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Sermons from the Book of Job

Volume 2

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A SONG AND A SOLACE.

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“Thou hast granted me life and favor, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit. And these things hast thou hid in thine heart: I know that this is with thee.” — Job 10:12, 13.

BEFORE I speak upon these two verses, I will read the four which precede them, that you may note the connection in which they are found. Job is in great trouble, in sore distress of soul; his heart is very heavy, and his unfriendly friends are casting salt into his wounds instead of trying to heal them. In his distress, he turns to his God, and appeals to him in this fashion (beginning at the 8th verse): “Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about; yet thou dost destroy me. Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again? Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese? Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews.” Then follows our text: “Thou hast granted me life and favor, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit. And these things hast thou hid in thine heart: I know that this is with thee.”

You see that Job is appealing to the pity of God, and this is the form of his argument: “Thou art my Creator; be my Preserver. Thou hast made me; do not break me. Thou art dealing very hardly with me, I am almost destroyed beneath the pressure of thy hand; yet remember that I am thine own creature. Weak and frail as I am, I am the creation of thy hand; therefore, despise not thine own work. Whatever I am, with the exception of my sin,

thou hast made me what I am; 'tis thou who hast brought me into my present condition; consider, then, O God, what a poor, frail thing I am, and stay thy hand, and do not utterly crush my spirit."

This is a wise prayer, a right and proper argument for a creature to use with the Creator; and when Job goes further still, and, in the language of our text, addresses God not only as his Creator, but as his Benefactor, and mentions the great blessings that he had received from God, his argument still holds good: "Do not, Lord, change thy method of dealing with me; thou hast given me life, thou hast shown me special favor, thou hast hitherto preserved me; cast me not away from thy presence, dismiss me not from thy service, let not thy tender mercies fail, but do unto me now and in days to come according as thou hast done unto me in the days that are past."

In speaking about these two verses, I am going to use them in two senses; the first in one sense and the second in another, but both and each of them in its own true meaning, so far as I understand it. First, here is *a song for bright days*: "Thou hast granted me life and favor, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." Secondly, here is *a solace for dark nights*: "And these things hast thou hid in thine heart: I know that this is with thee."

I. First, then, let us use the former part of our text as A SONG FOR BRIGHT DAYS: "Thou hast granted me life and favor, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit."

Whatever we have received that is good, has come to us from God as a matter of pure favor; certainly we have deserved nothing at his hands but displeasure, and everything short of death and hell is a mercy, and a thing for which to magnify the goodness of God. In this first portion of our text, there is a mention of three blessings that must never be forgotten. The great charter of God's bounty includes three notable things which he has granted to us: — life, favor, and his visitation which hath preserved our spirit.

Now, then, ye joyful ones, unite with me while we first *bless God for granting us life*. To a Christian man, life is a blessing; in itself, considered alone, it is a blessing; but to the ungodly man it may turn out to be a curse, for it would have been better for that man if he had never been born. But to a godly man like Job, it is a great mercy even to have an existence. Blessed be the Lord who brought us into the world, and gave breath to these lungs,

and the flowing life to these veins. Blessed be God for having made us. Sometimes, as I gaze upon the world in springtime, or in the summer, it appears to me that it is a great happiness to all nature simply to exist. Look at the lovely lily, as it stands quite still, and never speaks, it seems in silence to praise God by its beauty. But a Christian man should go beyond a mere flower, he ought to feel that it is a great favor to be made by God. The man who knows that his eternal future is secured by the unfailing

grace of God may forever praise the Lord who has given him life.

I find that, in the Hebrew, this word “life” is in the plural: “Thou hast granted me *lives*,” and, blessed be God, we who believe in Jesus have not only this natural life, which we share in common with all men, but the Holy Spirit has begotten in the hearts of believers a new life infinitely higher than mere natural life, a life which makes us akin to Christ, joint-heirs with him of the eternal inheritance which he is keeping for us in heaven. A Christian man is lifted into quite another sphere of action; he is no longer in the carnal but in the spiritual realm, and therefore he understands things that are hidden from carnal eyes, and he lives in the midst of a world into which the unregenerate cannot possibly come. An unconverted man cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven; he cannot even see it until he is born again, regenerated by the Holy Spirit; but once he is born again, he can bless God for giving him a second life infinitely better than the first one. Our wellbeing is a far higher thing than simply our being; the new creation is vastly superior to the first creation, good as that was; and the life of God in the soul is infinitely above the mere ordinary life of man.

Let us praise God, then, for life, and especially for this higher life if it is ours. What a joy it is to live in this respect! You know that, when a person is very sick and ill, and can scarcely turn in bed, or lift a hand, when every sense is deprived of enjoyment, and every vein or nerve becomes a road for the hot feet of pain to travel over, then life is hardly to be called life; but when God graciously raises us up from sickness, we ought to bless him for giving us life again, prolonged, restored, enjoyable life; and when the heart itself is sick, when the spirit flags, and the soul is ready to burst with inward grief, then the spiritual life seems scarcely to be life; but when, through the mercy of God, the Holy Spirit comes to us, and applies the pardoning blood of Jesus to our heart and conscience, and whispers peace to our troubled spirit, so that we can read our title clear to mansions in the skies, then our spiritual life is life indeed; we run, we leap, we fly; we would scarcely exchange for the bliss of angels the joy which the spiritual

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life brings to us at such times, and we bless and magnify the Lord who hath granted us this higher life, this life so blessed, so superlatively blessed that, even here below, it makes us anticipate and realize some of the glory of heaven itself. Are you, my brother, my sister, enjoying these lives? Do you feel that it is your privilege to be one with Christ, and to live because he lives, and do you really know that you have received this wondrous blessing? Oh, then, sing unto the Lord as long as you live, for it is the living, even the living in Zion who shall praise him as we do this day! Let this be one of your songs in this bright day of your happy experience; let the joy of your heart ring it out in the words of our text: “Thou hast granted me life.”

Next, we have to *praise God for granting us favor*. I should be quite unable to tell you to the full all that is wrapped up in that word “favor.” Favor from God! It is a great word in the original, a word big with meaning, for it means the love of God. What the expression “the love of

God” fully means, we cannot tell, for Charles Wesley truly wrote, —
“God only knows the love of God.”

God loves immeasurably. The force and extent of true love never can be calculated; it is a passion that cannot be measured by degrees as the temperature can be recorded on the thermometer; it is something that exceedeth and overfloweth all measurement, for a man giveth all his heart when he truly loveth. So is it with God; he setteth no bound to his love. When he loves a man, the great infinity of his being flows out towards his chosen. How much God loves you, my brother, my sister, if you are indeed one of his elect and redeemed people, it would not be possible even for an angel to calculate. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote, —

***“The love of Jesus — what it is,
None but his loved ones know;” —***

but I correct the poet; for even his loved ones cannot know it, except in that sense which Paul intended when he wrote to the Ephesians, ‘that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.’ We might rightly paraphrase Job’s words, and say, ‘Thou hast granted me life and love.’ Oh, what wondrous words to put together, life and love! Life without God’s love is death; but put God’s
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love with it, and then what a song we ought to send up to his throne if we feel that he has given us both spiritual life and infinite love.

The word “favor”, however, means not only love; but, as we ordinarily use it, it means some special form of grace and goodness. I know that there are some people who never will admit that God favors anyone, or that he has any special love toward some more than toward others. They do not like that hymn which Dr. Watts wrote; I heard one alter the verse, —

***“Let those refuse to sing
That never knew our God;
But favorites of the heavenly King
May speak their joys abroad.”***

The gentleman did not like the word “favorites”, so he gave out the line, —
“But subjects of the heavenly King.”

I let him sing it in that fashion, for I thought that very likely he was only a subject, but I sang the line correctly, because I knew that I was one of the King’s favorites, and I was resolved to rejoice in that fact. So I am at this moment, for I know that I have received special favor from God, and that there are some who have not received such favor and mercy. If, at this hour, anyone of you is a child of God, it is because God has done more for you than he has done for others. If there be a difference between you and others, somebody made that difference; and whoever made it ought to be honored and praised for it. Did you make it yourself? Shall I put the crown on your head? Why, if you are right-hearted, you will cry, ‘Nay, nay; it is God who hath made me to differ from others, it is his grace which has been given to me, to bring me out of the darkness in which others have been

left." So, whatever others may think or say, we at any rate, believe in that special form of grace which may be called favor: "Thou hast granted me life and favor." The Lord has given peculiar favor unto his own chosen people, and this makes them sing a song that rises above all the others: "He hath not dealt so with any nation." "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy." Let them praise the Lord with thanksgiving evermore, and if you, dear friends, belong to that privileged company, praise ye the Lord.

By the word "favor" is also meant grace in all the shapes which it assumeth, so Job's words might be rendered, "Thou hast granted me life and grace." Come, my brothers and sisters, if you can say this, just think over all that it
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means. "Thou hast granted me the grace and favor of thine electing love and of thy redeeming love, the grace of effectual calling, the grace of regeneration, the grace of justification, the grace of adoption, the grace of perseverance until this day, the grace of sanctification," (for all this is grace,) "thou hast given it, thou hast granted it of thy free favor, and granted it to me." "I do not know whether God has granted this grace to me," says one. Well, my dear brother, you cannot sing while you doubt this; but if, through faith in Jesus, you know that God has given you life and grace, sing away, sing despite all that might stop you, for this is a mercy which should forever monopolize the music of everyone who has been thus favored of God: "Thou hast granted me life and grace." I do not know what any other person in this place might say; but if no one else said it, I should be compelled, in the courts of the Lord's house, and in the midst of his people, to say, "I bless his name for giving me life and grace; I am altogether undeserving of such mercy, yet he has favored me with his goodness, so that I cannot do otherwise than feel overwhelmed by his grace." I do not know whether you can all say the same, but I feel persuaded that there are scores, hundreds, yea, even thousands of you who might stand up, and say, "We bless God that, though unworthy of his notice, he has granted us life and grace."

Now let us dwell, for a minute or two, on the third blessing of this divine grant: "*and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.*" There is a wonderful range of meaning in those words, but Job no doubt first refers to the providence of God by which he makes, as it were, a visitation of all the world, and especially of his own people. As a man, who possesses a large estate, if he be wise, goes round and looks over all his cattle and his servants and his fields, and makes a visitation to see whether all is going well, for he knows that the master's eye doeth much, so doth God visit the earth, and inspect it, and care for the creatures whom he hath formed to live upon it. "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry." The Lord keeps a watchful eye upon the whole universe. He leadeth out the stars, calling them all by their names, and nightly marshals their serried ranks. He counteth even the sparrows, so that not one of them falleth upon the ground without his knowledge. It has been the providence of God that has preserved us hitherto, so let us bless him for this great

favor.

Some of us have had very special providential deliverances; we will not mention them tonight, because they are too many. It has been well said,
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‘He that watches providence shall never be without a providence to watch.’ I am sure it is so. You, who have had your eyes divinely opened, must have seen an act of God’s gracious providence everyday. Some will only see God’s providence in deliverance from a terrible catastrophe, — such as an escape from fire, or from a railway accident, or something of that unusual and startling kind; but, indeed, the providence of God is watching over us just as much when we sit in our home, or sleep in our beds, or go about our daily duties. People used to say of Dr. Gill, my illustrious predecessor, that they could easily find him, for he was always in his study, and someone remarked, “At any rate, he is in a safe place there; a man is out of harm’s way when he is studying at home.” It so happened that the Doctor was called away from his study, one day, when a high wind blew down a stack of chimneys, which crashed right through the house into his study, and must have killed him if he had been in the place where he was usually sitting. Truly, it is the providence of God that preserves our lives as much when we are at home as if we were out on the vast deep when it is tossed with tempests.

Now, brethren, is it not wonderful that some of us are alive at all? Have not most of you reason to praise God for some very singular instances of his guardian care which has preserved you in being until this day? Refuse not to sing to God the song of thanksgiving which is his due. Prolonged life should beget continual gratitude, and votive offerings of joyful praise should ascend unto the Most High.

Oh, but that is only the beginning of the meaning of Job’s words, “Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.” God hath visited those of us who are his people in other ways besides the watching of his providence. Let me mention some of them. He has visited some of us with correction, and we do not like that form of visitation. We have been smitten heavily with his rod till all our bones have ached, and the blows have been so severe that they have left black bruises; or we have lost friend after friend, or we have been corrected by the scandal and the slander of wicked men, or in some way or other God has used man as the rod in his hand to chasten us. “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” Look back, and see whether you cannot say to God, “Thy visitation in correction hath preserved my spirit.” Can you not say, “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word”? There have been times, in the lives of some of us, when nothing
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but affliction could have saved us from falling into gross sin. We should have been carried away with pride, but we suffered from grievous depression of spirit, and so could not afford to be proud. There have been times when we should have been exalted above measure, but the thorn in

the flesh was graciously given to us, a messenger of Satan came to buffet us, and so we were preserved in the hour of temptation.

There are some, whom God will yet permit to be rich, who would not have been capable of managing so much money to the Lord's honor and glory if they had not for awhile had to live on short commons. The very thing we regret most in providence will probably be that in which we shall rejoice most in eternity. You know, in this world, we see the wrong side of the carpet that is being woven. We are like Hannah More in the carpet manufactory, when she said to the workman, "I cannot see any design; there seem to be a great number of loose pieces of wool, but I cannot perceive any pattern or order." "No, madam," said the man, "of course you cannot, because you are standing on the wrong side of the carpet; if you will come to the other side, you will then see it all." We are on the wrong side at present, but God will take us to the other side by-and-by, and then we shall each one say, "O my Lord, how wrongly did I judge thee! How little did I understand thy dealings with me! I thought thy visitation would have crushed me, but it preserved my spirit."

There are other visitations, however, such as the visitations of consolation. Oh, how sweet those are to the soul when in trouble! You and I must have known times when our spirits have gone down below zero, when no earthly friend could comfort us, and we could not think of any source of consolation for ourselves. Just then, some unnoticed promise of the Word of God has dropped into our soul with charming effect. It was, perhaps, but a sentence of half a dozen words, but they came from God the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, and they were so powerfully applied to our spirit that we said, "I do not mind what burden I have to bear, for I know that Christ's grace will be sufficient for me. I cannot tell what the divine will may be concerning me, or however dark and dreary may be the valley of the shadow of death through which I shall have to pass, but God's rod and staff are evidently with me, and they will comfort me in the most trying hour, and my Lord himself will surely bring me through all my tribulations." Cannot some of you say that your blessed Savior, who has suffered for you, and who understands all your griefs, has come and bound up your broken hearts, and given you unfailing comfort when you were in

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such sorrow that you feared you would have lost your reason, and perhaps even taken your own life? But here you are, the living to praise him, and to say, "Thy visitation by way of comfort hath preserved my spirit."

Once more, how sweet are the visitations of God in communion! Have you not sometimes had such communion with your Lord, during a sermon, that you have said, "My steps had well-nigh slipped, but now my Lord has come near unto me, and he has made me to stand so firmly that nothing can cast me down." Or perhaps you have gone upstairs to your room when you have been weighed down under very heavy grief, and you have told it all to Jesus, whispered it all into the ear that never wearies of his people's complaints; and, after awhile, you have come down, and you have felt, "Now I do not mind what happens, I can even face a frowning world, for

Jesus Christ's visitation hath preserved my spirit." I am sure also that many of us can say that, at the Lord's table, in the breaking of bread, our spirits have been so refreshed that we could go out into our daily callings, or back to our domestic griefs, and feel, "It really does not matter now; I can shoulder my cross, for I have seen the Crucified; I can bear my own sorrows, for I have had fellowship with him in his sorrows; I could even die for his sake, for I have entered into fellowship with his death."

"Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." I want you, my brother, my sister, to pray for that visitation tonight. Ask the Lord Jesus not only to pay a visit to your soul, but to come and stop with you. You have only to open the door of your heart, and he will come in. That is what he said even to lukewarm Laodicea: "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." So open wide the door at once. You say, "But there is nothing within; it is only an empty house." That does not matter to him, for he will bring with him the provisions on which he will sup with you, and you with him. Open the door, give him heart-room, say, "Come in, thou blessed Savior, wherefore standest thou without?" He saith to you who are slow to admit him, "My head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." Oh, keep not the door of your heart closed against him any longer! At least be willing that he should enter, pray that he may enter, cry to him to enter, and he will surely come in to you, and you shall have such a blessed season that you shall say, "Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit."

I have it deeply impressed upon me — so I must say it — that there are some of you who had better get a good feast tonight, for you have a great

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sorrow coming. You had better enter into close fellowship with Christ tonight, for the dark clouds of trouble are gathering about you. The tempest lowers, and if your ship is not prepared to weather the storm by having Christ on board, it will go ill with you. Avail yourselves of this present opportunity of a visit from Christ. Creep to the cross, clasp it to your heart, hide yourselves there, for no lightning flash can smite you there; that cross will conduct the lightning of divine wrath right away from you, and you will be saved; and you will say afterwards, "I am glad that I stayed to the communion, and that I communed, for I did not merely eat bread and drink wine, I spiritually ate the flesh and drank the blood of my Lord, and I had fellowship with him, and he hath made me strong to suffer or to serve." If it be so with us now, or if it hath been so in the past, let us sing unto the Lord a glad song of thanksgiving for this trinity of blessing, — life, favor, and preserving visitation; yea, let us sing unto him as long as we live.

II. Very briefly must I speak upon the second part of our subject, that is, A SOLACE FOR DARE NIGHTS: "And these things hast thou hid in thine heart: I know that this is with thee."

There is another interpretation of this verse, quite different from the one

that I am going to give you, but I do not think that Job ever could have meant what some people think he did. I believe that, when he said, “These things” — that is, life, favor, and God’s gracious visitation, — “These things hast thou hid in thine heart: I know that this is with thee,” that he meant, first, that *God remembers what he has done, and will not lose his pains*. “‘Thou hast granted me life and favor;’ Lord, thou hast not forgotten that; thou hast hidden that in thine heart, thou rememberest it well. Since thou hast done this for me, and thou dost remember that thou hast done it, therefore thou wilt continue thy mercy to me, and not lose all the grace and goodness which thou hast already bestowed upon me.” Just think of that for a minute. Even if you have forgotten all that God has done for you, God has not forgotten it. If you do a kindness to a man, it is very probable that he will not recollect it, but you will. Many children forget all the kindness and love of their mother, but the mother remembers all that she did for her children in the days of their helplessness, and she loves them all the more because of what she did for them. There is a little secret which I may whisper in your ear. If you want people to love you, do what you can for them; yet, possibly, you will not gain their love by that process; but if you let them do something for you, they will be sure to love you then.

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When you have done much for anyone, you are specially bound to that person, so Job puts it thus, “Thou, Lord, hast done much for me, thou hast all this in thy remembrance; and I am persuaded that this binds thee to me, — thy great goodness in giving me life, and favor, and in visiting me, — all this hath bound thee to me, and I feel persuaded that thou wilt not leave me.” That is the teaching of the verse many of us delight to sing, —

*‘His love in time past forbids me to think
He’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink;
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
Confirms his good pleasure to help me quite through.’*

If the Lord had not meant to finish his work, he would never have begun it; if he had not meant to bring us to heaven, he would not have snatched us like brands from the burning; if he had not meant to complete his work, he would not have spent so much upon us. “Spent so much upon us?” says one. Ay, he lavished upon his people more than all the millionaires who were ever upon the earth have possessed, he expended more than there is in heaven with the exception of that which he spent upon them. “What is that?” you ask. He spent the life of his only-begotten Son; and heaven itself does not contain any other treasure that is at all comparable to the Father’s equal Son. He spent the best he had upon us, and do you think that, after that, he will ever leave us? Nay, that can never be; though he were to take away all our property, though he were to deprive us of every one of our children, though he were to cover us from head to foot with sore blains, though he should cause us to sit upon a dunghill, and scrape ourselves with a potsherd, though the very wife of our bosom should bid us curse God and die, though all our friends should become miserable comforters, and make us ready to curse the day on which we saw the light, yet still God

must be gracious to us, and we must trust him; yea, though he should slay us, yet must we trust in him. All the goodness of the past is an infallible guarantee that he will be good to us even to the end, according to that word concerning the Lord Jesus, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." That is one meaning of the verse. But, next, I think that the words, "And these things hast thou hid in thine heart: I know that this is with thee;" have this meaning, that *God sometimes hides his favor and love in his heart, yet they are there still*. At times, it may be that you get no glimpse of his face, or that you see no smile upon it. When that is my experience, I love to turn to that verse in the 63rd Psalm: "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow
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of thy wings will I rejoice." It is all shadow, shadow, shadow; no sunshine; I cannot see my God, but the very shadow is the shadow of his wings, and as you may often see the chickens cower down beneath the mother hen, and nestle there, so in the shadow of his wings will I rejoice; and you, dear friend, may share that blessed and safe shelter. "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler." When there is no light, thou shalt walk on as steadily as if seven suns were shining. When there is no comfortable assurance for thee, when there is no temporal deliverance, when there is nothing for thee out of the winepress or out of the barn, when there is no friend nor helper near thee, when the fig tree doth not blossom, when thou hast no flocks, and thy herds are cut off by the storm, when God's mercy seems to be clean gone forever, and his promises all appear to fail, it is not really so.

***'He hides the purpose of his grace
To make it better known.'***

The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; therefore, O tried child of God, learn what Job here teaches us, that these things are still hidden in the heart of God, and that eternal love holdeth fast to the objects of its choice. "I know that this is with thee," said Job, so the last thing I want you to learn from his words is that *God would have his people strong in faith to know this truth*. Job says, "I know that this is with thee." I speak to many persons who say that they are Christians, and who perhaps are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and one of their clearest evidences is that they are very happy. Dear young people, I am glad you are so happy. True religion makes people happy, it is a perennial fountain of delight. But do not set too much store by your emotions of delight, because they may be taken from you, and then where will your evidences be? God's people sometimes walk in darkness, and see no light. There are times when the best and brightest of saints have no joy. I will not say whether they are not to be blamed for that, it is probable that they are in most instances, though I do not see that Job could be much blamed; I wish I was able to be a thousandth part as good as he was with a thousandth part of his pains and troubles. But it is a fact that, whether rightly or wrongly, God's people are not always joyous; as Peter says, "For a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." Whenever you get into that condition, dear young

people, if you have learned to trust Christ before, trust him still. If your religion should not, for a time, yield you any joy, cling to it all the same.
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Do not give it up; for if there is any time when you want faith, it is when your spirits sink, and when your outward trials multiply.

You see, God does not give you faith in order that you may merely run about in the meadows with it all among the fair spring flowers. I will tell you for what purpose he gives you faith; it is that you may put on your snow-shoes, and go out in the cold wintry blast, and glide along over the ice and the snow. He does not give you faith that you may put it on as I remember seeing Napoleon's guard with armor in which I saw my face as well as ever I did in a mirror; the Lord does not give you faith merely that you may go on parade with it, and show yourself; you are to fight with it. There is not a fragment of faith that you have which will not be dented by the blows of the enemy, and rusted through exposure to the weather. You will have difficulties, mark you, as surely as you have faith. You will have a difficulty in maintaining your faith against the assaults of the adversary, for wherever there is faith in the world, there are trials for it to encounter. Railway men do not build bridges over rivers without an intention of sending engines and trains across them, and God does not give faith without an intention of letting it be tried; and he wants you to know, when he does try you, or permit others to try you, that he still loves you. When he leaves you for a little while in the dark, he loves you just as much as when you were in the light. A little child cries, and says that her mother does not love her because she has put her to bed, and gone downstairs, and left her in the dark. She will always be a baby if the mother stays there with a candle by the hour together till she gets to sleep. The mother wants her child to grow into a woman, and she trains her accordingly. So is it with us. God does often humor our littleness and weakness by doing many kind things to us as we do to poor feeble little children, but he wants us to grow up, and become men and women in Christ Jesus, and to be strong in the Lord. I pray that you, my dear brethren and sisters, may be stalwart Christians of this sort. You see, if our faith is to depend upon our disposition, our joy or our sorrow, it will be ever fluctuating, up and down; and we shall be apt to think that we may be saved today and lost tomorrow. That is not the teaching of the Bible. When you are on the mount with Christ, you are safe; but when you are at the bottom of the valley with Christ, you are just as safe; when you sit at the table with Christ, you are safe; and so you are if you should be at sea with Christ in the vessel. Only have faith in him, and say, 'My God, thy will towards me
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to give me life, and favor, and preservation, may be hidden, but it is still in thine heart, 'I know that this is with thee.'"

Now I must leave these things with you. You who know and love the Lord will seek a renewal of his visitations tonight; and as for you who do not know him, oh, how I wish that you did! Often as I come on this platform, and look upon this throng of people, I should wonder why so many came if

I did not know that the earnest simple preaching of the gospel will never fail to bring people together. But as you have come to hear the gospel, I pray you also to receive it. Do not merely hear it, but accept it. If there were diamonds to be given away here, and I said that I could give them to everybody who was willing to have them, I am sure that you would not be content to hear me talking about their beauty, their facets, or their particular brilliance, but you would each one cry out, ‘Hand me one,’ ‘Give me one,’ ‘Pass me down one worth a hundred thousand pounds; I will be content with that, and you may leave off talking if you like.’ I will leave off talking about Christ if you will take him as your Savior. I shall not need to extol him when you have once accepted him, for you will find out his excellence for yourselves. The Scripture saith, ‘Taste and see that the Lord is good.’ Oh, that you would all taste and see for yourselves! You would know his goodness far better from that taste and sight than you can ever know it from any human language however earnest it may be. God bless you all, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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THE BOOK FUND AND ITS’ WORK,

1898 AND 1899.

BY MRS. C. H. SPURGEON.

For several years, Mrs. C. H. Spurgeon’s Book Fund Reports have not been on sale; they have only been sent to subscribers. So many inquiries have, however, been made for the Reports by other friends, that extra copies have been printed this time, and they can be obtained of the publishers, Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster, or through all booksellers and colporteurs.

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It has been a source of surprise to many people that any Report of the Book Fund could be issued while Mrs. Spurgeon continues so very ill. The explanation is that, before she was laid aside, the Lord had graciously enabled her almost to complete the manuscript; and when she felt that the time for its publication had arrived, little labor was required beyond the compilation of the various tables of statistics and lists of contributions, — a task of which others were able almost entirely to relieve her.

The Report — which was at first delayed because of the more pressing claims of the *Autobiography*, and afterwards by Mrs. Spurgeon’s long and serious illness, — now covers the work of two years; and a very remarkable work it is. Over 10,000 volumes and more than 126,000 of Mr. Spurgeon’s Sermons have been sent out during that period, while all the other departments of Book Fund, Pastors’ Aid Fund, and Auxiliary Book Fund service have continued in active operation. Mrs. Spurgeon again

pleads the cause of her poor pastors with all the earnestness and pathos of former years, and she gives extracts from many of the grateful letters written by the recipients of her grants, special prominence being accorded to the epistles she has received from clergymen who have derived benefit from her dear husband's writings. The Report makes a neat booklet of 84 pages, and we think many of our readers will thank us for calling attention to its publication; possibly, some of them, after examining it, will become subscribers to the Book Fund, and so help to extend its beneficent influence. — *Review in July "Sword and Trowel."*

THE SWEET USES OF ADVERSITY.

NO. 283

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 13TH, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

‘Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.’ — Job 10:2.

AND will God contend with man? If God be angry, can he not take away the breath of his nostrils, and lay him low in the dust of earth? If the heart of the Almighty be moved unto hot displeasure, can he not speak in his anger, and will not the soul of man sink into the lowest hell? Will God contend — will he set himself in battle array against his creature? and such a creature? — the creature of an hour — a thing that is not, that is here today and gone to-morrow? Will the Almighty contend with the nothingness of man? Will the everlasting God take up the weapons of war, and go out to fight against the insect of a day? Well might we cry out to him, “after whom is my Lord the King gone forth? After a dead dog: after a flea?” Wilt thou hunt the partridge on the mountains with an army, and wilt thou go forth against a gnat with shield and spear? Shall the everlasting God who fainteth not, neither is weary, at whose reproof the pillars of heaven’s starry roof tremble and start — will he become combatant with a creature? Yet our text saith so. It speaks of God’s contending with man. Ah, surely, my brethren, it needs but little logic to understand that this not a contention of anger, but a contention of love. It needs, methinks, but a short sight for us to discover that, if God contendeth with man, it must be a contention of mercy. There must be a design of love in this. If he were angry he would not condescend to reason with his creature, and to have a strife of words with him; much less would he put on his buckler, and lay hold on his sword, to stand up in battle and contend with such a creature as man. You will all perceive at once that there must be love even in this apparently

angry word; that this contention must, after all, have something to do with contentment, and that this battle must be, after all, but a disguised mercy, but another shape of an embrace from the God of love. Carry this consoling reflection in your thoughts while I am preaching to you; and if any of you are saying to-day, ‘Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me,’ the very fact of God contending with you at all, the fact that he has not consumed you, that he has not smitten you to the lowest hell, may thus, at the very outset, afford consolation and hope.

Now, I propose to address myself to the two classes of persons who are making use of this question. First, I shall speak to the tried saint; and then I shall speak to the seeking sinner, who has been seeking peace and pardon through Christ, but who has not as yet found it, but, on the contrary, has been buffeted by the law, and driven away from the mercy-seat in despair.

I. First, then, to THE CHILD OF GOD. I have — I know I have — in this great assembly, some who have come to Job’s position. They are saying, ‘My soul is weary of my life; I will leave my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.’ Sometimes to question God is wicked. As the men of Bethshemesh were smitten with death when they dared to lift up the lid of the ark and look into its sacred mysteries, so is it often death to our faith to question God. It often happens that the sorest plagues come upon us on account of an impudent curiosity which longs to pry between the folded leaves of God’s great council -book, and find out the reason for his mysterious providences. But, methinks this is a question that may be asked. Inquiring here will not be merely curious: for there will be a practical affect following therefrom. Tried saint t follow me while I seek to look into this mystery and answer your question, and I pray you, select that one of several answers which I shall propound, which shall, to your judgment, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, seem to be the right one. You have been tried by trouble after trouble: business runs cross against you; sickness is never out of your house; while in your own person you are the continual subject of a sad depression of spirit. It seems as if God were contending with you, and you are asking, ‘Why is this?’ ‘Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.’

1. My first answer on God’s part, my brother, is this — it may be that God is contending with thee that he may show his own power in upholding thee. God delighteth in his saints; and when a man delights in his child, if it be a

child noted for its brightness of intellect, he delights to see it put through hard questions, because he knows that it will be able to answer them all. So God glories in his children. He loves to hear them tried, that the whole world may see that there is none like them on the face of the earth, and even Satan may be compelled before he can find an accusation against

them, to resort to his inexhaustible fund of lies. Sometimes God on purpose puts his children in the midst of this world's trials. On the right, left, before, behind, they are surrounded. Within and without the battle rages. But there stands the child of God, calm amidst the bewildering cry, confident of victory. And then the Lord pointeth joyously to his saint, and he saith, "See, Satan, he is more than a match for thee. Weak though he is, yet through my power, he all things can perform." And sometimes God permits Satan himself to come against one of his children; and the black fiend of hell in dragon's wings, meets a poor Christian just when he is faint and weary from stumblings in the valley of humiliation. The fight is long and terrible, and, well it may be, for it is a worm combating with the dragon. But see what that worm can do. It is trodden under foot, and yet it destroys the heel that treads upon it. When the Christian is cast down he utters a cry, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, for though I fall yet shall I rise again." And so God pointeth to his child and with, "See there! see what I can do: I can make flesh and blood more mighty than the most cunning spirit; I can make poor feeble foolish man, more than a match for all the craft and might of Satan." And what will you say to this third proof that God puts us through? Sometimes God doth as it were, himself enter into the lists; oh, let us wonder to tell it. God to prove the strength of faith, sometimes himself makes war on faith. Think not that this is a stretch of the imagination. It is plain simple fact. Have ye never heard of the brook Jabbok, and of that angel-clothed God who fought with Jacob there, and permitted Jacob to prevail? What was this for? It was this: thus had God determined, "I will strengthen the creature so much, that I will permit it to overcome its Creator." Oh, what noble work is this, that while God is casting down his child with one hand, he should be holding him up with the other: letting a measure of omnipotence fall on him to crush him, while the like omnipotence supports him under the tremendous load. The Lord shows the world — "See what faith can do! 'Well does Hart sing of faith —

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*'It treads on the world and on hell;
It vanquishes death and despair;
And, O! let us wonder to tell,
It overcomes heaven by prayer.'*

This is why God contends with thee: to glorify himself, by showing to angels, to men, to devils, how he can put such strength into poor puny man, that he can contend with his Maker, and become a prevailing prince like Israel, who as a prince had power of God, and prevailed. This, then, may be the first reason.

2. Let me give you a second answer. Perhaps, O tried soul! the Lord is doing this to develope thy graces. There are some of thy graces that would never be discovered if it were not for thy trials. Dost thou not know that thy faith never looks so grand in summer weather, as it does in winter?

Hast thou not heard that love is too often like a glow-worm, that showeth but little light except it be in the midst of surrounding darkness? And dost thou not know that hope itself is like a star — not to be seen in the sunshine of prosperity, and only to be discovered in the night of adversity? Dost thou not understand that afflictions are often the black foils in which God doth set the jewels of his children's graces, to make them shine the better. It was but a little while ago that on thy knees thou wast saying, 'Lord, I fear I have no faith: let me know that I have faith.' But dost thou know thou wast praying for trials, for thou canst not know that thou hast faith, until thy faith be exercised. Our trials, so to speak, are like wayfarers in a wood. When there is no intruder in the silent glades of the forest, the hare and the partridge lie; and there they rest, and no eye sees them. But when the intruding footstep is heard, then you see them start and run along the green lane, and you hear the whirr of the pheasant as it seeks to hide itself. Now, our trials are intruders upon our heart's rest; our graces start up and we discover them. They had lain in their lair, they had slept in their forms, they had rested in their nests, unless these intruding trials had startled them from their places. I remember a simple rural metaphor used by a departed divine. He says he was never very skillful at birds' nesting in the summer time, but he could always find birds' nests in the winter. Now, it often happens that when a man has but little grace, you can scarcely see it when the leaves of his prosperity are on him; but let the winter's blast come and sweep away his withered leaves, and then you discover his graces. Depend upon it, God often sends us trials that our graces may be discovered, and that we may be certified of their existence. Besides, it is

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not merely discovery, it is real growth that is the result of these trials. There is a little plant, small and stunted, growing under the shade of a brood spreading oak; and this little plant values the shade which covers it, and greatly does it esteem the quiet rest which its noble friend affords. But a blessing is designed for this little plant. Once upon a time there comes along the woodman, and with his sharp axe he fells the oak. The plant weeps, and cries, 'My shelter is departed: every rough wind will blow upon me, and every storm will seek to uproot me.' 'No, no,' saith the angel of that flower, 'how will the sun get at thee; now will the shower fall on thee in more copious abundance than before; now thy stunted form shall spring up into loveliness, and thy flower, which could never have expanded itself to perfection, shall now laugh in the sunshine, and men shall say, 'How greatly hath that plant increased! how glorious hath become its beauty through the removal of that which was its shade and its delight!'" See you not, then, that God may take away your comforts and your privileges to make you the better Christians? Why, the Lord always trains his soldiers, not by letting them lie on feather beds, but by turning them out and using them to forced marches and hard service. He makes them ford through streams, and swim through rivers, and climb mountains, and walk many a long march with heavy knapsacks of sorrow on their backs. This is the way in which he makes soldiers — not by dressing them up in fine

uniforms, to swagger at the barrack gates, and to be fine gentlemen in the eyes of the loungers in the park. God knows that soldiers are only to be made in battle; they are not to be grown in peaceful times. We may grow the stuff of which soldiers are made, but warriors are really educated by the smell of powder, in the midst of whizzing bullets, and roaring cannonades — not in soft and peaceful times. Well, Christian, may not this account for it all? Is not thy Lord bringing out thy graces and making them grow? This is the reason why he is contending with you.

3. Another reason may be found in this. It may be the Lord contends with thee because thou hast some secret sin which is doing thee sore damage. Dost thou remember the story of Moses? Never a man better beloved than he of the Lord his God, for he was faithful in all his house as a servant. But dost thou remember how the Lord met him on the way as he was going to Egypt, and strove with him? find why? Because he had in his house an uncircumcised child. This child was, so long as it had not God's seal upon it, a sin in Moses; therefore God strove with him till the thing was done.

Now, too often we have some uncircumcised thing in our house, some joy

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that is evil, some amusement that is sinful, some pursuit that is not agreeable to his will. And the Lord meets us often as he did Moses, of whom it is written — “The Lord met him by the way in the inn, and sought to kill him.” — Exodus 4:24. Now search and look, for if the consolations of God be small with thee, there is some secret sin within. Put it away, lest God smite thee still more sorely, and vex thee in his hot displeasure. Trials often discover sins — sins we should never have found out if it had not been for them. We know that the houses in Russia are very greatly infested with rats and mice. Perhaps a stranger would scarcely notice them at first, but the time when you discover them is when the house is on fire; then they pour out in multitudes. And so doth God sometimes burn up our comforts to make our hidden sins run out; and then he enables us to knock them on the head and get rid of them. That may be the reason of your trial, to put an end to some long-fostered sin. It may be, too, that in this way God would prevent some future sin, some sin hidden from thine own eyes into which thou wouldst soon fall if it were not for his troubling thee by his providence. There was a fair ship which belonged to the great Master of the seas; it was about to sail from the port of grace to the haven of glory. Ere it left the shore the great Master said, “Mariners, be brave! Captain, be thou bold! for not a hair of your head shall perish; I will bring you safely to your desired haven. The angel of the winds is commissioned to take care of you on your way.” The ship sailed right merrily with its streamers flying in the air. It floated along at a swift rate with a fair wind for many and many a day. But once upon a time there came a hurricane which drove them from the course, strained their mast until it bent as if it must snap in twain. The sail was gone to ribbons; the sailors were alarmed and the captain himself trembled. They had lost their course. “They were out of the right track,” they said; and they mourned exceedingly. When the day dawned the waves were quiet, and the angel of the winds appeared; and they spoke unto him,

and said, "Oh angel, wast thou not bidden to take charge of us, and preserve us on our journeys?" He answered, "It was even so, and I have done it. You were steering on right confidently, and you knew not that a little ahead of your vessel lay a quicksand upon which she would be wrecked and swallowed up quick. I saw that there was no way for your escape but to drive you from your course. See, I have done as it was commanded me: go on your way." Ah, this is a parable of our Lord's dealings with us. He often drives us from our smooth course which we thought was the right track to heaven. But there is a secret reason for it; there is a quicksand ahead that is not marked in the chart. We know

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nothing about it; but God seeth it, and he will not permit this fair vessel, which he has himself insured, to be stranded anywhere; he will bring it safely to its desired haven.

4. I have now another reason to give, but it is one which some of you will not understand; some however will. Beloved, ye remember that it is written, that we "must bear the image of the heavenly," namely, the image of Christ. As he was in this world even so must we be. We must have fellowship with him in his sufferings, that we may be conformable unto his death. Hast thou never thought that none can be like the Man of Sorrow unless they have sorrows too? How can you be like unto him, who sweat as it were great drops of blood, if you do not sometimes say, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Think not, O well-beloved, that thou canst be like the thorn-crowned head, and yet never feel the thorn. Canst thou be like thy dying Lord, and yet be uncrucified? Must thy hand be without a nail, and thy foot without a wound? Canst thou be like him, unless like him thou art compelled to say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God is chiselling you — you are but a rough block — he is making you into the image of Christ; and that sharp chisel is taking away much which prevents your being like him. Must he who is our head be marred in his visage by reason of grief, and must we for ever rejoice and sing? It cannot be.

*"The heirs of salvation, I know from his word,
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord."*

Sweet is the affliction which gives us fellowship with Christ. Blessed is the plough that ploughs deep furrows, if the furrows be like his. Blessed is the mouth that spits upon us, if the spittle be from the same cause as that which defiled his face. Blessed are the nails and thorns, and vinegar and spear, if they but make us somewhat like to him, in whose glory we shall be partakers when we shall see him as he is. This is a matter which all cannot understand, for it is a path which no unhallowed foot hath trodden, and no careless eye hath so much as seen it. But the true believer can rejoice therein, for he has had fellowship with Christ in his sufferings.

5. To the child Of God I shall give only one more reason. The Lord, it may

be, contendeth with thee, my brother, to humble thee. We are all too proud; the humblest of us do but approach to the door of true humility. We are too proud, for pride, I suppose, runs in our very veins, and is not to be gotten out of us any more than the marrow from our bones. We shall have
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many blows before we are brought down to the right mark; and it is because we are so continually getting up that God is so continually putting us down again. Besides, don't you feel, in looking back on your past troubles, that you have after all been best when you have had troubles? I can truly say, there is a mournfulness in joy, and there is a sweet joy in sorrow. I do not know how it is, but that bitter wine of sorrow, when you once get it down gives such a warmth to the inner man as even the wine of Lebanon can scarce afford. It acts with such a tonic influence upon the whole system, that the very veins begin to thrill as the blood leaps therein. Strange influence! I am no physician, but yet I know that my sweet cup often leaves bitterness on the palate, and my bitter cup always leaves a sweet flavour in the mouth. There is a sweet joy in sorrow I cannot understand. There is music in this harp with its strings all unstrung and broken. There are a few notes I hear from this mournful lute that I never get from the loud-sounding trumpet. Softness and melody we get from the wail of sorrow, which we never get from the song of joy. Must we not account for this by the fact that in our troubles we live nearer to God? Our joy is like the wave as it dashes upon the shore — it throws us on the earth. But our sorrows are like that receding wave which sucks us back again into the great depth of Godhead. We should have been stranded and left high and dry upon the shore if it had not been for that receding wave, that ebbing of our prosperity, which carried us back to our Father and to our God again. Blessed affliction! it has brought us to the mercy seat; given life to prayer; enkindled love; strengthened faith; brought Christ into the furnace with us, and then brought us out of the furnace to live with Christ more joyously than before.

Surely, I cannot answer this question better. If I have not hit upon the right reason, search and look my dearly beloved; for the reason is not far off if ye but look for it — the reason why he contendeth with you.

II. I have thus done with the saints; I shall now turn myself to address THE SEEKING SINNER, who is wondering that he has found no peace and comfort. By the way — running a little apart from the subject — I heard a brother saying the other evening in describing his experience, that before he was converted he Was never sick, never had an affliction at all, but from the very hour when he became converted, he found that trials and troubles came upon him very thick. I have been thinking of that ever since, and I think I have found a reason for it. When we are converted, it is the time of the singing of birds; but do you know the time of the singing of birds is the
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time of the pruning of vines, and as sure as the time of the singing of birds

is come the time of the pruning of vines is come also. God begins to try us as soon as he begins to make our soul sing. This is not running away from the subject. I thought it was. It has just brought me to address the sinner. You have come here this morning saying to yourself, 'Sir, not long ago I was awakened to a sense of my lost estate. As I was directed I went home and sought mercy in prayer. From that day till now I have never ceased to pray. But, alas! I get no comfort, sir; I grow worse than ever I was before — I mean I grow more desponding, more sad. If you had asked me before conviction, sir, whether the path to heaven was easy, I should have said 'yes.' But now it seems to me to be strewn with flints. That I would not mind but, alas! methinks the gate is shut which lies at the end of the road; for I have knocked, and it has never opened; I have asked, and I have not received; I have sought, and I have not found. In fact, instead of getting peace I receive terror. God is contending with me. Can you tell me, sir, why it is?' 'I will try to answer the question, God helping me.

1. My first answer shall be this. Perhaps, my dear hearer, God is contending with you for awhile, because as yet you are not thoroughly awakened. Remember, Christ will not heal your wound till he has probed it to its very core. Christ is no unqualified physician, no foolish surgeon, who would close up a wound with proud flesh in it; but he will take the lances, and cut, and cut, and cut again crossways, and he will lay the sore open, expose it, look into it, make it smart; and then after that, he will close up its mouth and make it whole. Perhaps thou hast not as yet known thine own vileness, thine own lost state. Now, Christ will have thee know thy poverty before he will make thee rich. His Holy Spirit will convince thee of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. He will strip thee, and though the pulling off of thy own righteousness be like flaying thee and tearing off the skin from thy breast, yet he will do it; for he will not clothe thee with the robe of his own righteousness till every rag of thy own selfsufficiency is pulled away. This is why God is contending with thee. Thou hast been on thy knees. Go lower, man — go lower; fall flat on thy face. Thou hast said, 'Lord, I am nothing.' Go lower, man; say, 'Lord, I am less than nothing and the very chief of sinners.' Thou hast felt somewhat; go ask that thou mayest feel more; may be yet more fully convinced of sin — may learn to hate it with a more perfect hatred, and to bewail thy lost estate with a wailing like that of Ramah, when Rachel wept for her children and would not be comforted because they were not. Seek to know the

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bottom of your case. Make it a matter of conscience to look thy sins in the face, and let hell also blaze before thee: realize the fact that thou deservest to be lost for ever. Sit down often and take counsel with the Lord thy God, whom thou hast grievously offended. Think of thy privileges, and how thou hast despised them; recollect the invitations thou hast heard, and how often thou hast rejected them; get a proper sense of sin, and it may be that God will cease to contend with thee, because the good is all obtained which he sought to give thee by this long and painful contention.

2. Another answer I will give you is this: perhaps God contends with thee in order to try thy earnestness. There are many Mr. Pliables, who set out on the road to heaven for a little time, and the first boggy piece of road they come to, they creep out on that side which is nearest to their own house, and go back again. Now, God meets every pilgrim on the road to heaven and contends with him. If you can hold your own, and say, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him;" if you can dare to do it, and be importunate with God, and say, "Though he never hear me, if I perish I will pray, and perish only there;" then you have got the mastery and you shall succeed. God's Spirit is teaching you how to wrestle and agonize in prayer. I have seen a man, when he has become solemnly in earnest about his soul, pray as though he was a very Samson, with the two gates of mercy in his hand, rocking them to and fro as though he would sooner pull them up — gates, and bar, and all — than he would go away without obtaining a blessing. God loves to see a man mighty in prayer, intent upon getting the blessing, resolved that he will have Christ, or he will perish seeking him. Now, be in earnest. Cry aloud! spare not! Rise in the night-watches! pour out your heart like water before the Lord, for he will answer thee when he hath heard the voice of thy crying; he will hearken to thy supplication and give thee the desire of thy heart.

3. Yet, again, another matter. "May it not be, my dear hearers, that the reason why God contends with you and does not give you peace is, because you are harbouring some one sin" Now, I will not say what it is; I have known a man solemnly under conviction of sin, but the company which he kept on market-day was of such a caste, that until he was separated entirely from his companions, it was not possible he should have peace. I do not know what your peculiar besetting sin may be. It may be a love for frivolity; it may be the desire to associate with those who amuse you; it may be worse. But remember, Christ and thy soul will never be one till thou and thy sins are two. Thy desires and longings must make a clean

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sweep of the devil and all his crew, or else Christ will not come and dwell with thee. "Well," says one, "but I cannot be perfect." No, but you cannot find peace till you desire to be. Wherever you harbour a sin, there you harbour misery. One sin wilfully indulged in, and not forsaken by true repentance, will destroy the soul. Sins given up are like goods cast out at sea by the mariners in days of storm; they lighten the ship, and the ship will never float till you have thrown all your sins overboard. There is no hope whatever for you till you can truly say,

*'Whate'er consists not with thy love,
O help me to resign."
'The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from its throne,*

And worship only thee."

4. Then drawing near to a conclusion let me have your most solemn attention while I give one more hint as to the reason why you have not yet found peace. My dear hearers, perhaps it is because you do not thoroughly understand the plan of salvation. I do feel that all ministers, — and here perhaps, I am as great a sinner as any other, and I condemn myself while I chastise others — we all of us do in some way or other, I fear, help to dim the lustre of God's grace, as manifested in the cross of Christ. Often am I afraid lest I should prefer Calvinism to Calvary, lest I should put the sinner's sense of need like a quickset hedge round the cross, and keep the poor sinner from getting as near as he would to the bleeding Lamb of God. Ah, my dear hearers, remember if you would be saved, your salvation comes wholly and entirely from Jesus Christ, the dying Son of God. View him yonder, sinner, sweating in the garden! See the red drops of blood as they fall from that dear face! Oh, see him sinner, see him in Pilate's hall. View the streams of gore as they gush from those lacerated shoulders. See him, sinner, see him on his cross! View that head still marked with the wounds with which the thorns pierced his temples! Oh, view that face emaciated and marred! See the spittle still hanging there — the spittle of cruel mockers! See the eyes floating in tears with languid pity! Look, too, at those hands, and view them as they stream like fountains of blood! Oh, stand and listen while he cries, 'Lama Sabachthani!' Sinner, thy life is in him that died; thy healing is in yonder wounds; thy salvation is in his destruction. 'Oh,' says one, 'but I cannot believe.' Ah, brother, that was once my mournful cry. But I will tell you how I came to believe. Once
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upon a time, I was trying to make myself believe, and a voice whispered, 'Vain man, vain man, if thou wouldst believe, come and see!' Then the Holy Spirit led me by the hand to a solitary place. And while I stood there, suddenly there appeared before me One upon his cross. I looked up, I had then no faith. I saw his eyes suffused with tears, and the blood still flowing: I saw his enemies about him hunting him to his grave; I marked his miseries unutterable; I heard the groaning which cannot be described; and as I looked up, he opened his eyes and said to me, 'The Son of Man is come into the world to seek and to save that which was lost.' I clapped my hands, and I said, 'Jesus, I do believe, I must believe what thou hast said, I could not believe before, but the sight of thee has breathed faith into my soul. I dare not doubt — it were treason, it were high treason to doubt thy power to save.' Dissolved by his agonies, I fell on the ground, and embraced his feet, and when I fell, my sin fell also! And I rejoiced in love divine that blots out sin and saves from death.

Oh my friend, you will never get faith by trying to make yourself have it. Faith is the gift of Christ! go and find it in his veins. There is a secret spot where faith is treasured up; it is in the heart of Christ; go and catch it sinner as it flows therefrom. Go to your chamber, and sit down and picture Christ in holy vision, dying on the tree, and as your eye sees, your heart shall

melt, your soul shall believe, and you shall rise from your knees and cry, ‘I know whom I may believe, and I am persuaded he is able to save that which I have committed to him until that day.’

And now, may the love of Christ Jesus, and the grace of his Father, and the fellowship of his Spirit, be with you for ever and ever. Amen and Amen.

COMFORT FROM THE FUTURE.

NO. 2676

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MAY 27TH, 1900,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JAN. 30TH, 1881.

“Thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away.” — Job 11:16.

JOB’S misery was extreme, and it seemed as if he could never forget it. He never did forget the fact of it, but he did forget the pain of it. That he had been utterly miserable, would always remain recorded upon the tablets of his memory; but the wretchedness itself would not remain. It would be so entirely removed that it should be as a thing that has been altogether forgotten. Nothing better can happen to our misery than that it should be forgotten in the sense referred to in our text; for then, evidently, it will be clean gone from us. It will be as it is when even the scent of the liquor has gone out of the cask, when even the flavor of the bitter drug lingers no longer in the medicine glass, but has altogether disappeared. So is it with the sorrow that has so effectually gone out of the mind that it is just as though it had never been there.

If anyone here is in misery of any kind, — whether it be misery of physical pain, or misery of want, or misery of soul on account of sin, or the loss of the light of God’s countenance, — I can only pray for you, dear friend, that you may speedily forget your misery, and only remember it as waters that pass away. The thing goes to be done; it is quite possible, and you may expect it. If you look carefully at the connection of our text, and give earnest attention to the matter, I do not doubt that you will experience this blessed forgetfulness. When we are in pain of body, and depression of

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spirit, we imagine that we never shall forget such misery as we are enduring. The sharp ploughshare has gone down so deeply that we think it has made a mark in the soul that can never be erased. We seem to lie all broken in pieces, with our thoughts like a case of knives cutting into our spirit; and we say to ourselves, “We n ever shall forget this terrible experience.” And yet, by-and-by, God turns towards us the palm of his

hand, and we see that it is full of mercy, we are restored to health, or uplifted from depression of spirit, and we wonder that we ever made so much of our former suffering or depression. We remember it no more, except as a thing that has passed and gone, to be recollected with gratitude that we have been delivered from it, but not to be remembered so as to leave any scar upon our spirit, or to cause us any painful reflection whatsoever. "Thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away."

I. I am not going to limit the application of the text to Job and his friends, for it has also a message for many of us at the present time; and I shall take it, first, WITH REFERENCE TO THE COMMON TROUBLES OF LIFE WHICH AFFECT BELIEVING MEN AND WOMEN.

These troubles of life happen to us all more or less. They come to one in one shape, and perhaps he thinks that he is the only man who has any real misery; yet they also come to others, though possibly in another form. There is certainly a cross for every shoulder to bear; Simon must not bear the cross alone, and all the rest go free. There is no road to heaven without its stones, or without its Hill Difficulty; and I think that there are few pilgrims from the City of Destruction who get to the Celestial City without passing through the Valley of Death-shade, and having to fight with giants and even with Apollyon himself. Cowper truly wrote, —

*"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."*

There is much joy in true religion. Wisdom's "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her." But, still, notwithstanding the joy, and in addition to it, there is sorrow; there is misery lurking close by the believer's pathway, and it is ever ready to pounce upon him somewhere between here and heaven. The Lord of the pilgrims was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" and his

disciples must expect to fare even as their Master fared while here below; it is enough for the servant if he be as his Lord.

You, dear friends, who are just now enduring misery, should seek to be comforted under it. Perhaps you will ask me, "Where can we get any comfort?" Well, if you cannot draw any from your present experience, seek to gather some from the past. You have been miserable before, but you have been delivered and helped. There has come to you a most substantial benefit from everything which you have been called to endure. You must be conscious that, when you think of your troubles, you can say, with Hezekiah, "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live." Or you can say, with the psalmist, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word." I believe that, very often, God sends his very choicest love-tokens to us in black-edged envelopes; and many a time has it

happened that the great rumbling waggons of tribulation have been those which have brought the heaviest weight of treasure to the doors of the saints. Do we ever learn much without the rod? I fear we do not; most of us are quickest learners, I think, when we smart most. Well, then, if affliction has been profitable in the past, let us rest assured that it will be so in the future.

Let us gather consolation Also from the future. If, as the apostle truly says, ‘No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous,’ recollect how he goes on to say, ‘Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.’ I have been trying to ring the changes on those two words, during the last few weeks, while I have been laid aside by illness: ‘nevertheless afterward’ — ‘nevertheless afterward’ — ‘nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.’ The apostle James tells us that ‘the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.’ He does not complain because his corn is buried under the clods, and covered with the snow; but he lives upon hope, and rejoices in the future harvest, pleading the promise, ‘He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.’ In your own case, dear friend, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, what will happen in the future? For it is with that I would comfort you at this time. Why, this is what will happen: ‘Thou shalt

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forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away.’ How will that be?

Well, first, by *the lapse of time*. Time is a wonderful healer. Hearts, that seem as if they must break when first the trial comes, at last grow quite used to it. Look through the veil of a few minutes, gaze through the longer vista of a few years, and that which seemed dark as tempest wears quite another aspect. Oh, if you, whose hearts seem now almost ready to burst, could but project yourselves only six months ahead, if you could leap forward a year, and then look back, probably even in that time you would almost have forgotten your misery.

Ay, but there is something better than the lapse of years, and that is when, *during a considerable time, you are left without trial*. That is a sharp pain you are now enduring; but what if you should have years of health afterwards? Then you will forget your misery. That is a sad loss which you have been called to suffer, it seems to you to be a crushing disaster, but what if it should be succeeded by years of prosperity? Remember how Job forgot his misery when, in a short time, he had double as much of all that he possessed as he had before, he had back twice the amount of all his former wealth, he had again a smiling family around him, so he might well forget his misery. Year after year, and, perhaps, even to his death, — it was so as far as we know, — Job was again a man who had a hedge made round about him and all that he had, and in the happiness of his later life he might well forget his former misery. Well, now, it is very likely to be so

with you after you get through this present struggle; therefore, keep your heart up, believe in God, have confidence in him, and all shall be well. There is wonderfully smooth sailing on ahead for some of you when you are once over this little stretch of broken water. If you can safely pass over this stony portion of the road, it will be good travelling for you all the way to heaven. Recollect that the horses' heads are towards home, you are journeying to your Father's house, so be of good courage, for you shall forget your misery, and only remember it as waters that pass away. And besides the lapse of time, and an interval of rest and calm, it may be — it probably is the fact with God's people — that *he has in store for you some great mercies*. When the Lord turns your captivity, you will be like them that dream; and you know what happens to men who dream. They wake up; their dream is all gone, they have completely forgotten it. So will it be with your sorrow. Through God's goodness, you will seem suddenly

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to wake up out of a dreary dream, and then you will begin to laugh, and soon your mouth will be filled with laughter. You will almost despise your former depression of spirit; and when you see the abundant mercy of God toward you, all your misery shall seem like a dream that has gone, a vision of the night — unsubstantial, unreal, — that has melted into nothingness. Some of you have no idea what is reserved for you; you would not be weeping, but laughing, if you did know what God has in store for you, — I mean, even here below. It is good for us not to be able to read the roll closed by the hand of God; but we may be sure that there are such blessed things in it concerning our future that each believer may well say, "I will not be bowed down by the trials of the present, but my spirit shall rejoice in God, who doeth for me what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and what my heart hath never conceived."

Be of good courage, brother, sister, in these dark, dull times, for, mayhap, this text is God's message to thy soul, "Thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away." It has been so with many, many, many believers in the past. What do you think of Joseph sold for a slave, Joseph falsely accused, Joseph shut up in prison? But when Joseph found out that all that trial was the way to make him ruler over all the land of Egypt, and that he might be the means of saving other nations from famine, and blessing his father's house, I do not wonder that he called his elder son "Manasseh." What does that name mean? "Forgetfulness" — "for God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house." Why, sitting on the throne there, feeding the nation, and blessing his father and his brethren, he must have thought that the being cast into the pit, and being sold to the Ishmaelites, and being put into prison, was not worth recollecting, except for gratitude to God that it ever happened as a means to the grand end of helping him up into that position of usefulness. And Joseph is not the only one who has had such an experience as that. Read the Scriptures through, and you will find that those whom God has called and anointed to eminent service have been put, like the blades of Damascus, into the fire, and drawn through the fire again and again, that in

the day of battle they might strike on the northern iron and steel, and yet not turn their edge. These servants of the Lord have been prepared for an immortal destiny by desperate griefs; and —

“The deeper their sorrows, the louder they’ll sing.”

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As a woman remembereth no more her travail, for joy that a man is born into the world, so has it happened to the believer in the time of his sorrow; he has forgotten it, cast it all away, because of the greater joy which God has brought out of it. Jabez is the child of sorrow, but he is therefore more honorable than his brethren. The more stormy the sea, the sweeter the haven. The rougher the road on earth, the better the rest above. So, poor tried child of God, believe that this text is intended to be a divine message of comfort to thy heart, “Thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away.”

Thus much on the first head.

II. I should be greatly rejoiced if, in the second place, I might speak A CHEERING WORD TO POOR SOULS UNDER DISTRESS ON ACCOUNT OF SIN. I mean you who long to be saved, yet cannot understand how it is to come to pass, or who, understanding the plan of salvation, are somehow unable to appropriate it to yourselves. You feel as if you have your eyes bandaged, and your feet fast fixed in the stocks, so that you cannot go to Christ, and cannot even look to Christ, and therefore your souls are full of sorrow. I want you, dear friends, specially to notice what Zophar recommends to a man who has sin upon him. Read the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th verses of this chapter: “If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward him; if iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear: because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away.” I recommend these words to you also; only I have something even better to recommend to you. Does any man here say, “I cannot get peace with God; I am full of misery on account of sin?” I know all about you, friend; I have gone that road, long ago. I have been splashed up to my very eyes in the mire of the Slough of Despond; and I sometimes get a little of its mud in my eyes even now.

Well, now, I exhort you, first of all, to *look to Christ, and lean on Christ*. Trust in his atoning sacrifice, for there alone can a troubled soul find rest. If you say that, somehow, you cannot get peace, then I shall have to ask you to see whether, perhaps, sin may not be lying at the door. To use Zophar’s expression, have you prepared your heart? Have you gone to Christ with your whole heart and soul? Have you sought him with all your might? I hope you realize that repentance and faith are very bad things to

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play with, for such play will damn a man’s soul. These are things to be earnestly used in a most solemn undertaking. “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence” in this matter. We can neither repent nor believe with

half our heart; it is our whole soul that is required if salvation is to be ours. Now, hast thou sought the Lord with all thy heart? If thou hast, thou wilt surely find him. I am certain that thou wilt; and then, afterwards, "thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away." There was never a man yet who, with all his heart, did seek the Lord Jesus Christ, but sooner or later found him; and if you have been long in seeking, I lay it to the fact that you have not sought with a prepared heart, a thoroughly earnest heart, or else you would have found him.

But, perhaps, taking Zophar's next expression, you have not stretched out your hands toward the Lord, giving yourself up to him like a man who holds up his hands to show that he surrenders. You must come and say, "My opposition is all over; I have no quarrel now with God; I yield unconditionally to him." The word may refer to one who stretches out his hands to grasp whatever may come from God within his reach. He stretches out his empty hands, asking to have them filled; stretches out his entreating hands, pleading that God will bless him. Well now, if you have done that, you shall get a blessing.

Further, you may and you shall forget your misery, provided you fulfill one more condition mentioned by Zophar, and that is, that you are not harbouring any sin: "If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles." There is an old-fashioned grace that I am never ashamed to preach, though some, who call themselves evangelists, have folded it up, and put it away in the back cupboard; they never mention this old-fashioned grace, which is called repentance. Now, I learn from the Scriptures that repentance is just as necessary to salvation as faith is; and the faith that has not repentance going with it will have to be repented of one of these days. A dry-eyed faith is a faith that will save no man. Peter's message was, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;" and our Lord's own declaration was, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." He began his public ministry by crying, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel," which means just this, that if any man is living in sin, it is no use his praying, or pretending to believe, until he gives up that sin. If there is any passion that you are indulging, any lust that is your master, — if you are carrying on a wicked business, — if you are living in wilful transgression of God's law, Christ

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can save you from your sins, but even Christ cannot save you in your sins. If you will have your sin, you must be lost, so stands God's decree. Christ must, by his grace, separate you from your sin, or else you will be separated from him for ever. I want this to be a very heart-searching word; and therefore I say to any miserable man or miserable woman here, — You shall forget your misery if you give up your sin, and trust in the sin-atoning Savior. Come, friend, you shall not say that I am flattering you, for I tell you plainly that you must fly for your life from the dearest sin that now lays hold upon you.

"Oh!" you say, "but how am I to do it?" Christ will help you. Trust him to help you. But if you say, "I will trust him to save me," and yet continue to

live in sin, he will not save you. That is not the salvation that we preach; we proclaim salvation from sin, for that is the salvation which Jesus came to bring to us. You must, as Zophar said to Job, put your iniquity far away, and you must not let wickedness dwell in your tabernacles; that is to say, in your tents, in your houses. I know some men, who will never get peace of conscience, and rest of heart, while they let their wives live as they do live, and while they allow their children to live as they do live. Some of you will not find mercy for yourselves while you neglect your children's highest welfare as you do. I know some men, — I hope they are good men, but certainly they are not good fathers. They are so peaceful, and gentle, that they never like to utter a word of reproof; their boys and girls may go where they like, — I might almost say that they may go to the devil if they like, — yet their father has not a word to say to them; do you call that proper conduct for a professedly Christian man? There are some parents, who allow their children to do such things that God is grieved with them for their children's sakes; and they will never get peace of mind till they set their house in order. What! is God coming to live where there is no family prayer, where there is no care for his name or his day, where there is no rebuke of open sin? It has filled me with unspeakable sorrow when I have heard of Christian parents whose boys swear, and whose girls are allowed to go where, if they are not ruined, body and soul, it is little short of a miracle. Oh, do see that you let not wickedness dwell in your tabernacles, you who are the people of God, and you who wish to be his, if you would have Zophar's words to Job fulfilled in your experience, "Then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear: because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away."

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III. Now let me tell you How SWEETLY GOD CAN MAKE A SINNER FORGET HIS MISERY.

The moment a sinner believes in Jesus Christ with true heart and repentant spirit, God makes him forget his misery, first, *by giving him a full pardon*. All his sin is forgiven, and therefore he feels ready to dance for joy, and he soon forgets his misery. By faith, he gets a sight of the great, pardoning Lord, and of his atoning blood. He sees the Son of God suffering and dying for him on the tree, and he is overjoyed at the revelation of such a wondrous redemption. He claps his hands, and he forgets his misery. Next, *he rejoices in all the blessings that God gives with his grace*. He reads that those whom Christ has pardoned "are justified from all things," from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. He learns that they are clothed with the robe of Christ's perfect righteousness, and he forgets his own nakedness while he rejoices that he is so wondrously clothed. He feeds on the bread of heaven, and forgets his former hunger. He drinks of the water of life, and forgets his previous pangs of thirst. He enjoys the liberty of the sons of God, and he forgets the chains he used to

wear as Satan's slave. He has peace with God, and he forgets the trouble that was such a burden on his heart, he is so full of joy that there is no room for sorrow; and if, perchance, the tear of repentance still lingers in his eye, it is not sullen but sweet sorrow, and the tear glistens in the sunlight of God's countenance like the diamond, or like some choice pearl that slumbers in its shell. Oh, beloved, if you will but come to Christ, and leave your sin, whatever your misery is, you shall forget it; or, if you do recollect it at all, it shall only be to remember it as the snow that has melted and vanished, or as the rain that has soaked into the earth, "*as waters that pass away.*"

Now, dear friends, all that I have been saying to the sinner is quite as applicable to every backsliding child of God. It may be that some of you who are here are Christians; — that is, you have trusted in Christ to save you; — but you have got into a very sad state of heart. You have not half the spiritual life that you once had, and therefore you do not glorify God as you once did. It is most grievous to think how many professing Christians live at a poor dying rate; they seem to be just alive, or hardly that. Well, dear brother or sister, if you have become miserable, I am rather glad that you have. That is part of the way towards a better state of things. When a man cannot be happy in a backsliding state, he will soon seek to get out of

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it. The smart is a part of the cure. Solomon says, "The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil; 'and the chastisement which follows sin is often for the healing of the sinner.

IV. I will bring my discourse to a close with this last reflection. THIS TEXT WILL COME TRUE TO THE SICKENING, DECLINING, SOON-DEPARTING BELIEVER.

Ah! dear friend, when first you found out that the complaint from which you are suffering really was consumption, what a chill seemed to come over everything! When the physician said to you, very tenderly but very faithfully, "I fear I cannot do much for you. I can perhaps give you a little relief, but I dare not deceive you, for you have an incurable disease;" — then, although you are a child of God, you endured a great deal of misery, and spent many long, sleepless nights looking forward to you scarcely knew what. Are you still in that state, my dear sister? As you get worse and worse, do your spirits continue to sink? My dear brother, as you gradually fade away, does the light seem to fade, too? Well, then, listen. If thou hast believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and if thou art resting alone upon him, recollect that, in a very short time, "thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away." In a very, very, very short time, your suffering and sadness will all be over. I suppose the expression, "waters that pass away," signifies those rivers which are common in the East, and which we meet with so abundantly in the South of France. They are rivers with very broad channels, but I have often looked in vain for a single drop of water in them. "Then," perhaps you ask, "what is the use of

such rivers?" Well, at certain times, the mountain torrents come rushing down, bearing great rocks, and stones, and trees before them, and then, after they have surged along the river-bed for several days, they altogether disappear in the sea. Such will all the sorrows of life and the sorrows even of death soon be to you, dear friend, and to me also. They will all have passed away, and all will be over with us here. The passage to the grave may be sharp, but it must be short.

*"The road may be rough, but it cann ot be long,
So I'll smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song."*

'And then, you know, dear friends, those waters that have passed away will never come back again. Water that is spilt upon the ground can never be gathered up again, and it is one of the charms of the heavenly world that our sorrows will never reach us there. No more poverty, no more cold, no
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more heat, no more sin, no more depression of spirits, no more pain, no more forsaking of friends, no more sorrow of any kind, for 'the ransome d of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.' That is a very beautiful expression: 'Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.' Here, they keep clinging to us, one on one arm, and the other on the other arm. Sorrow and sighing will come with us wherever we go; and we sometimes say to them, 'Now, you might go somewhere else, for we do not want you;' yet they still hold fast to us; but when we get up to the golden gate, no sooner shall the light eternal flash on our eyes than we shall look in vain for our old companions, for they will be gone. 'Sorrow and sighing shall flee away; 'and lest there should be any trace of their mournful companionship left, we are expressly told that 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.'

Thank God, we shall recollect our sorrows in heaven only to praise God for the grace that sustained us under them; but we shall not remember them as a person does who has cut his finger, and who still bears the scar in his flesh. We shall not recollect them as one does who has been wounded, and who carries the bullet somewhere about him. In heaven, you shall not have a trace of earth's sorrow; you shall not have, in your glorified body, or in your perfectly sanctified soul and spirit, any trace of any spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing that shall show that you ever had a pang on earth, or even that you ever committed a sin. Some diseases, you know, leave marks on our hands or faces, so that we say to our friends, 'Do you see that lump? It was a time of terrible pain that brought that up, and I fear it will not go away.' Ah! but, in heaven, there will be no trace of anything like pain or sorrow of any sort. All sorrow and suffering shall be gone, and we shall forget our misery, or only remember it as waters that have passed away, never to come back again.

This is the sum and substance of all that I have been trying to say to you: 'Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in

the Lord.” Christian men do not live on the comforts of this world; their inheritance is on the other side of Jordan. If you are like Esau, and can be content with red pottage, well, you may have it; but you will lose the birthright if you do not prize it. But if you are God’s true Jacob, you will gladly give up the pottage to get the promise of the future inheritance. Oh,
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what a blessed thing is the faith that enables the soul to postpone the present in order to obtain that blessed future! For what is the present, after all, but a fleeting show, an empty dream? But the future is eternal and incorruptible, reserved in heaven at the right hand of God, where there are pleasures for evermore.

Now that, by God’s mercy, I find myself again in your midst after a season of sore suffering, I desire to forget my miseries, — and some of them have been very sharp ones. I am so glad to be here again, to see you all, and I pray that it may be a long time before I am deprived of the great privilege of speaking to you in the name of the Lord. I bless God to-night, and praise his name in the great congregation; and I ask for every brother and sister that, when your time of misery comes, you may be brought through it all, and come out of the big end of the horn, rejoicing in the cornucopia of God’s bounty and blessedness, and praising his name, as I do at this time with all my heart. Oh, may every one of you find this text to be true to you, ‘Thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away!’ The blessing of the Lord be with you all for evermore! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

JOB 11.

The words we are about to read were spoken by one of Job’s three friends, — or what if I call them his three tormentors? These men did not speak wisely, and their argument was not altogether sound; but, for all that, in the instance before us, Zophar the Naamathite spoke that which was truthful. Although he made a great mistake in turning it against Job, yet what he said was in the main correct, and we may learn from it as we read it. Remember, dear friends, that whenever you read the words of these three men, you must take them with a good many grains of salt. They are not to be accepted as if they were God’s Word, because they are not. Those three men were mistaken in many points, yet very much of what they said was weighty and valuable, and is still worthy of our careful consideration.

Verses 1-3. *Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said, Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified? Should thy lies make men hold their peace? and when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?*

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This was a very bitter and cruel speech, and Zophar was not using the

language of friendship, or even of common courtesy. First, he charged Job with being a great talker, “a man full of talk.” No doubt Job did speak well and eloquently; but to retort upon him that he was a man abundant in words, was a very cruel thing, especially when he was in such a condition of distress and suffering. Yet, dear friends, it is an evil thing to be men of tongue, and not of hand; it is a dreadful thing to be men — or, for the matter of that, women either — who are “full of talk,” and therefore have no room for anything else. There are some people who seem to think that, simply by their volubility, they can carry all before them. In such a case, we may say with Zophar, “Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified?”

But he went beyond these questions, and charged Job with downright lying because he had pleaded his own innocence: “Should thy lies make men hold their peace?” Zophar also insinuated that Job fumed and frothed, as it were, and spoke folly, which he certainly did not do, for he spoke in solemn, sober earnest if ever a man did.

4. *For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes.*

Job did not say that; at least, he did not say it in so many words. He did endeavor to prove his own innocence of the false charges that were brought against him; but he never said that he was clean in God’s eyes.

5, 6. *But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee; and that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is!*

Oh, that God would enable you, dear friends, to see your sin, and make you perceive that there is a double meaning in his law, — a deep, underlying, spiritual meaning, as well as that which is apparent on the surface, so that a man may be guilty of transgression even when he thinks it is not so! Oh, that God would unveil the secrets of his wisdom so as to make you see that he is wiser than all his works, that his hidden wisdom is double that which you have been able to perceive in nature, or in providence, and infinitely greater than he has ever made to appear before men’s eyes.

6. *Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.*

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That was a hard thing for Zophar to say to Job; but, still, it was true, and it is true in the case of all of us: “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.”

Even when a man sits down among the ashes, robbed of all his property, and bereaved of all his children, and when he has to scrape himself with a potsherd because of his many sore boils, even then it may be truly said to him, “God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.”

7. *Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection!*

What wonderful questions these are! How they ought to convict those who glibly talk of God as if they could measure him with a foot rule, and understood exactly what he ought to do and ought to be. We are

constantly meeting with statements that such-and-such a thing, which is revealed in Scripture, cannot be true, because it is inconsistent with the modern idea of the benevolence of God. Our only answer to the cavillet is, ‘Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?’”

8, 9. *It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know! The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.*

God is incomprehensible by any finite mind; and he is omnipotent, too.

10. *If he cut off, and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder him!*

If he sees fit to destroy men, or for a while to make them prisoners; or if he pleases to gather them together, and multiply them like the hosts of heaven, who can hinder him?

11. *For he knoweth vain men he seeth wickedness also; will he not then consider it?*

Wickedness hidden under the veil of night, God sees as clearly as in the blaze of noon. Wickedness which never comes out of the heart, but tarries there, and does not lead into overt action, God sees it: “Will he not then consider it?” Of course he will.

12. *For vain man —*

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That is just what man is by nature; the best of men are vanity — emptiness: “For vain man” —

12. *Would be wise, -*

He pretends to wisdom; he wishes to be thought wise; he likes to wear a wise man’s title: “Vain man would be wise,” —

12. *Though man be born like a wild ass’s colt.*

As untamed, as ignorant, as wilful as a wild ass’s colt, a re we by nature. Zophar seems to think that he has sufficiently rebuked Job for pretending to be wise, and for complaining that God was dealing unjustly with him; so now he begins to admonish him to repent: —

13-18. *If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward him; if iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear: because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away: and thine age shall be clearer than the noonday; thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning. And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope; yea, thou shalt dig about thee, and thou shalt take thy rest in safety.*

It is a great mercy when God enables men to pursue their daily callings, and to take their nightly rest in safety; and it is a still greater mercy when they feel secure, whether they live or die, because they have a good hope concerning the hereafter. It is an unspeakable blessing when sin is washed away, and a man can lift up his face to God without spot, and walk in the light of Jehovah’s countenance all the day long.

19, 20. *Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid; yea,*

many shall make stilt unto thee. But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, —
Carefully notice this very solemn prophecy, — the eyes that have looked
upon sin with pleasure, — the eyes that have flashed with lascivious desire,
— the eyes that have dared to look towards God with defiance or derision,
— “the eyes of the wicked shall fail,” —

20. *And they shall not escape, —*

To what place could they escape from God, when he is everywhere?
During the days when the Roman empire extended all over the world,
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people said that the whole earth was one great prison for Caesar’s enemies;
and the universe itself is a vast prison for those who are condemned of
God. Where shall they go to avoid arrest? Whither shall they fly to get
beyond God’s reach? They cannot escape anywhere. There is neither hole
nor corner, even in the bowels of the mountains, or in the flinty hearts of
the rocks, where a sinner can hide himself from the hand of God: “They
shall not escape,” —

20. *And their hope —*

The last thing that ever dies, “their hope” —

20. *Shall be as the giving up of the ghost.*

Like death itself, their hope shall be. Then, if “their hope shall be as the
giving up of the ghost,” what hope is there for them? Let us not have our
portion with them, else we shall be as hopeless as they are.

EVERYWHERE AND YET FORGOTTEN.

NO. 326

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 29TH, 1860,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

“Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.” -Job 12:9, 10.

THESE verses occur in Job’s answer to Zophar the Naamathite. Job had his failings, but certainly he appears less faulty in this dialogue than those three men who sought to reprove him and convict him of error. Zophar the Naamathite had the very highest opinion of his own personal wisdom. He addressed Job as though he had been an inferior. And all in the eleventh chapter he used language which though extremely beautiful, must have been very grating upon the ear of such a sufferer as Job, for it is a lecture full of high-flown language, abounding in poetry and noble images, but containing little solid sense, and less sympathy. Job being exceedingly irritated both with the style and with the matter of Zophar’s speech, begins at once to pluck off his plumes and to pull to pieces his fine language. In biting irony Job cries from his dunghill: — “No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you; yea, who knoweth not such things as these.” Ye have put into flowery language things which an ordinary observer might discover. Ye have pointed to the heaven above, and to the depth beneath, to prove a truth which the creeping insect of the earth could tell you, and which the fishes of the sea might proclaim. “Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee, and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare
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unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?”

There is much temper here, but there is very much all so of good common sense. I would we had another Job, to chastise the high-sounding language of modern theologians. There are starting up in our midst men, who if they are not heretics in doctrine, are aliens in speech. They are men described by

the old preachers, who say, ‘Mark!’ and there is nothing to mark, and who shout, ‘Observe!’ and there is nothing to observe, except the want of everything that is worth observing. We know ministers who cannot speak in the common language of mankind, but must needs adopt the jargon of Carlyle, who sets language on its head, and puts the last word first. These men must needs make the English language a slave to the German — the glorious grand old Saxon must buckle to their heresies and conceal the depths of their falsehoods. I pray God the time may come when some man may unmask them, when all these wind-bags may be rent, and all these bladders may be pricked, when if teachers have anything to tell us they will deliver themselves so that all can understand. If they cannot use plain language let their tongues go to school till they have learned it. There is something so enticing and yet so flimsy in the modern theological school, that I feel constrained to warn you constantly- against it. Its mystery is absurdity, and its depth is pompous ignorance. There is no theology in it; it is a futile device to conceal the want of theological knowledge. A man with an education that may be complete in every department except that in which he should excel, stands up and would teach Christians that all they have learned at the feet of Paul has been a mistake, that a new theology has been discovered, that the old phrases which we have used are out of date, the old creeds broken up. Well, what shall we do to this wiseacre and his fellow sages? Serve them. wherever you meet them or their disciples, as Job did Zophar: laugh at them, dash their language to pieces, and remind them that the best things they tell us are only what the fishes of the sea, or the fowls of the air, knew before them, and that their grandest discoveries are but platitudes which every child has known before, or else they are heresies that ought to be scouted from the earth.

The doctrine upon which Job spoke was this: he wished to show that the fact of the presence of God in all things was so clearly discernible, that men need not borrow thy eagle’s wing to mount to heaven, nor need they enter into the bowels of the Leviathan to find a chariot wherein to enter the depths of the sea. ‘No,’ said he, ‘no; the present Deity the beasts

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proclaim.” The actual existence and the constant working of the Eternal God is sung by the very fowls of heaven, and the mute fishes of the sea leap up, and in their joyous reappings seem to say, ‘The sea is his, and he made it.’ This doctrine I wish to bring out this morning; or, rather, thus would I speak of it. First,, the present hand of God everywhere in the universe; secondly, our present and complete dependence upon that hand of God; and then let us learn some useful lessons from the whole subject of Divine Providence.

I. The first doctrine is THE PRESENT HAND OF GOD.

1. That there is a God you need not that I should prove: that God is here, and there, and everywhere, you also firmly believe. But, alas I it is one thing to believe this truth, and quite another thing to hold it in perpetual

remembrance. We may write it down far more easily upon the tables of our creed than upon the tablets of our memory. In fact, this is one of the doctrines which all men are constantly forgetting; and even the righteous may often check themselves because they begin to degenerate into the fools who say in their hearts "There is no God here." Strange is it that the name of the Lord should be written everywhere so clearly that even the blind might see it; and yet man is so doubly dark that he does not observe his God even where God is most manifest and visible. Methinks, my brethren, this forgetfulness of God is growing upon this perverse generation. Time was, in the old puritanic days, when every shower of rain was seen to come from heaven, when every ray of sunshine was blessed, and God was shanked for having given fair weather to ingather the fruits of the harvest. Then, men talked of God as doing everything. But in our days where is our God? We have the laws of matter. Alas! alas! that names with little meaning should have destroyed our memory of the Eternal One. We talk now of phenomena, and of the chain of event, as if all things happened by machinery, as if the world were a huge clock which had been wound up in eternity, and continued to work without a present God. Nay, not only our philosophers, but even our poets rant in the same way. They sing of the works of Nature. But who is that fair goddess, Nature? Is she a heathen deity, or what? Do we not act as if we were ashamed of our God, or as if his name had become obsolete? Go abroad wherever you may, you hear but little said concerning Him who made the heavens, and who formed the earth and the sea; but everything is nature, and the laws of motion and of matter. And do not Christians often use words which would lead you to suppose that they believed in the old goddess, Luck, or rested in that

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equally false deity, Fortune, or trembled before the demon of Misfortune? Oh for the day when God shall be seen, and little else beside! Better, my brethren, that philosophical discoveries were lost, than that God should be concealed behind them. Better that our poets had ceased to write, and that all their flaming words were buried with their ashes, than that they should serve as a cloud before the face of the Eternal Creator. We must go back again to the remembrance of our God, and especially must the true believer make the worldling feel that the Christian has a God with him, a God about him, and a God within him, one who is his constant companion and his friend. So act, my brethren, that men may be compelled to say of you, "That man has a God whom he observes in all the events of his family, ascribing to his Divine hand every sickness that falls upon his child, and every loss that occurs to him in his business." My brethren, it is a doleful truth that there is nothing more easy to forget than the grand doctrine that God is everywhere at work in the midst of us all.

2. Now, let me proceed to say, that though this is a truth so frequently forgotten, it is a fact of universal force. God worketh ever and everywhere. There is no place where God is not. You may traverse the silent valleys where the rocks enclose you on either side, till you can see but a strip of the blue sky; you may be the only traveler that has passed through that

glen; the bird may start up affrighted, and the moss may tremble beneath the first tread of man; but God was there of old, upholding you rocky barriers, filling the flowercups with their perfume, and refreshing the lonely pines with the breath of his mouth. Or, descend if you will into the lowest depths of the sea, where undisturbed the water sleeps, and the very sand is motionless in eternal quiet, but the footsteps of the Lord are there; reigning within the silent palace of the sea. You may borrow the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea. but God is there. Mount to the highest heaven or dive into the deepest hell, and God is in both: hymned in everlasting song, or howled in eternal tortures. Everywhere, and in every place, God dwells and is manifestly at work.

And not merely, my friends, in every place, but in every time the Lord is present. From the beginning of the year even to the end thereof, there is God. His eyes never sleep, his hand never rests. In the silent watches of midnight when the city sleeps, God is the watchman, and when the sun wakes up and draws aside the curtains of the night the Lord is abroad before him, on the waters and on the snow-white summits of the mountains; and when again high noon is gained, and all the world is busy

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with its toil sad God forgotten, he is there amid the throng of men as well as in the deserts' wilds. Every place feels his footstep, and every time trembles at his presence. From everlasting to everlasting, O God, thou art sensibly felt in every passing moment. The pulsings of the eternal sea of time are caused by thee, and there never is an instant when thou hast fled and left us to ourselves.

And as in every place and every time, so in every event there is God. Is the earth shaken by inward convulsions? It is God that heaves the mountains to and fro. Or, do the valleys laugh in the sunshine, and do the rejoicing husbandmen carry home their harvests? God is there right manifest in the lavish bounty of his hand. The greatest political disasters are predestinated, guided, and over-ruled by God. When an Attila scourges the earth and reddens her soil with blood, his steps are ordered, arranged and foreordained, as much as the flight of the eternal angel who shall blow the trumpet of the gospel and proclaim the year of jubilee. There is no event, however base and vile, however grand and good, which is not within the management of the dread Supreme. His dominion hath no limit. Even the dark gulf of evil is spanned by the bridge of his wisdom. Journey onward till you seem to go where goodness is not found and grace is an eclipsed, in the thick darkness there He dwells. He makes the clouds his chariot and yokes the whirlwinds to his car. Be of good cheer, beloved, in every event you may behold your God. If invasion should ravage this fair island, if tyrants should set their foot on the neck of your liberties, if the streets should run with blood, God were even there supreme, his people still secure. And if it be so, that God is in every event, permit me to remind you that God is where there is no event. When there is a lull upon the waters and all is stagnant, when political affairs are quiet, when in the lesser world of your own house and your own soul there is a dead calm, perhaps the

woeful prelude of a tempest, God is there. Great God, thou standest in the midst of the silent desert, where not even the hum of the bee disturbs the dread solemnity of stillness! Thou art far down in the cleft of the rock where creature could not live I Nay, in the bowels of the solid adamant thou hast thy palace, and beneath the surging of the ever-tossing sea thou hast a tabernacle. In the unknown ravine, the untraversed gorge, the Lord Jehovah hath his dwelling-place. He keeps yon rocks from tottering to their fan. He swells those rivers till they roll along. Let him but remove his hand, and earth's pillars totter to their fallen creation reels, and the universe expires. As dies the spark struck from the steel, so dies creation if God

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ceases to be present there. Oh, learn then evermore, that not only in his doings but in his testings not only in his actings but in his standing still, God is most manifest to you if you will but see him, if your eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve are but open to behold your Father and your King. This, I may well say, is a truth which though much forgotten is of universal force.

3. Let me proceed a little further and remind you that this is a truth worthy of perpetual remembrance Do not look at it as a mere speculation. I beseech you do not think of a present God as a fact in which you have no interest. There is scarcely a truth in the compass of revelation which is more instructive, profitable, and consoling to the people of God than this; — a present God in everything. Come, let me show you how worthy a remembrance it is. You have many mercies; your God is in them all. Doth not that thought sweeten the bread you eat? Win it not give a relish to the water that you drink? The air you breathe, the clothes that are on your back God is in each of them. Go to your home, where your best pleasures dwell, your own sweet home, be it never so homely, and when you look on your mercies say, “I see my gracious God here.” Cast your eye upon the prattlers that climb your knee, and remember that they are a heritage from the Lord. Look at her who is the partner of your bosom, and see God's love and kindness in so good a gift. Look on all the prosperity that attends your business; look on your growing crops and your verdant fields, and see God in every mercy you receive. I would not have the worldling's wealth, for it is a wealth that came not from his God; at least so far as he is concerned it came not from a father's hand. But oh to have benefits every one of which smells of the treasury out of which it came; to look on your gold and on your silver, nay on your very pence, and see the impress of your God stamped there more clearly, than the image of Caesar's own self — to sit down to your table and eat and drink; and feel that every meal is a sacrament, that every robe you wear is a vestment sent from heaven, that in all these mercies there is the hand of a covenant, promise-keeping God — why it will make you live a noble life. It was thought by the old heathens to be the grandest thing they could say of a man that he should one day eat at the tables of the gods. My brethren, we eat at these tables every day. At the table of my God I feast, and from his cup I drink. I have nothing which I have not received from Him; the Lord hath given me all that I have.

But if it be very sweet to see God in our mercies, it is most consoling to discern Him in all our trials. Say not these are evil times. No times are evil
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where God is, for his presence scatters all that is ill. Say not that you dwell in an evil place; there is no evil place to the man who dwells with God. Think not that evil circumstances have happened unto you; they seem to be big with evil, but those clouds shall break in blessings on your head. Oh, if you can but look at your troubles as sent from God, it will take the sharpness from them, and turn them from wasps that sting into bees that gather honey. Say now when your family is sick, "The Lord hath placed his hand upon my wife and on my children," and when your treasure vanishes away, say, "The Lord hath put his hands into my coffers and emptied them" and when the ship is wrecked, say, "The Lord hath my vessel on the rocks;" and when the corn is spoiled and the harvest is not gathered, say, "The Lord hath sent the rain from heaven. He hath done it." Join with Job the author of our text, and exclaim, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." Regard not the second causes but the first cause, not the trying creature but the supporting Creator.

If it be pleasant to see God in our trials, I add it is very seasonable to remember Him in our dangers. To be at sea when every timber creaks in the ship and when the mast is strained, and then to feel, "He holds the waves in the hollow of his hand;" to stand in places where the danger is threatening and terrific, and then to say, "My Father's shield is over me," to walk through the midst of plague and pestilence, through the valleys that are steaming with miasma and malaria, and to feel that God holds our breath, and that all the arrows that Death ever stored within his quiver can never find a place in our heart until Jehovah bids them. Oh, these things are sweet and pleasant! A man is never in danger when he feels this. At God's command, through Death's dominions and through Hell's domains, a man might march securely trusting in the voice which cries, "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God."

A present God! My brethren, I cannot suggest a theme that may make you more full of courage in times of danger and trouble. I think I need not enlarge upon this point further than to add, you will find it exceedingly helpful and consoling if you can discover God in your trifles. Our life is made up of trifles, and if we had n God only for the great things and not for the little things, we should be miserable indeed. If we had a God of the temple and not a God of the tents of Jacob, where were we? But blessed be our heavenly Father, he that wings an angel, guides a sparrow; he that roils a world along, moulds a tear and marks its orbit when it trickles from its
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source. There is a God in the motion of a grain of dust blown by the summer's wind, as much as in the revolutions of the stupendous planet. There is a God in the sparkling of a fire-fly, as truly as in the flaming comet. Carry home, I beseech you, to your houses the thought that God is there, at your table, in your bed-chamber, in your workroom, and at your

counter. Recognize the doing and being of God in every little thing. Think for a moment, and you will find that there are many promises of Scripture giving the sweetest consolation in trivial matters. ‘He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands.’ Why? Lest thou fall from a precipice? Lest thou dash thyself from a pinnacle? No, ‘Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.’ A little danger, but a great providence to ward us from it And what saith the Scripture also? Doth it say, ‘The very days of your life are numbered?’ It saith not so, though that were true; but “the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” And what saith the Scripture, yet again? Doth it say, ‘The Lord knoweth the eagles, and not an eagle falleth to the ground without your Father?’ No; but, ‘are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.’ A. great God in little things I am sure it will spare you a world of vexation if you will but remember this, for it is hence our vexations come. We often get. into a bad temper about a bide, when a great trial does not agitate us. We are angry because we have scalded ourselves with a little water or bane lost a button from our clothes, and yet the greatest calamity can scarcely disturb us. You smile, because it is true with all of you. Job himself, who said, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away,” might have grown angry, because of some rough edge in his potsherd. Take care that you see God in little things, that your mind may be always calms and composed, and that you be not foolish enough to suffer a trifle to overcome a saint of God.

II. Now, my dear friends. having thus brought forward the doctrine of a God present everywhere, let me remind you of the second head — OUR ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE UPON A PRESENT GOD AT THIS VERY MOMENT. We are absolutely dependent upon the will and pleasure of God for our life, our comforts, our means to enjoy our comforts, and especial for all spiritual blessings.

First, then, our life is entirely dependably upon God. One sees strange sights in journeying, scenes which will never be erased from the memory. It was but a few days ago, just under a tremendous rock, I saw a vast mass of broken atones and earth tossed about in wild confusion and raised in huge

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hillocks My driver said to me, “That is the grave of a village.” Some years ago, there lived upon that spot a joyful and happy people. They went forth to their daily work, they ate, they drank, as men do to this day. One time they saw a great crack in the mountain that hung overhead; they heard alarming noises, but they had heard such sounds before, and the old men said, “There might be something coming, but they did not know.” On a sudden, however, without further notice, the whole side of the hill was in motion, and ere the villager could escape from his hut, the village was buried beneath the fallen rocks. And there it lies; and neither bone of man, nor piece of the habitation of man has ever been discovered in the wreck; so thoroughly was everything crushed and buried, that nothing by the most

diligent search could ever be discovered. There are many villages standing in a like position at this day. I passed another spot, where there was a shelving mountain with its layers slanting towards the valley. A town which had been built at the foot had been entirely covered, and a lake fined up by one tremendous slide from the top of the hill. Yet, there stand new houses still, and men venture to live among the graves of their sires. We are apt to say, 'How these people ought to look up every morning and say, 'O Lord, spare this village.'" Standing there where they might be crushed in a moment, where the slightest motion of the earth within would bring down the hill upon them, they ought to lift up their hearts to the Preserving One, and say, 'Oh thou keeper of Israel, keep us both day and night.'" Ah, but my friends, you and I are in the same position. Though no beetling crags overhang our homesteads, though no mountain threatens to leap upon our city yet are there a thousand gates to death. There are other agencies beside these, which can hurry mortals to their tombs. You are sitting today as near to the jaws of death, as those villagers who are dwelling there. Oh that you felt it! One breath choked up, and you are dead. Perhaps your life is a thousand times in danger every moment. As many times as there are ebbing and flowings of the blood, as many times as there are breathing from the lungs, so many times does your life hang in such jeopardy that it only needs your God to will it, and you are dead in your seat, and are carried out a pale lifeless corpse. There are parts of the mountain passes of the Alps of such danger to the traveler, that when you traverse them in winter the muleteers muffle the bells of their beasts, lest the faintest sound should bring down an avalanche of snow, and sweep you into the bottomless precipice beneath. Then, one would think, the traveler must feel that he is in God's hand. Ay, but you are in the same position now, though you see it not. Open but the eyes of your spirit. and you may see the

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avalanche overhanging you to-day, and the rock trembling to its fall at this very moment. Only let your soul behold the latent lightnings that God conceals within his hand, and you may soon see that to crush a gnat with your finger is not so easy for you, as for God to take away your life now, or wheresoever he pleases.

As it is with our life, my brethren, so is it with the comforts, of life. What would life be without its comfort? much more, what would it be without its necessities! And yet how absolutely dependent are we upon God for the bread which is the staff of life! I never felt more truly the dependence of man upon his God than I did last Friday week. At the foot of the Alpine pass of the Splügen, I saw in the distances the whole road black, as if it had been spread over with heaps of black earth. As we neared it, we discovered it was a group of locusts in fun march, — tens of thousands of myriads of them. As we drew nearer they divided as regularly as if they had been an army, and made room for the carriage. No sooner was it passed than the ranks were filled up again, and they went on in their devouring march. On we went for several miles, and there was nothing to be seen except these creatures, literally covering the ground here and there in thick layers like a

shower of black snow. Then I realized the language of the prophet: — “Before them was like Eden; behind them was a deserts.” They had eaten up every green blade. There stood the Indian corn with just the dry stems, but every green particle was gone. In the front of their march you saw the vines beginning to ripen, and the fields of grain hastening to perfection. There stood the poor cottager at his door; the wheat that he had planted, and the vines that he had tended, must all be eaten and devoured before his own eyes. The pastures were literally alive with these fiery creatures. When they first entered the field there was green pasture for the cows of the poor cottagers; let them stop there an hour, and you might take up the dust by handfuls, and nothing left besides. “Ah!” said my guide, “it is a sad thing for these poor people: in a month’s time those creatures will be as big and as long as my finger, and then they will eat up the trees — the mulberry trees with which the poor men feed their silkworms, and which furnish them with a little wealth: they will devour every green thing until there is nothing left but the have dry stem.” In armies countless as the sands of the sea, and fierce to look upon, well described by the prophet Joel, in his terrible picture of them, as “a great army of the Lord.” Ah, I thought within myself, if God can thud sweep this valley and make a waste of it with these little creatures, what a mercy it is that he is a kind and gracious

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God, or else he might let loose the like on all the people of the earth, and then nothing would stare us in the face but famine, despair, and death Perhaps you say to me, “Ah! but we do not aspect the locusts here; we shall gather our harvest joyously, Speak not too quickly. God has been teaching us during the last two months our absolute and entire dependence upon him. Let this rain continue but a little longer, let it continue till the appointed weeks of harvest shall come, and where are our people then? You may open your shops, ye citizens of London, and you may imagine that the harvest in the country will little affect you; but famine stares you in the face unless God withdraws the clouds and bide the sun thine down upon us. The days shall come which we have heard our fathers speak of, when the bread was such that it could not be eaten; when it was not hard enough for one to hold in his hand; when you had a crust without, and then within it was a mass of jelly, wheat swimming in water, and not capable of being eaten by any except those pinched by hunger. The like must inevitably come unless God withdraw those clouds. bet the rain continue much longer, and there will scarcely be a harvest, nothing for men to feed upon. Oh, my dear friends, we never know from year to year how dependent, how absolutely dependent we are upon God. Doth not the corn spring out of the land? and doth not every man, from the king to the peasant, live on bread? And if that staff fail, must not all totter to the ground with leanness on our bones and paleness on our face? Ye ate for that bread, and for that nourishment, and for all you have, as absolutely dependent upon God as a prisoner in his dungeon is dependent upon his keeper for his daily bread and water. Oh that I could make you feel this, and realize the force of the fact!

Again, I said we were not simply dependent upon God for the comforts, but for the power to enjoy the comforts. It is an evil which we have seen under the sun a man who had wealth, and riches and plenty, but who had not power to eat thereof. I have seen a man hungry and full of appetite, but no bread to eat; but I have seen a man perhaps more sad, a man with food of the most luxurious kind, to whom taste seemed denied, to whom every mouthful was a thing of detestation. The Lord has but in his judgment to smite any of us with only nervousness — that nervousness at which the strong may laugh, but which makes the weak tremble, and everything will become dark before you. He has but to affect some portion of your body, and you shall see no brightness in the sun; the very fields shall lose their verdure before you; the most happy event shall only be a source of deeper

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gloom; you shall look on everything through a dark glass, and see nothing but darkness and despair. He has but to touch you with sickness, and motion may be misery, and even to lie upon a bed may be a repetition of tortures as you toss from side to side. Worse still, the Lord hath but to put his finger on your brain, and you become a raving lunatic, or what may seem better, but more despicable, a drivelling idiot. Oh, how little then hath he to do to overturn your all, to pull down that mighty castle of your joys, and darken the windows of your hope. You are, again, for life, for necessities, for comforts, as absolutely in the hand of God as the clay upon the wheel is in the hand of the potter. You may rebel, but your rebellion is but the writhing of a worm. You may murmur, but your murmurs cannot affect him. You may ask your comrades to join in league with you against the Almighty God, but his purpose will stand fast, and you must submit. Bound in the iron chains of destiny, you must go the way he bide you, and you suffer or you must rejoice at his beck and will. Tremble, oh, man, tremble before God, for never was creature in the hand of creature, as creature is in the hand of Creator.

Let me briefly remark, that if this be true concerning temporals, how doubly true is it with regard to spiritual things. There is no Christian grace which has in it a particle of self-existence. Faith, love, courage, are all sweet flowers, but their roots are in God. There may be streams of gratitude in your heart, but the springs thereof are in him. Your soul may be devoted and consecrated, but the lock of your devotion will be shorn off, as was the hair of Samson, unless the eternal God preserves it. If you and I shall endure to the end, if we shall pass through the valley of death with calmness, if we shall stand before the throne of God with confidence, if we shall enter into bliss with joy, all these things must come of God. For let Him lock up the treasury of his grace, or dry up the channel of his love the noblest Christian that breathes, must become the vilest of reprobates, and he who has best served his God must become the most abject minion of hell. Oh, learn that you are absolutely dependent upon God. He can leave you, and where are you? He can help you, and you shall stand securely.

So is it with the sinner, he is in God's hand to save him or to destroy him.

He can give him up, like Pharaoh, to hardness of heart. or he can melt his heart and bow his stubborn will. He can throw the reins upon his neck, and say, ‘Let him alone, Ephraim is given unto idols; ‘or he can make him willing in the day of his power, create in him a new heart and a light spirit,
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and save him from the wrath to come. O God, thou art over all and thou art all. Man is nothing before thee. Thou hast thy will. Thou doest as thou pleases” among the angels in heaven, and among the inhabitant of this lower world. “Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.”

III. I come to my third and last point, namely, THE LESSONS FROM THIS SUBJECT. First, a few lessons to the saint, and then to the sinner.

To the saint first. Child of God, see where thou art. Thou, even thou, art completely in the hand of thy God, Thy life, thy death, thy prosperity in this world, thy growth in grace, thy peace, all things rest upon his sovereign will. Nothing can harm thee, unless he bids it. Nothing can cheer thee, unless he commands it. Thou resteth not in thine own hand. Be thy will never so headstrong, be thy mind never so stubborn, either thou must yield cheerfully, or else thou must bend unwillingly. Thou art absolutely, and entirely, and in every respect placed at the will and disposal of him who is thy God. And now, child of God, let me ask thee this question. Art thou grieved because of this? Does this doctrine trouble thee? Let God lay aside his scepter; say, art thou prepared to wield it? Hadst thou rather have followed thine own will than be at God’s disposal? Wouldst thou rather that He should be in everything, and that He should do as he wills, or that it should be left to thee? Oh! I see ye, ye countless armies of God; I see ye bow your knees at once, and cry, ‘O Lord, we bless thee that it is not so, we praise thee that thou hast left nothing to our disposal, but that thou everywhere hast sway.” This is not the subject of groaning but of mirth and joy to us. We set up our banners with this watchword, “The Lord reigneth.” We go on our journey with this as our constant cordial, “God is here.” With this as our shield, we lift up our arm against calamity. With this as our sword, we rush into the thick of the battle against sin. The Lord reigneth — ‘Let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof.” “Great God, if I could have it otherwise I would not. If I could reverse thy decision, and if I could erase the lines of trial and write in the stead thereof the gilded lines of joy, I could not and I would not do it. If the book of my destiny were in my power to-day, I neither would erase a word nor insert a syllable. Be it unto me even as thou wilt; not my will but thine be done.” It is easy to say this, but oh, how hard to feel it when it comes to the trial hour. When darkness fins the sky, when the coffin lies in the silent chamber, and the precious one is sleeping in the arms of death, when the tide has swept away all we have, when beggary stares us in the
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face, when slander follows us at the back, still to say, ‘Jehovah, thy

tempests are better than my sunshine, and the storm which thou heat brewed is better to me than the brightest days if I had made them for myself." Take care, child of God, that thou boldest fast and firm this thy confidence, which shall have great recompense of reward.

But mind one other thing, O heir of heaven. Let your conversation be such as becometh this doctrine. Speak of what thou wilt do, and of what will happen, always in respect to the fact, that man proposes but God disposes. When thou hearest thy enemy vow some thing against thee, smile, because thy enemy is not God. And when thou proposes to thyself something which seems to thee good and pleasant, weep over thy own folly if thou art too confident, for thou art not God. None but God can promise so as to cheer a sensible mind. None but God can threaten so as to alarm a Christian mind. The threatenings and promises of God are true, but neither the threatenings of man nor his promises are worth the words in which they are uttered. Oh, my dear Christian brethren, tried as some of you are in various and in arduous ways, I wish I could burn this truth into your souls. But God the Holy Spirit must do it. I pray you stand to it that there is God in everything, and I am sure as the result of it you will be driven to more constant and earnest prayer. For if there be God in everything, take everything to God. If God has done thee in, take the ill to God and he will set it right. This very season of the year suggests prayer. Prayer can reverse the winds and stay the clouds, and let the infidel world see it is so. In the days of that eminent Scotch minister, Robert Blair, there had been for a long time a terrible rain, until at the time of harvest the wheat had grown an inch long after it had ripened. The people met together for prayer, and that day it rained more furiously than it had done before. Yet they separated in the firm belief that God had heard their prayer. Mr. Blair said to the assembly that he was sure though God might seem as if he mocked them, yet he was a prayer hearing and a prayer-answering God still. That night the clouds were scattered and driven away, and the harvest was ingathered. Some of the wheat had been spoiled, but most of it was housed in safety. Trust thy God, then. Tempt him not by murmuring; but prove him, not as the children of Israel did, but prove him as Malachi exhorts us, and see if he will not pour out blessings and make the earth rejoice with the harvest. At any rate, be not as they that tremble in the day of calamity. Stand still, ye children of God. Ye wear an armor that no weapon of man can pierce; ye dwell within a city, the bulwarks of which are impregnable.

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Let no fear invade you. Be strong and of good courage, your God is with you. He is better than all your fears; nay, he shall exceed all your hopes. Set up your banners and shout aloud, and rejoice in him. God is with you, and the Lord Jehovah reigneth.

In conclusion, my last word is to the sinner. You, who have not been converted, and have no part or lot in present salvation, to you I say this much: Man, man, you are in the hand of God. Whether you shall live to reach your home today or not, depends absolutely upon his will. Rich though you be, the wealth you possess can take to itself wings and fly away

at his will. He can fill your body with pains so terrible that you shall long for death itself to escape from them. He can make visions flit before your eyes, both when you sleep and when you wake, that shall so scare you that you would prefer the company of the devils in hell to solitude. God can make you such a hell to your own self, that you would seek either knife or poison to escape from your own thoughts. And that he can do, and you cannot escape. No wings can bear you above his dominion. No depth can hide you from his sway. But now what is the path of wisdom! IS it wise to curse God, in whose hand your breath is? Is it a rational thing to treat with indifference him upon whom you depend for time and for eternity? Your own self-interest would dictate a wiser course. Dash not your head against the bosses of his buckler. Be not mad enough to run upon his glittering spear. What does wisdom say to you if you will but listen? It cries, "Be reconciled to God." You cannot resist him effectually, throw down your weapons and yield. And what doth the Scripture say to you? It saith, "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." What saith the Church unto you? It saith, "Christ hath received us: the Bride saith come." What saith Christ unto you? "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake." "Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth." "Bow the knee and kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little." Oh, Spirit of God, speak to the madmen and make them sane. Speak to the men that fight against God, and bid them tremble at him, and yield, and seek his favor. O sinner remember what he has said. "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Hear ye, in conclusion, that sweet word of his: "Whosoever will, let him come. The Spirit and the Bride say come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whom ever will, let him take the water of life freely."

FAITH TRIED AND TRIUMPHING.

NO. 3265

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“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” -Job 13:15.

THERE are some speeches which could not be made by ordinary men. As soon as you hear them, you feel that there is a ring about them which is by no means common. Certain expressions which have been heard and remembered could have been uttered only by great warriors, or by men who have navigated the vast ocean. Certain other still nobler expressions, because spiritual ones, could have been uttered only by those who have had to fight with spiritual foes, or have done business on the great waters of soul trouble. When you hear the expression, “If there are as many devils at Worms as there were tiles on the housetops, I will go there in God’s name,” you are quite certain the speaker is Martin Luther. No other than he could have said it. And just as certainly, I think, I should have felt, if I had read the text to-night for the first time, that it was Job who said it, and nobody else.

Job was a master sufferer. No man went deeper into grief than he: his children all dead, his wealth all swept away, his whole body covered with sore boils and blains, and the friends who pretended to comfort him, only accusing him of being a hypocrite; while his own wife bids him, “curse God, and die.” He was brought lower than any; and, therefore, being a man of faith, having overcome and triumphed by faith, it was like him to utter such a noble speech as that which our text brings before us. “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,” is not the utterance of any ordinary commonplace believer. It is a sort of word which, we are quite sure, could
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only come from a triumphant Job,-triumphant by victorious faith.

However, I trust there are some here who could use this expression, now

that another has fitted it for their lips, and I hope that all of us who have any faith at all, may have that faith so increased, that yet, without boasting, we may be able still more to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

I. In speaking upon this text I would note, first, THAT FAITH IS THE HABITUAL GRACE OF THE CHRISTIAN. To trust in God is his usual mode of life. He does not sometimes trust and sometimes cease to trust; but "the just shall live by faith." Faith is not a grace of luxury but a grace of necessity. We must have it, and if we had it not, we should not be the people of God at all. The common habit of the Christian then, is a habit of trusting. The Christian's walk is faith, and his life is faith.

Faith is to the Christian all the spiritual senses, not one, but all. The natural man has his eyes, but by faith we see Him who is invisible. The natural man has his hand and his feeling. We live not by feeling, but our faith is the hand by which we take fast hold upon eternal realities. The natural man has his ear, and it is delighted with sweet sounds, or through it the language of friendship enters his heart. Our faith is the ear through which we hear the voice of God, and sometimes, even catch stray notes from the harps of the angels. The natural man hath the nostril with which he becomes aware of sweet perfumes; and to our faith the name of Jesus is as choicest ointment poured forth. If we receive Christ as our heart's Lord, all the inlets by which we receive him and his grace are made of the agate of faith. Gates of carbuncle, windows of agate, are true faith. The light of God and the love of God come into our consciousness by our faith.

Faith, too, is with the Christian his first and his last. Faith looking to Christ is the very beginning of spiritual life'. We began to live at the cross -foot, when we looked up, and saw the flowing of those founts of forgiveness the five wounds of Christ. And as faith was the first, so it will be the last. We expect, to die looking for our Lord's appearing, and resting still upon his finished work. And all between the alpha and the omega-all the other letters we read them all by faith. There is no period of our life in which it is safe for us to live by feeling, not even when our enjoyments run highest. On the mount, where Christ is; transformed, and where; in the midst of the glory we shall fall asleep in amazement, we cannot live by sense. Even there, we can only enjoy the glory as faith shall continue, to be in exercise.

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We must all the way through, from the first to the last, look out of ourselves, and look above the things which are seen, to grasp the things which are not seen, to be touched with the eternal hand, and realize that which does not seem real to sense. This is the life of the Christian from the first to the last.

And I would add, as it is his, first and last, so faith is the Christian's highest and his lowest. If ever we get upon the mountain summit and bask our foreheads in the sunlight of fellowship with God, we stand there only by faith. It is because our faith is strong and in active exercise: that we realize

the things not seen as yet, and behold the God whom mortal eyes cannot gaze upon. Our very noblest, happiest, and most heavenly frames are those which are the results of faith. And so in our lowest. We can only live there by faith. Have you never lain shattered and broken, crushed and destroyed, expecting something yet more terrible; and have you not felt that now in your faintness you could fall back into the Savior's arms; that now in your brokenness you could drop into his hand; that now in your abject nothingness he, must be all in all to you, or else there will be an utter end to you! Oh! the faith that is as wings to us when we fly, becomes a lifebuoy to us when we sink. The faith which bears us up to the gates of heaven, also uplifting us from the very gates of hell. 'Tis our first and our last; 'tis our highest and our lowest. It is all the senses of our spiritual nature. We must have it, and always have it. We must trust in the Lord.

The matters about which the true Christian is to trust are very many, but they are chiefly these.

We trust for the pardon of our sins to our God in Christ Jesus. The only hope that any Christian has for the forgiveness of his iniquity, lies in the sacrifice presented on Calvary by the Lamb of God whom God has given for the sins of the world. If any shall ask us, whether we trust that our sins are forgiven us because of our repentance, or because of a long life of active Christian service, we shall reply that we are thankful if God has given us these things, but our sole reliance is in our dear Lord and Master who was once fastened to the cross, but now sitteth in power in the highest heavens. Our trust for the pardon of sin in every degree and every respect, lies in Christ the Son of God and there only. In this matter we can use the language of Job and say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," for the fact is, the more fully we are slain the more truly we do trust. When we see ourselves to be utterly dead, slain by the two edged sword of the Lord,

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and all hope of our own self-salvation to be a corpse, then more easy than ever it is before to come and cast ourselves upon the Christ of God, and rest there, for all our salvation from the guilt of sin.

But in God we trust also for the purification of our spirits from all the indwelling power of sin. Some Christians do not appear to make this a matter of faith, and therefore they do not succeed therein. You can no more conquer sin in yourself-really conquer it, by your own strength, than you can remove the guilt of it by your own merits. The same Christ who is made unto us "justification" and "redemption," is also made unto us "sanctification," and we must never forget, that while we wash our robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb as to pardon, we also overcome our sins through the blood of the Lamb. The same Savior who takes away the guilt, takes away the power, and the defiling power, of sin. Well has Toplady put it:

*"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.”

Now, the true Christian can say that he trusts in God for his effectual purification and his final perfection. He does not hope to drive out one of these Canaanites by his own arm. He does not think that he shall slay one of his corruptions in his own strength. But his eyes are unto the hills whence cometh his help, and he believes that the eternal Spirit will, like refining fire go through and through his soul, till everything in him shall be burnt up except that which is of God, that which will endure the fire and be well-pleasing in Jehovah's sight.

The matters upon which we rely upon God, then, are, as far as I have yet gone, the finished work of Jesus Christ, and the power that there is in Christ and in the blessed Spirit to sanctify us, spirit, soul, and body.

But, our trust is in God in another sense, namely: first, we trust him, believing that he always must be just. It does not occur to us now that God could be unjust. In the days of our flesh we used to think, if we suffered some extreme pain, or if we passed suddenly from wealth to poverty, that God had dealt very hardly with us; but now we feel that his strokes are fewer than our crimes and lighter than our guilt; and it does not occur to us in any way to impeach the justice of God let him do what he will. We feel
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that if he not only should slay us, but if he should cast us into hell for ever, remembering what we are in ourselves and standing on our own footing, we could not complain against him. This is our firm confidence, that whatever our position, is, God has always dealt justly with us, that he never will deal unjustly with us, and we shall never have to say of any one transaction that we have with him, "This is not according to the rule of right."

But, we go a great deal further. Having believed in Christ Jesus, and having become his children, we trust, believing that God will never do anything to us, but that which is full of love. We have assured that his eternal love does not only come forth now and then, that it does not only permeate and infuse itself into a few of his actions; but that all his conduct towards his children actuated by the motive power of love. He is always love towards those who put their trust in him. We are sure that he never gives us a pain more than is needful that he never lets us suffer a loss more than is necessary. "Though for a season, if need be, we are in heaviness through manifold temptations," we know and are convinced that there *is* a needs be for it. We trust his justice, and we trust his goodness.

And, more, we trust his wisdom mingled with all this. He has said that "all things work together for good to them that love God," and we believe it; we have had some bitters in our cup, but we still believe it: we may yet have a great many more, but we are assured that through the help of God's Spirit we shall still believe this,-that come what may, expected or unexpected, in the ways of grief and sorrow, still that ultimate good shall come out of the whole. God's purpose of love shall not be thwarted, but rather shall be answered by every circumstance of our history. Therefore

do we trust in God that he is just and cannot do us an unrighteous action; that he is loving and cannot do an untender thing to us; that he is wise and loving and just, and will make all things work together for good.

In fine, we trust him as a child trusts its parent, that is, for everything.

There are many things about him that we cannot understand, as there were about our parents in our childhood, but we trust him and know that there is none like him. "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun." We trust him in all that he doeth. We cannot understand him, for his way is in the sea, and his footsteps are not known; but we are sure that they are footsteps of holiness, and they are ways of righteousness. We trust him for all the past and all the present, aye, and for all the future, too; that future which

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sometimes looms before us in the mist, and half alarms us, till we are ready to shrink back from it. We gather up the skirts of our robe again, and though we fear as we enter into the cloud, yet are we comforted with the full conviction, that he who, has done so well in the past, will be with us even to life's close.

Thus have I tried to show you, that the whole tenor of the Christian man's life is trust,-that, as in the text, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

II. Now the second point shall be, that those of us who have learned to trust in God expect that OUR FAITH SHALL BE TRIED. The text holds the plain supposition that it shall be tried extremely. He does not say, "Though I *die*"; that would be a great trial. Death is not a pleasant thing, it is no child's play even to the strongest believer. Job does not say, "Though I die," but "Though he slay me." That is more. He does not say, "Though he permit me to be slain," but, "Though he slay me; though he should seem to be so much my enemy as to turn round and kill me, though I may not believe his action, I will believe himself; I will believe his infallible word. Even though he slay me." It is not, "Though he make me hunger, or, though he put me in prison, though he suffer me to be mocked at, though he suffer me to be banned from all my friends, and to live a solitary and wretched life." No, it is more than that: "Though he slay me." And, mark, it is not, "Though he slay my children; though he take away my wife; though he remove all my dear kindred." It is more than that. "Though he slay me; though it come right home to my own self."

Ah! Job know what he meant, for all other things had been done except the slaying of him. His children were dead, and the house in which they had met was a ruin. All he had was gone, health had gone, and he could not rest by reason, of the disease which was all over him, most painful and most acute. He had nothing left on earth that was worth having. He was even friendless, and he was worse than wifeless, for his wife had turned against him. Yet, he says, there is but one thing more that can be done, and God has kept Satan back from that. He said, "Only thou shalt not take his life." But if the Lord choose to let loose the dog without even the link of a

chain upon him,-though he suffer me now to lose my life itself,-
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*‘Though he slay me, I will trust ,
Praise Him even from the dust,-
Prove, and sing it as I prove,
His eternal gracious love.’*

Now, the text evidently implies that faith will be tried, and tried severely. Let us think a moment about this. Has it not been always the case, that if any man has had a faith beyond his fellow men, it has met with trial. If you go a step beyond the ordinary rank and file, you will be shot at for that very reason. Columbus believes that there is another part of the world undiscovered; what ridicule is heaped upon him! Galileo says the world moves; he must be put into the inquisition, the poor old man must be forged to deny what he was quite sure was the truth. It was dangerous in those days to know too much, and to believe a little more than other people. And in spiritual things it is just the same. The world is against the true faith. The faith of God’s elect is not a flower that men delight to admire and praise. It is a thing which, wherever they see it, they count as a speckled bird, and they are sure to be against it. If thou hast faith in God, remember, that this is not the world of faith, but the world of unbelief, and the darkness that is in the world will try to quench thy light.

But remember that true faith scorns trial and outlives it. It is not worth having if it does not. If I believe in the friendship of my friend, and yet it cannot bear a little trial, it is not real friendship. Perhaps in your youth, as with most of us, there was some one exceeding dear to you. In your boyish or girlish days you would walk with some companion, and you swore inseparable friendship. Ah, how many of those friendships did you make, and they were broken! Since then, perhaps, we have thought that someone with whom we took sweet counsel never by any possibility could betray us; but there came a test of our friendship. We were not worth so much as once we were, or we were not so much esteemed as we used to be, or there happened to be a misunderstanding; and in a little tiff, the friendship was marred. But that faith which a man has in his fellow men that is worth having, will not yield so easily. No, saith the man, ‘If you say anything to me against my friend I do not believe you, I think there is some other way of reading it. If you do speak the truth you do not know all about it; there is something else that would change the complexion of it. And even if you were to convict him of a fault I would still love him, for there are many virtues in him and if he did this thing, he must have made a mistake. I will defend him.’

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Now, transfer this from common life to faith in God. If a man says, ‘I trust in God,’ and it is all smooth sailing, and his children are about him and he

has plenty upon the table, his body in full health, and he has all that heart could wish-well, we will see what sort of faith that is. It is not proved yet; but will the man believe his God when God begins to take away all he loves? Will he believe him, when the wife pines away with a long and painful sickness? Will he believe him when child after child is taken to the tomb? Will he believe him when he sees his property taken away before his eyes? Will he believe his God when he himself can scarcely move hand or foot upon the bed off sickness? Will he still be able to bless the name of the Lord when he is stripped of everything? If he can, then this is faith worth having, but if he cannot, then it is not the faith that is worthy of God, and it is well it does give way, for it may drive the man then to seek the true faith, which would bear the tests.

You see, then brethren, if we have faith we must expect to have it tried, by reason of faith being an unusual thing in the world, and because if it would not bear trial it would not be worth having. History tells us that the best servants of God have had their trials, and why should we expect to escape. We turn over the historical pages of this Book, which are so full of instruction to us, and we find that all the Lord's children have had to do battle for the preservation of their faith. There is no smooth road to heaven. Steam rollers can be used for the earth, for our common roads, but you shall find the flint stones on the road to glory. They have never been rolled smooth yet, and they never will be.

***‘The path of sorrow, and that path alone
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.’***

Faith must and shall be tried, as surely as it is the faith of God's people; and if the best of saints have been obliged to say that through much tribulation they have inherited the Kingdom, we must not expect that God will change his rule in his treatment of us. I would not, however, encourage one thing which I have sometimes noticed, namely, the fear which comes into some Christians, that they are not God's people because they have not been much tried. All the saints met with trial. I know a dear friend who is suffering just now, who says that he was occasionally afflicted with a fear that he could not be a child of God because he was so long without a sickness or without a trial. Ah, you will have that case met quite soon enough. Do not run after trouble, remember troubles of our own seeking

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would not be genuine strokes of the rod. You may leave that in God's hand. Do not fret yourself there. Only, when the trials do come to you, let this console you, that

***‘Bastards may escape the rod,
Plunged in sensual vain delight,
But the true-born child of God
Must not,-would not, if he might.’***

In our peace of soul, if God has given it to us by lot and by inheritance, some thorns and thistles must and will spring up in this present world. Moreover, dear brethren, the trial is greatly for our good, and greatly for God's glory. Our faith could never grow, neither could we be sure of it, if it had not been tested. They do not send steam vessels out to sea at once. Often you see on the Clyde vessels being tried-tried on the Gairloch-before they go out to sea. And God tries us here, before we take the great ocean of judgment-ere we come to the time of death. We have our trials here, and we grow by our trials. Among the best mercies we have ever received, are those mercies that have come to us dressed in the sombre garb of mourning, which have carried treasures in both their hands. God be thanked for the fire! God be thanked for the refiner's furnace and the crucible! They have been among the best things we have inherited from his mercy.

Thus I have brought out two ideas of the text. The Christian lives by faith, and he expects that faith to be tried.

III. But now the next point is the main point of the text,-that A TRUE FAITH, PUT ON TRIAL, WILL CERTAINLY BEAR IT. Though he slay me." It is an extreme expression. "Though he do his worst, though he give the last and uttermost stroke that can be taken, yet will I not disbelieve him. Though he slay me."

Faith will be justified to the uttermost. It is very easy to believe the creature too much. It is a common fault. It is impossible to trust the Creator too much. To trust him too little is one of the most usual of sins. Faith in the creature is hardly ever warranted. Faith in the Creator can be warranted, push it as far as ever you like. You know that there is a point where faith in the creature must stop. Our dearest friends can go with us only to the Jordan's brink, and then they can help us no longer. But though we go through the valley of the shadow of death, God is with us, and we

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need fear no evil. Though it comes actually to the slaying and to the death, still we may trust in him, for he cannot he will not fall us.

Why is it that the believer is warranted in trusting in God to the very last extremity? The answer is, because he is always the same God. If he is worth trusting one day he is worth trusting another. He cannot change. His character is such, that if it is infinitely worthy of my confidence to-day, it will be just the same in the rough weather that may come to-morrow. Could he change, then my faith in him ought to change; but if he be ever the same true, faithful, loving and tender God, ruling all things by his power, there can be no reason why my faith should make a change. I ought to trust him, who at all times is the same.

I ought to trust him also to the last, because outward providences prove nothing to us about God. We cannot read outward events correctly; they are written in hieroglyphics. The book of God is readable; it is written in human language; but the works of God are often unreadable.

*“Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain.
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.”*

We begin spelling God's works and making mischief out of them, because we do not know the letters or understand the alphabet, and cannot readily know what he means. If the Lord saith he loves us, do we believe it though he smites us? Do we believe that-

*‘Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face?’*

Be wise, then, and believe in the God thou canst not see, and not in the outward providence which thou canst see; for if thou couldst see that outward providence aright as God sees it, thou wouldest see it to be as full of love as assuredly God's heart is to thee, if thou art a believer in him. Therefore, since the outward is no sign to us, let us, when it gathers all the black it can, still believe in him. When it shall seem most severe, and deep calleth unto deep at the noise of God's waterspouts, let us still hope in him, for he is the health of our countenance and our God.

Moreover, brethren, there is another cause why we should always trust in him. To whom else can we go? We are shut up to this. When it comes to slaying, to cutting, to striking, and to killing work, what can the soul do,
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but fall into the Creator's arms? When it comes to dying, what words shall fit these lips so well as those, 'Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.' The course of the Christian's life is such, that he feels it more necessary to trust every day he lives. He does not get off the line of faith, he gets more into the middle of it, as he feels his weakness more, and at the last, when his weakness will be more apparent, he will want faith more than ever, and he will have it, too. He shall be able to say, 'My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.' Ah! I say again, to whom should we go in our trouble but unto God? All other sources are then dried up. The world mocks us, it seems to be a howling wilderness. 'Tis only from heaven the manna can come; only from the rock Christ Jesus, the living water can gush forth.

And there is one other word I will say before I leave this point; we may depend upon it, God will always justify our faith if we do trust him. There was never one who in the long run had to say, 'I was a fool to trust in God.' Many have said to us, in time of trouble, 'he trusted in God that he would deliver him, let him deliver him,' and they have hissed between their teeth that hideous taunt, 'Where is now their God?' But God has not left the righteous to be ashamed and to be offended for ever. They have had perhaps a blush on the cheek for a moment for the flesh is weak, but they have not been confounded far long. Faith has come to the rescue, and God

has fulfilled their faith. Many a man has trusted in himself and been deceived, many have trusted in their wealth and been disappointed; thousands have relied on friends, and have been betrayed; but blessed is the man, O Lord of hosts, who stayeth himself on Thee. You can go beyond your friend's line and measure; you may readily expect too much of him; you can try the temper of the dearest one you have on earth, and at last feel that you have tried it too much; but you can never go beyond the line of God. Your sin will rather be in limiting the Holy One of Israel. You will never open your mouth too wide for him; you will never ask too much at his hands, you will never expect too much; you will never believe too much. Has he not, himself said, "I am the Lord Thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." The wider you open it the better; the larger your expectations the better, for, according to thy faith so shall it be done unto you.

Now, in closing, I would observe, that if we say the text, it will take a good deal of saying, and if it is true, it will want the power of God himself to make it true. You can stand up to-night and say, "Though he slay me,

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yet will I trust in him." But how would it be if he took you at your word? Did you ever question yourself thus, Christian brethren? You have said, "Well, I hope I have a faith that will bear me safely into the presence of God." Did you ever put yourself in the posture of a dying man, and think whether you could look death in the face? You have said, "I hope when I am weighed in the balances I shall not be found wanting." Did you ever get in the scales and try? Have you made a self-examination, an earnest praying, testing, trying of yourself? They do not send out a gun from the foundry without putting it into the proof-house to see whether it will bear the discharge of the powder. Have you ever put yourself into the proofhouse? But beware, above all things, of religious boasting. Recollect that God does not care for our words; it is the heart, it is the reality and truth of what we say, not the verbiage, that commends us to him. Many a man says very boldly, "Though God should slay me, I will trust him," and yet when God stops him a week's work he does not trust him. If he had a child sick his faith would begin to waver. A little puff of wind will alter some people's faith, for heaviest the heart is in the heavy air. O for a faith that can stand the test! Seek such faith, look to the strong for strength in this matter, and cry loudly unto him who is the author and the finisher of faith, that he would strengthen it in you. Say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief, and bring me to this, that I can look anything in the face." And say: "Let all the floods of earth, and all the outflowings from hell, and even the drenching trials that come from heaven itself, come upon me, yet will I stay myself on the Lord, for he will not fail me, neither will he leave me. His mercy cannot depart from his chosen. He will keep to the end those that have rested in him."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

PSALM 26.

No doubt this Psalm was written by David when his cruel persecutor Saul, the more effectually to stab at him, spread false reports concerning his character. When the wicked can use no other weapons, they always have their quivers full of slanderous reports. Let us learn here that the best of men must expect to be misrepresented, and to have the worst of crimes laid to their charge. Let us learn, also, from the example of David, to carry our

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case to the highest court at once, not to meddle with the lower courts of earth, but to go at once to the Court of King's Bench in heaven, and there plead our cause before the eternal throne.

Verse 1. Judge me, O LORD;-

As if he turned away from all other judges, bribed and false as they had proved themselves to be in his case, and put himself on trial before God: 'Judge me, O Lord; " -

1. For I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide.

He pleads two things: first, the outward life and second, the inward faith, which, as it is the main-spring and source of the outer life of integrity, is also the more important of the two. Remark, that as the case is between himself and his accusers he pleads his life, for though we are justified before God by faith and not by works, yet before men we must be justified by our works, rather than by our faith. It is in vain for me to plead my faith when I am slandered. The only answer that can effectually shut the mouth of the adversary, is to point to a blameless life. Hence in this case he not only brings his faith before his God, but he also brings the fruit of his faith. Note, the inference which he draws from God's mercy to him in enabling him to walk uprightly and to trust him-"therefore I shall not slide." He rests for the future upon his God. His position was slippery, his enemies were always busy trying to trip up his heels, but saith he-"I shall not slide."

2. Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.

This is a wonderful verse. One would hardly dare to pray it. Here are three kinds of trial. According to the etymology of the Hebrew the first is the trial by touch-"Examine me"; the next is the trial by smell - "Prove me"; and the next is the trial by fire-"Assay my reins and my heart." You see how anxious he is really to have the matter decided by God. 'Lord, search me through and through; thou knowest I am not a hypocrite.' Now who dares to say this but that true man of God whose soul is wholly fixed upon the Lord? The reins and the heart are mentioned because those were believed to be the seat of the affections, and when the affections are right the whole man is right. The heart is the fountain from which issue streams of life, and if the fountain be pure, the streams cannot be impure; hence he asks chiefly that the examination may be directed to his reins and to his heart.

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3. *For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes:-*

Right straight before his eyes, he had God's lovingkindness. Some people appear to have their miseries, their sorrows, their sins, before their eyes but happy is that believer who always has God's lovingkindness before him!

Come, my brother, forget for a little while the burden of your business cares; now for a little season let the sickness that is in your house be left in the hand of your God, and let his lovingkindness be before your eyes.

Lovingkindness-pull the word to pieces. Remember the ancientness of it, the constancy of it, the variety of ways in which it shows itself, and the lavish bounties which it bestows upon you. Do not turn your back to God's goodness, but now, right straight before you set the lovingkindness of your God.

3. *And I have walked in thy truth.*

By which he may mean two things, first that he endeavored to hold fast to truth both in doctrine and in practice; or, secondly, that by God's truthfulness in giving him the promised grace, he had been enabled to walk uprightly.

4. *I have not sat with vain persons,-*

I never took counsel with them; they never were my choice companions.

4. *Neither will I go in with dissemblers.*

He makes a vow for the future that all crafty, lying, and foolish men shall never have his companionship.

5. *I have hated the congregation of evil doers, and will not sit with the wicked.*

By which he does not mean that he does not associate with them in any way for we must needs go out of the world if we will not have communion with sinners; but he means that he did not seek their company, found no pleasure in it, and never went in it to abet them in their evil deeds.

6. *I will wash mine hands in innocency:*

Pilate did this, but alas! the water was very dirty in which he washed his hands. This was an old Jewish rite when a man was found murdered; if the people in the valley in which he was found would be free from the crime of

murder they took a heifer, slew it, and then washed their hands in water over the head of the victim. They were then clear. So here he says- "I will wash mine hands in innocency: "

6. *So will I compass mine altar, O LORD:*

He is innocent far as men are concerned, but he still confesses that he is a sinner, for he goes to God's altar. Perfect men need no altars. It is the sinner that needs a sacrifice. So let the saint ever know that though he can plead innocency against the charges of men yet before God, his hope lies in the blood-besprinkled altar of which Jesus Christ is the great High Priest.

7, 8. *That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works. LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where shine thy honor dwelleth.*

I am sure many of us can say this, that when the Sabbath comes round, it is the best day of all the week, and that hour in the week-night when we can

get to the house of God-what an inexpressible relief is that! It is to us like a green oasis in the midst of the sandy desert. There are no beauties in nature and no changes to be perceived in travelling that I think can ever compensate for the loss of the constant means of grace, after all God's house is the fairest spot of earth. Zion, I will prefer thee above my chief joy! If I forget thee let my right hand forget her cunning. 'I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where shine honor dwelleth.'

9, 10. *Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men: in whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes.*

See, he so loves God's house that he cannot bear the thought of being shut in with sinners; and this is our comfort, that if we have loved God's house on earth we shall dwell in his house for ever.

11. *But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.*

Bee again, my beloved, how in the Christian's practice good works and faith are seen happily blended. He declares that he will walk in his integrity, but still, still note, he prays as one that is conscious of a thousand imperfections-'Redeem me and be merciful unto me.' We do rest on Christ alone, but still we desire to walk in holiness with as much exactness as though our salvation depended upon our good works.

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12. *My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD.*

FAITH'S ULTIMATUM.

NO. 1244

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,
JULY 18TH 1875,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Though he slay me, yet win I trust in him." -Job 13:16.

THIS is one of the supreme sayings of Scripture. It rises, like an alpine summit, clear above all ordinary heights of speech, it pierces the clouds and glistens in the light of God. If I were required to quote a selection of the sublimest utterances of the human mind, I should mention this among the first: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Methinks I might almost say to the man who thus spoke what our Lord said to Simon Peter when he had declared him to be the Son of the Highest: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee." Such tenacious holding, such immovable confidence, such unstagging reliance are not products of mere nature, but rare flowers of rich almighty grace. The text contains a precious jewel of grace, fitly set in the purest gold of choice speech; happy is the man upon whose arm it can be worn as an ensign in the day of battle.

It is well worthy of observation that in these words Job answered both the accusations of Satan and the charges of his friends. Though I do not know that Job was aware that the devil had said, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not set a hedge about him and all that he hath?" yet he answered that base suggestion in the ablest possible manner, for he did in effect say, "Though God should pull down my hedge, and lay me bare as the wilderness itself, yet will I cling to him in firmest faith." The arch -fiend had also dared to say that Job had held out under his first trials because they were not sufficiently personal; "skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." In the brave words before us Job

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most effectually silences that slander by, in effect, saying, "Though my trial be no longer the slaying of my children, but of myself, yet will I trust in him." He thus in one sentence replies to the two slanders of Satan; thus unconsciously doth truth overthrow her enemies, defeating the secret malice of falsehood by the simplicity of sincerity. Job's friends also had

insinuated that he was a hypocrite. They inquired of him “Who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?” They thought themselves quite safe in inferring that Job must have been a deceiver, or he would not have been so specially punished. To this accusation Job’s grand declaration of his unstaggering faith was the best answer possible, for none but a sincere soul could thus speak. Will a hypocrite trust in God when he slays him? Will a deceiver cling to God when he is smiting him? Assuredly not. Thus were the three miserable comforters answered if they had been wise enough to see it.

Our text exhibits a child of God under the severest pressure, and shows us the difference between him and a man of the world. A man of the world under the same conditions as Job would have been driven to despair, and in that desperation would have become morosely sullen, or defiantly rebellious! Here you see what in a child of God takes the place of desperation. When others despair he trusts in God. When he has nowhere else to look he turns to his heavenly Father, and when for a time, even in looking to God, he meets with the conscious comfort, he waits in the patience of hope, calmly expecting aid, and resolving that even if it do not come he will cling to God with all the energy of his soul. Here all the man’s courage comes to the front, not, as in the case of the ungodly, obstinately to rebel, but bravely to confide. The child of God is courageous, for he knows how to trust. His heart says, ‘By Lord, it is bad with me now, and it is growing worse, but should the worst come to the worst, still will I cling to thee, and never let thee go.’ In what better way can the believer reveal his loyalty to his Lord? He evidently follows his Master, not in fair weather only, but in the foulest and roughest ways. He loves his Lord, not only when he smiles upon him, but when he frowns. His love is not purchased by the largesses of his Lord’s golden hand, for it is not destroyed by the smittings of his heavy rod. Though my Lord put on his sternest looks, though from fierce looks he should go to cutting words, and though from terrible broods he should proceed to cruel blows, which seem to beat the very life out of my soul, yea, though he take down the sword and threaten to execute me therewith, yet is my heart steadfastly set upon one resolve,

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namely, to bear witness that he is infinitely good and just. I have not a word to say against him, nor a thought to think against him, much less would I wander from him; but still, though he slay me, I would trust in him. What is my text but an Old Testament version of the New Testament ‘Quis separabit?’ “ — Who shall separate? Job does but anticipate Paul’s question. ‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 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.’ Was not the same Spirit in both Job and Paul? Is he also in us? If so, we are men indeed, and

our speech is with power, and to us this declaration is no idle boast, no foolish bravado, though it would be ridiculous, indeed, if there were not a gracious heart behind it to make it good. It is the conquering shout of an all-surrendering faith, which gives up all but God. I want that we may all have its spirit this morning, that whether we suffer Job's trial or not we may at any rate have Job's close adherence to the Lord, his faithful confidence in the Most High.

There are three things in the text: *a terrible supposition* — “though he slay me”; *a noble resolution*, “yet will I trust in him”; and, thirdly, *a secret appropriateness*. This last will require a little looking into, but I hope to make it clear that there is a great appropriateness in our trusting while God is slaying us — the two things go well together, though it may not so appear.

I. First, then, here is A TERRIBLE SUPPOSITION — “though he slay me.”

The Lord is here set forth as a slayer of his trusting servant. An idea full of terror. *It is a supposition which in some senses cannot be tolerated for a minute* — “Though he slay me.” Here I am, his dear child, one whom he has loved from before the foundation of the world, one for whom he laid down his life upon the cross, one of whom he has said, “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” How can he slay me? If he do so, it can only be in a minor sense: as to my best and truest life, it must be safe, for he is its author and guardian, and cannot be its destroyer. Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she could not have compassion on the son of her womb? Could she suffer a child of hers to die while she had power to keep

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it alive? Would she lay violent hands upon the child of her love and destroy it? God forbid. Neither will God destroy, or suffer to be destroyed, any one of his own dear children. Jesus has solemnly said — “I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.” The fairest children of the earth will die, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and all flesh is as decaying grass; but the feeblest child of God will live for ever, for the life of God in every degree of it is immortality. Time will put out the sun, the lamp of the moon will grow dim in ages yet to come, but neither time nor age shall quench a solitary spark of heaven-born grace and light. Though faith be but as a grain of mustard seed, it is essentially a living thing, and it is not conceivable that God himself should slay that which is quickened with his life. Though it be imperceptible sometimes even to the possessor of it, and though it should raise many painful questions as to whether it be there at all, yet if it be there, God will preserve it even to the end. Come, child of God, you must not suppose that the Lord will slay you for ever. You must not allow suppositions which would dishonor your God. You may suppose what you like if it be innocent, but you must not suppose that which would blaspheme the divine love, or cast a slur upon God's fidelity to his promise. He may cast you aside for awhile, but he cannot cast you away for ever; he

may take away your goods, but not your highest good. He may allow a cloud to rest upon your reputation, a blight to fall upon your usefulness, and a storm to sweep away your happiness, but his mercy is not clean gone for ever, he hath not in anger turned away his heart from you. He has chastened you sore, but he has not given you over unto death. No, you must not interpret the supposition of the text as though it said, "Though he leave me to perish, though he cast me into hell," for that can never be. But I make bold to say that even if the devil were to whisper in your ear that the Lord would finally destroy you, it would be a glorious thing if you could bravely reply, "And if he did I would still trust him." One old saint once used very daring and perhaps unjustifiable, language when he said, in ecstasy of love of God casts me into hell, I will hold so fast by him that he shall go there too; I will not let him go, and hell itself will be no hell to me while he is there." Beloved, say in your soul — Though the Lord should condemn me, I will not rebel, but confess that he is just; though he should refuse to hear my prayers, yet he is an infinitely good and blessed God, and I will praise him still. But, beloved, it cannot be that God should slay or condemn a believer, and you need not tolerate the supposition. Blessed be

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his name, he hath not cast away the people whom he did foreknow, neither has one soul that trusted in him ever been forsaken.

The terrible supposition before as is inclusive of all possible ills. "Though he slay me." He means that if every form of evil up to actual death should come upon him, yet would he trust in God. Though he should lose all that he had in flock or field, in purse or portion, yet would he trust. In Job's case away went the oxen and the asses, away went the sheep, away went the camels, and away went all the servants, and each time as the messenger came breathlessly running in, he said, "I only am left alone to tell thee." At last the worst news of all came, for all his children were taken away at a stroke. All was gone, for his wife was as good as lost also, since she vent over to the enemy, and said, "Curse God and die." Well saith Job, "Though my troubles have left me bare of all but life, though nothing remains to me but this dunghill and the broken potsherd with which I scrape my sores, yet will I trust in the Lord." Oh, it was bravely said!

In this resolve, as we have seen, he includes not only all losses of property, but all bereavements of friends; and I should like you Christian people to look this in the face. Perhaps the Lord may suddenly take away from you the dearest object of your heart's affection — your husband or your wife; can you trust him then? The almost idolized children may be removed one by one, and leave sad vacancies within your heart. O fond wife, the beloved of your soul may pass away in the prime of his manhood, the brother may be cut down as the green herb, and the sister fade as a flower. Parents, children, brethren, any and all of these may be put far from you, and you may find yourselves as lone trees, whereas now you are surrounded by a kindred forest. You may be the last of the roses, left alone, scarcely blooming, but bowing your head amid the heavy showers of sorrow which drench you to the soul. Now, believer, if you are in such a deplorable case

as that, can you still say, ‘If the Lord should go even further than this, should his next arrows penetrate my own lacerated heart, even then, as I bleed to death, I will kiss his hand ‘?

Job included in his supposition all kinds of pain. We can hardly imagine the bodily agony of Job when he was covered with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. None could approach him, the disease was so foul, neither could he endure to be touched, he says, ‘Though I have all these boils, and even should they grow worse, so that the pains I now endure should become unendurable, and should I suffer the very anguish of death

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itself, yet still would I put my trust in my God. Neither poverty, loneliness, nor fierce torment shall make me forsake the Lord, nor shall all put together cause me to doubt him.” What a victory of faith is this!

Job at that time also suffered from dishonor, for those who once looked up to him with respect now despised him in their hearts. He says that those whose fathers he would have disdained to have set with the dogs of his flock, opened their mouths against him; and whereas, when he stood in the street, princes were silent in his presence to listen to his wisdom, now among the basest of mankind he had become a song and a byword. As for his mistaken friends, he had grown so weary of them that he said, ‘O that ye would altogether hold your peace, and it would be your wisdom.” Poor Job was sorely galled with the scorn poured on him at a time when he deserved both sympathy and honor, but yet his faith cries, ‘If I am more despised still, and forgotten as a dead man out of mind, yet will I trust in thee, my God.”

Connected with all this, the afflicted patriarch must have felt much depression of spirit. Did he not say, ‘Even to-day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me”? Those of us who are subject to depression of spirit find much that is congenial in the Book of Job, his music is in tune with our own. How bitterly does he wail at times! What wondrous insight has he into the mystery of sorrow! Though his grief has never been thoroughly weighed, nor his calamities laid in the balances together, yet have his woes been considered by thousands of mourners, and have ministered a wealth of consolation to them. Job does not exclude his despondencies from his resolves nay, he mainly intends them, for these are in a special sense a man’s own personal slaying, and he says, ‘Though he slay *me*,” — though my heart should break with anguish, pierced through with despondency, yet will I put my trust in God. I began by calling the supposition of our text a terrible one, and now I claim that I have shown it to be so, since it includes the coming upon us of all sorts of ills.

Listen yet again. *This supposition goes to the extreme of possibility*, if not beyond it, for it will be hard to find a case in which God has really slain any of his servants. The martyrs were slain for him, but not by him. To none of his children, save one, has the Lord been as Abraham was to Isaac when he unsheathed the knife to slay him. If it had been so, could we have been as the lamb beneath the sacrificial knife? The stones which slew Stephen, and

the sword which slew James, were in the hands of cruel men, and not in the hands of God; but God himself is here supposed to slay us. Now, though he has not actually done so, we may enquire whether we could resign ourselves to him, even if he should take life and all with his own hand? Could we lie on the altar and not struggle? Do we hate even our own life also for love of him? What say we? Is our love stronger than death? God grant it may be so found.

But *this supposition goes further than matters ever will go*. Why, then, does the Psalmist suppose such a case? I answer because only by such suppositions can he express his faith to the full. Remember that psalm, "Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." We are not expecting the earth to move nor the mountains to plunge into the ocean, but in order to express our confidence, we declare that even such a quaking would not affect the foundation of our faith. God himself meets his people in like manner, by saying, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed." Child of God, you may suppose what never will occur, if you like, and project your soul by that supposition into depths of woe and grief, into which you will never actually come, and yet through divine grace you will resolve, "If it came even to that, still would I trust in him."

Though the text supposes what will not actually occur, yet *it is a just description of what often does occur as far as our conceptions go*. Have you never known what it is to be in your own conceptions slain by God? My heart has known it often. It is as death itself to feel all your religion melt away like the hoar frost of the morning, when the sun has risen; and all your joys in which you delighted flying away like birds when a man doth clap his hands. Have you never had to begin all over again, at the very alphabet of repentance and childlike faith, and find even that no easy work. Did you never know what it was to get your cup right full of what you thought was holy joy and sweet experience, and then for the Lord to turn it bottom upward and let you see that it was a mixture of self-conceit and sentimentalism, with thick dregs at the bottom of pride and falsehood? Can you say with David, "I have seen an end of all perfection"? Have you never been brought down from imaginary riches to bitter but honest poverty? Have you never thought you were becoming so wonderfully sanctified that you could scarcely lay a split sheet of tissue paper between you and

perfection, and then on a sudden the Lord has laid you naked and made you loathe the sight of your inborn corruptions? You have been as a cup which bubbled at the top and frothed over, and the Lord has blown off the froth and made you see the black draught of your inward vileness. God has many ways of thus slaying in his children all that ought to die. Thus he kills the spiritual hypocrisy which is so common in us all. Our life seems at times to run all into puffballs and bloated fungi of self-glorying, we think

that we are something when we are nothing, and then the Lord prunes us back to our real condition. Do you never know what it is to be thus slain? Ah, my brethren, at times our life is a long experience of the power of death. Do you not know what it is to say, 'Is this prayer? Why, while I prayed my thoughts were perplexed, distracted, and wandering. Is this faith? Why, even on the most vital points my soul dares scarcely speak with confidence! Is this love? — love to Christ, which even while I exercise it accuses me on account of its lukewarmness and want of self-denying ardor. Can this be spiritual life? Life at which I blush and over which I mourn! Life which scarcely reaches so far as feeling, and when it does, soon subsides into insensibility!' Beloved brethren, I speak from experience, all this is a kind of slaying by which the Lord hides pride from men and keeps them from the snares of vain confidence. Has he not written, 'I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal'? In these times of wounding and killing, which are very common to the experience of some of the children of God, the only thing we can do is still to trust, — 'Though he slay me, I will trust in him.' Trust him though he sift out nine-tenths of thy hopes, burn up all thy experiences, grind thine evidences to powder, crush all thy realised sanctities, and sweep away all thy rests and refuses. Then, indeed, is the best time of all to exercise true faith.

Once more, *the grim supposition of the text, if ever it was realized by anybody it was realized by our Lord Jesus*. Our great covenant Head knows to the full what his members suffer. God did slay him, and glory be to his blessed name, he trusted God while he was being slain. 'It pleased the leather to bruise him, he hath put him to grief;' yet from the lips of our dear Lord we hear no expressions of unbelief. Read the twenty-second Psalm, where he says, 'Our fathers trusted in thee, they trusted in thee and thou didst deliver them, but I am a worm, and no man.' Hear how he pleads with God, and specially listen to his dying words, where, though he says, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' yet a few minutes after he cries, 'Into thy hands I commit my spirit.' What! into the hands of

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a God who had forsaken him and smitten him; did he commit himself into those hands? Yes, into those very hands; and herein we must follow in his steps. Though the Lord cut, hew, hack, tear, and grind us to powder, yet out of the dust, and the tears, and the blood of the conflict we must look up to him and say, 'I trust thee still.' Here is the patience of the saints! Here is the glory of faith! Blessed is the man who thus becomes more than a conqueror. I say it calmly, I would sooner be able to do as Job did, than to be one of yonder seraphim, who have never suffered, and consequently have never clung to a slaying God. I count it the grandest possibility of a created being that it should be able completely to yield itself up into the Creator's hand, and unwaveringly believing in the Creator's love, in hope believing against hope. Oh, royal word of a right royal soul, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.'

II. Secondly, we have before us A NOBLE RESOLUTION — “yet will I trust in him.” Job meant that he was confident that the Lord was just, and though he did not feel that the sufferings he was then enduring were sent upon him for his sins, yet he never doubted the righteousness of God in so afflicting him, this friends said, “You see, Job, you suffer more than anybody else, therefore you must have been a hypocrite, for God will not lay upon any man more than is just.” “No,” said Job, “I have been upright before the Lord; and yet, on the other hand, I do not accuse the Lord of injustice, I am sure he does what is right, and I trust him as much as ever.” There were two things to which Job stuck very firmly — “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him, but I will maintain my own ways before him “ — that is, I will not admit that I have been a hypocrite, for I have been sincerely obedient to him; nor will I be driven to the other conclusion, that God is unjust in afflicting me. Job did not understand the Lord’s reasons, but he continued to confide in his goodness. He set no terms or limits to the Lord’s action, but left all to his absolute will, and was sure the whatever he might do it must be right. Should death prevent all apparent possibility of making up to him all his losses and woes, his faith o’erleaped the sepulcher, and saw justice and mercy alive in the realms beyond, making all things right in the end. Oh, it was grand thus to champion almighty goodness in the teeth of death itself.

Now, dear brethren, you and I, if we are resting upon God may say, “Whatever happens, though I may not be able to understand God’s dispensations to me any more than Job understood God’s dispensations towards him, yet I am quite sure of this, that he will help me in my trouble,

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and I will, therefore, cast myself upon him, believing that as my days my strength shall be; or if he does not aid me in my trouble with manifest help I will still trust that he will bring me out of it, that if he seem to forsake for a while, yet it shall be said of me as of God, “a troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last.”

If I should neither receive present help nor immediate deliverance, yet I am persuaded that my good is designed by my long trial, and that God is making the worst things work out my everlasting benefit and his own glory; therefore will I submit to his will, and expect in the end to see the lovingkindness of the Lord. Yea, and if I should have neither present help nor deliverance, nor see any immediate good come of my affliction, yet will I repose myself upon God, for in some mysterious way or other I shall yet know that his providence was right and good, for he cannot err, his dealings must be wise, he cannot be unkind, his actions must be tender. Though the sharp edge of death itself invade me, I will hold to this belief, that thou, O Lord, doest all things right. If down to the sepulcher my steps must go, and through the gloomy valley’s darkest shade my pilgrimage must wend, yet will I fear no evil, for thy rod and staff shall be my confidence, and I will be sure that he who bids me die will bid me live again; up from the grave my body shall yet rise, and in my flesh shall I see

God. As for my spirit, though it pass through the death shade, it shall come forth into a brighter light, and in the eternity of glory it shall receive abundant recompense for the sorrows of the present time. This is the faith for us to hold at all times — “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” Why, think you, was Job able to speak thus positively about his trusting God? Was it not because he knew God? “They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.” If you would believe God you must know him. Those who are strangers to him cannot trust him. Oh, beloved, only think what God is! Sometimes when I am contemplating his being and character I feel as if I could leap for joy and when I touch upon the theme in the pulpit I feel as if I could talk on for ever in his praise, and use the grandest, sweetest, richest words in human language to tell what a blessed God my God is. What! the Lord do wrong to any of us? Impossible! The Lord be unkind to us? The supposition cannot be endured for a single moment. After once knowing him we feel that all the goodness and kindness of fathers, mothers, brethren, children, husbands, wives, all put together, is only like one single drop of sweetness compared with that ocean full of honey which is to be found in his infinite love. Besides, we have not only

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his attributes to trust to, but his past actions to us. Did my Lord forgive me all my sin? and after that will he ever be unkind to me? Did he lay down his life for me upon the accursed tree, and can I dream that he will desert me? Have I looked into the wounds of my dying Savior, and shall I ever murmur if he should multiply pains and sufferings and losses and crosses to me? God forbid. Such love as his forbids all fear. Did you ever lean on the Bridegroom’s arm? Have you ever sung like the bride in the canticle, “His left hand is under my head, and his right arm doth embrace me”? Did he ever stay you with dawns and comfort you with apples while your soul was sick with too much delight; and after all that will you indulge hard thoughts of him? Oh no, till the day break and the shadows flee away, we cannot think hardly of him who has dealt so kindly with us. His ways must be right, such wondrous acts of love as his have proved to us beyond all question that he is love, essential love, and cannot, therefore, do us an ill turn.

Beside this, we know the relationship in which he stands to us. It has been said that you cannot trust an enemy, and it has been equally well added you cannot trust a reconciled enemy: suspicion lingers long. But our God is no reconciled enemy, though he is sometimes represented as if he were so: he has loved us with an everlasting love; his is no friendship of yesterday, no passion which began to burn a month or two ago; but long ere the hills lifted up their heads he loved us. The bands of his fatherhood are upon us, and we can well commit ourselves into his hands.

Are any of us in great trouble this morning; then let us trust in the Lord now, for what else can we do? Suppose we give up trusting in him, to whom or whither should we go? If this anchor drags, what other holdfast can there be? Let us continue to trust our Lord, for he deserves it. He has never done aught that could justify us in doubting him. Has he ever been

false to us? Ah, Judas, you sold your Master, but your Master never sold you. Ah, unbelieving heart, you have wandered from Jesus, but he never wandered from you. If you do not doubt him till you have cause for doubting him it will not be soon. Let us trust our God, for this is the sweetest comfort a man can have. This side heaven nothing can yield the afflicted man such support under trial as when he can fall back upon the strong love of God, and believe that the wisdom of God is overruling all. Nothing tends so to sanctify our trials, and produce good results from them, as faith in God. This is the Samson which finds honey in the lion. For a thousand reasons I would say, "Trust in the Lord at all times: ye people, 506 pour out your hearts before him. God is a refuge for us." Say ye each one, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!"

III. And, now, the last point is this, A SECRET APPROPRIATENESS about it all.

There is a something about our Lord's slaying us which should help us to trust him. I would sooner the Lord should slay me with troubles and trials than let me alone in my sin. What saith the Scriptures? "If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons, for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" I do not so much pity the children of God who have a cross to carry, I reserve my fears for those worldlings who are not in trouble as other men, neither plagued like other men. It would be very foolish for the afflicted one to say, "I am no child of God because he smites me": there would be more reason in the sinner's saying, "I am no child of God, for I have my portion in this life." Surely there is something in you which God loves, or else he would not be killing that which he hates. If he hates the sin in you, it is a good sign; for where do we hate sin most? Why, in those we love most. If you see a fault in a stranger, you wink your eye, and say but little, but in your own dear child you are deeply grieved to observe it. Where there is true love there is a measure of jealousy, and the more burning the love the more fierce the jealousy, especially on the part of Jesus Christ. Where he sees sin in those who are very dear to him, his fury burns not against them, but against their sin, and he will not stop until he has slain it. His rebukes are severe, not because of want of love, but because he loves them so much. An ungodly man met me some years ago when I was suffering, and said to me in a jeering way, "Ah, whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, I see." I said, "Yes, it is his custom." "Ah," said he, "so long as I am without the chastisement I am very content to be without the love." Oh, it brought the red into my cheeks and the tears into my eyes, and I cried, "I would not change places with you for ten thousand worlds. If my God were to afflict me from head to foot I would bear it joyfully sooner than live a moment without his love." When the Lord flogs us we love him, and we would not leave him though the devil should bribe us with all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them. Our Father puts us sometimes into the black hole, and we

are there crying bitterly under a sense of his wrath, but we love him still, and if anybody were to find fault with him we would be up at once and say ‘He is a good God, and blessed be his name.’”

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Note again that *the slaying of the creature is the very condition in which faith was born*, and in which she delights to display her power. We are saved by passing from death unto life. As Noah was like a dead man out of mind shut up in the ark, and by this burial passed into the new world, and as in the ordinance of baptism we are in like figure buried with Christ that we may rise with him, so faith took her birth in the death of the creature at the time when the new life was breathed into us. When God is slaying all that is capable of death, and our new immortal life alone survives, faith feels as if her birthday had come over again and brought with it her native air.

Notice again, *it is at times when God is slaying us that our faith is being tested* whether it is true or not. When all the winds are fair how can you tell whether your barque would bear a storm? How much faith some of us have at times! Have you never felt as if you could fight seven devils with one band? There was not a devil within seven miles when you were so bold; but when the smallest fiend has drawn near your courage has oozed out. We are like an old man whom I once knew, who said to me, ‘Here am I, eight y years old, and through the winter I often think, I wish I had a bit of mowing or reaping to do, for I feel quite young again; but as soon as harvest comes on, and I get down my old sickle, I have not done much before I feel the old man is a very old man, and had better leave that work alone.’” Slaying times let us know whether our strength is real strength, and whether our confidence is true confidence, and this is good, for it would be a great pity for us to be stocked with heaps of stain faith, and fictitious grace, and ready-made holiness. Some of my friendly talk as if they had boldness enough for a dozen people, but I am afraid if they were tried as some of us are they would find they had not half enough for one. This is the benefit of trial — it lets us see what is gold and what is tinsel, what is fact and what is fiction. Alas, how much religious fiction is abroad at this time!

Note further, that *slaying times are the most favorable for trusting God*. I have been putting a little riddle to myself. Here it is. Is it easier to trust God when you have nothing, or when you have all things? Is it easier to say, ‘Though he slay me, I will trust in him,’ or to say, ‘Though he make me alive, I will trust in him’? Will you think it over? Shall I help you? Here is a man without a farthing in the world; his cupboard is bare, his flocks are cut off from the field, and his herds from the stall; is it hard for that man to trust in God? If you say so I will not dispute with you. But here is another

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man who has a bank full of gold, his meadows are covered with flocks and herds, his barns are ready to burst with corn, and his trade prospers on all hands. Now, sirs, is it easy for that man to trust God? Do you say ‘Yes’? I say ‘No.’ I say that he has a very hard task i ndeed to live by faith, and the

probabilities are that when he says, "I trust God," he is trusting his barn or his bank. All things considered, it occurs to me that it is easier to trust God in adversity than in prosperity, because whatever trust there is in adversity is real trust, but a good deal of the faith we have in prosperity is a kind of trust which you will have to take upon trust, and whether it is faith or not is a matter of serious question. Sirs, where is the room for faith when you can see already all that you want? A full barn has no room for faith if she be any bigger than a mouse; but in an empty barn faith has scope and liberty. When the brook Cherith is dried up, when the poor widow has nothing left but a handful of meal and a little oil, then there is room for the prophet to exercise faith. Oh, brethren, it is well to go into action with clear decks. In the name of God, with double-shotted guns full of strong faith you can let the world and the flesh and the devil know what faith is; but while your deck is all hampered with comforts and visible resources faith can scarce stir a hand or move a gun. "Though he slay me," — well, that means everything is gone, only breath enough left me just to exist; and now, my Lord, thou art all in all to me. Now can I say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee; there is none upon the earth that I desire beside thee." Once more, *these slaying times* are very desirable occasions, because they *allow the child of God to show that he is not a mercenary professor*, held to Christ by a cupboard love. If God were always to prosper us the world would say, "These Christians follow their God as stray dogs follow those who give them bones, but they have no sincere love." When the Lord falls a whipping us, and we love him all the more, then they cannot say but what we are faithful, nor can they deny the work of grace in our souls. Oh, you that are Christians as long as it is pleasant to be Christians, you who make your love to Christ depend upon your feeling happy, — what despicable beings you are. Our Lord wants not such base disciples, but such as can say, "If I lose all I have, still I love thee, O my Savior: thy sweet love is so precious that if death were threatened me I would still choose thee to be my all in all." Love desires opportunities for proving her disinterestedness, and such is the opportunity of the text.

There are seeking souls here this morning, and I daresay they have said, "Mr. Spurgeon has been describing great faith, we shall never get to that."
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I have been thinking, dear souls, what kind of a man is most like a little child. Is it not a very old man? What kind of faith is most like new-born faith? Why, the ripest and most advanced faith. My text is very old faith: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," but the very first faith I had in Christ — I remember it well — was just like it. I thought he would destroy me, I could not see how he could do otherwise, and yet be a just God. I thought he must strike me down if I went to him. He seemed to stand with a drawn sword in his hand, but I felt "Well, if he does slay me, I had better die by his hand than remain his enemy;" and I went to him. I was like the boy who ran away from his homes and dared not return, because he feared his father would dog him. He was out all night, shivering, cold, and wet, and had nothing to eat all day. By the time he got to the next evening, such

was his dread of being alone all through another night, that he said to himself, "I would sooner feel my father's rod than lie here," and so he went home, and was received with tenderness. So with me. I thought if I went to the Lord, I should have to smart for it, but I concluded I would rather smart than be as I was, and so I went to him, and found I was safe. O poor souls, come to Jesus Christ in that fashion Say

*'I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try;
For, if I stay away, I know
I must for ever die.
'But if I die with mercy sought,
When I the king have tried;
That were to die, delightful thought,
As sinner never died.'*

Say, "If I go to hell, I will trust Christ; if I am cast away for ever, I will trust Christ: "and that cannot be, for "he that believeth in him is not condemned." God grant you true faith, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Psalm 73.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"
— 73 (PART II.), 689, 46 (VERS. III)***

HOW TO CONVERSE WITH GOD.

NO. 1255

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,
SEPTEMBER 19TH, 1875,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Then call thou, and I will answer: or let me speak, and answer thou me.” —
Job 13:22.*

JOB might well have been driven frantic by his miserable comforters; it is wonderful that he did not express himself far more bitterly than he did. Surely Satan found better instruments for his work in those three ungenerous friends than in the marauding Sabeans, or the pitiless whirlwind. They assailed Job remorselessly, and seemed to have no more bowels of compassion than so many flint stones. No wonder that he said to them many things which otherwise he would never have thought of uttering, and a few which I dare say he afterwards regretted. Possibly the expression of our text is one of those passages of too forcible speech. The tormented patriarch did what none but a man of the highest integrity could have done so intensely as he did; he made his appeal from the false judgment of man to the bar of God, and begged to be forthwith summoned before the tribunal of the Judge of all, for he was sure that God would justify him. “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him.” He was ready to appear at the judgment seat of God, there to be tried as to his sincerity and uprightness. He says, “Only do not two things unto me: then will I not hide myself from thee. Withdraw thine hand far from me: and let not thy dread make me afraid.” He offers in the words of our text to come before the righteous Judge in any way which he might appoint — either he will be the defendant and God shall be the plaintiff in the suit — “Call thou and I will answer,” or else he will take up

the part of the plaintiff and the Lord shall show cause and reason for his dealings towards him, or convict him of falsehood in his pleas, — ‘Let me speak, and answer thou me.’ He feels so sure he has not been a hypocrite that he will answer to the All-seeing there and then without fear of the result.

Now, brethren, we are far from condemning Job’s language, but we would be quite as far from imitating it. Considering the circumstances in which Job was placed, considering the hideous libels which were brought against him, considering how he must have been stung when accused so wrongfully at such a time, we do not wonder that he thus spoke. Yet it may be that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips; at any rate it is not for us to employ his language in the same sense, or in any measure to enter upon self-justification before God. On the contrary, let our prayer be, ‘Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.’ How shall man be just with God? How can we challenge his judgment before whom the heavens are not pure, and who charged his angels with folly? Unless, indeed, it be in a gospel sense, when, covered with the righteousness of Christ, we are made bold by faith to cry ‘Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died, yea rather, that hath risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.’

I am going to use the words of Job in a different sense from that in which he employed them, and shall apply them to the sweet communion which we have with our Father, God. We cannot use them in reference to our appearance before his judgment seat to be tried; but they are exactly suitable when we speak of those blessed approaches to the mercy seat when we draw near to God to be enriched and sanctified by sacred communion. The text brings out a thought which I wish to convey to you — ‘Call thou, and I will answer: or let me speak, and answer thou me.’ May the Holy Spirit bless our meditation.

The three points this morning will be, *two methods of secret converse* — ‘call thou, and I will answer: or let me speak, and answer thou me;’ secondly, *the method of combining the two*, and here we shall try to show how the two modes of converse should be united in our communion with God; and thirdly, we shall show *how these two modes of fellowship are*
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realized to the full in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our answer to God, and God’s answer to us.

I. First, then, here are TWO METHODS OF SACRED CONVERSE BETWEEN GOD AND THE SOUL: sometimes the Lord calls to us and we reply, and at other times we speak to God and he graciously deigns to answer us. A missionary some years ago, returning from Souther Africa, gave a description of the work which had been accomplished there, through the preaching of the gospel, and among other things he pictured a little incident

of which he had been an eye-witness. He said that one morning he saw a converted African chieftain sitting under a palm tree with his Bible open before him. Every now and then he cast his eyes on his book and read a passage, and then he paused and looked up a little while, and his lips were seen to be in motion. Thus he continued alternately to look down on the Scriptures and to turn his eyes upward towards heaven. The missionary passed by without disturbing the good man, but a little while after he mentioned to him what he had seen, and asked him why it was that sometimes he read, and sometimes he looked up? The African replied, — ‘I look down to the book, and God speaks to me, and then I look up in prayer, and speak to the Lord, and in this way we keep up a holy talk with each other.’ I would set this picture before you, AS being the mirror and pattern of intercourse with heaven, — the heart hearkening to the voice of God, and then replying in prayer and praise.

We will begin with the first method of communion. *Sometimes it is well in our converse with God that we should wait till our heavenly Father has spoken* — ‘Call thou, and I will answer.’ In this way the Lord communed with his servant Abraham. If you refer to those sacred interviews with which the patriarch was honored, you will find that the record begins — ‘The Lord spoke unto Abraham and said.’ After a paragraph or two you hear Abraham speaking to the Lord, and then comes the Lord’s reply, and another word from the patriarch, but the conversation generally began with the Lord himself. So was it with Moses. While he kept his flock in the wilderness he saw a bush which burned and was not consumed, and he turned aside to gaze upon it, and then the Lord spake to him out of the bush. The Lord called first, and Moses answered. Notably was this the case in the instance of the holy child Samuel. While he lay asleep the Lord said to him, ‘Samuel, Samuel,’ and he said, ‘Here am I,’ and yet a second and a third time the voice of God commenced a sacred intercourse. No doubt the Lord had heard the voice of the child in prayer at other times, but upon

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this notable occasion the Lord first called Samuel, and Samuel answered ‘Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth.’ So was it with Elijah. There was a still small voice, and the Lord said to the prophet, ‘What doest thou here, Elijah?’ Then Elias replied, ‘I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, for they have thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword.’ To which complaint his great Master gave a comfortable answer. Now, as it was with these saints of old so has it been with us: the Lord our God has spoken to us by his Spirit, and our spiritual ears have listened to his words, and thus our intercourse with heaven has commenced. If the Lord wills to have the first word in the holy conversation which he intends to hold with his servants, God forbid that any speech of ours should interpose. Who would not be silent to hear Jehovah speak?

How does God speak to us then, and how does he expect us to answer? He speaks to us in the written word. This ‘more sure word of testimony, whereunto ye do well if ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark

place.” He speaks to us also in the ministry of his word, when things new and old which are in Holy Scripture are brought forth by his chosen servants, and are applied with power to our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The Lord is not dumb in the midst of his family, though, alas, some of his children appear to be dull of hearing. Though the Urim and Thummim are no longer to be seen upon the breasts of mortal men, yet the oracle is not silent. O that we were always ready to hear the loving voice of the Lord. The Lord’s voice has many tones, all equally divine. Sometimes he uses the voice of *awakening*, and then we should give earnest heed. We are dead and he quickens us. We are sluggish and need to be bestirred, and the Lord, therefore, cries aloud to us, “Awake thou that sleepest.” We are slow to draw near to him, and therefore lovingly he says, “Seek ye my face.” What a mercy it is if our heart at once answers, “Thy face, Lord, will I seek.” When he arouses us to duty there is true communion in our hearts if we at once reply “Here am I, send me.” Our inmost souls should reply to the Lord’s call as the echo answers to the voice. I fear me it is sometimes far otherwise, and then our loving Lord has his patience tried. Remember how he says “Behold I stand at the door and knock :” he knocks because he finds that door closed which should have been wide open. Alas, even his knocks are for a while in vain, for we are stretched upon the bed of ease and make idle excuses for remaining there — “I have put off my coat, how
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can I put it on? I have washed my feet, how can I defile them?” Let us no longer treat him in this ungenerous manner lest he take it amiss and leave us, for if he go away from us we shall seek him but find him not, we shall call him but he will give us no answer. If we will not arise at his call it may be he will leave us to slumber like sluggards till our poverty come as one that travelleth, and our want as an armed man. If our Beloved cries, “Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away,” let us not linger for an instant. If he cries “Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion,” let us arise in the power of his call and shake ourselves from the dust. At the first sound of heaven’s bugle in the morning, let us suit the bed of carnal ease and go forth to meet our Lord and King. Herein is communion, the Lord draws us and we run after him, he arouses us and we wake to serve him, he restores our soul and our hearts praise him.

Frequently the voice of God is for our *instruction*. All Scripture is written for that purpose, and our business is to listen to its teachings with open ear and willing heart. Well did the Psalmist say “I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace unto his people.” God’s own command of mercy is, “Incline your ear and come unto me, hear and your soul shall live.” This is the very Gospel of God to the unsaved ones, and it is an equally important message to those who have through grace believed, for they also need to receive of his words. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall men live.” Hence one of the saints cried out, “Thy words were found and I did eat them;” and another said, “How sweet are thy words unto my taste, yea sweeter than honey to my mouth.” God’s word is the soul’s manna and the

soul's water of life. How greatly we ought to prize each word of divine teaching. But, dear brethren, do you not think that many are very neglectful of God's instructive voice? In the Bible we have precious doctrines, precious promises, precious precepts, and above all a precious Christ, and if a man would really live upon these choice things, he might rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. But how often is the Bible left unread! And so God is not heard. He calls and we give no heed. As for the preaching of the Word when the Holy Spirit is in it, it is the 'power of God unto salvation,' and the Lord is pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe; but all believers do not hear the voice of the Lord by his ministers as they should. There is much carping criticism, much coldness of heart, much glorying in man, and a great want of teachableness of spirit, and thus the word is shut out of our hearts. The

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 Lord would fain teach us by his servants, but our ears are dull of hearing. Is it any wonder that those professors cannot pray who are for ever grumbling that they cannot hear? God will be deaf to us if we are deaf to him. If we will not be taught we shall not be heard. Let us not be as the adder which is deaf to the charmer's voice. Let us be willing, yea, eager to learn. Did not our Lord Jesus say, 'take my yoke upon you and learn of me'? And is there not a rich reward for so doing in his sweet assurance, 'ye shall find rest unto your souls'? Search the Scriptures that no word from the Lord may be inadvertently slighted by you; hear the Word attentively and ponder it in your heart, and daily make this your prayer, 'What I know not, teach thou me.' 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.' Let us strive against prejudice, and never let us dream that we are so wise that we need learn no more. Jesus Christ would have us be teachable as little children and ready to receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save our souls. You will have a blessed fellowship with your Lord if you will sit at his feet and receive his words. O for his own effectual teaching. Call thou, O Lord, and I will answer.

The Lord also speaks to his servants with the voice of *command*. Those who trust Christ must also obey him. In the day when we become the Lord's children we come under obligations to obey. Does he not himself say, 'If I be a father, where is mine honor?' Dear friends, we must never have a heavy ear towards the precepts. I know some who drink in the promises as Gideon's fleece did the dew, but as for the commands, they refuse them as a man turns from wormwood. But the child of God can say, 'Oh, how I love thy law, it is my meditation all the day: I will delight myself in thy commandments which I have loved.' The will of God is very sweet to his children; they long to have their own wills perfectly conformed to it. True Christians are not pickers and choosers of God's word, the part which tells them how they should live in the power of the Spirit of God is as sweet to them as the other portion which tells them how they are saved by virtue of the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Dear brethren, if we shut our ears to what Jesus tells us, we shall never have power in prayer,

nor shall we enjoy intimate communion with the Well-beloved. ‘If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love,’ saith he, ‘even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.’ If you will not hear God, you cannot expect him to hear you, and if you will not do what he bids you, neither can you expect him to give you what you seek at his
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hands. An obedient heart is needful if there is to be any happy converse between God and the soul.

The Lord sometimes speaks to his servants in the tone of *rebukey*, and let us never be among those who harden their necks against him. It is not a pleasant thing to be told of our faults, but it is a most profitable thing. Brethren, when you have erred, if you are on good terms with God, he will gently chide you: his voice will sound in your conscience, ‘My child, was this right? my child, was this as it ought to be? Is this becoming in one redeemed with precious blood?’ When you open the Bible, many a text will like a mirror show you yourself, and the spots upon your face, and conscience looking thereon will say, ‘Do not so, my son, this is not as thy Lord would have it.’ ‘Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: That which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.’ If we do not listen to God’s rebuking voice in his word, he will probably speak in harsher tones by some addicting providence. Perhaps he will hide from us the light of his countenance and deny us the consolations of the Spirit. Before this is the case, it will be wise to turn our hearts unto the Lord, or if it has already come to that, let us say, ‘Show me wherefore thou contendest with me. Make me to know my faults, my Father, and help me to purge myself from them.’ Brethren, be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, but pray to be made tender in spirit. Be this your prayer:

‘Quick as the apple of an eye,

*Oh, God, my conscience make,
Awake, my soul, when sin is nigh,
And keep it still awake.
‘Oh may the least omisi on pain
My well instructed soul;
And drive me to the blood again,
Which makes the wounded whole!’*

Let us hear Nathan as kindly when he rebukes us as when he brings a promise, for in both cases the prophet speaks his Master’s own sure word. Let us thank the Lord for chiding us, and zealously set about destroying the idols against which his anger is stilted. It is due to the Lord, and it is the wisest course for ourselves.

But blessed be his name, the Lord will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever. Very frequently the Lord speaks to us in
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consolatory language. How full the Bible is of comforts, how truly has God carried out his own precept to the prophet. — ‘Comfort ye, comfort

ye my people, saith your God.” What more, indeed, could God have said than he has said for the consolation of his own beloved? Be not slow to hear when God is swift to cheer you. Alas, our mischief sometimes turns a deaf ear even to the sweetest note of Jehovah’s love. We cannot think that all things will work together for our good; we cannot believe that the Providence which looks so evil can really be a blessing in disguise. Blind unbelief is sure to err, and it errs principally in stopping its ear against those dulcet tones of everlasting lovingkindness which ought to make our hearts leap within us for joy. Beloved, be ye not hard to comfort, but when God calls be ready to answer him, and say, ‘I believe thee, Lord, and rejoice in thy word, and therefore my soul shall put away her mourning, and gird herself with delight.’ This is the way to keep up fellowship with God, to hear his consolations and to be grateful for them.

And last of all upon this point, God speaks to his people sometimes in the tones which *invite to innermost communion*. I cannot tell now how they sound, your ear must itself have heard them to know what they are. Sometimes he calls his beloved one to come away to the top of Amana, to ascend above the world and all its cares, and to come to the mount of transfiguration. ‘There,’ saith he, ‘will I show thee my loves.’ There the Lord seems to lay bare his heart to his child, and to tell him all the heights and depths of love unsearchable, and let him understand his eternal union with Christ, and the safety that comes of it, and the mystical covenant with all its treasures; ‘for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant.’ It is a sad thing when the Lord calls us into the secret chamber, where none may approach but men greatly beloved, and we are not prepared to enter. That innermost heart-to-heart communion is not given to him who is unclean. God said even to Moses, ‘Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.’ There is no enjoying that extraordinary nearness to God with which he sometimes favors his choice ones, unless the feet have been washed in the brazen laver, and the hands have been cleansed in innocence. ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.’ He that is of clean hands and a pure heart, he shall dwell on high; and only he, for God will not draw inconsistent professors and those who are dallying with sin into close contact with himself. ‘Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord,’

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and especially be ye clean who hope to stand in his holy place and to behold his face, for that face is only to be beheld in righteousness. Brethren, it is clear that the voice of God speaks to us in different tones, and our business, as his children, is to answer at once when he speaks to us. This is one form of holy fellowship.

The second and equally common form is that *we speak to God and he graciously replies to us*.

How should we speak to the Most High? I answer, first, we ought constantly to speak to him in the tone of *adoration*. We do not, I fear, adore and reverently magnify God one hundredth part as much as we should. The general frame of a Christian should be such that whenever his

mind is taken off from the necessary thoughts of his calling he should at once stand before the throne blessing the Lord, if not in words, yet in heart. I was watching the lilies the other day as they stood upon their tall stalks with flowers so fair and beautiful; they cannot sing, but they seemed to me to be offering continual hymns to God by their very existence. They had lifted themselves as near to heaven as they could, indeed they would not commence to flower till they had risen as far from the earth as their nature would permit, and then they just stood still in their beauty and showed to all around what God can do, and as they poured out their sweet perfume in silence they said by their example, ‘Bless ye the Lord as we also do by pouring out our very souls in sweetness.’ Now, you may not be able to preach, and it would not be possible to be always singing, especially in some company; but your life, your heart, your whole being should be one perpetual discourse of the lovingkindness of the Lord, and your heart, even if the Lord be silent, should carry on fellowship by adoring his blessed name.

Coupled with adoration, the Lord should always hear the voice of our *gratitude*. One of our brethren in prayer last Monday night commenced somewhat in this fashion. He said, ‘Lord, thou dost so continuously bless us that we feel as if we could begin to praise thee now and never leave off any more. We are half ashamed to ask for anything more, because thou dost always give so promptly, and so bountifully.’ In this spirit let us live. Let us be grateful unto him and bless his name, and come into his presence with thanksgiving! The whole life of the Christian man should be a psalm, of which the contents should be summed up in this sentence, ‘Bless Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name.’ Now, adoration

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and thanksgiving, if rendered to God with a sincere heart through Jesus Christ, will be acceptable to God, and we shall receive an answer of peace from him, so that we shall realize the second half of the text. ‘I will speak, and answer thou me.’

But, my brethren, it would not suffice for us to come before God with adoration only, for we must remember what we are. Great is he and therefore to be adored, but sinful are we, and therefore when we come to him there must always be *confession* of sin upon our lips. I never expect, until I get to heaven, to be able to cease confessing sin every day and every time I stand before God. When I wander away from God I may have some idea of being holy, but when I draw near to him I always feel as Job when he said, ‘I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; therefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes.’ If you would have the Lord hear, be sure you speak to him in humble notes. You have rebelled against him, you are a sinner by nature, and though forgiven and accepted, and therefore freed from dread of wrath, you can never forget that you *were* a rebel, and if it had not been for sovereign grace you would have been so still; therefore speak with lowliness and humility before the Lord if you would receive an answer.

Beloved friends, we should also speak to God with the voice of *petition*,

and this we can never cease to do, for we are always full of wants. "Give us this day our daily bread" must be our prayer as long as we are in the land where daily needs require daily supplies. We shall always need to make request for temporals and for spirituals, for ourselves and for others too. The work of intercessory prayer must never be allowed to cease. Speak ye to the Lord, ye that have his ear; speak for us his servants who are his ambassadors to men, speak for the church also, plead for rebellious sinners, and ask that unnumbered blessings may be given from above. We should also speak to him sometimes in the language of *resolution*. If the poor prodigal was right in saying, "I will arise and go to my father," so are Christians right in saying, "Therefore will I call upon him as long as I live," or in saying, "Long as I live I will bless the Lord." Sometimes when a duty is set before you very plainly which you had for a while forgotten, it is very sweet to say unto the Lord, "Lord, thy servant will rejoice to do this, only help thou me." Register the secret vow before the Lord, and honourably fulfill it.

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We should often use the language of *intimate communion*. "What language is that?" say you; and again I answer, "I cannot tell you." There are times when we say to the blessed Bridegroom of our souls love-words which the uncircumcised ear must not hear. Why, even the little that is unveiled before the world in the Book of Solomon's Song has made many a man cavil, for the carnal mind cannot understand such spiritual secrets. You know how the church cries out concerning her Lord: "Let him kiss me with the kisses his mouth, for his love is better than wine." There are many love passages and love words between sanctified souls and their dear Lord and Master, which it were not lawful for a man to utter in a mixed assembly, it were like the casting of pearls before swine, or reading one's loveletters in the public streets. Oh, ye chosen, speak ye to your Lord. Keep nothing from him. He has said, "If it were not so, I would have told you." He has told you all that he has seen with the Father, tell him everything that is in your heart, and when you speak with sacred child-like confidence, telling him everything, you will find him answering you with familiar love, and sweet will be the fellowship thus created.

Thus I have shewn you that there are two forms of the believer's intercourse with God.

II. Let us now consider THE METHOD OF THE COMBINATION OF THE TWO. With regard to this subject, I would say that *they must be united*. Brethren, we sometimes go to prayer, and we want God to hear us; but we have not heard what God has to say. This is wrong. Suppose a person neglects the hearing of the word, but is very fond of prayer, I feel certain that his prayer will soon become flat, stale, and unprofitable, because no conversation can be very lively which is all on one side. The man speaks, but he does not let God speak, and therefore he will soon find it hard to maintain the converse. If you are earnest in regular prayer, but do not as

regularly read or hear the Scriptures, your soul gives out without taking in, and is very apt to run dry. Not only thoughts and desires will flag, but even the expressions will become monotonous. If you consider how it is that your prayer appears to lack vivacity and freshness, the probable reason is that you are trying to maintain a maimed fellowship. When conversation is all one side, do you wonder that it flags? If I have a friend at my house tonight, and we wish to have fellowship with each other, I must not do all the talking, but I must wait for him to answer me, or to suggest new topics, as he may please; and if he be wiser than I am, there is the more reason why I

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should play second in the conversation, and leave its guidance very much to him.

It is such a condescension on God's part to speak with us that we ought eagerly to hear what he has to say. Let him never have to complain that we turned away our ear from him. At the same time we must not be silent ourselves; for to read the Scriptures, and to hear sermons, and never to pray, would not bring fellowship with God. That would be a lame conversation. Remember how Abraham spoke with God again and again, though he felt himself to be but dust and ashes; how Moses pleaded; how David sat before the Lord and then spake with his tongue: above all, remember how Jesus talked with his Father as well as hearkened to the voice from Heaven. Let both forms of converse unite, and all will be well. Again, it will be well sometimes to *vary the order*. Dear Mr. Mÿller, who is a man living near to God, whose every word is like a pearl, said the other day, 'Sometimes when I go into my closet to pray, I find I cannot pray as I would. What do I then? Why, since I cannot speak to the Lord, I beg the Lord to speak to me, and therefore I open the Scriptures and read my portion; and then I find the Lord gives me matter for prayer.' Is not this a suggestion of much weight? Does it not commend itself to your spiritual judgment? have you not observed that when somebody calls to see you, you may not be in a fit condition to start a profitable conversation; but if your friend will lead, your mind takes fire, and you have no difficulty in following him. Frequently it will be best to ask the Lord to lead the sacred converse, or wait awhile till he does so. It is a blessed thing to wait at the posts of his doors, expecting a word of love from his throne. It is generally best in communion with God to begin with hearing his voice, because it is due to his sacred majesty that we should first hear what he has to say to us; and it will especially be best for us to do so when we feel out of order for communion. If the flesh in its weakness hampers the spirit, then let the Bible reading come before the praying, that the soul may be awakened thereby. Still, there are times when it will be better to speak to our heavenly Father at once. For instance, if a child has done wrong, it is very wise of him to run straight away to his father, before his father has said anything to him, and say, 'Father I have sinned.' The prodigal had the first word, and so should our penitence seek for speedy audience, and pour itself out like water before the Lord. Sometimes too, when our heart is very full of thankfulness, we should allow praise to burst forth at once. When we

have received a great favor we ought not to wait till the giver of it speaks
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to us, but the moment we see him we should at once acknowledge our indebtedness. When the heart is full of either prayer or praise, and the presence of Jesus is felt, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we begin addressing the Lord with all our hearts. The Lord has spoken, and it is for us to reply at once.

On the other hand, when for wise reasons our Lord is silent unto us, it is well to take with us words and come unto him. If you have read your Bible, and have felt no visit from the Holy Spirit, or if you have heard a sermon and found no dew from the Lord attending it, then turn at once to prayer. Tell the Lord your condition, and entreat him to reveal himself unto you. Pray first and read afterwards, and you will find that your speaking with God will be replied to by his speaking to you through the Word. Take the two methods — common-sense and your own experience will guide you, and let sometimes one come first and sometimes the other.

But *let there be a reality about both*. Mockery in this matter is deadly sin. Do not let God's word be before you as a mass of letterpress, but let the book speak to your soul. Some people read the Bible through in a set time, and in great haste, and they might just as well never look at it at all. Can a man understand a country by merely tearing through it at a railway pace? If he desires to know the character of the soil, and the condition of the people, he walks leisurely through the land and examines with care. God's word needs digging, or its treasures will lie hidden. We must put our ear down to the heart of Scripture and hear its living throbs. Scripture often whispers rather than thunders, and the ear must be duly trained to comprehend its language. Resolve emphatically, "I will HEAR what God the Lord shall speak." Let God speak to you, and in order that he may do so, pause and meditate, and do not proceed till you grasp the meanings of the verses as far as the Spirit enables you. If you do not understand some passages read them again and again, and remember it is good to read even those parts of Scripture which you do not understand, even as it is good for a child to hear his father's voice whether he understands all his father has to say or not. At any rate, faith finds exercise in knowing that God never speaks in vain, even though he be not understood. Hear the word till you do understand it. While you are listening the sense will gradually break in upon your soul, but mind that you listen with opened ear and willing heart. When you speak to God do not let it be a dead form, for that is an insult to the Most High. If the heart be absent, it is as wicked to say a prayer as to be prayerless. If one should obtain an audience of Her Majesty
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and then should read a petition in which he took no interest, which was in fact a mere set of words, it would be an insult of the worst kind. Beware lest you thus insult the Majesty of heaven!

III. The last thought is only meant to be dropped before you for you to

enlarge upon it at your leisure, — THE BLESSED REALIZATION OF THESE TWO FORMS OF COMMUNION IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST. — ‘Call thou, and I will answer.’ Infinite majesty of God, call thou upon me and ask thou for all thou canst ask, and I bless thee that I have an answer for thee. Ask thy poor servant for all thou canst demand of him and he will gladly reply. Brethren do you ask in wonder — How can we answer him? The answer is clear — By bringing Jesus to remembrance. Our Lord Jesus Christ is man’s complete answer to God. Divine justice demands death as the penalty of sin: — Behold the Son of God taken down from the cross because he was surely dead, wrapped in the cerements of the grave and laid in Joseph’s tomb. God’s justice demands suffering, demands that the sinner be abandoned of God. See yonder cross and hear the cry, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ Great God, thou hast in Jesus all the suffering thy justice can ask, even to death itself. God’s holiness righteously demands a life of obedience: man cannot be right before God unless he renders perfect obedience to the law. Behold our answer, we bring a perfect Savior’s active and passive obedience and lay it down at Jehovah’s feet — what can he ask for more? He requires a perfect heart, and an unblemished person, and he cannot accept less than a perfect manhood. We bring the Father his Only Begotten, the Son of man, our brother; and here is our answer: there is the perfect man, the unfallen head of the race. Oh, never try to reply to God with any other answer than this. Whatever he asks of thee, bring him thy Savior; he cannot ask more. Thou bringest before him that which fully contents him, for he himself has said, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ Let thine answer then to the justice of God be Christ.

But I said that Christ fulfilled the other purpose. He is God’s answer to us. What have you to ask of God this morning? Are you so far away from him that you enquire, ‘How can I be saved?’ No answer comes out of the excellent glory except Christ on the cross, that is God’s answer: believe in him and live. By those wounds, by that bloody sweat, by that sacrificial death, you must be saved; look you there! Do you unto the Lord, ‘I have trusted Christ, but am I secure of salvation?’ No answer comes but Christ risen from the dead to die no more. Death hath no more dominion over

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him, and he hath said, ‘Because I live ye shall live also.’ The risen Christ is the Lord’s assurance of our safety for eternity. Do you ask the Lord, ‘How much dost thou love me?’ Thou hast asked a large question, but there is a large answer for thee. He gives his Son, behold what manner of love is born! Do you enquire, ‘Lord, what wilt thou give me?’ His Son is the answer to that question also. Behold these lines written on his bleeding person, ‘He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?’ Would you know more? Do you say, ‘What sign showest thou that all these things are so?’ He gives thee Christ in heaven. Yea, if thou askest, ‘Lord, what shall thy servant be when thou hast completed thy work of grace upon me? He points you to Jesus in the glory, for you shall be like him. If you ask what

is to be your destiny in the future, he shows you Christ coming a second time without a sin-offering unto salvation. Dear friend, thou canst Isle nothing of thy God, but what he gives thee at once a reply in Jesus. Oh What blessed talk is that when the Christian's heart says Jesus, and the Christian's God says Jesus, and how sweet it is when we come to Jesus and rest in him, and God is in Jesus and makes him his rest for ever. Thus do believers and their God rest together in the same beloved One. May the Lord add his blessing to our meditation, and make this kind of communion common among us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON

— Psalm 84. and 85.

HYMN FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 84 (SONG III.), 95 (SONG III.), 782.

STRUGGLES OF CONSCIENCE.

NO. 336

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING,
SEPTEMBER 22ND, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

‘How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin.’ — Job 13:23.

THERE are many persons who long to have a deeper sense of their sinfulness, and then with a certain show of conscientious scruple, they make an excuse for the exercise of simple faith. That spiritual disease, which keeps sinners from Christ, assumes a different shape at different times. In Luther’s day the precise evil under which men labored, was this: they believed in being self-righteous, and so they supposed that they must have good works before they might trust in Christ. In our day the evil has taken another, and that a most extraordinary shape. Men have aimed at being self-righteous after quite a singular fashion; they think they must feel worse, and have a deeper conviction of sin before they may trust in Christ. Many hundreds do I meet with, who say they dare not come to Christ and trust him with their souls, because they do not feel their need of him enough; they have not sufficient contrition for their sins; they have not repented as fully as they have rebelled. Brethren, it is the same evil, from the same old germ of self righteousness, but it has taken another and I think a more crafty shape. Satan has wormed himself into many hearts under the garb of an angel of light, and he has whispered to the sinner, ‘Repentance is a necessary virtue; stop until you have repented, and when you have sufficiently mortified yourself on account of sin, then you will be fit to come to Christ, and qualified to trust and rely on him.’ It is with that deadly evil I want to grapple this morning. I am persuaded it is far more common than some would think. And I think I know the reason of its great commonness. In the Puritanic age, which was noted certainly for its purity

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of doctrine, there was also a great deal of experimental preaching, and much of it was sound and healthy. But some of it was unscriptural, because

it took for its standard what the Christian felt and not what the Savior said; the inference from a believer's experience, rather than the message which goes before any belief. That excellent man, Mr. Rogers, of Deadham, who has written some useful works, and Mr. Sheppard, who wrote *The Sound Believer*, Mr. Flavel, and many others, give descriptions of what a sinner must be before he may come to Christ, which actually represent what a saint is, after he has come to Christ. These good brethren have taken their own experience; what they felt before they came into light, as the standard of what every other man ought to feel before he may put his trust in Christ and hope for mercy. There were some in the Puritanic times who protested against that theology, and insisted that sinners were to be bidden to come to Christ just as they were; not with any preparation either of feeling or of doing. At the present time there are large numbers of Calvinistic ministers who are afraid to give a free invitation to sinners; they always garble Christ's invitation thus: "If you are a sensible sinner you may come;" just as if stupid sinners might not come. They say, "If you feel your need of Christ, you may come;" and then they describe what that feeling of need is, and give such a high description of it that their hearers say, "Well, I never felt like that," and they are afraid to venture for lack of the qualification. Mark you, the brethren speak truly in some respect. They describe what a sinner does, feel before he comes, but they make a mistake in putting what a sinner does feel, as if that were what a sinner ought to feel. What the sinner feels, and what the sinner does, until he is renewed by grace, are just the very opposite of what he ought. We always get wrong when we say one Christian's experience is to be estimated by what another Christian has felt. No, sir, my experience is to be measured by the Word of God; and what the sinner should feel is to be measured by what Christ commands him to feel, and not by what another sinner has felt. Comparing ourselves among ourselves, we are not wise. I do believe there are hundreds and thousands who remain in doubt and darkness, and go down to despair, because there is a description given and a preparation for Christ demanded, to which they cannot attain — a description indeed which is not true, because it is a description of what they feel after they have found Christ, and not what they must feel before they may come to him. Now, then, with all my might I come this morning to break down every barrier that keeps a soul from Christ; and, as God the Holy Spirit shall help me, to

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dash the battering ram of truth against every wall that has been built up, whether by doctrinal truth or experimental truth, that keeps the sinner from Christ, who desires to come and to be saved by him.

I shall attempt to address you in the following order this morning. First, a little by way of consolation; then, a little by way of instruction; a little more upon discrimination or caution; and in the last place, a few sentences by way of exhortation.

I. First, beloved, let me speak to you who are desiring to feel more and

more your sins, and whose prayer is the prayer of the text, ‘Lord how many are mine iniquities and my sins, make me to know my transgression and my sin.’ Let me try to COMFORT YOU. It ought to give you much solace when you recollect that the best of men have prayed this prayer before you. The better a man is, the more anxious is he to know the worst of his case. The more a man gets rid of sin and the more he lives above his daily faults and errors, the more does he cry ‘Search me, O God, and know my heart; O try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.’ Bad men do not want to know their badness; it is the good man, the man who has been renewed by grace, who is anxious to discover what is his disease, that he may have it healed. Ought it not then to be some ground of comfort to you, that your prayer is not a prayer which could come from the lips of the wicked, but a prayer which has constantly been offered by the most advanced of saints, by those who have most grown in grace. Perhaps that is a reason why it should not be offered by you, who just now can scarcely hope to be a saint at all; yet it should be a matter of sweet rejoicing that your prayer cannot be an evil one, because the “Amens” of God’s people, even those who are the fathers in our Israel, go up to God with it. I am sure my aged brothers and sisters in Christ now present, can say unanimously, ‘That has often been my prayer, ‘Lord let me know my iniquity and my sin; teach me how vile I am, and lead me daily to Christ Jesus that my sins may be put away.’ Let this reflection also comfort you — you never prayed like this years ago when you were a careless sinner. It was the last thing you would ever think of asking for; you did not want to know your guilt. No! you found pleasure in wickedness. Sin was a sweet morsel to you; you only wanted to be let alone that you might roll it under your tongue. If any told you of your evil, you would rather they let it alone. “Ah,” said you, “what business is that of yours? no doubt I make some mistakes and am a little amiss, but I don’t

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want to be told so.” Why, the last meditation you would ever have thought of entertaining would have been a meditation upon your own criminality. When conscience did speak, you said, ‘Lay down, sir, be quiet!’ When God’s word came home sharp to you, you tried to blunt its edge — you did not want to feel it. Now, ought it not to be some comfort that you have had such a gracious change wrought in you, that you are now longing for the very feeling which at one time you could not endure? Surely, man, the Lord must have begun a good work in you, for you would not have such wishes and desires as these unless he had put his hand to the plough, and had begun to plough the barren, dry, hard soil of your heart.

Yet further, there is another reason why you should take comfort; it is very probable you do already feel your guilt, and what you are asking for you already have in measure realized. It often happens that a man has the grace which he seeks for, and does not know he has it, because he makes a mistake as to what he should feel when he has the blessing. He has already got the boon which he asks God to give him. Let me just put it in another shape. If you are sorry because you cannot be sorry enough on account of

sin, why you are already sorry. If you grieve because you cannot grieve enough, why you do grieve already. If it is a cause of repentance to you that your heart is very hard and that you cannot repent, why you do repent. My dear hearer, let me assure you for your comfort, that when you go down on your knees and say ‘Lord , I groan before thee, because I cannot groan; I cannot feel; Lord help me to feel,’ why, you do feel, and you have got the repentance that you are asking for. At least you have got the first degree of it; you have got the mustard seed of repentance in tiny grain. Let it alone, it will grow; foster it with prayer and it will become a tree. The very grace which you are asking of God is speaking in your very prayer. It is repentance which asks God that I may repent more. It is a broken heart which asks God to break it. That is not a hard heart which says, ‘Lord I have a hard heart; soften my heart.’ It is a soft heart already. That is not a dead soul which says, ‘Lord I am dead; quicken me.’ Why, you are quickened. That man is not dumb who says, ‘Lord I am dumb; make me speak.’ Why, he speaks already; and that man who says, ‘Lord I cannot feel,’ why, he feels already. He is a sensible sinner already. So that you are just the man that Christ calls to him. This experience of yours, which you think is just the opposite of what it ought to be, is just what it should be. Oh, be comforted in this respect. But sit not down in it; be comforted enough to make you run to Jesus now, — just as you are. I take thee,

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sinner, to be just the man the minister is always seeking after. When we say that Christ came that there might be drink given to the thirsty, you are just the man we mean — you are thirsty. ‘No,’ you say, ‘I don’t feel that I am thirsty, I only wish I did.’ Why, that wish to feel thirsty is your thirst. You are exactly the man; you are far nearer the character than if you said ‘I do thirst, I have the qualification;’ then, I should be afraid you had not got it.” But, because you think you have it not, it is all the clearer proof that you have this qualification, if indeed there be any qualification. When I say, ‘Come unto Christ all ye that labor and are heavy laden;’ and you say, ‘Oh, I don’t feel heavy laden enough,’ why, you are the very man the text means. And when I say, ‘Whosoever will, let him come,’ and you say, ‘I wish I were more willing, I will to be willing,’ why, you are the man. It is only one of Satan’s quibbles — a bit of hell’s infernal logic to drive you from Christ. Be a match for Satan now, this once and say ‘Thou lying fiend, thou tellest me I do not feel my need of a Savior enough. I know I feel my need; and, inasmuch as I long to feel it I do feel it. Christ bids me come to him, and I will come — now, this morning. I will trust my soul, just as it is in the hands of him whose body hung upon the tree. Sink or swim, here I am resting on him, and clinging to him as the rock of my salvation.’

Take, then, these words of comfort.

II. I must now go on to my second point, and give a few words of INSTRUCTION.

And so, my hearer, you anxiously long to know how many are your iniquities and your sins; and your prayer is, "Lord, make me to know my transgression and my sin." Let me instruct thee, then, as to how God will answer your prayers. God hath more than one way of answering the same prayer; and though the ways are diverse, they are all equally useful and efficacious. It sometimes happens that God answers this prayer by allowing a man to fall into more and more gross sin. At our last church meeting, a brother, in giving his experience of how he was brought to God, said he could not feel his guilt, his heart was very hard; till it happened one day he was tempted to the utterance of an untruth, and no sooner had he uttered it than he felt what a despicable creature he was to tell a lie to another. So that that one sin led him to see the deceitfulness and vileness of his own heart; and from that day he never had to complain that he did not feel his guilt enough, but, on the contrary, he felt too guilty to come to Christ. I

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believe many a man, who has been educated morally, who has been trained up in such a way that he has never fallen into gross sin, finds it very difficult to say, "Lord, I feel myself to be a sinner." He knows he is a sinner, and he knows it as a matter of fact, but he cannot altogether feel it. And I have known men who have often envied the harlot and the drunkard, because, say they, "Had I been like them, I should feel more bitterly my sin, and should feel I was one of those whom Jesus came to save." It may be, though I could hope it may not be so, that God may suffer thee to fall into sin. God grant it may never be so; but if thou ever shouldst, thou wilt then have cause to say, "Lord, I am vile; now mine eye sees myself; I abhor myself in dust and ashes, because of this my great sin." Or possibly, you may not actually fall into sin, but be taken to the very verge of it. Did you ever know what it was on a sudden to be overtaken by some fiery temptation, to feel as if the strong hand of Satan had gripped you about the loins, and was pulling on, you knew not whither, nor why, nor how, but against your will, to the very verge of the precipice of some tremendous sin, and you went on and on, till, on a sudden, just as you were about to take a dive into sin, your eyes were opened, and you said, "Great God, how came I here, — I, who hate this iniquity?, — I, who abhor it?, — and yet my feet had almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped." Then in the recoil you say, "Great God, hold thou me up, for if thou dost not hold me up, I fall indeed." Then you discover that there is inbred sin in your heart only lacking opportunity to spring out; that your soul is like a magazine of gunpowder, only needing the spark, and there shall come a terrible catastrophe; that you are full of sin, grim with iniquity and evil devices, and that it only wants opportunity and strong temptation to destroy you body and soul, and that for ever. It happens sometimes that this is the way God answers this prayer.

A second method by which the Lord answers this prayer is by opening the eyes of the soul; not so much by providence, as by the mysterious agency of the Holy Spirit. Let me tell thee, my hearer, if thou shouldst ever have thine eyes opened to see thy guilt, thou wilt find it to be the most awful

sight thou hast ever beheld. I have had as much experience of this as any man among you. For five years as a child there was nothing before my eyes but my guilt; and though I do not hesitate to say that those who observed my life would not have seen any extraordinary sin, yet as I looked upon myself, there was not a day in which I did not commit such gross, such outrageous sins against God, that often and often I wished I had never
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been born. I know John Bunyan's experience when he said he wished he had been a frog, or a toad, rather than a man, so guilty did he feel himself to be. You know how it is with yourselves. It is as when a housewife cleans her chamber, she looks, and there is no dust; the air is clear, and all her furniture is shining brightly. But there is a chink in the window shutter, a ray of light creeps in, and you see the dust dancing up and down, thousands of grains, in the sunbeam. It is all over the room the same, but she

cannot see it only where the sunbeam comes. It is just so with us; God sends a ray of divine light into the heart, and then we see how vile and full of iniquity it is. I trust, my hearer, that your prayer may not be answered as it was in my case, by terrible conviction, awful dreams, nights of misery, and days of pain. Take care; you are praying a tremendous prayer when you are asking God to show you your wickedness. Better for you to modify your prayer, and put it thus, — 'Lord, let me know enough of my iniquity to bring me to Christ; not so much as to keep me from him, not so much as to drive me to despair; but only enough to be divorced from all trust in myself, and to be led to trust in Christ alone.' Otherwise, like Moses, you may be constrained to cry out in a paroxysm of agony, 'O Lord, kill me I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favor in thy sight, and let me not see my wretchedness.'

Still, however, the practical question recurs, and you ask me again, 'Tell me how I can feel the need of my Savior.' The first advice I give you is this: Particularise your sins. Do not say 'I am a sinner;' it means nothing; everybody says that. But say this, 'Am I a liar? Am I a thief? Am I a drunkard? Have I had unchaste thoughts? Have I committed unclean acts? Have I in my soul often rebelled against God? Am I often angry without a cause? Have I a bad temper? Am I covetous? Do I love this world better than the world to come? Do I neglect prayer? Do I neglect the great salvation?'" Put the questions upon the separate points, and you will soon convict yourself much more readily than by taking yourself in the gross as being a sinner. I have heard of a hypocritical old Monk who used to whine out, while he whipped his back as softly as he could, 'Lord, I am a great sinner, as big a sinner as Judas;' and when some one said, 'Yes that you are — you are like Judas, a vile old hypocrite,' then he would say, 'No I am not.' Then he would go on again, 'I am a great sinner.' Some one would say, 'You are a great sinner, you broke the first commandment;' and then he would say, 'No I have not.' Then when he would go on and
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say, 'I am a great sinner,' some one would say, 'Yes, you have broken the

second commandment,” and he would say, “No I have not;” and the same with the third and the fourth, and so on right through. So it came to pass he had kept the whole ten according to his own account, and yet he went on crying he was a great sinner. The man was a hypocrite, for if he had not broken the commandments, how could he be a sinner at all? You will find it better not to dwell on your sins in the mass, but to pen them, count them over, and look at them individually, one by one.

Then let me advise you next to hear a personal ministry. Sit not where the preacher preaches to you in the plural number, but where he deals with you as a man alone, by yourself. Seek out a preacher like Rowland Hill, of whom it is said that if you sat in the back seat in the gallery, you always had a notion that Mr. Hill meant you; or, that if you sat in the doorway where he could not see you, yet you were quite convinced he must know you were there, and that he was preaching right at you. I wonder indeed, if men ever could feel their sins under some ministers — genteel ministers, intellectual, respectable, who never speak to their hearers as if they did anything wrong. I say of these gentlemen what Hugh Latimer said of many ministers in his day, that they are more fit to dance a morris-dance than to deal with the souls of men. I believe there are some this day more fit to deliver smart lectures and bring out pleasing things to soothe carnal minds, than to preach the Word of God to sinners. We want the like of John the Baptist back again, and Boanerges; we want men like Baxter to preach, *‘As though they might not preach again, As dying men to dying men.’*

We want men like John Berridge, who have pulled the velvet out of their mouths years ago and cannot speak fine words — men that hit hard, that draw the bow and pull the arrow to its very head, and send it right home, taking deadly aim at the heart and the conscience of men, ploughing deep, hitting at the private lusts and at the open sins, not generalizing particularising, not preaching to men in the mass but to men in the detail, not to the mob and the crowd, but to each man separately and individually. Grow not offended with the minister if he comes home too close to you; remember that is his duty. And if the whip goes right round you, and stings you, thank God for it, be glad of it. Let me, if I sit under a ministry, sit under a man who uses the knife with me sometimes, a man who will not spare me, a man who will not flatter me. If

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there should be flattery anywhere, let it not be at any rate in the pulpit. He who deals with men’s souls should deal with them very plainly; the pulpit is not the place for fine words, when we have to deal with the solemnities of eternity. Take that advice, then, and listen to a personal, home-smiting ministry.

Next to that, if thou wouldst know thy sins, study much the law of God. Let the twentieth chapter of Exodus be often before your eyes, and take with it as a commentary, Christ’s sermon, and Christ’s speech when he said, ‘He that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart.’ Understand that God’s

commandments mean not only what they say in words, but that they touch the thought, the heart, the imagination. Think of that sentence of David, “Thy commandments are exceeding broad.” And thus, I think, thou wilt soon come to detect the heinousness of thy sin, and the blackness of thy guilt. And if thou wouldst know still more, spend a little time in contemplating the fatal end of thy sin, shouldst thou die impenitent. Dare to look downward to that fire which must be thy eternal doom, unless Jesus Christ save thee. Be wise, sinner, and look at the harvest which thou shalt surely reap if thou sowest tares; sometimes let these words ring in thy ears, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” Open thy ears and listen to the end of this text — “Where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.” Let such a pass age as this be chewed over in your soul, “The wicked shall be cast into hell with all the nations that forget God.” These solemn thoughts may help you. Such books as Allaine’s Alarm, Baxter’s Call to the Unconverted, Doddridge’s Rise and Progress, may have a good effect on your mind, in helping you to see the greatness of your guilt, by making you meditate upon the greatness of its punishment. But if thou wouldst have a better, and more effectual way still, I give thee one other piece of advice. Spend much of your time in thinking upon the agonies of Christ, for the guilt of thy sin is never so clearly seen anywhere as in the fact that it slew the Savior. Think what an evil thing that must be which cost Christ his life, in order to save thee. Consider, I say, poor soul, how black must be that vileness which could only be washed out with his precious blood! how grievous those offenses which could not be expiated unless his body were nailed to the tree, his side pierced, and unless he died in fever and in thirst, crying, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Go thou to the garden at the foot of The Mount of Olives, and see the Savior in his bloody sweat! Go thou to Pilate’s hall, and see him in his
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shameful accusations! Go thou to the hall of Herod’s praetorian guard, and see there how the mighty men set Christ at nought! And go then, last of all, to Calvary, and see that spectacle of woe, and if these do not show thee the blackness of thy sin, then nothing can. If the death of Christ do not teach thee thy need of a Savior, then what remedy remains for a heart so hard, for a soul so blind as thine? Thus have I given you words of instruction. Forget them not; put them into practice. Be ye not hearers only, but doers of the word.

III. And now, very briefly indeed, a few sentences by way of DISCRIMINATION.

Thou art longing, my hearer, to know thy great guilt, and to feel thy need of Jesus. Take care that thou dost discriminate between the work of the Spirit and the work of the devil. It is the work of the Spirit to make thee feel thyself a sinner, but it never was his work to make thee feel that Christ could forget thee. It is the work of the Spirit to make thee repent of sin; but it is not the work of the Spirit to make thee despair of pardon; that is

the devil's work. You know Satan always works by trying to counterfeit the work of the Spirit. He did so in the land of Egypt. Moses stretched out his rod and turned all the waters into blood. Out came Jannes and Jambres and by their cunning and sleight of hand, they have a large piece of water brought, and they turn that into blood. Then Moses fills the land with frogs — the ungracious sorcerers have a space cleared and they fill that with frogs; thus they opposed the work of God by pretending to do the same work; so will the devil do with thee. "Ah!" says God the Holy Spirit, "Sinner thou canst not save thyself." "Ah!" says the devil, "and he cannot save thee either." "Ah!" saith God the Holy Spirit 'thou hast a hard heart, only Christ can soften it.' "Ah!" says the devil, 'but he wont soften it unless thou dost soften it first.' "Ah!" says God the Spirit, 'thou hast no qualification, thou art naked, and ruined, and undone.' "Yes," says the devil, 'it is no use your trusting Christ, because you have no good in you, and you cannot hope to be saved.' "Ah!" says God the Spirit, 'thou dost not feel thy sin; thou art hard to repent, because of thy hardness.' "Ah!" says the devil, 'and because thou art so hard -hearted Christ cannot save thee.' Now do learn to distinguish between the one and the other. When a poor penitent sometimes thinks of destroying himself, do you think that is the Spirit's work? 'It is the devil's work, 'he was a murderer from the beginning.'" One sinner says, 'I am s o guilty, I am sure I can nev er be

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 pardoned." Is that the Spirit's teaching — that lie? Oh! that comes from the father of lies. Take heed, whenever you read a biography like that of John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, as you read, say, 'that is the Spirit' s work, Lord send me that' — "that is the devil's work, Lord keep me from that." Do not be desirous to have the devil tearing your soul to pieces, the less you have to do with him the better, and if the Holy Ghost keeps Satan from you, bless him for it . Do not wait to have the terrors and horrors that some have, but come to Christ just as you are. You do not want those terrors and horrors, they are of little use. Let me remind you of another thing; I ask you not to acquaint yourself with your sins so as to hope to know them all, because you cannot number them with man's poor arithmetic. Young, in his *Night Thoughts*, says, 'God hides from all eyes but his own that desperate sight — a human heart.' If you were to know only the tenth part of how bad you have been you would be driven mad. You who have been the most moral, the most excellent in character, if all the past sins of your heart could stand before you in their black colors, and you could see them in their true light you would be in hell, for indeed it is hell to discover the sinfulness of sin. Do you mean to say that you would go down on your knees and ask God to send you to hell, or drive you mad? Be not so foolish; say, 'Lord, let me know my guilt enough to drive me to Christ; but do not gratify my curiosity by letting me know more; no, give me enough to make me feel that I must trust Christ, or else be lost, and I shall be well content if thou givest me that, though thou deniest me more.'

Once again, my dear hearers, listen to this next oration, for it is very

important. Take care thou dost not try to make a righteousness out of thy feelings. If you say, "I may not go to Christ till I feel my need of him" — that is clear legality; you are on the wrong tack altogether, because Christ does not want you to feel your need in order to prepare for him; he wants no preparation, and anything which you think to be a preparation is a mistake. You are to come just as you are — to-day, as you are, now — not as you will be, but just now, as you now are. I do not say to you, "Go home and seek God in prayer; I say come to Christ now at this very hour;" you will never be in a better state than you are now, for you were never in a worse state, and that is the fittest state in which to come to Christ. He that is very sick is just in the right state to have a doctor; he that is filthy and begrimed is just in the right state to be washed; he that is naked is just in the right state to be clothed. That is your case. But you say, "I do not

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feel my need." Just so: your not feeling it proves you to have the greater need. You cannot trust your feelings, because you say, you have not any. Why, if God were to hear your prayers and make you feel your need, you would begin to trust in your feelings, and would be led to say, "I trust Christ because I feel my need;" that would be just saying, "I trust myself." All these things are but Popery in disguise, all this preaching to sinners that they must feel this and feel that before they trust in Jesus, is just selfrighteousness in another shape. I know our Calvinistic brethren will not like this sermon — I cannot help that — for I do not hesitate to say, that Phariseeism is mixed with Hyper-Calvinism more than with any other sect in the world. And I do solemnly declare that this preaching to the prejudice and feelings of what they call sensible sinners, is nothing more than selfrighteousness taking a most cunning and crafty shape, for it is telling the sinner that he must be something before he comes to Christ. Whereas the gospel is preached not to sensible sinners, or sinners with any other qualifying adjective, but to sinners as sinners, to sinners just as they are; it is not to sinners as repentant sinners, but to sinners as sinners, be their state what it may, and their feelings whatever they may. Oh, sinners, Mercy's door is wide open flung to you this morning; let not Satan push you back by saying, "You are not fit;" You are fit! that is to any, you have all the fitness Christ wants, and that is none at all. Come to him just as you are. "Oh," says one, "but you know that hymn of Hart's?"

*'All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of him.'*

I cannot get that." Let me counsel you then, never to quote part of a hymn, or part of a text: quote it all:-

*'All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of him;
This he gives you,
'Tis his Spirit's rising beam.'*

Come and ask him to give it to you, and believe he will give it you. Do believe my Master is longing to save you: trust him, act on that belief, sinner, and you shall be saved, or else I will be lost with you. Do but believe that my Master has got a loving heart, and that he is able to forgive, and that he has a mighty arm and is able to deliver you. Do him the honor now of not measuring his corn with your bushel. 'For his ways are not your ways, neither are his thoughts your thoughts.'" "As high as the heaven
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is above the earth, so high are his ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts." To-day he says to you, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.'" Sinner, if thou believest and art not saved, why God's Word is a lie, and God is not true. And wilt thou ever dream that to be the case? No, sinner; close in now with the proclamation of this gospel, and say, —

*'I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter mercy gives;
Perhaps he may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives.
Perhaps he will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But if I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there.'*

Thou canst not perish trusting in Christ. Though thou hast no good works and no good feelings, yet if thine arms are round the cross, and if the blood be sprinkled on thy brow, when the destroying angel shall pass through the world, he shall pass over thee. Thus is it written: — "When I see the blood, I will pass over you;" — not "when I see your feelings about the blood," — not "when I see your faith in the blood," but "when I see the blood. I will pass over you." Learn to discriminate between a sense of sin which would humble thee, and a sense of sin which would only make thee proud; when thou hast come to say, 'I have felt my sin enough, and therefore I am fit to come to Christ,' it is nothing but pride dressed in the garb of humility.

Let me tell thee one more thing before I have done with thee on this point. Anything which keeps thee from Christ is sin, whatever thought thou hast which keeps thee from trusting Christ to-day is a sinful thought; and every hour thou continuest as thou art, an unbeliever in Christ, the wrath of God abideth on thee. Now why shouldst thou be asking for a thing which may help to keep thee from Christ all the longer? You know now that you have nothing good in you; why not trust in Christ for all? But you say, 'I must first of all feel more.'" Poor soul, if you were to feel more acutely, you would find it all the harder to trust Christ. I prayed to God that he would show me my guilt; I little thought how he would answer me. Why I was such a fool that I would not come to Christ unless the devil dragged me there. I said, 'Christ cannot have died for me, because I have not felt

miserable enough.” God heard me, and, believe me, I will never pray that prayer again; for when I began to feel my guilt, then I said, “I am too wicked to be saved,” and I found the very thing I had been asking for was a curse upon me, and not a blessing. So, if thou shouldst feel what thou askest to feel, it might be the cause of thy condemnation. Be wise, therefore, and listen to my Master’s voice; stay not to gather together the fuller’s soap, and the refiners fire, but come thou and wash now in Jordan, and be clean, come, and stop not till thy heart be turned up with the plough, and thy soul hewn down with the axe. Come as thou art to him now. What man! wilt not thou come to Christ, when he has said, “Whomever will, let him come?” Wilt thou not trust him when he looks down and smiles on thee, and asks, “Trust me, I will never deceive thee?” What, canst thou not say to him, “Master, I am very guilty, but thou hast said, ‘Come now, and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’” Lord, this mercy is too great, but I believe it, I take thee at thy word; thou hast said, “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will forgive your iniquities.” Lord, I come to thee, I know not how it is that thou canst forgive such an one as I am, but I believe thou canst not lie, and on that promise do I rest my soul. I know thou hast said, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men;” Lord, I cannot understand how there can be power in the blood to wash away all manner of blasphemy, but thou hast said it, and I believe it. It is thy business to make thy own word true, not mine, and thou hast said, “Whosoever will, let him come;” Lord, I am not worthy, but I do will to come, or if I do not will, yet I will to will, therefore will I come, just as I am, I know I have no good feeling to recommend myself to thee, but then thou dost not want good feeling in me, thou wilt give me all I want.

Oh my dear hearers, I feel so glad I have such a gospel as this to preach to you. If you have not received it, I pray God the Holy Ghost to send it home to you. It is so simple that men cannot believe it is true. If I were to bid you take off your shoes and run from here to York and you would be saved, why you would do it at once, and the road to York would be thronged; but when it is nothing but the soulquickening words, “Believe and live,” it is too easy for your proud hearts to do. If I told you to go and earn a thousand pounds and endow a church with it, and you would be saved, you would think the price very cheap; but when I say, “Trust Christ and be saved,” you cannot do that — it is too simple. Ah, madness of the

human heart! strange, strange, besotted sin, when God makes the path plain, men will not run in it for that very reason; and when he sets the door wide open, that is the very reason they will not come in. They say if the door was half a-jar and they had to push it open, they would come in. God has made the gospel too plain and too simple to suit proud hearts. May God soften proud hearts, and make you receive the Savior.

IV. Now I come to my last point, which I have already trenched upon, and that is by way of EXHORTATION.

Poor sinner, seven years ago you were saying just what you are saying now, and when seven more years shall have come, you will be saying just the same. Seven years ago you said, ‘I would trust Christ, but I do not feel as I ought.’ Do you feel any better now? And when another seven years are come you will feel just as you do now. You will say, ‘I would come, but I do not feel fit — I do not feel my need enough.’ Ay, and it will keep going on for ever, till you go down to the pit of hell, saying as you go down, ‘I do not feel my need enough,’ and then the lie will be detected, and you will say, ‘It never said in the Word of God, ‘I might come to Christ when I felt my need enough,’ but it said ‘Whosoever will, let him come.’ I would not come as I was, therefore I am justly cast away.” Hear me, sinner, when I bid thee come to Jesus as thou art, and give thee these reasons for it.

In the first place, it is a very great sin not to feel your guilt, and not to mourn over it, but then it is one of the sins that Jesus Christ atoned for on the tree. When his heart was pierced, he paid the ransomed price for your hard heart. Oh! sinner, if Christ had only died that we might be forgiven of other sins except our hard hearts, we should never go to heaven, for we have, all of us, even we who have believed, committed that great sin of being impenitent before him. If He had not died to wash that sin away as well as every other sin, where should we be? The fact that thou canst not weep, nor sorrow as thou wouldst, is an addition to thy guilt; but did not Christ wash you from that sin, black though it be? Come to him, he is able to save you even, from this.

Again, come to Jesus, because it is He only who can give you that heart for which you seek. If men were not to come to Christ till they feel as they should feel, they would never come at all. I will freely confess that if I had never trusted Christ until I felt I might have trusted him, I never could have trusted him, and could not trust him now. For there are times with me

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when after I have preached the gospel as plainly as I could, I have returned to my own chamber and my heart has been dead, lumpish, lying like a log within my spirit, and I have thought then if I could not come to Christ as a sinner, I could not come anyhow else. If I found in the text one word before that word “sinner” — “Jesus Christ came into the world to save” — and then an adjective, and then “sinners,” I should be lost. It is just because the text says, “sinners” just as they are, that “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,” that I can hope he came to save me. If it had said Jesus Christ came into the world to save soft-hearted sinners, I should have said, ‘Lord, my heart is like adamant.’ If it had said Jesus came into the world to save weeping sinners, I should have said, ‘Lord though I press my eyelids I could not force a tear. If it had said Jesus came into the world to save sinners that felt their need of him, I should say, ‘I do not feel the need of it; I know I do need thee, but I do not feel it. ‘But, Lord, thou camest to

save sinners, and I am saved. I trust thou camest to save me, and here I am, sink or swim, I rest on thee. If I perish, I will perish trusting thee; and if I must be lost, in thy hands it shall be; for in my own hands I will not be in any respect, or in any degree whatever. I come to that cross, and under that cross I stand; ‘thy perfect righteousness my beauty is — my glorious dress.’”

Come sinner to Christ, because he can soften thine heart, and thou canst never soften it thyself. He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins; not merely the remission, but the repentance too. He gives his grace not merely to those who seek it, but even to those that seek it not. He gives repentance not to those who repent themselves, but to those who cannot repent. And to those who are saying, ‘Lord I would, but cannot feel;’ ‘I would, but cannot weep;’ I say Christ is just the Savior for you — a Christ that begins at the beginning and does not want you to begin — a Christ that shall go to the end, and won’t want you to finish — a Christ that does not ask you to say Alpha, and then he will be the Omega: but he will be both Alpha and Omega. Christ, that is the beginning and the end, the first and the last. The plain gospel is just this, ‘Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth.’ ‘But, Lord, I cannot see anything.’ ‘Look unto me.’ ‘But, Lord, I do not feel.’ ‘Look unto me.’ ‘But, Lord, I cannot say I feel my need.’ ‘Look unto me, not unto thyself; Al this is looking to thyself.’ ‘But, Lord, I feel sometimes that I could do anything, but a week passes, and then I am hard of heart.’ ‘Look unto me.’ ‘But Lord, I have often tried.’ ‘Try no more, look unto me.’ ‘Oh, but Lord

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thou knowest.” ‘Yes, I know all things, I know everything, all thine iniquity and thy sins, but look unto me.’ ‘Oh, but often, Lord, when I have heard a sermon I feel impressed, yet it is like the morning cloud and the early dew; it passes away.’ ‘Look unto me, not to thy feelings or thy impressions, look unto me.’ ‘Well,’ say some, ‘but will that really save me, just looking to Christ?’ My dear soul, if that does not save thee I am not saved. The only way in which I have been saved, and the only gospel I can find in the Bible, is looking to Christ. ‘But if I go on in sin,’ says one. But! you cannot go on in sin; your looking to Christ will cure you of that habit of sin. ‘But if my heart remains hard?’ It cannot remain hard; you will find that looking to Christ will keep you from having a hard heart. It is just as we sing in the penitential hymn of gratitude, —

***‘Dissolved by thy mercy I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found.’***

You will never feel as you ought until you do not feel what you ought; you will never come to Christ until you do not feel that you can come. Come as thou art; come in all thy poverty, and stubbornness, and hardness, just as you are now, take Christ to be your all in all. Sound your songs ye angels, smite your golden harps ye redeemed ones; there are sinners snatched from hell to-day; there are men who have trusted Christ this morning. Though they scarcely know it, their sins are all forgiven; their feet are on the rock; the new song shall soon be in their mouth, and their goings shall be

stablished. Farewell, ye brethren, turn to God this morning; God shall keep you, and you shall see his face in glory everlasting. Amen.

THE FRAIL LEAF.

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“Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro?” -Job 13:25.

POOR Job! who could have been brought lower than he? He had lost his possessions, his children, his health, he was covered with sore boils, and the was aggravated by the unkind speeches of his friends. In his deep distress he turns to God, and finding no other plea so near at hand he makes a plea out of his own distress. He compares himself to the weakest thing he could think of, and then he says to God, the great and the merciful, “Wilt thou, so glorious in power and so matchless in goodness wilt thou break me, who am like a poor leaf fallen from the tree, sere and dry, and driven to and fro in the wind?” Thus he draws an argument out of his own weakness. Because he is so low and insignificant and powerless, he lays hold upon the divine strength and pleads for pity.

It is a common figure he uses, that of a leaf driven to and fro. Strong gusts of wind, it may be in the autumn when the leaves hang but lightly upon the trees, send them falling in showers around us; quite helpless to stay their own course, fluttering in the air to and fro, like winged birds that cannot steer themselves, but are guided by every fitful blast that blows upon them, at last they sink into the mire, to be trodden down and forgotten. To them Job likens himself-a helpless, hopeless, worthless, weak, despised, perishing thing; and he appeals to the awful Majesty on high, and he says to the God of thunder and of lightning, “Wilt thou put out thy power to destroy me? Wilt thou bring forth thy dread artillery to crush such an insignificant creature as I am? With all the goodness of thy great heart-for thy name is God-that is good-wilt thou turn thy Almighty power against

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me? Oh, that be far from thee! Out of pity upon my utter weakness and nothingness, turn away thy hand, and break not a leaf that is driven to and fro! “

The apprehension is so startling, the appeal so forcible, that the argument

may be employed in a great many ways. How often have the sick used it, when they have been brought to so low an ebb with physical pain that life itself seemed worthless. Stricken with disease, stung with smart, and fretted with acute pains and pangs, they felt that if the affliction continued much longer, it were better for them to die than live. They longed for the shades of death, that they might find shelter there. Turning their face to the wall, they have said, "O God, so weak as I am, wilt thou again smite me? Shall thy hand again fall upon me? Thou hast laid me very low. Wherefore again cost thou lift up thy rod? Break not, I beseech thee, a leaf that is driven to and fro! "

Not less applicable is the plea to those who are plunged into the depths of poverty? A man is in trouble arising from destitution; perhaps he has been long out of work; bread is not to be found; the children are crying, hungering, starving; the habitation has been stripped of everything which might procure a little nourishment. The poor wretch, after passing through seas of trouble, finds himself no nearer a landing-place than before, but

*"Sees each day new straits attend,
And wonders where the scene will end."*

Passing through the streets he is hardly able to keep his feet from the pavement or his skin from the cold, by reason of his tattered garments. Homeless and friendless, like a leaf that is driven to and fro, he says, "O God! wilt thou continue this much longer? Wilt thou not be pleased to stay thy rough wind, mitigate the sharpness of the winter, ease my adversity, and give me peace? "

So, too, with those who are in trouble through bereavement. One child has been taken away, and then another. The shafts of death flew twice. Then came sickness with threatening omen upon one that was nearer and dearer still. Still did not the desolation stay its gloomy portents. It seemed at length as though the widow would be bereft of her last and only child, and then she cried, "O God! I am already broken; my heart is like a ploughed field, cross-ploughed, till my soul is ready to despair! Wilt thou utterly

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break me? Wilt thou spare me no consolations, no props for my old age? Must I be altogether driven away before the whirlwind, and find no rest? " Perhaps it is even more harassing in cases of mental distress, for, after all, the sharpest pangs we feel are not those of the body, nor those of the estate, but those of the mind. When the iron enters into the soul, the rust thereof is poison. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear? You may be surrounded with all the comforts of life, and yet be in wretchedness more gloomy than death if the spirits be depressed. You may have no outward cause whatever for sorrow, and yet if the mind be dejected, the brightest sunshine will not relieve your gloom. At such a time, you may be vexed with cares, haunted with dread, and scared with thoughts which distract you. You fear that your sins are not pardoned, that your past transgressions are all brought to remembrance, and that punishment is being meted out to you in full measure. The threatenings rise up out of God's book, and seem to Lift

sharp swords in their hands with which to smite you. Time is dreadful to you, because you know it is hurrying you to eternity; and the thought of eternity stings as cloth an adder, because you measure the future reckoning by the present distress. At such a time, when you are faint with longing, ready to despair, and driven to the verge of madness, I can imagine your crying out, "O Lord God of mercy, I am as a leaf that is driven be and fro; wilt thou quite break me, and utterly destroy me? Have compassion, and show thy favor to thy poor broken creature! "

Many a child of God may have used this, and if he has not used it yet, still he may use it. There are times when all our evidences get clouded, and all our joys are fled. Though we may still cling to the cross, yet it is with a desperate grasp. God brings our sins to remembrance, till our bones, as David puts it, "are sore broken by reason of our iniquity." Then it is t hat, all-broken, we can turn to the Strong for strength, and use the plea of the text, "Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro?" and we shall get for our answer these comforting words, "A bruised reed he will not break, and smoking flax he will not quench."

I. THE PLEA IS SUCH AS ARISES FROM INWARD CONSCIOUSNESS.

What plea is more powerful to ourselves; than that which we draw from ourselves? A man may not be sure of aught that is without him, for eyes and ears may deceive; but he is always pretty well assured of anything within him, for that which he perceives in his own consciousness he is very
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tenacious about. Now, in this case, Job was quite certain about his own weakness. How could he doubt that? He looked upon his poor body covered with sores, he looked upon his friends who had perplexed and vexed him so much, and he felt that he was, indeed, just like a sere leaf. I do trust that many of us have been brought by God the Holy Spirit into such a humble frame of mind as to feel that, in a certain sense, this is true of us: "O God, if we k now ourselves right, we are all like withered leaves; we once thought ourselves fresh and green; we reckoned that we were as good as others, we made a fine and verdant profession; but, lo! thou hast been pleased to deal with us, and all the fresh verdure of what we thought to be our piety-the natural piety which we thought we possessed-has faded and withered, and now we are convinced that we are altogether as an unclean thing, and that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Nay, the hope that we clung to as the leaf clings to the tree, we have had to give up. We are blown away from that. We were once upon the tree of good works; we seemed as if we had life, and should always be happy there, but the winds have taken us away, and we cannot hold on to our frail hope. We once thought that we could do everything; we now perceive that without Christ we can do nothing. We are cast forth as a branch separated from the vine; we are withered. What can a leaf do? What power has it to resist the wind: Just so we feel now; we can do nothing; even the sin that dwelleth in us, like the wind, carrieth us away; and we are like the loaf on the wind,

subject to its power.

O my brethren, what a great blessing it is to be made to know our own weakness. To empty the sinner of his folly, his vanity and conceit is no easy matter. Christ can easily fill him with wisdom and prudence, but to get him empty-this is the work; this is the difficulty. To make a man know that he is in himself utterly lost, ruined, and undone; this is the Spirit of God's own work. We ministers cannot make a man see that; however diligently we may point it out; only the Spirit of God can enlighten the heart to discern it, and yet, until a man does see it, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, for there are none within the pearly gates who were not once brokenhearted sinners. Who could possibly come there and sing, "Unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," but those who once said, "Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great"?

While it is a confession of weakness, it is also an acknowledgment of God's power to push that weakness to a direful conclusion. "Wilt thou break me?" says the text -"Lord, thou hast done it. In one minute thou

couldst take away hope from every one of us now in this house of prayer." Some there be who are in the house of doom, where prayer can never be answered, and where mercy's proclamation can never be heard. God could break us. It is an easy thing for him to destroy; and more, he is not only able, but he has the right to do it if he will, for we are such worthless creatures through our disobedience, that we may say, in the words of the hymn-

*"If my soul were sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well."*

When we feel this, then let us make a proper use of our own consciousness, not to despond and faint, but to arise and go to our Father, so we shall come to God and Say, "Thou canst destroy me; thou mayest destroy me justly, and I cannot resist thee. I cannot save myself -from thy vengeance, nor can I merit anything as thy hand, I am as weak as water, and altogether as perishing a thing as a poor withered leaf; but wilt thou destroy me? I plead for pity. Oh! have pity upon me! O God, let thy bowels yearn towards me, and show me thy great compassion! I have heard that thou delightest in mercy; and as Ben-hadad of old, with the rope about his neck, sent in unto the king, and confessed that he deserved to die, so do I confess, and as the king forgave him, even so do thou with me-a guilty culprit trembling in thy presence!

*'Show pity, Lord; O Lord, forgive,
Let a repenting rebel live.'*

II. This is also A VERY PITIFUL PLEA

Though there is weakness, yet there is also power, for weakness is, for the most part, a prevalent plea with those who are strong and good. You could not see on your road home to-night a poor fainting woman, and pass her

by, I trust. You could not have brought in before your presence a halfstarved child, that could not drag its weary limbs along without feeling that you must give relief. The mere sight of weakness draws pity. As a certain town was being sacked, one of the rough soldiery is said to have spared a little child, because it said, 'Please, sir, don't kill me, I am so little.' The rough warrior felt the cogency of the plea. You may yourselves just plead thus with God. "O God, do not destroy me! I deserve it, but oh, I am so little! Turn thy power upon some greater thing, and let thy bowels move with compassion towards me! "

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The plea gathers force when the weakness is confessed. If a man shall have done you some wrong, and shall come and acknowledge it, and bow down before you and confess it, why, then, you feel that you cannot take him by the throat, but you say, 'Rise, I have forgiven thee! "When weakness appeals to strength for protection, and confession of guilt is relied on as an argument for mercy, those who are good and strong are pretty sure to be moved with compassion.

But, best of all, going from the positive to the comparative, and from the comparative to the superlative, how a confession of weakness torches your heart when it comes from your own child. If your child has been chastised, and has confessed his wrong, and pleads with you, how you stay your hand! Or, if the child be sick, and some thing be done to it which pains it, if while the operation is being performed he should look you in the face, and say, 'Father, spare thy child; I can bear no more! "you have already felt more than you can make him feel, forthwith your own tears blind you, and you stay your hand. "Like as a father pitieth his children, even so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." If you have faith to bring your weakness before God with the sense of a child towards him, you surely must prevail. Come, then, you timid trembling children of your Father who is in heaven, use this plea-'Wilt thou break a leaf that is driven to and fro? "

III. This PLEA IS RIGHTLY ADDRESSED.

It is addressed to God. As I thought it over, it seemed to me as if I could use it with reference to each Person of the Blessed Trinity in Unity.

Looking up to the great Father of our spirits, from whom every good and perfect gift cometh down, it seemed to me that out of weakness I could say to Him, 'Wilt thou, whose name is Father, wilt thou break a leaf that is driven to and fro? Thou art the God that made us; wilt thou utterly destroy the earthen vessel which thou hast fashioned on thy wheel? Thy name is 'Preserver of men;' wilt thou annihilate us, and break us into shivers? Hast thou not revealed thyself as delighting in mercy? Art thou not the ' Lord God, merciful and gracious, passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin '? Hast thou not said, ' Come, now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool? ' O God, the Father of heaven, wilt thou break a leaf that is driven to and fro? "

And then, I thought I could address myself to the blessed Son of God, who is also our brother in human flesh, and say to him, Wilt thou break-O thou
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‘faithful High Priest, touched with a feeling of our infirmities’ -‘bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh’ -Brother of our soul, by whose stripes we are healed-wilt thou break a leaf that is driven to and fro? Nay, by thy thorn-crowned head and thy bloody sweat, by thy cross and passion, by thy wounds and by thy death-cry, thou canst not, wilt not, be unmerciful and unkind. Surely, they who in confidence turn to thee, and lay hold upon thee, shall find that thy strength shall be ready to help; for though shine arm be strong to smite, it is no less strong to save.”

Again, it comes across me sweetly, ‘O blessed Spirit! couldst thou break a leaf that is driven to and fro? Thou art no eagle; thou didst descend on Christ in Jordan as a dove; thy influences are soft and soothing. Thy name is ‘The Comforter’; thou takest of the things of Christ, not to blast us, but to bless us therewith; thou art not a destroying Spirit, but a quickening Spirit, not a terrifying but an enlivening Spirit; wilt thou break a leaf that is driven to and fro! “

Yea, I address thee, thou Triune God, thou who art so full of mercy, and love, and grace, and truth, that those who have known thee best have been compelled to say, “Oh, how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee! Oh, the depths of thy lovingkindness! “is it possible that thou canst cast away a poor, broken-hearted trembler, a poor, fearing, doubting one, who would fain be saved, but who trembles lest he should be cast away?

IV. THIS PLEA IS BACKED UP BY MANY CASES OF SUCCESS.

We will not give many, for we have not time; but there is one case which we may mention: There was a woman whose life was exceedingly sorrowful. She was an Eastern wife, and her husband had been foolish enough to have a second mistress in the house.

The woman of whom we speak, a holy woman, a woman of refined and delicate mind, a poetess, indeed, of no mean order-this poor woman, having no children was the constant butt of her rival, whose sneering spiteful remarks chaffed and chafed her. Her adversary, it is said, “vexed her sore to make her afraid.” Though her husband was exceedingly kind to her, yet as with a sword that cut her bones did she go continually. She was a woman of a sorrowful spirit, her spirit being broken. Still, “she feared the Lord exceedingly,” and she went up to God’s house, and it was in God’s house that she received, what was to her, perhaps, the greatest blow
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of her life. If it was from her rival that she received the harshest word, it was from the High Priest of God that she received this hardest blow. As she stood there praying, using no vocal sound, but her lips moving, the High Priest-an easy-going soul, who had brought his own family to ruin by his slackness-little knowing her grief, told her that she was drunken. Being

a woman to whom the thought of such a sin was as bitter as gall it must have smitten her as with the chill blast of death, that God's priest had said she was drunken. But, as you will all remember, the Lord did not break the leaf that was driven to and fro. There came to her a comfortable promise. Ere long that woman stood there to sing. The mercy of God had made the barren woman to rejoice, and to be the joyful mother of children. The song of the Virgin Mary was modelled after the song of Hannah-that memorable poem in which she sang of the Lord who had filled the hungry with good things, while the rich he had sent empty away. In that case the Lord did not break the leaf that was driven; to and fro.

In after years-to take an example of another kind-there was a king who had sinned desperately, slaying God's servants with both hands. But he was taken captive by a powerful monarch and thrown into prison, such a noisome prison that he was among thorns, in mental as well as in material darkness. Then, troubled in spirit, tossed to and fro, and without power to help himself Manasseh sought unto the Lord, and he found the Lord; he prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord heard him. Out of the low dungeon he did not break the leaf that was driven to and fro.

Take a later case, in our Savior's time. The picture of those proud Pharisees hurrying into our Savior's presence a poor fallen woman is even now in your mind's eye. Yes, sirs, she was taken in adultery. There was no doubt of it; she was "tak en in the very act," and there she stands -nay, she kneels, all covered with blushes before the man who is asked to judge her. And you remember his words. He never said a word to excuse her guilt: the Savior could not and would not condone her shame; nor would he, on the other hand, lend himself to crush the woman who had sinned, but he said-"Where are those shine accusers? Go and sin no more!" Let his words come unto thee, poor leaf, driven to and fro! Oh, if there, should be such a leaf as that driven here to-night, driven in, perhaps, by stress of weather! Men despise you; from your own sex you get faint pity, but, Jesus, when thou dost appeal to him, will not break such a leaf that is driven to send fro!

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Shall I tell another story of the woman who came behind the Master in, the press, and stole a cure by touching his garment? She thought she should receive a curse, but he said-"Be thou of good cheer; thy faith maketh thee whole; go in peace." It was poor faith: it was very like unbelief; but yet it was rewarded with a rich acceptance, for he will not break a leaf that is driven to and fro.

V. Once more, my text is A FAINT PLEA WHICH INVITES FULL SUCCOR.

"Wilt thou break a leaf that is driven to and fro?"

O Job! there is much wrapped up in what thou hast said.

He meant this-"Instead of breaking it, thou wilt spare it; thou wilt gather it up, thou wilt give it life again." It is like that text, "A bruised reed he will not break." Oh, it means! more than that; it means that he will heal its

bruises. "A smoking flax he will not quench." That is good, but it means more. It means that he will stoop down to it, and that with his soft breath he will blow that smoking flax into a flame; he will not let it go out; he will preserve its heat, and make something more of it. O you, who, are brought to the very lowest of weakness! use that, weakness in pleading with God, and he will return unto you with such a fullness of blessing that you shall receive the pardon of sin; you shall be accepted through the righteousness of Christ; you shall be dear to the heart of God; you shall be filled with his Spirit; you shall be blessed with all the fullness of God.

My Lord is such a One that if a beggar asks a penny of him he gives him gold, and if you ask only for the pardon of sins, he will give you all the covenant blessing which he has been pleased so bounteously to provide for the necessities of his people. Come, poor guilty one, needy, helpless, broken, and bruised. Come thou by faith, and let thy weakness plead with God through Jesus Christ.

VI. WE MAY USE THIS PLEA-MANY OF US WHO HAVE LONG KNOWN THE SAVIOR.

Perhaps our faith has got to be very low. O Lord, wilt thou destroy my little faith? I know there is sin in it. To be so unbelieving as I am is no little crime; but, Lord, I thank thee that I have any faith. It is weak and trembling, but it is faith of shine own giving. Oh, break not the poor leaf that is driven to and fro!

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It may be your hope is not very bright. You cannot see the golden gates, though they are very near. Well, but your hope shall not be destroyed because it is clouded. You can say, "Lord, wilt thou destroy my hope because it is dim?" "No, that he will not!"

Perhaps you are conscious that you have not been so useful lately as you once were, but you may say, "Lord, wilt thou destroy my usefulness because I have been laid aside, or have not done what I ought to have done in thy service?" "Bring your little graces to Christ as the mothers brought their little children, and ask him to put his hands upon them and to bless them. Bring your mustard-seed to Christ, and ask him to make it grow into a tree, and he will do it; but never think that he will destroy you, or that he will destroy the works of his own hand in you.

Oh, that I could so preach as to give the comfort to you which I have felt in my own soul while musing over these words! I wish that some who feel how lost, how empty, and how ruined they are, could now believe in the great and the good heart of my Lord Jesus Christ. Little do they know how glad he will be to save them. You will be glad to be saved, but he will be more glad to save you. You will be thankful to sit at the feast; but, of all that come to the banquet, there is no heart so glad as the heart of the king. When the king came in to see the guests, I know there were gleams of joy in his face which were not to be found in the faces of any of the guests. He has the joy of benevolence. Perhaps you have sometimes felt a thrill of

pleasure when you have done some good to your poor fellow-creatures. Now, bethink ye what must be the joy of Christ, the joy of the Father, and the joy of the Holy Spirit-the joy of doing good to those who do not deserve it, the joy of bestowing favors upon the wicked and the unthankful, the joy of showing that he doeth good because he is good-not because you are good, but because he is good; thus the Lord God will overleap the mountains of your sins and your prejudices, and the rivers of your iniquities, that he may come unto you and display the full glory of his lovingkindness and his tender mercy.

Oh! that some might now for the first time be drawn to Jesus, put their trust in him, and find pardon and peace.

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EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

PSALM 130:1 -8; 1 JOHN I. 1-10; 2:1 AND 2.

Psalm 130:1. *Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD. The most eminent of God's saints have been in the depths;*

Wherefore then, should I murmur if I have to endure trials? What I am that I should be exempt from warfare? How can I expect to win the crown without first carrying the cross? David saw the depths and so must you and I. But David learned to cry to God out of the depths. Learn hence that there is no place so deep, but prayer can reach from the bottom of it up to God's ear, and then God's long arm can reach to the bottom and bring us up out of the depth. "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord." Do not say, "Out of the depths have I talked to my neighbors and sought consolation from my friends."

*"Were half the breath thus vainly spent
To heaven in supplication sent
Your cheerful song would oftener be
Hear what the Lord hath done for me."*

2. LORD, hear my voice: let shine ear be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

Now a main part of prayer must be occupied by confession, and the Psalmist proceeds, therefore-

3. If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand.

That is to say, apart from Christ, if God exercises his justice to its utmost severity the best of men must fall, for the best of men being men at the best are sinners ever at their best estate.

4. But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

If there were no mercy there would be no love in any human heart, and

there would be an end to religion if there were an end to forgiveness. Here let us observe that the best of men dare not stand before an absolute God, that the holiest of God's saints need to be accepted on the footing of a mediator, and to receive forgiveness of sins.

5. *I wait for the LORD, my soul cloth wait, and in his word do I hope.*
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There is a waiting of expectancy, we believe that he is about to give us the mercy, and hold out the hand for it. There is a waiting of resignation, we know not what God may do nor when he may appear, but we wait. Aaron held his peace; 'tis a great virtue to wait for God when we know not what he does, but to wait his own explanations, and be content to go without explanations if he does not choose to give them.

6. *My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.*

And many a mariner has watched for the morning with an awful anxiety for he could not know where his vessel was until the day should break. Many a weary patient tossed upon the bed of pain has waited for the morning, saying, "Would God it were morning for then perhaps I might find ease." And you know that sometimes the watchers upon the castle top, who have to be guarding the ramparts against the adversary by night, watch for the morning. So does David's soul watch. Lord, if I may not have thee permit me to watch for thee. Oh! there is some happiness even in waiting for an absent God. I recollect that Rutherford says, "I do not see how I can be unhappy, for if Christ will not love me, if he will but permit me to love him, and I feel I cannot help doing that, the loving of him will be heaven enough for me." Waiting for God is sweet, inexpressibly delightful.

*"To those who call how kind thou art, how good to those who seek;
But what to those who find? Ah! this, nor tongue nor pen can show
The love of Jesus, what it is, none but his loved ones know."*

Happy are they who, having waited patiently, at last behold their God.

7, 8. *Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption and he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*

He shall do this in a double and perfect way, he shall redeem us from the effect of all our iniquities through the atoning sacrifice and from the presence of all iniquity by his sanctifying Spirit. They are without fault before the throne of God. I will purge their blood that I have not cleansed saith the Lord that dwelleth in Zion. May my soul have a part and lot in this precious promise.

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1. John 1:1. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;*

The fact that Christ was really in the flesh, that he was no phantom, no shadow mocking the eyes that looked upon him, is exceedingly important,

and hence John-(whose style, by the way, in this epistle is precisely like the style which he uses in his Gospel)-John begins by declaring that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who in his eternity was from the beginning, was really a substantial man, for he says-"We have heard him" -hearing is good evidence, "Which we have seen him with our own eyes; "eye -sight is good, clear evidence, certainly, "Which we have looked upon " - this is better still, for this imports a deliberate, careful, circumspect gaze; but better still- "which our hands have handled," for John had leaned his head on Jesus Christ's bosom, and his hands had often met the real flesh and blood of the living Savior. We need have no doubt about the reality of Christ's incarnation when we have these open eyes and hands to give us evidence.

2. (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

That same eternal Being who is Very God of Very God, and is worthy to be called essentially Life, was made flesh and dwelt among us, and the Apostles could say-"We beheld his glory."

3. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you-

See how he does hammer this nail as if he will drive it fast! How he rings this bell that it may toll the death-knell of every doubt!

3. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us:

But John, what is the value of fellowship with you, you and your brethren, a parcel of poor fishermen, who wants fellowship with you-hooted, despised, mocked and persecuted in every city-who wants fellowship with you?

3. And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

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What a leap from the fisherman to the Father's throne, from the poor, despised son of Zebedee up to the King of Kings! Oh, John, we would have fellowship with thee now! We will have fellowship with thy scorn and spitting, that we may have fellowship with thee, and with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ.

4. And these things write I unto you that your joy may be full.

Some Christians have joy, but there are only a few drops in the bottom of their cup; but the Scriptures were written, and more especially the doctrine of an Incarnate God is revealed to us, that our joy may be full. Why, if you have nothing else to make you glad the fact that Jesus has become brother to you, arrayed in your flesh, should make your joy full.

5. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

Not a light, nor the light, though he is both, but that he is light. Scripture uses the term light for knowledge, for purity, for prosperity, for happiness, and for truth. God is light, and then in his usual style, John, who not only tells you a truth but always guards it, adds-"in whom is no darkness at

all.”

6. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.*

Mark here, this does not mean walking in the darkness of sorrow, for there are many of God’s people that walk in the darkness of doubts and fears, and yet they have fellowship with God; nay, they sometimes have fellowship with Christ all the better for the darkness of the path along which they walk, but the darkness here meant is the darkness of sin, the darkness of untruthfulness. If I walk in a lie, or walk in sin, and then profess to have fellowship with God, I have lied, and do not the truth.

7. *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light,-*

Not to the same degree, but in the same manner-

7. *We have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

So you see that when we walk the best, when we walk in the light, as he is in the light, when our fellowship is of the highest order, yet still we want
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daily cleansing. It does not say-mark this O my soul-it does not say “The blood of Jesus Christ cleansed “but “cleanseth.” If guilt return, his power may be proved again and again, there is no fear that all my daily slips and shortcomings shall be graciously removed by this precious blood. But there are some who think they are perfectly sanctified and have no sin.

8, 9. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Oh, those words, and more especially that glorious word “all! “This must include the vilest sin that ever stained human nature, the blackest grime that ever came from the black heart of man. And now John is very careful when he strikes a blow to hit completely. He has already smitten those who say they have no sin, and now he smites those who say they did not at one time have any.

10. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

1 John 2:1. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.*

He is anxious that they should not sin, he knows they do, and that if they say they do not, they lie. Still the Christian’s object is sinless perfection, and though he will never have it till he gets to heaven, that is all the better because he will always then be pressing forward, and never reckoning that he has attained.

1, 2. *And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

By which is merit, not only that Jesus Christ died for Gentiles as well as Jews, and for some of all nations, but that there is that in the atonement of Christ which might be sufficient for every creature under heaven if God had so chosen every creature, the limitation lying, not in the value of the

atonement itself, but in the design and intention of the Eternal God. God sent his Son to lay down his life for his sheep. We know that Christ redeemed us from among men, so that the redemption is particularly and specially for the elect; yet at the same time the price offered was so precious the blood was so infinite in value, that if every man that ever lived
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had to be redeemed Christ could have done it. It is this that make us bold to preach the Gospel to every creature, since we know there is no limit in the value of the atonement, though still we know that the design of it is for the chosen people of God alone.

OUR LIFE, OUR WORK, OUR CHANGE.

NO. 764

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 4TH, 1867,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."
-Job 14:14.

JOB was well nigh driven to desperation by the fearful torment of his bodily pains, by the exasperating remarks of his friends, and the cutting suggestion of his wife. It is no wonder if he became somewhat impatient. Never were words of complaint more excusable than in the sad case of Job when he cried, "O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave!" Everything that could make life bearable had been taken from him, and every evil which could make death desirable came upon him. Yet, after Job had uttered those exclamations, he seems to have been half ashamed of his weakness, and girding up his loins, he argues with himself, reasoning his soul into a cooler, calmer frame. Job looks his life in the face: he perceives that his warfare is severe, but he remembers it is but once, and that when once over and the victory won, there will be no more fighting; and therefore he encourages himself to put up with his present sorrows, and even with future evils, be they what they may, and registers this solemn resolution—far more glorious than the resolve of Alexander to conquer the world—to conquer himself, and to abide with patience the will of God. He fixed it steadfastly in his heart, that all his appointed days until a change should come, he would endure the divine decree with constancy of resignation. None among us can afford to cast a stone at the patriarch for sighing and complaining, for we should not act one half so well ourselves.

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We are too much at times like Jonah; we turn cowards, and would fain flee from our work when it becomes arduous or yields us no honor. If we do not seek a ship to convey us to Tarshish, we sigh for a seraph to bear us to heaven. This huge Nineveh has made most of us quail in times of depression. I fear that frequently we act like lineal descendants of those children of Ephraim who, being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. We shrink as a bone out of joint, which slips aside under

pressure. We are not only like Jacob, who halted upon one thigh, but we limp upon both legs at times. We are often disinclined for conflict, and pine for rest, crying, "When will the day be over? When shall we be perfectly at ease?"

It is against such a spirit as this that we must struggle; and to help us in the struggle, it seemed to me to be good to consider the text now before us; and to that end may God bless it, that we maybe "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."

We shall call your attention this morning, first, to the aspect of life which Job gives us; secondly, to his estimate of our work; and thirdly, to his view of the future.

I. First, let us observe THE ASPECT UNDER WHICH JOB REGARDED THIS MORTAL LIFE. He calls it an "appointed time," or, as the Hebrew has it, "a warfare."

Observe that Job styles our life a time. Blessed be God, that this present state is not an eternity! What though its conflicts may seem long, they must have an end. We are in the finite state at present, in which all grief's have their closes and conclusions. Long as the night may last, it must yield in due season to the light of the morning. The winter may drag its weary length along, but the spring is hard upon its heels; the tide may ebb out till nothing remains but leagues of mud, and we lament that all the bright blue deep will vanish, but it is not so, the tide must flow again, for God has so decreed. Our whole life is brief indeed. Compared with eternity, a mere span, a hand's -breadth. From the summits of eternity, how like a flying moment will this transient life appear. The pains of this mortal life will seem to be a mere pin's -prick to us when we get into the joys never ending and overflowing; and the toils of this life will be as child's play when we reach the everlasting rest. Let us then, my brethren, judge immortal judgment; let us not weigh our troubles in the ill-adjusted scales of this

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poor human life, but let us use the shekel of eternity. We are born for eternity; and although it is true we have to struggle through this one brief hour of toil and conflict, an hour with our God in glory will make up for it all. "I reckon," said that master of heavenly arithmetic, the apostle Paul, who was never out in his reckoning, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory, which shall be revealed in us." The longest and most sorrowful life is but a "time." Whisper that simple truth into the ear of the languishing sufferer; tell this glad truth to the son of sorrow, poor and despised; tell it to every daughter of grief, life is but a time; it is not eternity. O mourner, contrast thy present sorrows with the griefs of lost spirits, to whom there is no time—who are cast away for ever—who cannot expect a termination to their bitter grief's, but who see this word written in letters of fire before their weeping eyes, "Forever! forever! forever! forever!"

Job also calls our life an “appointed” time. Ye know who appointed your days. You did not appoint them for yourself, and therefore you can have no regrets about the appointment. Neither did Satan appoint it, for the keys of hell and of death do not hang at his girdle.

***“An angel’s arm can’t cast me to the grave:
Millions of angels cannot keep me there.”***

To the almighty God belong the issues from death. He alone can speak the irrevocable word, and bid the spirit return to God who gave it. God, alone can wing the shaft that shall end this mortal existence: until he putteth his hand to the bow, all the archers of earth and hell shall shoot in vain. Our pilgrimage has an appointed beginning and end. In yonder hour-glass, which measures thine existence, the sands which trickle to the nether globe were all measured into the upper bulb by the divine hand. There is not a sand too few, nor a grain too many. You shall find that God has appointed with exact wisdom, with profound knowledge, and with irreproachable love all the days and the doings of your life. Remember that thou wilt live out, but not outlive thine allotted years. Thou wilt live up to the last minute, and neither plagues, nor pestilence’s, nor dangers of flood, or field, or battle, can deprive thee of the last second which God has measured out to thee. But beyond the boundary he thou shalt not pass, though thou take great care, and call in the physician, yet canst thou not add an inch of time to thy determined period. Inexorable death will make no tarrying, but perform his errand promptly when the Master sends him.

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***“Then to the dust, r eturn thou must
Without delay.”***

Should not this cheer us-that the appointment of our lot has been made by a loving Father’s prudence, and that the days and bounds of ou r habitation are not left to the winds of chance or to the waves of uncertainty, but are all decreed immutably by our Father who is in heaven? In the volume of the book our life-story is written-in that same volume wherein the Savior’s covenant engagements were recorded.

You will observe, dear friends, also that Job very wisely speaks of the “days” of our appointed time. It is a prudent thing to forbear the burden of life as a whole, and learn to bear it in the parcels into which providence has divided it. Let us live as life comes, namely, by the day. Our God does not trust us with so much life as a month at once-we live as the clock ticks, a second at a time. Is not that a wiser method of living rather than to perplex our heads by living by the month, or by the year? You have no promise for the year: the word of mercy runs, “As thy days thy s trength shall be.” You are not commanded to pray for supplies by the year, but, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Said a good man to me the other day who had many troubles, who has borne them manfully to my knowledge, for these fifteen

or twenty years, when I asked him how his patience had held out- “Ah,” said he, ‘I said to my afflicted wife the other day, when the coals come in, it takes several big fellows to bring in the sacks, but yet our little kitchenmaid Mary, has brought the whole ton up from the cellar into our parlour; but she has done it a scuttle-full at a time. She has as surely moved those tons of coal as ever did the wagons when they brought them in, but she has moved them by little and little, and done it easily.’ This is how to bear the troubles of life, a day’s portion at a time. Wave by wave our trials come, and let us breast them one by one, and not attempt to buffet the whole ocean’s billows at once. Let us stand as the brave old Spartan did, in the Thermopylae of the day, and fight the Persians as they come on one by one, thus shall we keep our adversities at bay, and overcome them as they advance in single file; but let us not venture into the plain amidst the innumerable hordes of Persians, or we shall speedily be swallowed up, and our faith and patience will be overcome. I would fain live by the day, and work by the day, and suffer by the day, till all my days are over, and I see the Ancient of Days in that land where days are lost in one eternal day, and the soul swims in seas of joy forever.

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I must not fail to remind you of the Hebrew: “All the days of my warfare will I wait.” Life is indeed a “warfare;” and just as a man enlists in our army for a term of years, and then his service runs out, and he is free, so every believer is enlisted in the service of life, to serve God till his enlistment is over, and we sleep in death. Our charge and our armor we shall put off together. Brethren, you are soldiers, enlisted when you believed in Jesus. Let me remind you that you are a soldier, you will be always at war, you will never have a furlough or conclude a treaty. Like the old knights who slept in their armor, you will be attacked even in your rest. There is no part of the journey to heaven which is secure from the enemy, and no moment, not even the sweet rest of the Lord’s -day, when the clarion may not sound. Therefore, prepare yourselves always for the battle. ‘Put on the whole armor of God,’ and look upon life as a continued battle. Be surprised when you have not to fight; be wonderstruck when the world is peaceful towards you; be astonished when your old corruptions do not rise and assault you. You must travel with your swords always drawn, and you may as well throw away the scabbard, for you will never want it. You are a soldier who must always fight, and by the light of battle you must survey the whole of your life.

Taking these thoughts together as Job’s view of mortal life, what then? Why, beloved, it is but once, as we have already said-we shall serve our God on earth in striving after his glory but once. Let us carry out the engagements of our enlistment honourably. He who enters into Her Majesty’s service for a term of years, if he be an honorable man, resolves that he will act worthily, so long as he is in the ranks. So let it be with us: we shall never enter upon another war; let us wage the present warfare gloriously. We carry in our hands a sword, we have but to use it in one great life-battle, and then it shall be hung up on the wall forever. Let us use

our weapon well, that we may not have to resign it, rusty and dishonored, as a memorial of our disgrace. Let us march cheerily to the fight, since it is but once. Let us play the man, and be like David's mightiest, who feared no risks, but accepted deadly odds, and won and held their own against all comers. Come, beloved, we have an appointed time, and it is running out every hour, let us rejoice to see it go. Our Captain appointed it, he commanded us to stand sentry, or to rush into the front of the battle. Since the time is appointed by our well-beloved King, let us not dishonor his appointment, but in the name of him who gave us our commission to live and fight, let us war a good warfare, living at the highest bent of our force,
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and the utmost strength of our being. And since, dear friends, it is the Lord's war that we are engaged in, we are enlisted under the great Captain of our salvation, who leads us on to sure and certain victory, let us not be discouraged; let not our hearts fail us; let us quit ourselves like men, and be strong, for the Lord our God is with us, and we have the mighty One of Israel to be our Captain. Let us glorify the grace of God while we are permitted to remain on earth to glorify it. Let us up and at our enemies while there are enemies for us to fight. Let us carve out victory while we have the raw material of conflict to carve. There are no battles to be fought, and no victories to be won in heaven. So now, in this life let us resolve in the name and strength of God the Holy Ghost, with all our force and vigor to glorify God, who has appointed us our warfare. We now leave this head to turn to the second, and may God the Holy Spirit bless us in so doing.

II. JOB' S VIEW OF OUR WORK while on earth is that we are to wait. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait." The word "wait" is very full of teaching. It contains the whole of the Christian life, if understood in all its various senses. Let us take up a few very briefly.

In the first place, the Christian life should be one of waiting; that is, setting loose by all earthly things. Many travelers are among us this morning; they are passing from one town to another, viewing divers countries; but if they are only travelers, and are soon to return to their homes, they do not speculate in the various businesses of Lombard Street or Cheapside. They do not attempt to buy large estates and lay them out, and make gold and silver thereby; they know that they are only strangers, and they act as such. They take such interest in the affairs of the country in which they are sojourning as may be becoming in those who are not citizens of it; they wish well to those among whom they sojourn and dwell; but that is all, for they are going home, therefore, they do not intend to bind themselves with anything that might make it difficult to part from our shores. They know that they are on the wing, and therefore they live like strangers and sojourners. As a Bedouin wandering across the desert, so is a Christian-a bird of passage; a voyager seeking the haven. This is not our rest: it is polluted.

‘Sad thought were this to be our home!’

The wisdom of the Christian is to disentangle himself as much as possible of the things of this life. He will act kindly towards the citizens of the
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country where he is called to dwell, and he will seek their good: still he will remember that he is not as they are. He is an alien among them. He may have to buy and sell in this world, but that is merely as a matter of transient convenience. He neither buys nor sells for eternity; for he has ‘bought the truth,’ and he ‘sells it not.’ He has received God to be his treasure, and his heart and his treasure too he has sent on ahead. On the other side of the river all his joys and all his treasures are to be found. Here he looks upon his earthly joys as things that are lent him-borrowed comforts. If his children die, he does not wonder: he knew that they were not immortal. If his friends are taken away, he is not astonished: he understood that they were born of women, and therefore would die like the rest. If his wealth takes to itself wings, he does not marvel: he knew that it was a bird of passage, and he is not astonished when, like the swallows, it flies elsewhere. He had long ago learned that the world is founded on the floods and therefore, when it moves beneath him, he understands that this is the normal state of things, and he is not at all amazed, but rather wonders that the world is not all panic and confusion, since it is so unsubstantial. As Samson shook the Philistine temple, so shall the word of the Lord in the hour of final doom lay all nature prone in one common ruin; and vain is he who boasts of his possessions where all is waiting to be overturned. Brethren, are you doing so? Some of you professors, I am afraid, are living as though this were your rest. You do not wish to go home, do you? The nest is very comfortable: you have feathered it warmly. You have all that heart could wish; Here you would fain abide for ages. Ah! well, may this worldliness be cast out of you, and may you be seized with home-sickness, that sweet disease which every true patriot ought to have, an insatiable longing for his dear fatherland. Have you never heard of the Swiss soldiers in the French army, who would fall sick when they heard the music of the song, which reminded them of their native mountains, with their chalets and peasants, and the cowboy’s song? Ill could they rest in sunny France, when their hearts were among Helvetia’s rugged hills. Are there no sweet songs of Zion which remind you of that blessed land where our best friends, our kindred dwell, where God our Savior reigns? If we are true citizens of the New Jerusalem, we shall long for that fair country, the home of the elect.

***‘Ah! then my spirit faints
To reach the land I love,
The bright inheritance of saints,
Jerusalem above.’***

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It is your duty, Christian, and your privilege, to set loose by the things of earth, and say with Job, “All the days of my appointed time I will wait” -like

a mere waiter- "till my change come."

A second meaning of the text, however, is this: we must wait expecting to be gone-expecting daily and hourly to be summoned by our Lord. The proper and healthy estate of a Christian is to be anticipating the hour of his departure as near at hand. I have observed a great readiness to depart in many dying saints, but the same readiness ought to characterize living saints also. Our dear friend, Mr. James Smith, whom some of you remember as preaching the word at Park Street, and afterwards at Cheltenham, when I saw him, some little while before his departure, described himself thus: "You have seen a passenger that has gone to the station, taken his ticket, all his luggage brought in, all packed up, strapped, directed; and you have seen him sitting with his ticket in his hand waiting till the train comes up." That, said he, "is exactly my condition. I am ready to go as soon as my heavenly Father pleases to come for me." And is not that how we should always live-waiting for the Lord's appearing? Mr. Whitefield used to say, of his well-known order and regularity, "I like to go to bed feeling that if I were to die tonight, there is not so much as a pair of my gloves out of their proper place." No Christian man ought to live without having his will made, and his estate put in proper condition, in case he should die suddenly. That hint may be useful to some of you who have neglected to set your house in order. No Christian man should live expecting to live another day. You cannot reckon upon an hour. You should rather be so ready, that if you were to walk out of this tabernacle and fall down dead upon the steps, it would not make any derangement in your affairs, because you are equally ready for life or death. One of our beloved sisters this week was walking down Paternoster Row: her mourning friends sit here, but they have no cause to mourn sudden faintness came over her: she was taken into a shop, and water was offered to her, but she could not drink; nay, she was already drinking of the water of the river of life that flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In a moment she closed her eyes to the sorrows of earth, and she opened them to the joys of heaven. When we visit the graves of those who have died in Christ, we ought not to weep for them; or, if we weep at all it should be with the regret that we are not yet admitted to the same reward. To "die daily" is the business of Christians. It is greatly wise to talk with our last hours, to make ourselves familiar with the grave. Our venerable forefathers

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had a queer habit of placing on the dressing-table a death's head, as a memento more-either a real skull, or else an ornament fashioned in the form of it-to remind them of their end; yet, so far as I can gather, they were happy men and happy women, and none the less so because they familiarized themselves with death. A genuine Puritan, perhaps, never lived a day without considering the time when he should put off the garments of clay, and enter into rest; and these were the happiest and holiest of people, while this thoughtless generation, which banishes the thought of dying, is wretched and all its hollow pretense of mirth. I exhort you, brethren, wait! wait ever for the trumpet call! Live as looking for the Lord to come and

take you from this mortal state, waiting for the convoy of angels to waft you to the city of the blessed, in the land of the hereafter.

Nor is this all. Waiting means enduring with patience. We are put into this world for one appointed time of suffering, and in sacred patience we must abide steadfast and the heat of the furnace. The life of many Christians is a long martyrdom: they are patiently to bear it. 'Here is the patience of the saints.' Many believers go from one sickness to another, from one loss to another; but herein they fulfill their life's design, if through abundant grace they learn to bear their woes without a murmur, and to wait their appointed time without repining.

Serving is also another kind of waiting. The Lord Jesus gives us plain directions as to service in the parable recorded in the seventeenth of Luke: 'But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink?' In this world we are to wait upon the Lord Jesus, running his errands, nursing his children, feeding his lambs, fighting his foes, repairing the walls of his vineyard, doing anything and everything which he may please to give to us. And mark you, this is to be attended with perseverance, for Job says, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait." He would not be a servant sometimes, and then skulk home in idleness at another season, as if his term of service were ended. Every saint should say, 'I will wait upon thee, my God, as long as I live; so long as I have breath to draw, it shall be spent for thee. So long as I have life to spend here below, I will spend it and be spent in thy service.' This should be the spirit of the Christian all his days, to his last day. Waiting still, like a holy man of God among the American Indians, who, when he lay dying,

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was observed to be teaching a poor little Indian to read his letters, and he said, 'What a mercy, now I am laid aside from preaching, that I can teach this poor little child to read his letters; God has still something for me to do, and my prayer is, that I may not live an hour after I cannot do anything for Christ.' May we be in just such a state of heart. Moreover, to close this aspect of Christian life, we should be desirous to be called home. No Christian ought to desire to go out of the field of battle till the victory is won, nor to leave the field till the plough has gone up to the headland for the last time, but still he may desire to be at home, and must desire it because of the love which he bears his Lord. I cannot understand you if you do not sometimes sing that hymn-

*'My heart is with him on his throne,
And ill can brook delay;
Each moment listening for the voice,
'Rise up, and come away.'"*

Do you love your husband, wife, if you do not really wish to see him? Do

you love your home, child, if you do not wish for the time when the school shall break up, and you shall leave for home? Oh! it is a weary world, even though our Lord makes it bearable by the sweet glimpses we get of him through the telescope of faith, when he throws the lattices aside and shows himself. Yet these sweets only cause us to long for more. I tell you, heavenly food on earth is a hunger-making thing; it makes you desire fresh supplies. You cannot sip from the waters of grace on earth without longing to lie down at the well-head and drink your full of glory. Do you never have a heart-sickness after heaven? Do you never feel the cords that bind you to Christ tugging at your heart-strings to draw you nearer? Oh, yes! You must feel this; and if you are mixing up these longings to be with Christ, these expectings to depart, with a patient endurance of the divine will, you have hit upon Job's true idea of life. May ye not only have the idea, but carry it out practically; may all the saints do so to the praise and glory of divine grace.

III. Now comes JOB' S ESTIMATE OF THE FUTURE. It is expressed in this word, "Til I my change come." He refers to the two great changes which he views at one glance-the change of death when we shall "shuffle off this mortal coil" -the change of resurrection when we shall put on our imperishable garments-shall be girt about with eternal gladness.

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Beloved, let it be observed that, in a certain sense, death and resurrection are not a change to a Christian: they are not a change as to his identity. The same man who lives here will live forever. The same saint who serves God on earth will wake up in the image of Christ, to serve him day and night in his temple, and that identity will exist, not only with regard to the soul, but the body; "My eyes shall see him and not another." These very eyes which have wept for sin, shall see the King in his beauty; and these hands which here have served the Lord, shall embrace him in his glory. Do not think that death will destroy the identity of the resurrection body: it will be as much the same as the full-blown flower is the same as the seed out of which it grew. There will be a mighty development, but it will still be the same, it is sown a natural body, and the same it is raised a spiritual body. There will also be to the regenerate no change as to his vitality. We are quickened now by the life of Christ, which is the same life that will quicken us in heaven; the incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." He has it now -the same life, which he is to live in heaven, where it will be more developed, more glorious, but still the same.

There will be no difference in the Christian's object in life when he gets to heaven. He lives to serve God here: he will live for the same end and aim there. Here holiness is his delight; it shall be his delight there. And his occupation will not change either. He served his Master like a waiting-servant during his day on earth: he will be taken up to serve him day and night in his temple.

And the Christian will not experience a very great change as to his companions. Here on earth the excellent of the earth are all his delight; Christ Jesus his Elder Brother abides with him; the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, is resident within him; he communes with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. The fact is, heaven and earth to the Christian are the same house, only the one is the lower floor, and the other is the upper story; the one is so low and near the ground, that sometimes the water of trouble rushes into it, and the windows of the rooms below are so dark, that but a small degree of the light of heaven ever enters them, and the view is contracted; but the other rooms upstairs have a fair view, and the sun shines always through its windows, and it is furnished with a matchless skill; but still it is the same house. Heaven is thus but a slight change in some respects, yet it is a change, and we shall see that readily enough.

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To the Christian it will be a change of place. He will be away from the dull and coarse materialism of this defiled, sin-stricken earth, where thorns and thistles grow, and he will arrive at the place where the inhabitants shall no more say I am sick-the paradise of God, where flowers wither not. He will change his neighborhood. He is vexed here with the ungodly conversation of the wicked; he often finds his neighbors to be like the men of Sodom, exceeding vile; but there angels shall be fellow citizens with him, and he shall commune with the spirits of the just made perfect. No vain discourse shall vex his ear,

no sin shall come before him to disgust his mind; he shall not be a stranger in a strange land, but a child at home. There, too, will be a great change as to his outward circumstances. No sweat will need to be wiped from his brow, no tear from his eye. There are no funeral knells to be heard in heaven; no open graves to be filled with the dead. In heaven there is no poverty, no proud man's scorn, no oppressor's heavy heel, no persecutor's fiery brand; but there "the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest."

Especially will it be a change to the Christian as to that which will be within him. No body of this death to hamper him; no infirmities to cramp him; no wandering thoughts to disturb his devotion; no birds to come down upon the sacrifice, needing to be driven away. As the body shall be free from the corruption which engendereth death, so shall the soul be free from the corruption which engendereth strife against the new law which is in the believer's members. He shall be perfectly free from sin. There will be this change too, that he will be delivered from that dog of hell who once howled in his ears: as the world will be afar off, and cannot tempt, so Satan will be afar off, and cannot molest. A change indeed it will be, in an especial manner, to some. Have you ever visited the hospital, and sat by the side of the poor Christian woman who has lain upon that bed for months-her hearing almost gone, her sight failing, scarcely able to breathe, palpitations of the heart, life a protracted agony? Oh! what a change from the bed of languishing to the throne of God! What a difference between that hospital, with its sounds of sickness and of sorrow, and yonder New

Jerusalem and the shout of them that triumph, the song of them that feast!
What an escape from the dying bed to the living glory-from the glazing
eye, and the wasting frame, and the cold death-sweat, to the glory which
excelleth, and the harps of angels, and the songs of the glorified! What a
change, too, for some of the poor, for some of you sons of penury who are
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here this morning, from that hard work which scarcely knows a pause,
from those weary fingers, and that flying needle, and that palpitating heart;
from that sleep which gives but little rest, because the toil begins so soon
that it seems to pervade and injure the sleep itself. What an exchange from
that naked room, that unfurnished table! that cup which, so far from
running over, you find it difficult to fill! from all those various pains and
woes that penury is heir to, to the wealth and happiness of paradise! What
a change for you, to the mansions of the blessed, and the crowns of
immortality, and the company of the princes of the blood royal, with whom
you shall dwell for ever! And what a change, again, for the persecuted! I
know how a father's angry word breaks your heart, and how a husband's
cruel remarks grieve you; but you shall soon escape from it all. The jeer of
the workshop sometimes reminds you of the cruel mockings you have
often read of. What a change for you to be in sweet company, where
friends shall cheer and make you glad! My brethren, what a leap it must
have been for the martyrs, right away from their stakes to their thrones!
What a change for the men who rotted in dungeons till the moss grew on
their eyelids, to the immortal beauty of the fairest of the fair, midst the
bright ones doubly bright! What a change!

Right well, good patriarch, didst thou use the term, for it is the greatest of
all changes. If you require a commentary upon this word "change," turn to
the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, and read it
through; we read it in your hearing just now. You will there see that all
that needs to be changed, will be changed. All that must be changed to
make the believer perfectly blessed, will be transformed and transfigured by
the Master. If you desire a glimpse of what we shall be in heaven,
remember the face of Moses when it glowed so that he covered it with a
veil! remember Stephen's face when they looked upon him and saw as it
were the face of an angel! remember our Lord transfigured till he was
whiter than any fuller could make him! Those were transient gleams and
glimpses of the beatific glory, which shall surround and environ every one
of the blessed are long.

My brethren, perhaps to you it will be a sudden change. Last Sunday our
sister sat here; this Sunday she sits there in heaven. Others, too, have gone
this week to their home. I suppose week by week about two in this
congregation die almost as regularly as I come into this pulpit So ye melt
away one after the other, and ye disappear; but blessed thought if, when ye
disappear, it is to shine for ever in heaven! Well, let the change come
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suddenly. There is much to be envied in sudden death. I never could
understand why it should be put in the litany, "From sudden death, good

Lord deliver us.” O brethren, sudden death may God send to us so long as we are but prepared, for then we miss the pain of sickness in the gradual breaking down of the frame. It must be desirable, a choice favor which God only gives to some of his peculiarly beloved ones: a thing to pray for, not to pray against. Well it may be sudden. There is this about it, however, that if we be in Christ, let it come suddenly, we are fully prepared, ‘For ye are complete in him.’ ‘He that believeth hath e verlasting life.’ ‘He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die.’ Death has lost all its terror to you who are in Christ. And there is one very sweet thought to my mind, and that though a change, it is the last change. Glory be to God, there will be no more of it, once changed into the likeness of Christ, and there will be no more changes, but immortality for ever.

‘For ever with the Lord.’

We may well add-

‘Amen! so let it be.’

O you who have no hope in Jesus, death must be to you a gloomy thing indeed! It puts out your candle and leaves you forever in the dark. But you who have a good hope through grace, and have built your house upon the rock, you may joyfully look forward to the end of your appointed days, waiting until your change come, blessing God that it wilt come in its appointed time, and that when it comes it will be a change for the better to you in all respects-a change which shall never be followed by another change, a change which shall make you like your Lord for ever and ever! May God give his blessing! Amen.

A VOICE FROM THE HARTLEY COLLIERY.

NO. 432

A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING,
JANUARY 30TH, 1862,

BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

'If a man die, shall he live again? -Job 14:14.

ONCE more the Lord has spoken. Once again the voice of Providence has proclaimed "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of grass." O sword of the Lord, when wilt thou rest and be quiet?

Wherefore these repeated warnings? Why doth the Lord so frequently and so terribly sound an alarm? Is it not because our drowsy spirits will not awaken to the realities of death? We fondly persuade ourselves that we are immortal, that though a thousand may fall at our side, and ten thousand at our right hand, yet death shall not come nigh unto us. We flatter ourselves that if we must die, yet the evil day is far hence. If we be sixty, we presumptuously reckon upon another twenty years of life; and the man of eighty, tottering upon his staff, remembering that some few have survived to the close of a century, sees no reason why he should not do the same. If man cannot kill death, he tries at least to bury him alive; and since death will intrude himself in man's pathway, we endeavor to shut our eyes to the ghastly object. God in providence is continually filling our path with tombs. With kings and princes there is too much forgetfulness of the world to come; God has, therefore, spoken to *them*. They were but few in number; one death might be sufficient in their case. That one death of a beloved and illustrious prince will leave its mark on courts and palaces. As for the workers, they also are wishful to put far from them the thought of the coffin and the shroud: God has spoken to *them* also. There were many; one death would not be sufficient; it was absolutely necessary that there should

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be many victims, or we should have disregarded the warning. Two hundred witnesses cry to us from the pit's mouth, a solemn fellowship of preachers all using the same text, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!" If God had not thus spoken by the destruction of many, we should have said, "Ah, it is

a common occurrence; there are frequently such accidents as these?" The rod would have failed in its effect had it smitten less severely. The awful calamity at the Hartley Colliery has at least had this effect, that men are talking of death in all our streets. Oh! Father of thy people, send forth thy Holy Spirit in richer abundance, that by this solemn chastisement higher ends may be answered than merely attracting our thoughts to our latter end. Oh! may hearts be broken, may eyes be made to weep for sin, may follies be renounced, may Christ be accepted, and may spiritual life be given as the result of temporal death to the many who now sleep in their untimely graves in Earsdon churchyard.

This text is appropriate to the occasion, but God alone knoweth how applicable the discourse may be to some here present; yes, to young hearts little dreaming that there is but a step between them and death; to aged persons, who as yet have not set their house in order, but who must do it, for they shall die and not live. We will take the question of the text, and answer it upon Scriptural grounds. "If a man die, shall he live again?" NO! - YES!

I. We answer the question first with a 'No.' He shall not live again here; he shall not again mingle with his fellows, and repeat the life which death has brought to a close. This is true of him with regard to himself, and equally true with regard to his neighbors. Shall he live again for himself? No. Shall he live again for his household? No.

1. Dwell for a moment on the first thought. "If a man die, shall he live again." *Shall he live for himself.* No; if he hath lived and died a sinner, that sinful life of his shall never be repeated. Sinner, thou mayest empty the cups of drunkenness in this world throughout a long life, but thou shalt never have another season to spend in intoxication! Thou who hast broken through all the bounds of morality, thou mayest live in this life debauched, depraved, and devilish, but death shall put an end to thy career of lust. Let the cup be sweet; it is the last time thou shalt ever drink it. If there be any pleasures in sin, thou shalt never taste them again. The sweets shall be over once for all, and at the bottom thou shalt find the bitter dregs which shall be gall for ever. Once thou shalt insult high heaven, but not twice. Once

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shalt thou have space to blaspheme; once shalt thou have time proudly to array thyself in self-righteousness; once shalt thou have power to despise the Christ who is the Savior of men, *but not twice*. The longsuffering of God shall wait for thee through thy life of provocations; but thou shalt not be born again into this world; thou shalt not a second time defile its air with blasphemies, nor blot its beauties with impiety. Thou shalt not live again to forget the God who hath daily loaded thee with mercies. Thou hast thy daily bread now; the clothes that are on thy back shelter thee from the cold; thou goest to thy house, and thou hast comforts and mercies there, but like the swine which feed beneath the oak forgetful of the green bough which yields the acorn, or like the brute which is content to eat the

grass, but never thanks the sun or the cloud which nourished the pasture, so thou livest in this world, forgetful of the God who made thee, in whom thou livest, and movest, and hast thy being. In this life thou art unthankful but thou shalt have no further opportunity for this ingratitude. All thy candles shall go out in eternal darkness. There shall be no more dainty meals for thee; no more joyous holidays, no more quiet slumbers. Every mercy shall be taken from thee. That which makes life desirable shall be removed if thou diest impenitent, till thou shalt hate thine existence and count it thy highest blessing if thou couldst cease to be. Thou shalt not live again, I say, to treat thy God worse than the ox treateth its owner. The ass knoweth his master's crib, but thou knowest not it, though thou shalt know, for this is the last season in which thou shalt play the brute. My dear hearers, many of you have something more than the common mercies of God, you have his Word, Sabbath after Sabbath, preached in your ears. I may say truthfully concerning you who attend this house of prayer, that you hear one who, when he fails for want of power, fails not for want of will to do you good; one who has not shunned to warn you, and to preach in all simplicity the whole counsel of God, so far as he has been taught it by the Holy Spirit. If you die you shall not live again to stifle the voice of your conscience, and to quench the Spirit of God. You shall have no more Sabbaths to mis-spend when this life is over. There shall be no church bells for you, after your knell is tolled. No affectionate voice shall beseech you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. No warning hand shall point you to the cross; no loving lip shall cry, "This is the way; walk ye in it." Ye have your last warnings *now* sinners; if ye reject them ye shall have no more. Ye hear in this life your last invitations; despise them, and the door shall be shut in your face for ever. Christ is lifted up before your eyes, look
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to him now and live; refuse him, and there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, and no other life in which you may lay hold of him.

*Fix'd is their everlasting state,
Could man repent, 'tis then too late;
Justice has closed mercy's door,
And God's longsuffering is no more.*

Here you may have a mother to weep for you; a wife to pray for you, friends who will counsel you; the blessings of a Christian country, an open Bible, and a house of prayer, but it is your last time. Now or never; now or never. Lost in time; lost in eternity; saved now, saved for ever. Sinner, it is thy last turn. Will thou choose to be damned? Then damned thou art without hope! May God save thee now, and saved thou art beyond fear of perishing. But it is thy last, thine only opportunity. Where the tree falleth there it must lie for ever.

'Return, O wanderer to thy home, 'Tis madness to delay; There are no pardons in the tomb, And brief is mercy's day. Return! Return!"
Solemnly let us say it, awful as it appears, it is well that the sinner should

not live again in this world. "Oh!" you will say, when you are dying, "if I could but live again, I would not sin as I once did." When you are in the pit of hell, perhaps your pride will lead you to imagine that if you could come back to earth again you would be another man. Ah! but you would not be so! Unless you had a new heart and a right spirit, if you could live again, you would live as you did before. Keep the fountain unchanged, and the same streams will flow. Let the cause remain, and the same effects will follow. If the lost spirits could escape from hell, they would sin as they did before; if they could again listen to the gospel they would again reject it, for he that is filthy will be filthy still; the flames of hell shall work no change in character; for they have no sanctifying influence; they punish, but they do not cleanse. Sinners, it is well that you will not live again, for if you did you would but increase your condemnation. There would be two lives of sin, of rejection of Christ, of unbelief, and, if it were possible, hell would then be less tolerable for you than it shall be now. Oh! my poor dying hearers, by the corpses in the dark smothering gas of Hartley Pit, I pray you be awakened, for *your* death-hour is hastening on, and you have but to-day in which to find a Savior.

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"Sinner beware . -the axe of death, Is raised and aimed at thee: Awhile thy Maker spares thy breath, Beware, O barren tree."

Every time you hear your clock tick, let it say to you, "*Now or never, NOW OR NEVER, NOW OR NEVER.*"

In the case of the child of God, it is the same, so far as he himself is concerned, when he dies he shall not live again. No more shall he bitterly repent of sin; no more lament the plague of his own heart, and tremble under a sense of deserved wrath. No more shall the godly pitman suffer for righteousness' sake, despising the sneer of his comrades. The battle is once fought: it is not to be repeated. If God hath safely guided the ship across the sea and brought it to its desired haven, it casteth anchor for ever, and goeth not out a second time into the storm. Like those earnest Methodist miners, we have one life of usefulness, of service, of affliction, of temptation; one life in which to glorify God on earth in blessing our fellowmen; one life in which faith may be tried and love made perfect; one life in which we may prove the faithfulness of God in providence; and one life in which we may see Christ triumphant over sin in our mortal bodies, but we shall not return to the scene of conflict.

Brethren is it not a mercy for you and for me if we be in Christ, that our furnace is not to be re-lit? Oh, brethren, it were unkind for us to wish back the dead! Ah, when we think of those brethren, those men of God, who in the pit held prayer meeting when they knew that the fatal gas would soon take away their lives; though we look at their weeping widows and their sorrowing children, it were wrong to wish them back again. What would any of us who fear God think, if we were once in heaven? Would not the very suggestion of return, though it were to the most faithful spouse and best-beloved children, be a cruelty? What, bring back again to battle the victor who wears the crown! Drag back to the storm and the tempest, the

mariner who has gained the strand! What, bring me back again to pain and sorrow, to temptation, and to sin? No. Blessed be thou, O God, that all the wishes of friends shall not accomplish this, for we shall be Far from this world of grief and sin, With God, eternally shut in."

This world is not so lovely as to tempt us away from heaven. Here we are strangers and foreigners; here we have no abiding city; but we seek one to come. There is one wilderness, but we bless God there are not two. There is one Jordan to be crossed, but there is not another. There is one season when we must walk by faith and not by sight, and be fed with manna from
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heaven; but blessed be God there is not another, for after that comes the Canaan-the rest which remaineth for the people of God. What man among ye, immersed in the cares of business, would desire two lives? Who, that is tired to-day with the world's noise, and vexed with its temptations; who that has come from a bed of sickness; who that is conscious of sin, would wish to leave the haven when once it is reached? As well might galley-slave long to return to his oar, or captive to his dungeon? No, blessed be God, the souls which have ascended from the colliery to glow are not to leave their starry spheres, but rest in Christ for ever.

2. But now we pass to the other thought under this first head. If a man die, shall he live again?" *Shall he live for others?* No. The sinner shall not live to do damage to others. If there were any fathers who perished in the pit who had neglected the training of their children, they cannot live again to educate them for Christ. If there were any there (we hope there were not, and there is a hopeful sign, for I am told that there was not a single publichouse within a mile of the village), but if there were there any who by their ill example taught others to sin, they shall never do it again. If there were any there who led others astray, by bold speeches against God, they have done once for all their life's -mischiefs. And so with each of us to-night. Do I speak to one here who is living a useless life; a tree planted in rich soil but bearing no fruit; a creature made by God but rendering him no service? Do I not speak to some such to-night? I know I do. You cannot be charged with outward vice, or with positive irregularity of conduct, but still it may be said of you, "I was an hungred and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; naked and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison and ye visited me not." Ye have not done it unto one of the least of these his brethren, and ye have not done it unto Christ. It is not necessary to do anything in order to be lost. The way to perdition is very simple; it is only a little matter of neglect. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation." Well, sinner, this is the last life of negligence that you shall ever spend; the very last season when you shall turn upon your heel and say, "Ha! ha! there is nothing in it!" The last time in which you shall put off the messenger by saying, "When I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." The neglect of our own souls is a most solemn mischief to others. When others see that we neglect, they take courage and neglect too.

*‘One sickly sheep infests the flock,
And poisons all the rest.’*

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But there are others whose example is bad. What sorrow it is to notice men who carry the infection of sin wherever they go about them. In some of our villages, and especially in our towns, we have men who are reeking dunghills of corruption. To put them by the side of a youth for an hour would be almost as dangerous as to make that youth walk through Nebuchadnezzar’s fiery furnace. Men who, as Saul breathed out threatenings, breathe out lasciviousness. Ah! do I speak to such a wretch? It is thy last rebellion-thy last revolt. Thou shalt never do this again. Never again shalt thou lead others down to hell, and drag them to the pit with thee. Remember that. And some there be who not only by example, but by overt teaching drive others astray. We have still, in this enlightened Christian land, wretches who boast the name of ‘infidel lecturer;’ whose business it is to pervert men’s minds by hard speeches against the majesty of heaven. Let them labor hard if they mean to subvert Jehovah’s throne, for they have little time to do it in. Well may the enemies of the Lord of Hosts be desperately in earnest, for they have an awful work to do, and if they consider the puny strength with which they go forth to battle against the Judge of all the earth, and the brevity of the time that can be given to the struggle, well may they work and toil. This is their only time their sure damnation draweth nigh. Hushed shall be their high words; cold shall be their hot and furious hearts. God shall crush them in his anger, and destroy them in his hot displeasure. If a man die, he shall not live again to scatter hemlock seed, and sow sin in furrows. I do not know what your life is my friend. You have stepped in here to-night; it is not often you are in a place of worship, but listen now. You know that to your family you are sometimes a terror, and always an ill example. Ah, you are a co-worker with Satan now, but God shall put you where you shall do no more hurt to that fair child of yours; where you shall not teach your boy to drink; where you shall not instil into your daughter’s mind unholy thoughts. The time shall come, masters, when you shall be taken away from those men who imitate you in your evil ways. The time shall be over with you workingman yonder, you shall not much longer jeer at the righteous, and sneer at the godly. You will find it hard work to laugh at the saints when you get into hell. You will find when God comes to deal with you, and your life is over, that it will be utterly impossible for you then to call them fools, for you will be thinking yourself the greatest fool that ever was, that you did not, like them, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Well, jeer and joke, and point the finger, and slander, and persecute as you may; it is the last time, and you shall never have another opportunity to mock

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the saints. O remember, it were better for you that a mill-stone were about your neck, and that you were cast into the depths of the sea than that you

should thus offend Christ's little ones. Well, I think we may say it is a great mercy that the sinner shall not live again in this sense. What, bring him back again-that old drunkard of the village tap-room, restore him to life? No, no; good men breathed more freely when he was gone. What, bring back that vile old blasphemer who used to curse God? No, no; he vexed the righteous long enough; let him abide in his place. What, bring back that lewd, lascivious wretch to seduce others and lead them astray? What, bring back that thief to train others to his evil deeds? Bring back that selfrighteous man who was always speaking against the gospel, and striving to prejudice other men's minds against gospel light? No, no. With all our love of one man, the love of many is stronger still, and we could not wish for the temporary and seeming good of one, to permit him to go raging, among others. Natural benevolence might suggest even the loosing of a lion as a creature, but a greater benevolence says, 'No, let him be chained, or he will rend others.' We might not wish to crush even a serpent. Let it live, it has its own sphere and its own enjoyment. But if the serpent creep among men, where it can bite and infuse its poison into human veins, let it die. Without compunction we say it,- 'It were better that one man should die for the nation, than the whole nation perish not.' If a man die then, as far as others are concerned, he shall not live again to curse his kind. And now, me remind you that it is the same with the saint, 'If a man die, shall he live again?' No. This is our season to pray for our fellow-men, and it is a season which shall never return. Mother, you shall never come back to pray for your daughters and your sons again! Ministers, this is your time to preach. We shall never have an opportunity of being God's ambassadors anymore. Oh! when I sometimes think of this, I am ashamed that I can preach with dry eyes, and that sobs do not choke my utterance. Methinks if I were lying upon my dying bed, I might often say, 'O Lord, would that I could preach again, and once more warn poor souls.' I think Baxter says he never came out of his pulpit without sighing, because he had played his part so ill, and yet who ever preached more earnestly than he? And so, at times when we have felt the weight of souls, yet in looking back, we have thought we did not feel it as we should; and when we have stood by the corpse of one of our own hearers, we have had the reflection, 'Would that I could have talked more personally, and spoken more earnestly, to this man!' I often feel that if God should ever permit me to say I am clear of

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the blood of you all, it is about as much as I can ever hope to have, for that must be heaven to a man, to feel that God has delivered him out of his ministry, it is such an awful thing to be responsible before God for the souls of men. 'If the watchman warn them not, they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands.' And so, remember, it is with each one of you. Now is your time to rescue the fallen, to teach the ignorant, to carry the lambs in your bosom, or to restore the wandering; now is your season for liberality to the Church, for care of the poor, for consecration to Christ's service, and for devotion to his cause. If there could be sorrow among the spirits that are crowding around the throne of

Christ, methinks it would be this, that they had not labored more abundantly, and were not more instant in season and out of season in doing good. If those godly pitmen over whom we mourn tonight, had not done their utmost while they were here, the deficiency could never be made up. Let me commend to you the example of some of those who were in the pit, praying and exhorting their fellow men just as they were all in the last article of death. They were Primitive Methodists. Let their names clothe Primitive Methodism with eternal honor! I conceive that in employing poor unlettered men to preach, the plan of the Primitive Methodists is New Testament and Scriptural policy. Such methods of usefulness we have endeavored to pursue, and hope to do so yet more fully. The Primitive Methodists think that a man may preach who never went to college; that a man may preach to his fellow-miners even though he cannot speak grammatically; and hence they do not excite their ministers to labor after literary attainments, but after the souls of men; and the local preachers are chosen solely and wholly for their power to speak from the heart, and to make their fellow-men feel. We should have done more for London if we had not been so squeamish. Real Primitive Methodism we have seen in London, in the person of Mr. Richard Weaver; and if you would put a score of the ministers who have preached in the theatres altogether, they would not have made one such a man as Richard Weaver, for real effect upon the masses. And yet what teaching had he, and what wisdom? None, but that he feels the power of God in his own soul, and speaks out of his heart, roughly and rudely, but still mightily to others. We want all our Churches to feel that they must not say, "Who is John So -and-so? He is only a cobbler; he must not preach. What is Tom So-and so? He is only a carpenter; why should he preach?" Ah, these are the men who shook the world; these are the men whom God used to destroy old Rome. With all our gettings, while we seek to get education in the ministry, we must take

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care that we do not despise those things that are not, which God shall make mightier than the things that are: and those base things which God hath chosen to stain the pride of human glorying, and to bring into contempt all the excellent of the earth. I know that I address some working men here. Working men, oh, that you knew Christ in your own hearts as they did in the Hartley pit! You see they had no preacher down there. Do not get the notion that you want a minister in order to come to Christ. Priestcraft is a thing we hate, and as you hate it too, we are quite one in that opinion. I preach the Word, but what am I more than you? If you can preach to edification, I pray you do so. Your poor brethren in the pit, though not set apart to that work, were yet as true priests unto the living God, and ministers for Christ, as any of us. So be you. Hasten to work while it is called to-day; gird up your loins and run the heavenly race for the sun is setting never to rise again upon this land.

II. "If a man die shall he live again?" Yes, yes, that he shall. He does not

die like a dog; he shall live again; not here, but in another and a better or a more terrible land. The soul, we know, never dies, but when it leaves the clay it mounts to sing with angels or descends to howl with fiends. The body itself shall live again. The corpses in the pit were some of them swollen with foul air; some of them could scarcely be recognized, but as the seed corn has not lost its vitality, shrivelled though it be, neither have those bodies. They are now sown, and they shall spring up either to bear the image of condemnation, or of immortality and life. Scattered to the winds of heaven, devoured of beasts, mixed with other substances and other bodies, yet every atom of the human body has been tracked by the eye of omniscience, and shall be gathered to its proper place by the hand of omnipotence. The Lord knoweth every particle of the bodies of them that are his. All men, whether they be righteous or wicked, shall certainly live again in the body, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

This much cometh to all men through Christ, that all men have a resurrection. But more than that. They shall all live again in the eternal state; either for ever glorified with God in Christ, blessed with the holy angels, for ever shut in from all danger and alarm; or in that place appointed for banished spirits who have shut themselves out from God, and now find that God has shut them out from him. They shall live again, in weal or woe, in bliss or bane, in heaven or in hell. Now ye that are unconverted, think of this I pray you for a moment. Ye shall live again; let
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no one tempt you to believe the contrary. Whatever they shall say, and however speciously they may put it, mark this word-you shall not rot in the tomb for ever; there shall not be an end of you when they shall say 'Earth to earth, dust to dust, and ashes to ashes.'" Ye shall live again. And hark thee, sinner; let me hold thee by the hand a moment; *thy sins shall live again*. They are not dead. Thou hast forgotten them, but God has not.

Thou hast covered them over with the thick darkness of forgetfulness, but they are in his book, and the day shall come when all the sins that thou hast done shall be read before the universe and published in the light of day.

What sayest thou to this, sinner? The sins of thy youth, thy secret sins-oh! man, let that thought pierce through thee like a point of steel, and cut thee to the very quick-thy sins shall live again. *And thy conscience shall live*. It is not often alive now. It is quiet, almost as quiet as the dead in the grave. But it shall soon awaken, the trumpet of the archangel shall break its long sleep; depend on that; the terrors of hell shall make thee lift up thine eyes which have so long been heavy with slumber. You have had an awakened conscience, but then you are still in the land of hope, you will find however that an awakened conscience when there is no Christ to flee to is an awful thing. Remorse of conscience has brought many a man to the knife and to the halter. Ah, careless sinner, you dare not to-night sit up an hour alone and think over the past and the future; you know you dare not. But there will be no avoiding conscience hereafter, it speaks now, but it will thunder then; it whispers now, and you may shut your ears, but its thunder-claps

then shall so startle you that you cannot refuse to listen. Oh! transgressor, thy conscience shall live again, and shall be thy perpetual tormentor. Remember that *your victims shall live again*. Am I addressing any who have enticed companions into sin, and conducted friends to destruction? Your dupes shall meet you in another world and charge their ruin upon you. That young lad whom you led astray from the path of virtue shall point to you in hell and say, "He was my tempter." That woman -let us cover up that deed,-bright eyes shall sparkle upon you through the black darkness like the eyes of serpents, and you shall hear the hissing voice, "Thou didst bring me here," and you shall feel another hell in the hell of that other soul. Oh! God, save us, let the sins of our youth be covered. Oh, save us! Let the blood of Jesus be sprinkled on our conscience, for, there are none of us that dare meet our conscience alone! Shelter us, thou Rock of Ages. Deliver us from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation. Sinner, remember thy God shall live. Thou thinkest him nothing now; thou shalt see him then. Thy business now stops the way; the smoke
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of time dims thy vision; the rough blasts of death shall blow all this away, and thou shalt see clearly revealed to thyself the frowning visage of an angry God. A God in arms, sinner, a God in arms, and no scabbard for his sword; a God in arms, and no shelter for thy soul; a God in arms, and even rocks refusing to cover thee; a God in arms, and the hollow depths of earth denying thee a refuge! Fly, soul! while it is yet time: fly, the cleft in the rock is open now. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." Fly, sinner, to the open arms of Jesus! Fly! for he casteth out none that come to him.

And then, lastly, as this is true of the sinner, so it is true of the saint. He shall live again. If in this life only we had hope, we were of all men the most miserable. If we knew that we must die and not live for ever, our brightest joys would be quenched; and in proportion to the joy we lost would be the sorrow which followed. We shall live again. Godly wife, thy Christian husband, though he perished by the fatal "damp," shall live again, and thou shalt sit with him before the eternal throne. He finished his life with prayer amid his comrades, he shall begin anew with praise amid the cherubim. Widow, bereaven of thy many children, thou hast lost them all; not lost we hope, but gone before. Oh! there shall be joy when every link that was snapped shall be re-fitted; when again the circle shall be completed, and all losses restored.

*"Far, far removed from fear and pain,
Dear brethren we shall meet again."*

That sweet hymn of the children is a blessed one after all-

"We shall meet to part no more."

Death, thou canst not rob us, thou canst not tear away a limb from Jesu's body! Thou canst not take away a single stone from the spiritual temple. Thou dost but transplant the flower, O death! thou dost not kill it. Thou dost but uproot it from the land of frost to flourish in the summer's clime; thou dost but take it from the place where it can only bud, to the place where it shall be full blown. Blessed be God for death, sweet friend of regenerated man! Blessed be God for the grave, safe wardrobe for these poor dusty garments till we put them on afresh glowing with angelic glory. Thrice blessed be God for resurrection, for immortality, and for the joy that shall be revealed in us. Brethren, my soul anticipates that day; let yours do
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the same. One gentle sigh and we fall asleep; perhaps we die as easily as those did in the colliery; we sleep into heaven, and wake up in Christ's likeness. When we have slept our last on earth, and open our eyes in heaven, oh! what a surprise! No aching arm, no darkness of the mine, no chokedamp, no labor and no sweat, no sin, no stain there! Brethren, is not that verse near the fact which says,

*We'll sing with rapture and surprise,
His loving kindness in the skies?*

Shall we not be surprised to find ourselves in heaven? What a new place for the poor sinner. From the coal mine to celestial spheres. From black and dusty toil to bright and heavenly bliss. Above ground once for all, ay and above the skies too. Oh! long-expected day begin! When shall it come? Hasten it, Lord.

*Come death and some celestial hand,
To bear our souls away!"*

I have thus tried to bring forward the text. Oh that the Lord, in whose name I desire to speak, may bless it to some among you. I have now to ask you kindly to think of those who are suffering through this terrible calamity. More than four hundred widows and orphans are left bereaved and penniless, for the working-man has little spare cash to provide for such contingencies. As a congregation we can do but little to alleviate so great a sorrow, let us, however, bear our part with others. I have no doubt the wealthier ones among you have already contributed in your different connexions, either through the Lord Mayor, or Mark Lane, or the Coal Market, or the Stock Exchange, or in some other way, but there are many of you who have not done so, and those who have may like an opportunity of doing so again. Let us do what we can to-night, that we may show our gratitude to God for having spared our lives; and as we drop our money into the box, let us offer a prayer that this solemn affliction may be blessed to all in the land, and that so Christ may be glorified.

OUT OF NOTHING COMES NOTHING.

NO. 2734

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 7TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 21ST, 1880.

‘Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.’ — Job 14. 4.

JOB considered himself to be unclean in the sight of God; yet, if we speak the plain truth about him, we must say that he was as clean as any man who lived in that age, or, indeed, in any other. We have the witness of the Holy Spirit, in this very Book, that he ‘was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.’ We have also the practical confirmation by the devil of the same fact; for, when the Lord said to him, ‘Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?’ he could not deny it, but could only insinuate that there was an evil motive at the back of the patriarch’s uprightness: ‘Do th Job fear God for nought?’ Sometimes, the unwilling acknowledgment of an enemy is a stronger proof than the hearty declaration of a friend, and it was so in Job’s case. He was one of the best, truest, sincerest, cleanest men to be found throughout the whole world; yet he called himself unclean, and probably he did so because, just in proportion as a man becomes really pure, he discovers his own impurity. The impure man has a very low standard of what true holiness is, and possibly he thinks that he comes nearly up to it; or, if not, he tries to lower his standard down to his own level; but the man who is really pure in heart has a very high ideal of what truth is, and uprightness is, and holiness
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is; and because his ideal is so high, he feels that he has not yet attained to it; and he thinks more of the distance between his present condition and his idea of perfection than he does of all that he has as yet attained. Such a man says, with the apostle Paul, ‘Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the

mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

It is always a bad sign when a man begins to think exceedingly well of himself. I had rather, a great deal, hear a man complain, and cry out before God, under a deep sense of humiliation, than hear him utter a single word that reveals a spirit of complacency with his own condition. What we are in Christ, is a thing to be perfectly satisfied with and rejoiced over; for, in Christ, believers are justified and accepted; but as for what we are in our own personal character, the very best of us must still feel that there is much over which we have to mourn. However nearly we may have approached to the example of Christ, that very nearness will make us the more regret the points in which we have fallen short of a complete imitation of him; and we shall still cry out, “O wretched man that I am, — blessed to have come so far on the way of holiness, but wretched that I have not gone further still, — who shall deliver me from the present thralldom of the body of this death? Who shall perfectly emancipate me from its control, that I may live wholly unto God, and be holy even as God is holy?”

Then, as Job considered himself an unclean thing, we need not wonder that he should have despaired of ever, by his own power, bringing out of himself anything that should be perfectly clean in God’s sight, and we need not be surprised at his question, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” As I have already reminded you, what he brought out of himself in his daily life was clean in the eyes of men; he vindicated his character, against false accusations, with great earnestness and sincerity, and with considerable warmth of temper; for he felt that it was clean before men, yet he was conscious that it was not clean before God. There are two kinds of perfection; there is a measure of cleanness in which a man may wash his hands in innocency, and say to his fellow-men, “I am free from any transgression,” as the prophet Samuel fearlessly challenged all Israel to produce anyone whom he had defrauded or oppressed, “And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man’s hand. And he said unto them, The Lord is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.” That ought to be the

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character of every Christian man, — he should be white as the driven snow, aiming ever to be honest and upright in all his dealings with his fellowcreatures. But, beloved, God’s judgment, and yo urs, and mine, concerning cleanness, differ very greatly. Our weights and scales are rough and coarse, though they suffice for the common purposes of the life we live here on earth; but God’s scales will turn if a single hair falls upon them, the small dust of the balance will move them. Nay; the metaphor is not a perfect one all round; I use it, but I make a reservation concerning it. God does not regard any sin of ours as the small dust of the balance, and his judgment is right judgment. He doth not find much evil where there is but little, for the great evil is there all the while; and because God is perfectly holy, he discovers what our impure eyes cannot perceive. In contrast with his absolutely perfect holiness, none of us are clean. Job’s friend Bildad said,

“The stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man, that is a worm?” And Eliphaz said, “ Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moths.” The purity of God is incorruptible; and when we look at ourselves, we despair of ever attaining to such perfection as his without his help.

I. Now, coming to our text, I want first to speak of SOME MATTERS OF IN NATURE,— the bringing of clean things out of unclean ones.

And the first matter of impossibility I will mention is, that there should be born into this world *a pure child, perfectly holy in nature, from impure parents*: “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.”

Whatever the new-fangled teaching may say about the old-fashioned doctrine that we are shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin, that doctrine is true. It matters not who may deny its truth, it still stands fast, for it is founded upon the rock of the Inspired Word of God. Men will never be able to gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles. An unfallen Adam and Eve would have had an unfallen progeny; but fallen men and women, such as we are, will certainly have for our children those whose tendencies are towards evil. Though there is, in every child, much that is very beautiful, which a mother’s eye is quick to detect, yet who that has carefully watched his own offspring can fail to have seen that temper which, sometimes early in life, becomes more terrible than it does in grown-up people? I have seen little children turn black in the face through passion; yet, when reason comes to them, they will learn somewhat to control themselves. The tendency to evil is there all the while; and

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according to the disposition of the child, it displays itself sooner or later. David said, “*The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.*” Certainly, a child, who has never heard a lie, will often lie very terribly; and various forms of deception will be practiced by those who have had the best possible example set before them. If any of you think that you have a perfect child, you will find yourselves grievously mistaken; the time will come when you will discover that evil is lurking there as it is in you the father, or in you the mother, and it will only need a suitable opportunity to display itself. It will scarcely need fostering by ill companions; but even in a godly household, where the atmosphere of piety abounds, sin will grow up in the child as naturally as weeds grow in a garden that is left to itself.

If you leave a plot of ground to itself, you do not find that there will come out of it vegetables fit for your table; and you will not find that a child, left to himself, will produce, virtues and excellences acceptable to God. No, evil is inherent in the heart of man, and, being there, in due time it cometh out of him. From our very birth, we “were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” It was an apostle who said that, but it was Christ himself who said to Nicodemus, “Ye must be born again.” The children of God are

‘born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” “ Except a man be born again, (from above,) he cannot see the kingdom of God,” for his nature is evil. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh;” and only “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

That, then, is one matter of impossibility,— the birth of innocent children from fallen parents.

The next is, *the bringing of a pure nature out of the depraved nature of any one individual*. Here are we, possessed of an impure nature; but cannot we, by some means, educate impurity into purity? Our whole system is depraved; but cannot we, somehow or other, out of depravity develop excellence, love to God, consecration to his service? No, never. You may, if you like, watch a skeleton till your eyes ache, but you will never see a trace of life springing up within those ribs of death. You may look at a foul stream as it comes rolling along, and you may stir it to its depths, or you may alter its channel; but as long as the source, from which the stream flows, is impure, the water that comes from it will be impure too, and it will not be able to purify itself. So, human nature may pass through as many processes as you please; but as long as it remains merely

human nature, and God the Holy Spirit has not transformed it, and made it like the nature of God, it will still be an impure thing, and no clean thing can come out of it.

“But,” says someone, “can we not change human nature by reading the Bible to it?” Ah! you may read the Bible to the devil as long as you like, but it will not make an angel of him; and you cannot change a sinner into a saint simply by reading the Scriptures to him. “Can we not preach him into a right state of heart?” asks another. You might as well hope to preach a lion into a lamb as to change the unholy into the holy without the power of God. “ Oh, but!” say others, “we can surely do a great deal with him by example, by repression, and by encouragement.” Of course you can affect him morally; but, with regard to the great spiritual matter of being clean in the sight of God, all that you can do will avail about as much as when they sought to wash the blackamoor white. The tubs were full of hot water, soap in abundance was used, the brushes were worn out with the efforts of the scrubbers, but the black man came out as black as he went in. The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, or the leopard his spots; and out of an unclean thing cleanness cannot come. God must work the miracle by his grace, for of itself evil will produce only evil, and not good.

Another impossibility also follows on the heels of this one; that is, *pure acts cannot come out of an impure heart*. A man, who is what he is by nature, unrenewed by grace, may do a great deal that is very excellent. Some of the most beautiful of the virtues towards man will grow in unrenewed hearts. It has sometimes been asserted that only true religion can produce a beautiful character towards man; but I think it must be admitted, by all who know the facts of the case, that such a statement as that is not true. Generosity, honesty, heroism, and other virtues and excellences have been displayed by men who have been unbelievers, and

even by those who have disregarded God altogether; and there has often been much that we have been bound to admire in men to whom scepticism was all the religion that they had. We must say as much as that in fairness to those from whom we greatly differ; but it is quite another matter when we begin to talk about their conduct towards God, that cleanness of heart which God has a right to demand from all his creatures. These men may be able to pay off their pence creditors, the people who are round about them; but it is a different thing when we bring them face to face with the great Creditor, their Maker to whom their enormous debt is due. As long as a man is not right in the sight of God, as long as his nature is unrenewed by

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grace, nothing that he does can be pleasing to God, there is nothing in it that God can accept. He may even have an outward religiousness of a certain kind; but he presents his religion to God with such filthy hands that there are dirty marks all over it. He may even bring to God a sacrifice out of his flock; but you can see that the motive of doing it, the way of doing it, and the pride in having done it, spoil it all. He comes before God with a reverent appearance, but with a wandering heart. He sings lustily with his mouth, but his soul is not really praising and magnifying the Lord. He bows his head when others pray, and he seems to be praying, too; but there is no confession of sin, there is nothing that can be acceptable with God; nor can there be until God has changed the nature of the man. That which comes out of an impure heart, however pure it may seem, is impure; it is tainted with the smell of the evil place from which it arose.

There is another impossibility over which some of us have often to groan; that is, *perfect actions cannot be performed by imperfect men*. I think that you, who love the Lord, must know what it is to grieve over things over which you have at first rejoiced. For instance, I have preached a sermon, I have been earnest in delivering the truth, I have had liberty in proclaiming it, and I have felt hopeful that God would bless it. But I know what it is to get home, and to lie upon my bed, and think over what I omitted to say, and how I ought to have said it in a better way,— the way in which I think I should say it if I could get up then, and call you all together, and tell it over again; and so I cry out, *'Lord, I thought I had brought forth a clean thing, but I find that I have not; and I have learned that it is not possible to bring a perfectly clean thing out of that which is unclean.'* However cleansed the human heart may be, by divine grace, yet there remaineth still so much of impurity about it that *'we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.'* There is about all that cometh from us imperfection, infirmity, fault, flaw, much to weep over, much to deplore; and the wonder is that God accepts it at all. Yet it is no wonder when we recollect that we and our service are. *'accepted i n the Beloved,'* and there is enough grace and virtue in him to make even such poor creatures as we are, and such poor works as we present, to be fully acceptable for his dear sake.

One more phase of this difficulty and impossibility is this,— *"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean," in another person?* If you believe

in human ability, I wish you would addict yourself to the effort to convert souls. If you think that you have the power to convert a soul, choose even
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a little child, and set to work upon it. I could pick you out some men whom I know, and some women, too, upon whom I should like you to try your wonderful sword. If they do not laugh you to scorn, and turn the edge of your weapon, I am greatly mistaken. God knows how to thrust at them so that every stroke shall tell; for he hath said, 'I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.' But, apart from that divine power, who among us can convert a single soul? Who can dart faith into the unbelieving heart? Who can fetch a penitential tear out of that stolid impenitent soul? Who can beget love to Christ in that chill, indifferent heart? Ah! often have God's servants had to cry with the Reformer, 'Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon; and t hey have had to go home, and confess that no human being can bring a clean thing out of an unclean.

These are all matters of impossibility in nature which the text sets before us.

II. Now, in the second place, let us notice CERTAIN SUBJECTS FOR PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION, FOR EVERY ONE OF US, that arise out of a right contemplation of this subject. First, we see here that we are unclean by nature. Do we all know that it is so with us? Have we made this great discovery? Has the Spirit of God taught us this humbling truth? Are we in the track of the footsteps of the flock? If so, we shall say, with Isaiah, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; "and, with David, we shall confess that we were "shapen in iniquity," and conceived in sin. It is well for us to deal with our birth sin, our original depravity, and the natural tendencies of our spirit; we do not get to the truth about ourselves till we get there. Well, now, do we all know ourselves to be naturally unclean? It is well to know that, sad as the truth is.

Then the next consideration is, that *we must be clean if we are to be accepted by God*. We never can have fellowship with God while we remain unclean. We may have a measure of fellowship with God when he hath cleansed us by the precious blood of Christ, but that fellowship will never be perfect till the last trace of sin has been removed from us. Absolutely perfect fellowship with the thrice-holy Jehovah will only come to us above because then we shall be absolutely clean, and shall be with him, and near him, and like him, and then we shall have become akin to him in holiness. We must be cleansed if we are ever to be in his presence in glory. There is
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no possibility of getting to heaven foul and stained with sin; there is no possibility of sitting amongst the white-robed hosts above in these rags of ours. This filthiness of ours must be put away somehow, but how can it be put away?

The fact that we cannot work this great change ourselves *will not relieve us of our responsibility*. When a man becomes so much a liar that he cannot speak the truth, or so dishonest that he cannot keep his hands from picking and stealing, when the very nature is defiled, it doth not excuse the acts which the guilty one commits. Although we cannot cleanse our heart, the Word of God contains the plain command. "Wash you, make you clean;" so that the responsibility still rests upon us, although we are totally unable to obey the injunction.

It is quite clear that *we cannot, in our own strength, do this needful work of cleansing*. If any man asserts that he can purify himself, I would answer, "Yes, you may cleanse yourself from many faults, from evil speaking, lying, and slandering, from dishonesty, from drunkenness, from unchastity,— all of which you ought to do; but it is not possible for you to cleanse yourself so as to be perfectly pure in God's sight." Only think a minute, and you will agree with me that it must be so. When you have done all that you can with yourself, will you believe that you are fit to be in God's company, and to speak with him? God is present with us at this moment; but none of you can conceive that, in your present condition, you are fit to have communion with him. If you are in Christ, you are able to commune with the Most High, through Jesus the Mediator; but I am supposing that you are not in Christ, and if that is the case, you must shrink from the presence of the perfectly holy God. And can you ever hope to make yourself fit to stand amongst the glorified spirits above, to walk your golden streets, and to have fellowship with those who have never sinned, or with those who, having sinned, have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? Methinks that every reasonable man with any sort of conscience would start back, and say, "I cannot hope to enter there as I am, nor do I think that I can ever make myself fit to go there."

Do you not think that *our wisdom lies in being driven to despair as to ourselves*? I thought I heard somebody say, "This doctrine would drive men to despair." That is exactly what we wish to do, for self-despair is the doorstep of confidence in God. When you know you are helpless, you will then begin to look away from yourself, to find help somewhere else; but as

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long as ever you can do a stitch of patching and mending, you will not put down the needle, and look to God alone to cover you with the robe of righteousness which the Savior has wrought. When you realize that you can do nothing, but that an almighty power must be exerted on your behalf, that making you look away from yourself, and bringing you to think of the great God in heaven as your only Helper, is half the battle. So I say that, to drive you to despair of yourself, is the very thing we are aiming at; therefore, would it not be wise for you now to begin to look to the Strong for strength, to the Righteous One for righteousness, to the Creating Spirit for new creation? You cannot bring a clean thing out of an unclean; so do not attempt the impossible task, but go to him who sitteth upon the throne, and who saith, "Behold, I make all things new."

III. The last point I am going to deal with is, THE PROVISION THAT IS MADE TO MEET THIS HUMAN IMPOSSIBILITY.

Let everyone who desires to be made pure in heart, and clean in the sight of God, recollect, first, that *we have to deal with an omnipotent God.*

When you come to him, trusting and resting in and to renew a right spirit within you, you are practically expressing your conviction that, what you cannot do for yourself, he can do for you. There is not any lust within you which he cannot subdue; there is not any lack or deficiency of virtue which he cannot supply.

This work is rightly called a creation: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation” It is beautiful to think that, as the Lord made the first creation, fashioning everything out of nothing, and then bringing order out of chaos, so will he come again, and find nothing of good in you, and out of the chaos he will make a new order of things altogether. As when “darkness was upon the face of the deep,” he came, and said, *‘Light be,’* and light was, so he can come and say to you in all your darkness, *‘Light be,’* and there shall be light immediately. He finds nothing in you that can help him, as he found nothing that could help him to make the world; and when he had made it out of nothing, it was all chaotic, and could not help itself. He had to breathe life and light into it; it all came from himself. So it is with you; you are just a lump of helpless matter, a wretched, wicked, condemned one, yet the Lord can come, and put away your sin, and he can form and fashion you after his own pattern. He can give you repentance, and give you faith, and give you every grace; and he can go on to nurture and water all those graces till they come to perfection. He can perfect you

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in likeness to Christ, so that you shall be “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” If you believe in a God almighty to bless and save, you cannot doubt that he is able to do all that I have said. Look not to your own weakness, but by faith look to the divine strength. Consider not so much, poor soul, what you are as what God is, and think of the great new Creator, and commit your soul into his keeping, “as unto a faithful Creator,” as the apostle Peter says. That is a blessed word,— a faithful Creator, who will begin to do his creating work anew in such a soul as yours.

Notice, next, that there is a second provision to meet this human impossibility, namely, *the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.* It is not possible for your uncleanness to be put away by anything that you can do. You must say, with Toplady,—

*‘Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill thy law’s demands:
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone:
Thou must save, and thou alone.’*

It was God himself that did hang on Calvary's cross; he had taken upon himself human nature, with all its infirmities and all its guilt, though he himself was pure and spotless, and there did he hang in that nature to bleed and die. No one— at least, no human tongue— can tell how great was the atonement that Christ there made for the sin of his guilty creatures; none of us can calculate the price he paid for the redemption of his people; but we know that, however great is the sin that is to be put away in order to make you clean, it can all be removed by "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." I am not able to imagine any sin that the blood of Christ could not wash away. See how red is your guilt, mark the scarlet stain; if you were to wash your soul in the Atlantic Ocean, you might incarnadine every wave that washes all its shores, and yet the crimson spots of your transgression would still remain. But plunge into the—

*'Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,' —*

and in an instant you are whiter than snow, every speck, and spot, and stain of sin has gone, and gone for ever, and God is thereby glorified. What a
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blessing it is that, to meet our inability to put away our sin, there is provided a redemption, an atonement, amply sufficient to remove it all for ever! Think, then, not only of your sin, but of your Savior. Think not so much of your guilt as of his sufferings by which that guilt is put away. Oh, how earnestly would I press this advice upon any who are now troubled about their sin! I would almost say,— Do not look at your sin except you can see the Savior, too. Do remember that the sin itself shall never condemn you if you trust in Jesus Christ, for he has taken it off all who believe in him, and has cast it into the depths of the sea, to be remembered against them no more for ever. You are saved, however guilty you may have been, as soon as you rely upon the infinite merit of Christ's atoning sacrifice.

*'Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain.
'But Christ, the heavenly Lamb ,
Takes all our sins away;
A sacrifice of nobler name,
And richer blood than they.'*

Then you shall be able to sing, with Dr. Watts,—

*"'Twas he adorn'd my naked soul,
And made salvation mine!
Upon a poor polluted worm
He makes his graces shine.*

*“And lest the shadow of a spot
Should on my soul be found,
He took the robe the Savior wrought,
And cast it all around.”*

There is a third provision made to meet this great emergency. We have spoken of the Father and the Son; but we must not omit to mention *the renewing work of the Holy Spirit*. The Holy Ghost, so often forgotten and slighted, is the great Worker in the cleansing and renewing of man's nature. That blessed Spirit has the whole power of the Godhead, and wherever he works effectually, he convinces of sin, making men see the guilt and evil of it; but he also convinces them of righteousness, so that they see that there is a righteousness to be had, and they learn how they

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may righteously obtain it. The Holy Spirit brings Christ near, reveals him to the heart, and then he enables the sinner to see the suitability of Christ to him. The Spirit also enables the man to see that he may trust Christ; nay, he goes further, and enables the poor guilty soul actually to trust him who came to save him. One of the first proofs of his working in the heart is the production of faith there; then, when he has wrought that grace in the soul, he helps the man to pray, to overcome temptation, to engage in holy service. The Spirit helps us all the way through. He creates all that is good within us. He works in us “both to will and to do of his good pleasure; ‘and wherever the Holy Spirit comes, he acts like the fire that consumes the dross, and purifies the metal.

So, what thinkest thou, poor unclean soul, if God the Holy Ghost were to take thee in hand, could not he make thee clean? Oh, if he were to come now, in all that wondrous power of his, could he not burn up the wood, and hay, and stubble of sin that is within thee? There have been men, who seemed to be lost to every noble thought, who nevertheless have been lifted up to heroic effort by the power of the Spirit of God. There have been others, who were sunken in vice, in ignorance, in drunkenness, and every kind of crime, yet, they have been washed, cleansed, sanctified, made saints of God on earth, and perfect spirits above, by the power of the Holy Ghost when he has come upon them, and applied the blood of Christ to their heart and conscience. What he has done for others, he can do for you; and I do pray you not so much to look at your power to will as at the power of the Spirit of God to work in you to will; not so much at your power to do, which is nothing, but at the power of the Spirit of God to work in you what he would have you do. Recollect what I have often told you, that the confidence of a man in himself can never be of any good to him; it is like the anchor while it is on board the ship. What is the good of it there? It only increases the weight of the vessel as long as it is lying on the deck, or hanging over the side of the ship. You may throw it where you like,—throw it down the hold, but it won't hold the vessel so. Throw it into the captain's cabin, hang it on the mast; what good is it? As long as it is in the ship, it is of no service. The thing to be done with the anchor is,

heave it overboard. Splash! Down it goes; listen to the clatter of the chain; now, when the anchor gets a good grip somewhere out of sight, then it holds the ship. So, throw your hope out of yourself, get it away from yourself, do not let it rest in yourself, it will help to sink you if you do;— let it go down into the unseen, let it grasp Christ, let it get a firm hold of him,
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and of his finished work, and of God the Omnipotent, and of the everblessed Spirit of God. Now your vessel will outride the storm, and all will be well.

Some people, who ought to be better informed, are quite ignorant of the work of the Holy Spirit. I knew a man, who attended at a certain church, and on one occasion he heard a good gospel sermon. I do not know who was the author of it, but the parson who preached it certainly was not. This gospel sermon had so cut into the hearer's conscience that, when he went home, he could not rest. The next morning, he went off to the clergyman, and he said to him, 'Sir, I am greatly troubled by what you said yesterday.' 'My dear fellow,' replied the parson, 'I never meant to say anything to give you a moment's uneasiness, I am sure; and if I did so, I am truly sorry for it.' 'Oh, sir!' said the man, 'but your sermon did give me dreadful uneasiness. You preached about our being born again; tell me, sir, what it is to be born again.' 'Well,' said the minister, 'I was educated at Cambridge, but I do not know what it is to be born again, and I do not think there is any need for you to trouble yourself at all about the matter. I wish I had never bought that sermon, or read it, for it has proved to be a troublesome sermon to two or three others beside yourself, but I will never preach it again, I will promise you that.' Ah! but our poor awakened friend could not be quieted in that fashion, for that sermon had dragged off every coverlet from him, and the bed was too short for him to stretch himself upon it, and he did not rest until he had found out a true minister of Christ, who was able to point out to him the way to obtain peace with God through believing in Jesus. Then, how glad he was to think that the clergyman had, even unintentionally, made him uncomfortable! How glad he was that he, though in ignorance, had taken away his first false peace, that God might come in, and establish the second,— the peace that does not lie in ourselves, but in Christ,— the peace that is not founded upon an assumption of our own personal righteousness, but upon the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

All that I have been saying shows *the fitness of this gospel for sinners*. This gospel encourages the man who had given up all hope, wakes him up to a wondrous consciousness of the possibilities of his purified manhood, and sets before him the glorious prospect of making something of his immortality. When he gets to heaven, he will not throw up his cap, and cry, 'Glory be to myself! Have not I done it well?' No, no; that is how Pharisees might act if they could get to heaven by their own works; but
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when God is going to save a sinner, he first puts him down in the lowest class, and reads him a very humbling lesson. He makes him feel that he is

nothing but sin, and that he can do nothing but sin; and then he says to him, ‘*Look* unto me; I will work the change that needs to be wrought in you.’” Then Christ comes in, and says, ‘*I* am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last; rest in me;’ and the Spirit of God saith, ‘*I* will work in thee a new creation, and make all things anew in thee;’ and, all along, as the work of grace is really wrought; in the man, he continues to bless and to magnify the name of the Lord. Thus, that spirit of gratitude and adoration, which is the very essence of virtue, becomes the underlying rock that supports a noble character; and all things that are of good report are created and nurtured by this glorious gospel of the blessed God. If there is anybody who prefers any other sort of gospel, I am sure I do not want to rob him of it; if he can get any comfort out of it, let him keep it. But as for me, I am so weak, so sinful, so undone, that I commit my soul to the God of grace, and nothing but ‘free grace and dying love’ will suffice for me. Many of us stand together upon this matter, as we have done for many a year, and I believe we shall continue to do so more and more as our age increases, and our hair gets grey, for we did not know so much about grace when we were lads as we know now, and we keep on learning more and more of it every day that we live. What we want is grace, *grace*, GRACE, and may God grant it to every one of us! May there be in us nothing of self, and all of grace, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

CONCERNING THE CONSOLATIONS OF GOD.

NO. 2099

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 11TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Are the consolations of God small with thee?
is there any secret thing with thee?” -Job 15:11.*

THESE are the words of Eliphaz, one of those three friends of Job who blundered dreadfully over his case. Their words are not to be despised; for they were men in the front rank for knowledge and experience. Eliphaz says, “With us are both the gray-headed and very aged men, much elder than thy father.” Their errors were not the superficial mistakes of fools, but the profound reasonings of men of light and leading. Their utterances are, at least, equal to anything our own learned men may have to say on the same problem. However wrong Eliphaz may have been in reference to Job and in reference to him his remarks were grossly unjust-yet many of them are correct in themselves, and may usefully be applied to our own hearts. Inasmuch as Eliphaz, in this verse, teaches no doctrine, but only asks two searching questions, he cannot mislead us; but he may do us good service. May God the Holy Spirit enable us so to consider these questions that we may be profited thereby!

The text is in the form of question, and its sense I shall endeavor to bring out by other questions, each of which will have a practical relation to ourselves. The passage in the original has proved hard to translate; but I think that in four questions I can set forth the essence of the meanings which have been found therein.

If we are indeed believers in the gospel, and are living near to God, our consolation should be exceeding great. Passing through a troubled world

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we have need of consolations; but these are abundantly provided by our God, and their influence upon us should be exceeding great. We ought not to be unhappy; for we have joy urged upon us by the precept, ‘Rejoice in the Lord alway’; and that precept is in substance often repeated. It is both the duty and the privilege of Christians to be of good cheer; if we are not

glad, even amid our trials, there is a reason for it, and we shall do well, at this time, to use the text as a candle by which to search out that reason. “Are the consolations of God small with thee? is there any secret thing with thee?”

I. Our first question follows the interpretation given by most authorities: “Do YOU REGARD THE CONSOLATIONS OF GOD AS SMALL?” Do you judge that the comforts of faith are insignificant? “Are the consolations of God too small for thee?”

I would ask you, first, Do you think religion makes men unhappy Have you poisoned your mind with that invention of the enemy? Have you made yourself believe that godliness consists in morbid. self-condemnation, despondency, apprehension, and dread? If so, permit me to warn you that there are many popular errors, and that, in this case, “common fame is a common liar.” Do you find in the preacher, and the members of his church, any confirmation of this silly assertion? We can personally assure you that the joys of religion are by no means meagre in our case. We beseech you not to let a groundless prejudice blind your eyes to the truth. I will hope that, like the Bereans, you are of a noble spirit, and will examine that which is told you.

Is not your verdict different from that of those who have tried godliness for themselves? Do you not know that many, for the joy they have found. in the love of Christ, have renounced all sinful pleasures, and utterly despised them? They were once fascinated with the world, but they tasted higher joys, and shook off the spell. He that drinks of the river of the water of life will count the streams of sin to be foul and. brackish, and will no more drink thereof. Many a believer for the joy that is set before him has, in the service of God, encountered much ridicule, endured severe losses, and borne great hardships; and has done so with delight. Have you not also remarked, in many afflicted. Christians, a peace which you yourself do not know? Have you not observed their patience under adversity? They have been poor, but perfectly content; they have been sick, and yet cheerful; racked with pain, and yet joyous. Under the apprehension of surgical

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operations, have you not seen them happily resigned? Have you ever seen one of them die? How often have we heard them singing in their deaththroes, which have been to them death joys! Is it not a fact which cannot be disputed, that faith in our Lord Jesus has uplifted the sorrowful, and has rendered others supremely happy? This joy has sprung entirely from their hope in Christ, their communion with God, their delight in the truth revealed in Holy Scripture. Have we not among us in Christian fellowship many notable proofs that

*“Tis religion which can give
Sweetest pleasure while we live”?*

Therefore, my questioning friend, it behoves you to look into this matter, and not to remain under the impression that the consolations of God are small. Those whose experience asserts that the joys of religion are great are not foolish or disreputable persons: give due weight to their witness, and believe that the consolations of God are precious beyond expression. Amid many pains and afflictions, I can personally assure you that it is a blessed thing to trust in the Lord.

Will you follow me a while as I ask you, Upon consideration, will you not amend your judgment? What are these consolations of God? The more you know of them, the more ground will you see for believing that they must be great. They are the ‘consolations of God.’ If God himself deigns to comfort men, will he not greatly cheer them? Knowing human sorrow, and stepping from the height of his glory to comfort it, is it conceivable that he will labor in vain? Do you think that the All-sufficient cannot provide consolation equal to the affliction? The consolations we speak of are applied by the Spirit of God; and to prove how earnestly he performs his work, he has taken the name of ‘Comforter.’ Will the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, think you, come to any human heart with insufficient consolations? Will he trifle with our griefs? Can it be that he does not know how to give sunlight when our day is dark with sorrow? Think not so. Moreover, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, is the substance of those consolations. He is called ‘The consolation of Israel.’ Can a man have Christ to be his portion, and yet be poor? Can a man have Jesus for his joy, and yet be weighed down with sadness? Might he not well ask, ‘Why art thou cast down, O my soul?’ I cannot for a moment dream of a joyless Christ.

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See again, my friend, these consolations of God deal with the source of sorrow. Whence came the curse, but from the sin of man? Jesus has come to save his people from their sins. Those thorns and thistles which now rend our flesh are not the natural fruits of the earth as God created it. Sin sowed all these. The consolations of God deal with sin. As for the guilt which we have incurred, and the inevitable punishment, both are removed by pardon full and free. Jesus bore the guilt of sin, and put it all away by his death upon the cross; and, in consequence, sin can be blotted out. Is not this the grandest of all consolations-the consolation of God? When we lay hold on Jesus, and receive forgiveness, affliction may remain, but sin is gone for ever; and hence the affliction itself loses its bitterness. Sin reigning in the heart is the death of peace; but the dethronement of the usurper is provided for, and hence another divine consolation. Until we get the mastery over evil, we must be uncomfortable; but the consolations of God assure us of a new heart and a right spirit, and of a power supreme and divine, which enters the nature of the believer, and subdues, destroys, and at last annihilates the propensity to sin. Is not this a rich and rare consolation? Comfort which left us under the power of evil would be dangerous comfort; but comfort which takes away both the guilt and the

power of sin is glorious indeed. Dream not that it can be small! Remember, too, that the consolations of God reveal to us a reason for the sorrow when it is allowed to remain. There is a needs-be that we are in heaviness. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." If suffering be a fire, the consolations of God assure us that it is a refining fire, which only consumes our dross. Do you not think that the comfortable fruits of righteousness, which are brought forth in those believers who are exercised by trial, are the source of great comfort to the afflicted of the Lord?

*'Since all that I meet shall work for my good,
The bitter is sweet, the medicine is food.'*

Another reflection sweetly cheers the heart of the tried one during his tribulation, namely, that he has a comrade in it. We are not passing through the waters alone. We have a fellow-sufferer, of whom we read, "In all their affliction he was afflicted." Our Lord drank long ago of that cup whereof we sip. He knows the sting of treachery, the stab of calumny, the spit of scorn; for he was "in all points tempted like as we are." Many of us have

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found this to be an eminent comfort. Do you not think it must be so? Has not many a man, at the sound of another's voice, been cheered in the darkness of the night when pursuing a dangerous way? Has not the presence of a stronger and wiser one acting as guide been quite enough to remove all dread? If the Son of God be with us, surely there is an end of every sort of fear. Does he not use this as his own note of cheer, saying, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee?"

Besides, "the consolations of God" lie also in the direction of compensations. You have the rod; yes, but this is the small drawback to heavenly sonship, if drawback indeed it be. You have become a son of God, and "what son is there whom his father chasteneth not?" You are an heir of God, joint heir with Jesus Christ; and in accepting heirship will you not cheerfully take the cross therewith, seeing it is part of the entail? It is true that you have special sorrow; but then you have the royal nature to which that sacred sorrow is a witness. God has given to you a nature that wars against evil: hence these tears! Would you be of the seed of the serpent, and have your meat as plentiful as dust? Would you not far rather be of the seed of the woman, and have your heel bruised? What is the bruising of the heel compared with the eternal dominion to which that seed is predestinated? Compensations abound in every case of trouble. You have lost your child, but you believe in the resurrection. You will die yourself, it may be; but you shall rise again from the dust. You have lost your property; but you are an heir of all things in Christ Jesus. You have been persecuted; but in this you rejoice as a partaker of the sufferings of Christ. The compensations of the covenant of grace are so overflowing that we call our troubles "light afflictions, which are but for a moment," and

they work out for us a far more. exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Besides, there is one consolation, with which I finish; not because. I have completed my list, but because time does not permit me to enlarge: there is the consolation that you are on your journey home, and that every moment you are coming closer to the eternal rest. When we once reach heaven, we shall forget the trials of the way. An hour with our God will make up for a life of pain. You languish on that bed; but if you languish into immortality, you will no more. remember your anguish. When your head wears the crown and your hand waves the palm, you will count it all joy that you were thought worthy to be persecuted for Christ's sake.

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O sirs, we have the best of it! Whatever trouble may come to us as Christians, so much more of joy comes with it, that we have the best of the bargain. We give up drops of poisonous delight, but we dive into rivers of ineffable joy. The Christian's joy far excels the best that earth can afford. Grace is the dawn of glory. Faith brings heaven down to us, while love bears us up to heaven. Celestial fruits are gathered upon earthly ground by those who look up for the manna. Let us begin the song which with sweeter voices we shall continue, world without end- 'Unto him that loved us and laved us in his own blood, be glory for ever!'"

Still I fear there are some to whom it appears as if the joys of religion and the consolations of God were small. Let them correct their mistake; for the truth is far otherwise.

II. But now a second question comes up, which will come home to many Christian people. HAVE THESE CONSOLATIONS BEEN SMALL IN THEIR EFFECT UPON YOU? Have these consolations, though great in themselves, been small in their influence upon you?

I will begin my examination by putting to one disciple this question: Have you never very much rejoiced in God? Have you always possessed a little, and but a very little, joy? Are you one of those who are only up to the ankles in the river of grace? Why is this? Dear friend, you are believing upon a slender scale; you are living on a low plane. Why is it so? You hope you are saved, but it is by the skin of your teeth; you hope you are a child of God, but you are not very sure about it; and, consequently, you get very little joy out of it. This is mischievous. Whence comes it? Is it ignorance? Do you not know enough of the great doctrines of the gospel, and of the vast privileges of the redeemed? It may be so. We have heard of persons in Australia who walked habitually over nuggets of gold. We have heard of a bridge being built with what seemed common stones, but it contained masses of golden ore. Men did not know their wealth. Is it not a pity that you should be poor in comfort, and yet have all this gold of consolation at your foot? You have, lying within the leaves of your Bible, cheques for millions, and yet you have scarcely a penny to spend. What a pity! Is it listlessness? Have you never felt desirous to know the best of the Christian life? Have you never had the sacred ambition to gain all the blessings which

are provided in the covenant of grace? It is wonderful how indifferent some people can be: they can fret when within reach of unutterable joy! I have heard of a person who walked some seven hundred miles to see the Falls of
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Niagara. When he was within seven miles, he thought he heard the roar of the cataract, and he called to a man working in the fields, and said, 'Is that the roar of Niagara?' The man answered, 'I don't know, but I guess it may be. What if it is?' With surprise, the good man said, 'Do you live here?' 'Born and bred here,' the man answered. 'And yet you don't know whether that thundering noise is from the waterfall?' 'No, stranger,' said he, 'I don't care what it is. I have never seen those Falls. I look after my farm.' No doubt there are many within hail of heaven's choicest joys who have never cared to know them. They hope they are saved, but they don't care for great joy. They use their spade and their hoe, and dig their potatoes; but Niagara is nothing to them. Many look well to this life, but do not arouse themselves to gain present spiritual joy. Oh, sad, that you should be so much a Christian, that we should not wish to question that you are converted, and yet you are half-asleep, and self-content! You labor under the notion that those good people, who rejoice in the Lord are enthusiasts, or else you say to yourself, 'It would be presumption on my part to aspire to have the same joy.' What nonsense! Go in for everything that God can give you. If you are his child, nothing in his house is denied you. He saith to you, 'Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.' Do not you, like the elder brother, complain that you have served him all these years, and yet he never gave you enough to make you merry with your friends.

But it may be, dear friend, that you once did joy and rejoice. Well, then, is it of late that you have lost these splendid consolations, and come down to feel them small with you? I suggest to you that you observe what alteration you have made of late. Is it that you have more business, and have grown more worldly? You cannot get out to prayer-meetings now, nor to weeknight services. 'No,' you say, 'I cannot; and if you knew what I have to do, you would not blame me.' Just so, a little while ago you had not so much to do; but you chose to load yourself with an extra burden, knowing that you would not be able to get so much of spiritual food as aforetime. Somewhere in that line you will find the reason why your joy has declined. If anybody said to me, 'The days are darker now than they used to be,' I should remember that the sun is still the same. Perhaps my friend has not lately cleaned his windows; or he has not drawn up his blinds; and that is why he thinks there is less light. It is very possible to be much more in the dark than you need to be. The gloom may be in the eyes rather than in the
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heavens. May I suggest a little looking at home, that you may see why your former blessedness is gone?

Do you reply to me that you do use the means of grace? Do the outward means fail to bring you the consolation they once did? To what means do you refer? Are you as much in prayer as ever? and is prayer less refreshing

than it used to be? Do you read the Scriptures as you formerly did, with the same regularity, attention, and devotion? Do you no longer draw the waters of comfort from these wells of salvation? Do you really go on hearing the Word as you once did, with the same hunger for it, and love to it, and yet do you find it unsatisfactory to you? I must again remind you that these things have not altered in themselves; for the ministry is the same to other saints, the Scriptures must be the same, and the mercy-seat is not removed. The fault is not in these, but in yourself. Surely, dear friend, some evil thing within you has curdled the milk of blessing, and stopped the flow of joy. Search yourselves, I pray you, if the consolations of God are small with you. He has not forgotten to be gracious, neither has he ceased to hear prayer and to speak to his servants through his sacred Word. You shut the door from within; he bars it not from without.

I may come near to your experience if I ask—do you revive occasionally, and then relapse? I think I hear you say, “Oh, yes; I sometimes can clap my hands; for I feel delighted while hearing the gospel. I could shout Hallelujah, I do so rejoice. I am for a time up in the stirrups.” But you come down again just as readily. Why is this? Surely, you are in a very changeable frame, and live by feeling rather than by principle. Are not the grounds of comfort always the same? If a promise is true this morning, it will be true this afternoon; and if it is a real source of comfort to you this afternoon, it ought to be a comfort to you on Monday and all the other days of the week. If the feast does not alter, and yet it does not satisfy you as it once did, you must be ill, some fever or other disease is upon you. Haste away to the Great Physician of souls, and say to him, “Lord, search me and try me, and see what evil thing there is in me, and make me right, that I may again be satisfied with heavenly food.” It is childish to be so changeable. Grow in grace, and be rooted in faith.

Whose the cause of your greater grief lie in a trial to which you do not fully submit? I think I hear you admit that you faint under your load. “If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.” But he giveth more grace. Get it. Are you impatient? Do you kick against the pricks? Do you

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feel that you can endure no longer? Since you are impatient, do you wonder that you are unhappy? Since you walk contrary to God, do you wonder that he walks contrary to you? Do not find fault with his consolations; find fault with your own rebellious heart. When a child rebels against his father, it is not likely that his father’s love will be a source of much comfort to him. Dear friend, the Lord help you to get rid of impatience, and you will be rid of anguish. Take the cup, and drink it, and say, “Not as I will, but as thou wilt”; and an angel will appear unto you strengthening you. As it was with your Lord in a similar case, so shall it be with you. Are you alarmed at what may yet come? Do you dread the future? Well, if you will import trouble from the future, blame not the consolations of God; for he has told you that “the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” He has never taught you to pray, “Give me to -morrow my daily bread”: he

has limited you and pegged you down to this," Give us this day our daily bread." Will you not be content to live by the day? Walking with him who is the God of Eternity, you may leave days and years to him; and let one day at a time be enough for you.

It may be that while you are thus without the enjoyment of divine consolation, Satan is tempting you to look to other things for comfort. I pray you, touch not the wine-cup, if this be placed before you as a means of consolation. A dark hour is often the crisis in the history of a man of God: if he can weather this storm he will have fair sailing Satan will now be very busy to get you to act hastily, or wickedly. It will be whispered to you, 'Put your pen to that accommodation bill. Borrow, though you cannot pay. It may be wrong, but you can put it right afterwards.' I pray you, do not dream of any means of help which you cannot lay before God. How often have men in offices of trust been tempted to handle money, for just a little while, and then to put it back again! I beseech you, shake this viper off your hand. into the fire, for it is a viper. Better suffer anything than do wrong. Keep in the furnace till God bids you come out of it. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, when they found themselves walking safely in the midst of the flames, and saw Nebuchadnezzar standing at the mouth of the furnace, did not leap out to assail the tyrant. Not they: they stayed till they came out with honor. Brother, seek not consolation in policy, in trickery, in falsehood. Do not even seek it in overhaste. Many a man who has run before the cloud has had to slink back again. Many a man who has taken a knife to carve for himself, has cut his fingers. Do not be

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tempted to think that you can find better comforts than God can give you. Look not to man, but let your expectation be in God alone. If you have despised the consolations of God by setting them below your own efforts, you cannot expect that they should be sweet to your taste. Amend this and you will be happy. Your lack of comfort lies not in the consolations themselves, but in your own heart. Pray God the Holy Spirit to revive the work of grace in your soul, and that being done, either the trouble will grow lighter, or your back will be stronger to bear the burden.

III. Our third question is this-Since the consolations of God appear so small to you, HAVE YOU ANYTHING BETTER TO PUT IN THEIR PLACE? Perhaps this is what Eliphaz meant when he said, 'Is there any secret thing with thee?' He seemed to say to Job, 'We cannot tell you anything. You will not hear us. Have you some wonderful discovery of your own? Have you some secret cordial, some mystic support, some unknown joy? Have you discovered a balm of greater efficacy than ours, a cure-all for your sorrow?' Let me ask you a similar question. If God's gospel fails you, what will you do?

Have you found out a new religion with brighter hopes? I do not think you have, for the prognostications of modern thought are dreary enough! Moreover, I have been informed by those who know most about it, that the

theology of the future has not yet crystallized itself sufficiently to be defined. As far as I can see, it will take a century or two before its lovers have licked it into shape; for they have not yet settled what its shape is to be. While the grass is growing, the steed is starving. The new bread is baking: the arsenic is well mixed within it; but the oven is not very hot, and the dough is not turned into loaf yet. I should advise you to keep to that bread of which your fathers ate, the bread which came down from heaven. Personally I am not willing to make any change, even if the new bread were ready on the table; for new bread is not very digestible, and the arsenic of doubt is not according to my desire. I shall keep to the old manna till I cross the Jordan, and eat the old corn of the land of Canaan. Are you hopeful of finding comfort in new speculations? Is that the "secret thing"? Then you feed upon the wind.

Are you hoping to find comfort in the world? Will you be happy if you manage to get that position? if you pass that examination? if you save so much money? I beseech you, do not play the fool: there is no consolation in all this. Did you ever read a little book called "The Mirage of Life,"

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published by the Tract Society? It ought to convince anybody that there is no satisfaction to be found in the greatest worldly success; for it shows us millionaires, statesmen, and princes all dissatisfied. But I need not refer to any book; observe for yourselves. The richest men have often been the most miserable, and those who have succeeded best in rising to places of honor have been worn out in the pursuit, and disgusted with the prize. Wealth brings care, honor earns envy, position entails toil, and rank has its annoyances. One of our richest men once said, "I suppose you fancy I am happy, because I am rich. Why, a dozen times in a year, and oftener, some fellow threatens to shoot me if I do not send him what he wants. Do you suppose that this makes me a happy man?" Believe me, the world is as barren of joy as the Sahara. Vain is the hope of finding a spring of consolation in anything beneath the moon. Seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.

Or, do you conclude that you are strong-minded enough to bear all the difficulties and trials of life without consolation? Well, friend, I will not discuss the point. I have found that persons who think themselves strong in mind are generally strong in the head. Yet I would remind you that the strongest are not too strong for life's battle. There never was a wise man yet who thought he was wise. This world has enough of woe in it to test all the wisdom you are likely to possess. For my own part, I feel very diffident, and would be glad of all the consolations heaven can give me. I suspect that you are as I am, and will not be able to play the man without help from God.

Who you say that what can't be cured must be endured, and you will keep as you are? This is a poor resolve for a man to come to. If there is better to be had, why not seek it? Do you mean to abide in the sad state into which you have fallen? Are you content to be discontented? Have you had a child of your own? Have you seen it go wrong, and get itself into trouble, and

then resolve not to confess it, but to make. itself appear a martyr and fret? You wished to put it right, and cheer it into obedience; but it would not get out of the sulks. What did you do with it? I suppose, in the long run, you had to leave it to have its sulk out, and you thought to yourself, ‘S ill y child! How miserable you make yourself, and all for nothing. You might be as happy as your brothers and sisters; but if you must sulk, you must.’”

Some believers are of this sort. Because they had a serious loss, they must needs rob themselves of communion with God. Because they have endured terrible bereavement, they bereave themselves of their Lord. Because they
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are not well, they fret themselves into worse health. Some are only satisfied when they are in the depths of misery. I know some whose wretchedness is chronic: like polar bears, they are only at home in the ice. You smile, and well you may; but then you should also weep, if this is your case. You should cry, ‘O Lord, put me right with thyself! I cannot be content to be always repining and lamenting! If there are consolations to be had in thee, let me have them now. I know there is no consolation anywhere else. To whom should I go? Thou alone hast the words of eternal life! There is no secret thing with me, my God, upon which I can rely. I must have thy consolation, or I shall have no comfort!’”

IV. Here comes the most practical question of all, and with this I close. If it be so, that you have hitherto found heavenly consolations to have small effect with you, and yet have nothing better to put in their place, IS THERE NOT A CAUSE FOR YOUR FAILURE? Will you not endeavor to find it out?

Dear friends, you that seek to be right, you that desire to be full Christians, and yet cannot rejoice in God, at least not often, nor greatly, is there not some sin indulged? A child of God may go on with a sin unwittingly, and that for years; and all the while that sin may be causing a dreadful leakage in his joy. You cannot be wrong in life, and thought, and word, without a measure of joy oozing away. Take a good look at yourself, and examine your life by the light of Scripture, and if you find that you have been doing something wrong unawares, or for which you have made an unworthy excuse, away with the evil! Away with it at once! When this Achan is stoned, and the accursed thing is put away, you will be surprised to find what joy, what comfort will immediately flow into your soul.

Next, may there not have been some duty neglected? We are not saved by good works; but if any Christian omits a good work, he will find it injurious to his peace. Many Christian people never get into the clear light of full assurance, because they do not obey their conscience upon every point. I pray you, never quarrel with conscience, for it will have the best of it with you-if you have a conscience. If you go contrary to conscience, there will be trouble inside the little kingdom of your soul, as sure as you are alive. “Oh, but I have always been intending to do it.” That makes it the greater sin that you have not done it, for evidently you knew your Lord’s will. Have you considered that any wilful omission of duty is not one sin,

but many? It is your duty to do it now; it is a sin that you have not done it already. It will be your duty to do it to-morrow; it will be another sin if you
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omit it to-morrow. How often the omission creates a new sin I cannot tell; but as surely as you rob God of obedience, sin will rob you of comfort. If you neglect obedience to the precept, you cannot have the comfort of the promise. Get that matter seen to at once, there's a dear friend! Omitted duty is like a little stone in the sole of your shoe. It is small, and some say it is a non-essential matter; but it is just because it is so small that it can do so much mischief. If I had a great pebble in my boot, I should be sure to get it out; but a tiny stone may remain, and blister me, and lame me. Get out the little stones, or they will hinder your travelling to heaven. Again, may there not be some idol in your heart? That is a very searching suggestion. If the consolations of God are small with you, may you not have set up something in the place of God—a lover, a wife, a husband, a child, a friend, learning, honor, wealth? I need not mention the many forms taken by our idols. It is very easy to set up an image of jealousy. A thing in itself harmless and even lovely, may grievously provoke the Lord through our heart going after it. Brother, sister, is it so? Do you love anything as you love God? I suggest that you should at once cry—

*‘The dearest idol I have known,
Whate’er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee.’*

If you do not remove the idol from its throne, if God loves you, he will make your Dagon fall and be broken. If you want to lose that which is the object of your comfort and delight, love it too much. This is a sort of unwilful murder which good people can perform upon their children and their friends. Idolize and destroy. Love the creature more than the Creator, and it may be necessary that they should be taken from you altogether. But, beloved, if you do not enjoy the consolations of God, do you not think it is because you do not think enough of God? I am ashamed of myself that I do not live more with my God. How little time do we spend with him! We think about his work rather than himself. Even in the Scriptures we look more to the words than to God speaking by the words. We criticize a phrase when we should be drinking in the spirit of the revelation, and so be getting near to God. If we are cold, is it not because we do not sit in the sun? If we are faint, is it not because we do not feed on him whose flesh is meat indeed? How would a fish fare if it left the water? How can we prosper if we leave our God, who is the element of our life? Say with David, in the psalm we sang just now:
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*‘Like as the hart for water -brooks
In thirst doth pant and bray;
So pants my longing soul, O God,
That come to thee I may.’*

And then you will not long be disquieted, for you will go on to sing:

*‘For yet I know I shall him praise,
Who graciously to me,
The health is of my countenance,
Yea, mine own God is he.’*

If any of you have not the joy of the Lord which you once possessed, is it not possible that when you used to have it you grew proud? ‘Jeshurun. waxed fat and kicked.’ He will have to be starved a bit to bring him to his senses. Ah! I have known a child of God so happy in the Lord, so useful and so blessed in every way, that he began to think he was something out of the common. He grew very sublime. As to the poor brethren around him, he could hardly put up with them—they were more dead than alive; they were weaklings, foolish men, mere babes, and so on. He saw a poor tried believer looking out of one of the windows of Doubting Castle, and instead of helping him out, he bullied him so much for being there at all that the poor prisoner was more shut up than ever. Look at him! He is a fine fellow! He never had sad doubts; he never felt anxious fears. Not he! You re- mind me, my dear brother, of the fat cattle mentioned in Ezekiel, of whom the prophet says that they thrust with side, and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with their horns till they had scattered them.

‘Therefore thus saith the Lord God unto them; behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle.’ The Lord will not have you condemn the weak and sneer at the feeble. You may yet be such yourselves. His consolations will be small with you if his people are small with you. If you do not care for the little ones who believe in him, neither will he be quick to comfort you. Be humble. Take the lowest place. If you will lie low before the Lord, he will lift you up; but if you lift up yourself, God will throw you down.

I will close by saying that one of the worst causes of disquietude is unbelief. Have you begun to distrust? Do you really doubt your God? Then I do not wonder that the consolations of God are small with you. Here is the rule of the kingdom—‘According to your faith, so be it unto you.’ If you doubt God, you will get but little from him. He that wavereth may not
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expect to receive anything of the Lord. Strong faith may have what it wills; but when your doubts master your faith, prayer cannot prevail. Few are the dainties from the King’s table which come to the dish of mistrust. What do you doubt? Do you question the Word of God? Has the Lord said more than the truth will warrant? Do you think so? Will you dare to throw such a handful of mud upon the veracity of God? His truth is one of his crown jewels; would you take it away? Do you distrust his power? Do you think he cannot comfort you? Do you imagine that he cannot make you ride upon the high places of the earth? Do you think that he cannot put a new song into your mouth, and make you rejoice in his name from morning to night? Wherefore should you doubt his power to make you joyful in his

house? Do you doubt the Lord's wisdom? Do you think the Holy Spirit cannot meet your case, and provide comfort suitable for your distress? Surely, you cannot have fallen into this base suspicion! Or, do you doubt the Lord's presence? Do you think that he is too far off to know you and help you? He is everywhere present, and he knows the way that you take. Come and trust the Lord. Come, beloved, whether you be saint or sinner, come through the Lord Jesus, and fall down at Jehovah's feet and say, 'Lord, my hope is in thee. I have no comfort elsewhere; but I know thy comforts are not small. Comfort me, I pray thee, in Christ Jesus.' If you would have that prayer answered, listen to these words of the Lord Jesus: 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.' Though the tears be in your eyes, yet turn them to Christ crucified. Put your trust simply, immediately, wholly, and alone in him who died for you, and you shall go your way filled with consolation. God grant that it may be so, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

RESTRAINING PRAYER.

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“Thou ...restrainest prayer before God.” -Job 15:4.

THIS is one of the charges brought by Eliphaz the Temanite against Job, “Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God.” I shall not use this sentence as an accusation against these who never pray, though there may be some in this here of prayer whose heads are unaccustomed to bow down, and whose knees are unaccustomed to kneel before the Lord their Maker. You have been fed by God’s bounty, you owe all the breath in your nostrils to him, yet you have never done homage to his name. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib, but you know not, neither do you consider the Most High. The cattle on a thousand hills low forth their gratitude, and every sheep praiseth God in its bleatings; but these beings, worse than natural brute beasts, still continue to receive from the lavish hand of divine benevolence, but they return no thanks whatsoever to their Benefactor. Let such remember that that ground, which has long been rained upon, and ploughed, and sown, which yet bringeth forth no fruit, is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. Prayerless souls are Christless souls, Christless souls are graceless souls, and graceless souls shall soon be damned souls. See your peril, ye that neglect altogether the blessed privilege of prayer. You are in the bonds of iniquity, you are in the gall of bitterness. God deliver you, for his name’s sake!

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Nor do I intend to use this text in an address to those who are in the habit of formal prayer, though there are many such. Taught from their childhood to utter certain sacred words, they have carried through youth, and even up to manhood, the same practice. I will not discuss that question just now,

whether the practice of teaching children a form of prayer is proper or not. I would not do it. Children should be instructed in the meaning of prayer, and their little minds should be taught to pray; but it should be rather the matter of prayer than the words of prayer that could be suggested; and I think they should be taught to use their own words, and to speak to God in such phrases and terms as their own childlike capacities, assisted by a mother's love, may be able to suggest. Full many there are who, from early education, grow up habituated to some form of words, which either stands in lieu of the heart's devotion, or cripples its free exercise. No doubt there may be true prayer linked with a form, and the soul of many a saint has gone up to heaven in some holy collect, or in the words of some beautiful liturgy; but, for all that, we are absolutely certain that tens of thousands use the men language without heart or soul, under the impression that they are" praying. I consider the form of prayer to be no more worthy of being called prayer than a coach may be called a horse; the horse will be better without the coach, travel much more rapidly, and find himself much more at ease; he may drag the coach, it is true, and still travel well. Without the heart of prayer, the form is no prayer; it will not stir or move, it is simply a vehicle that may have wheels that might move; but it has no inner force or power within itself to propel it. Flatter not yourselves that your devotion has been acceptable to God, you that have been merely saluting the ears of the Most High with forms. They have been only mockeries, when your heart has been absent. What though a parliament of bishops should have come, posed the words you use, what though they should be absolutely faultless, ay, what if they should even be inspired, or though you have used them a thousand times, yet have you never prayed if you consider that the repetition of the form is prayer. No! there is more than the chatter of the tongue in genuine supplication; more than the repetition of words in truly drawing near to God. Take care lest, with the form of godliness, you neglect the power, and go down to the pit, having a lie in your right hand, but not the truth in your heart.

What I do intend, however, is to address this text to the true people of God, who understand the sacred art of prayer, and are prevalent therein; but who, to their own sorrow and shame, must confess that they have

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restrained prayer. If there be no other person in this Congregation to whom the preacher will speak personally, he feels shamefully conscious that he will have to speak very plainly to himself. We know that our prayers are heard; we are certain — it is not a question with us, — that there is an efficacy in the divine office of intercession; and yet (oh, how we should blush when we make the confession!) we must acknowledge that we do restrain prayer. Now, inasmuch as we speak to those who grieve and resent that they should so have done, we shall use but little sharpness; but we shall try to use much plainness of speech. Let us see how and in what respect we have restrained prayer.

I. Do you not think, dear friends, that we often restrain prayer IN THE FEWNESS OF THE OCCASIONS THAT WE SET APART FOR SUPPLICATION? From hoary tradition and modern precedents, we have come to believe that the morning should be opened with the offering of prayer, and that the day should be shut in with the nightly sacrifice. We do ill if we neglect those two sessions of prayer. Do you not think that often, in the morning, we rise so near to the time of labor, when duty calls us to our daily avocation, that we hurry through the wonted exercises with unseemly haste, instead of diligently seeking the Lord, and earnestly calling upon his name? And even at night, when we are very weary and jaded, it is just possible that our prayer is uttered somewhere between sleeping and waking. Is not this restraining prayer? And throughout the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year, if we continue thus to pray, and this be all, how small an amount of two supplication will have gone up to heaven!

I trust there are none here present, who profess to be followers of Christ who do not also practice prayer in their families. We may have no positive commandment for it, but we believe that it is so much in accord with the genius and spirit of the gospel, and that it is so commended by the example of the saints, that the neglect thereof is a strange inconsistency. Now, how often this family worship is conducted in a slovenly manner! An inconvenient hour is fixed; and a knock at the door, a ring at the bell, the call of a customer, may hurry the believer from his knees to go and attend to his worldly concerns. Of course, many excuses might be offered, but the fact would still remain that, in this way, we often restrain prayer.

And then, when you come up to the house of God, — I hope you do not come up to this Tabernacle without prayer, — yet I fear we do not all pray as we should, even when in the place dedicated to God's worship. There

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should always be a devout prayer lifted up to heaven as soon as you enter the place where you would meet with God. What a preparation is often made to appear in the assembly! Some of you get here half an hour before the service commences; if there were no talking, if each one of you looked into the Bible, or if the time was spent in silent supplication, what a cloud of holy incense would go smoking up to heaven!

I think it would be comely for you and profitable for us if, as soon as the minister enters the pulpit, you engaged yourself to plead with God for him. For me, I may especially say it is desirable. I claim it at your hands above every or man. With this overwhelming congregation, and with the terrible reliability of so numerous a church, and with the word spoken here published within a few hours, and disseminated over the country, scattered throughout all Europe, nay, to the very ends of the earth, I may well as you to lift up your hearts in supplication that the words spoken may be those of truth and soberness, directed of the Holy Spirit, and made mighty through God, like arrows shot from his own bow, to find a target in the hearts that he means to bless.

And an going home, with what earnestness should we as the Master to let

what we have heard dive in our hearts! We lose very much of the effects of our Sabbaths through not pleading with God on the Saturday night for a blessing upon the day of rest, and through not also pleading at the end of the Sunday, beseeching him to make that which we have heard abide in our memories, and appear in our actions. We have restrained prayer, I fear, in the fewness of the occasions. Indeed, brethren, every day of the week, and every part of the day, should be an occasion for prayer. Ejaculations such as these, ‘Oh, would that!’ ‘Lord, save me!’ ‘Help me!’ ‘More light, Lord!’ ‘Teach me!’ ‘Guide me!’ and a thousand such, should be constantly going up from our hearts to the throne of God. You may enjoy a refreshing solitude, if you please, in the midst of crowded Cheapside; or contrariwise, you may have your head in the whirl of a busy crowd when you have retired to your closet. It is not so much where we are as in what state our heart is. Let the regular seasons for devotion be constantly attended to. These things ought ye to have done; but let your heart be habitually in a state of prayer; ye must not leave this undone. Oh, that we prayed more, that we set apart more time for it! God Bishop Farrar had an idea in his head which he carried out. Being a man of some substance, and having some twenty-four persons in his household, he divided the day, and there was always some person engaged either in holy song or else in

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devout supplication through the whole of the twenty-four hours; never was there a moment when the censor ceased to smoke, or the altar was without its sacrifice. Happy shall it be for us when, day without night, we shall circle the throne of God rejoicing; but, till then, let us emulate the ceaseless praise of seraphs before the throne, continually drawing near unto God, and making supplication and thanksgiving.

II. But, to proceed to a second remark, dear friends, I think it will to very clear, upon a little reflection, that we constantly restrain prayer BY NOT HAVING OUR HEARTS IN A PROPER STATE WHEN WE COME TO ITS EXERCISE.

We rush into prayer too often. We should think it necessary, if we were to address the Queen, that our petition should be prepared; but, often, we dash before the throne of God as though it were but some common house of call, without even having a thought in our minds of what we are going for. Now, just let me suggest some few things which I think should always be subjects of meditation before our season of prayer, and I think, if you confess that you have not thought of these things, you will also be obliged to acknowledge that you have restrained prayer.

We should, before prayer, *meditate upon him to whom it is to be addressed*. Let our thoughts be directed to the living and true God. Let me remember that he is omnipotent, then I shall ask large things. Let me remember that he is very tender, and full of compassion, then I shall ask little things, and be minute in my supplication. Let me remember the greatness of his covenant, then I shall very boldly. Let me remember, also,

that his faithfulness is like the great mountains, that his promises are sure to all the seed, then I shall ask very confidently, for I shall be persuaded that he will do as he has said. Let me fill my soul with the reflection of the greatness of his majesty, then I shall be struck with awe, with the equal greatness of his love, then I shall be filled with delight. We should pray better than we do if we meditated more, before prayer, upon the God whom we address in our supplications.

Then, let me *meditate also upon the way through which my prayer is offered*; let my soul behold the blood sprinkled on to mercyseat; before I venture to draw near to God, let me go to Gethsemane, and see the Savior as he prays. Let me stand in holy vision at the foot of Calvary, and see his body rent, that the veil which parted my soul from all access to God might be rent too, that I might come close to my Father, even to his feet. O dear

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friends, I am sure, if we thought about the way of access in prayer, we should be more mighty in it, and our neglect of so doing has led us to restrain prayer.

And yet, again, *ought I not, before prayer, to be duly conscious of my many sins?* Oh! when I hear men pray cold, careless prayers, surely they forget that they are sinners, or else, abjuring gaudy words and flowing periods, they would smite upon their breast with the cry, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner;’ they would come to the point at once, with force and fervency. ‘I, black, unclean, defiled, condemned by the law, make my appeal unto thee, O God!’ What prostration of spirit, what zeal, what fervor, what earnestness, and then, consequently, what prevalence would there be if we were duly sensible of our sin!

If we can add to this *a little meditation upon what our needs are*, how much better we should pray! We often fail in prayer because we come without an errand, not having thought of what our necessities are; but if we have reckoned up that we need pardon, justification, sanctification, preservation; that, besides the blessings of this life, we need that our decaying graces should be revived, that such-and-such a temptation should be removed, and that through such-and-such a trial we should be carried, and prove more than conquerors, then, coming with an errand, we should speed before the Most High. But we bring to the altars bowls that have no bottom; and if the treasure should be put in them, it would fall through. We do not know what we want, and therefore we ask not for what we really need; we affect to lay our necessities before the Lord, without having duly considered how great our necessities are. See thyself as an abject bankrupt, weak, sick, dying, and this will make thee plead. See thy necessities to be deep as the ocean, broad as the expanse of heaven, and this will make thee cry. There will be no restraining of prayer, beloved, when we have got a due sense of our soul’s poverty; but because we think we are rich, and increased in goods, and we have need of nothing, therefore it is that we restrain prayer before God.

How well it would be for us if, *before prayer, we would meditate upon the past with regard to all the mercies we have had during the day*, what

courage that would give us to ask for more! The deliverances we have experienced through our life, how boldly should we plead to be delivered yet again! He that hath been with me in six troubles will not forsake me in the seventh. Do but remember how thou didst pass through the fires, and
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waste not burnt, and thou shouldst be confident that the flame will not kindle upon thee now. Christian, remember how, when thou passedst through the rivers aforetime, God was with thee; and surely thou mayst plead with him to deliver thee from the flood that now threatens to inundate thee. Think of the past ages too, of what he did of old, where he brought his people out of Egypt, and of all the mighty deeds which he has done, — are they not written in the book of the wars of the Lord? Plead all these, and say unto him in thy supplications: — ‘O thou that art a God that heareth prayer, hear me now, and send me an answer of peace! ‘I think, without needing to point that arrow, you can see which way I would shoot. Because we do not come to the throne of grace in a proper state of supplication, therefore it is that to often we restrain prayer before God.

III. Now, thirdly, it is not to be denied, by a man who is conscious of his own error, that, IN THE DUTY OF PRAYER ITSELF WE ARE TOO OFTEN STRAITENED IN OUR OWN BOWELS, AND SO RESTRAIN PRAYER.

Prayer has been differently divided by different authors. We might roughly say that prayer consists, first, of *invocation*: ‘Our Father, which art in heaven.’ We beg in by stating the title and our own apprehension of the glory and majesty of the Person whom we address. Do you not think, dear friends, that we fail here, and restrain prayer here? Oh! how we ought to sound forth his praises! I think, on the Sabbath, it is always the minister’s special duty to bring out the titles of THE ALMIGHTY ONE, such as ‘King of kings, and Lord of lords!’ He is not to be addressed in common terms. How should we endeavor, as we search the Scripture through, to find those mighty phrases which the ancient saints were, wont to apply to Jehovah! And how should we make his temple ring with his glory, and make our closet full of that holy adoration with which prayer must always be linked! I think the rebuking angel might often say, ‘Thou thinkest that the Lord is such an one as thyself, and thou talkest not to him as to the God of the whole earth; but, as though he were a man, thou dost address him in slighting and unseemly terms.’ Let all our invocations come more deeply from our souls reverence to the Most High, and let us address him, not in high-sounding words of fleshly homage, but still in words which set forth our awe and our reverence while they express his majesty and the glory of his holiness.

From invocation we usually go to *confession*, and how often do we fail here! In your closet, are you in the habit of confessing your real sins to
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God? Do you not find, brethren, a tendency to acknowledge that sin which it common to all men, but not that which is certainly peculiar to you? We

are all Sauls in our way, we want the best of the cattle and the sheep; those favourite sins, those Agag sins, it is not so easy to hew them in pieces before the Lord. The right eye sin, happy it that Christian who has learned to pluck it out by confession. The right hand sin, he is blessed and well taught who aims the axe at that sin, and cuts it from him. But no, we say that we have sinned, — we are willing to use the terms of any general confession that any church may publish; but to say, ‘Lord, thou knowest that I love the world, and the things of the world; I am covetous or to say, ‘Lord, thou knowest I was envious of So -and-so, because he shone brighter than I did at such and-such a public meeting, Lord, I was jealous of such-and-such a member of the church, because I evidently saw that he was preferred before me;” and for the husband also to confess before God that he has been overbearing, that he has spoken rashly to a child; for a wife to acknowledge that she has been wilful, that she has had a fault, — this would be *letting out* prayer; but the hiding of these things is *restraining* prayer, and we shall surely come under that charge of having restrained prayer unless we make our private confessions of sin very explicit, coming to the point.

I have thought, in teaching children in the Sabbath-school, we should not so much talk about sin in general as the sins in which children most commonly indulge, such as little thefts, naughty tempers, disobedience to parents; these are the things that children should confess. Men in the dawn of their manhood should confess those ripening evil imaginations, those lustful things that rise in the heart; while the man in business should ever make; this a point, to see most to the sins which attack business men. I have no doubt that I might be very easily led, in my confession, to look to all the offenses I may have committed against the laws of business, because I should not need to deal very hardly with myself there, for I do not have the temptations of these men; and I should not wonder if some of you merchants will find it very easy to examine ourselves according to a code that is proper to me, but not to you. Let the workman pray to God as a workman, and confess the sins common to his craft. Let the trader examine himself according to his standing, and let each man make his confession like the confessions of old, when every one confessed apart, — the mother apart and the daughter apart, the father apart and the son apart. Let each

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one thus make a clean breast of the matter, and I am sure there will not be so much need to say that we have restrained prayer before God.

As to the next part of prayer, which is *petition*, lamentably indeed do we all fail. We have not, because we ask not, or because we ask amiss. We are ready enough to ask for deliverance from trial, but how often we forget to ask that it may be sanctified to us! We are quite ready to say, ‘Give us this day our daily bread:” how of ten, however, do we fail to ask that he would give us the Bread which cometh down from heaven, and enable us blessedly to feed upon his flesh and his blood! Brethren, we come before God with such little desires, and the desires we get have so little fervency in them, and when we get the fervency, we so often fail to get the faith

which grasps the promise, and believes that God will give, that, in all these points, when we come to the matter of spreading our wants before God, we restrain prayer.

Oh, for the Luthers that can shake the gates of heaven by supplication! Oh, for men that can lay hold upon the golden knocker of heaven's gate, and make it ring and ring again as if they meant it to be heard! Cold prayers court a denial. God hears by fire, and the God that answers by fire let him be God. But there must be prayer in Elijah's heart, first — fire in Elijah's heart first — before the fire will come down in answer to the prayer. Our fervency goeth up to heaven, and then God's grace, which gave us the fervency, cometh down, and giveth it the answer.

But you know, to, that all true prayer has in it thanksgiving. "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, far ever and ever." What prayer is complete without the doxology? And here, too, we restrain prayer. We do not praise, and bless, and magnify the Lord as we should. If our hearts were more full of gratitude, our expressions would be far more noble and comprehensive when we speak forth his praise. I wish I could put this as plainly that every Christian might mourn on account of his sin, and mend his ways. But, indeed, it is only mine to speak; it is my Master's to open your eyes, to let you see, and to set you upon the solemnly important duty of self-examination. In this respect, I am sure even the prayers that you and I have offered today may well cry out against us, and say, "Thou hast restrained prayer."

IV. Yet, again, I fear also we must all sin in acknowledging A SERIOUS FAULT WITH REGARD TO THE AFTER-PART OF OUR PRAYERS. When prayer is done, do you not think we very much restrain it?

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For, *after prayer, we often go into the world immediately.* That may be absolutely necessary; but we go there, and leave behind us what we ought to carry with us. When we have got into a good frame in prayer, we should consider that this is like the meat which the angel gave to Elijah that he might go on his forty days journey in its strength. Have we felt heavenly-minded? Yet, the moment we cross the threshold, and get into the family or business, where is the heavenly mind? Oh, to get real prayer, inwrought prayer, — not the surface prayer, as though it were a sort of sacred masquerading after all, — to have it inside, in the warp and woof of our being, till prayer becomes a part of ourselves; then, brethren, we have no restrained it. We get hot in our closets, — when I say awe", oh, how few can say so much as that! — but, still, we get hot in our closets, and go out into the world, into the draughts of its temptations, without wrapping ourselves about with promises and we catch well-nigh our death of cold. Oh, to carry that heat and fervor with us! You know that, as you carry, a bar of hot iron along, how soon it begins to return to its common ordinary appearance, and the heat is gone. How hot, then, we ought to make ourselves in prayer, that we may burn the longer; and how, all day long, we

ought to keep thrusting the iron into the fire again, so that, when it ceases to glow, it may go into the hot embers once more, and the flame may glow upon it, and we may once again be brought into a vehement heat. But we are not careful enough to keep up the grace, and seek to nurture and to cherish the young child, which God seems to give in the morning into our hands that we may nurse it for him.

Old Master Dyer speaks of locking up his heart by prayer in the morning, and giving Christ the key. I am afraid we do the opposite, — we lock up our hearts in the morning, and give the devil the key, and think that he will be honest enough not to rob us. Ah! it is in bad hands when it is trusted with him; and he keeps filching all day long the precious things that were in the casket, until at night it is quite empty, and needs to be filled over again. Would God that we put the key in Christ's hands, by locking up to him all the day!

I think, too, that *after prayer, we often fail in unbelief*. We do not expect God to hear us. If God were to hear some of you, you would be more surprised than with the greatest novelty that could occur. We ask blessings, but do not think of having them. When you and I were children, and had a little piece of garden, we sowed some seed one day, and the next morning, before breakfast, we went to see if it was up; and the next day, seeing that

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no appearance of the green blade could be discovered, we began to move the mould to look after our seeds. Ah! we were children then. I wish we were children now, with regard to our prayers. We should go out, the next morning, to see if they had begun to sprout, and disturb the ground a bit to look after our prayers, for fear they should have miscarried. Do you believe God hears prayer?

I saw, the other day, in a newspaper, a little sketch concerning myself, in which the author, who is evidently very friendly, gives a much better description of me than I deserve; but he offers me one rather pointed rebuke. I was preaching at the time in a tent, and only part of the people were covered. It began to rain just, before prayer, and one petition was, 'O Lord, be pleased to grant us favorable weather for this service, and command the clouds that they rain not upon this assembly!' Now he thought this very preposterous. To say the least, it was rash, if not blasphemous. He admits that it did not rain a drop after it. Still, of course, he did not infer that God heard and answered the prayer. If I had asked for a rain of grace, it would have been quite credible that God would send that; but when I ask him not to send a temporal rain, that is fanaticism. To think that God meddles with the clouds at the wish of a man, or that he may answer us in temporal things, is pronounced absurd. I bless God, however, that I fully believe the absurdity, preposterous as it may appear. I know that God hears prayer in temporal things. I know it by as clear a demonstration as ever any proposition in Euclid was solved. I know it by abundant facts and incidents which my own life has revealed. God does hear prayer. The majority of people do not think that he does. At least, if he does, they suppose that it is in some high, clerical, mysterious, unknown

sense. As to ordinary things ever happening as the result of prayer, they account it a delusion. "The Bank of Faith!" How many have said it is a bank of nonsense; and yet there are many who have been able to say, "We could write as good a book as Huntington's 'Bank of Faith,' that would be no more believed than Huntington's Bank was, though it might be even more true."

We restrain prayer, I am sure, by not believing our God. We ask a favor, which, if granted, we should attribute to accident rather than ascribe it to grace, and we do not receive it; then the next time we come, of course we cannot pray, because unbelief has cut the sinews of prayer, and left us powerless before the throne.

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You are a professor of religion. After you have been to a party of ungodly people, can you pray? You are a merchant, and profess to be a follower of Christ; when you engage in a hazardous speculation, and you know you ought not, can you pray? Or, when you have had a heavy loss in business, and repine against God, and will not say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord;" can you pray? Pity the man who can sin and pray, too. In a certain sense, Brooks was right when he said, "Praying will make you leave off sinning, or else sin will make you leave off praying." Of course, that is not meant in the absolute sense of the term; but as to certain sins, especially gross sins, — and some of the sins to which God's people are liable are gross sins, — I am certain they cannot come before their Father's face with the confidence they had before, after having been rolling in the mire, or wandering in By-path Meadow. Look at your own child; he meets you in the morning with a smiling face, so pleased; he asks what he likes of you, and you give it to him. Now he has been doing wrong, he knows he has; and you have frowned upon him, you have chastened him. How does he come now? He may come because he is a child, and with tears in his eyes because he is a penitent; but he cannot as with the power he once had. Look at a king's favourite; as long as he feels that he is in the king's favor, he will take up your suit, and plead for you. Ask him to-morrow whether he will do you a good turn, and he says, "No, I am out of favor; I don't feel as if I could speak now." A Christian is not out of covenant favor, but he may be experimentally under a cloud; he loses the light of God's countenance; and then he feels he cannot plead, his prayers become weak and feeble.

Take heed unto yourselves, and consider your ways. The path of declension is very abrupt in some parts. We may go on gradually declining in prayer till faith grows weak, and love cold, and patience is exhausted. We may go on for years, and maintain a consistent profession; but, all of a sudden, the road which had long been descending at a gradual incline may come to a precipice, and we may fall, and that when we little think of it; we may have ruined our reputation, blasted our comfort, destroyed our usefulness, and we may have to go to our graves with a sword in our bones because of sin. Stop while you may, believer; stop, and guard against the temptation. I charge you, by the trials you must meet with, by the

temptations that surround you, by the corruptions that are within, by the assaults that come from hell, and by the trials that come-from heaven, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." To the members of this

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church I speak especially. What hath God wrought for us! When we were a few people, what intense agony of prayer we had! We have had prayermeetings in Park Street that have moved our souls. Every man seemed like a crusader besieging Jerusalem, each man determined to storm the Celestial City by the might of intercession; and the blessing came upon us, so that we had not room to receive it. The hallowed cloud rests o'er us still; the holy drops still fall. Will ye now cease from intercession? At the borders of the promised land, will ye turn back to the wilderness, when God is with us, and the standard of a King is in the midst of our armies? Will ye not fail in the day of trial? Who knoweth but ye have come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Who knoweth but that he will preserve in the land a small company of poor people who fear God intensely, hold the faith earnestly, and love God vehemently; that infidelity may be driven from the high places of the earth; that Naphtali again may be a people made triumphant in the high places of the field? God of heaven, grant this! Oh, let us restrain prayer no longer! You that have never prayed, may you be taught to pray! "God be merciful to me a sinner," uttered from your heart, with your eye upon the cross, will bring you a gracious answer, and you shall go on your way rejoicing, for —

*"When God inclines the heart to pray ,
He hath an ear to hear;
To him there's music in a groan,
And beauty in a tear."*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

1 JOHN 2.

1 John 2:1-4. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

Holy living is the sure fruit and proof of anyone being in Christ. Where it is not manifest, the profession of being in Christ is a lie.

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5. *But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.*

Note the gradation: we know him, we are in him we know that we are in

him.

6. *He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

Abiding in Christ helps us to live as Christ lived; not, as one well observes, that we can walk on the water as Christ walked upon it, but that we can walk in our daily life even as he did, because we abide in him.

7. *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.*

The old commandment is the word which we have heard from the beginning, yet it is always fresh and new.

8-10. *Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.*

Love is the great and sure way of abiding in the light, abiding in Christ.

11-14. *But he that hateth his brother is in darkness and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.*

Having overcome him, at the first by your faith in Christ you still go on to conquer him by abiding in Christ.

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15-17. *Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

Everything else is transient, fleeting, and soon passeth away; but he that doeth the will of God has entered into the eternal regions, and he has himself become one of those who abide for ever. Do not be carried away, therefore, from your old firm foundation, and from your eternal union to Christ.

18-20. *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. You are taught of God, so you know all that is needful for the attainment*

of true godliness, and the accomplishment of the divine purposes.

21-25. *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth; Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [but] he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.*

Not transient life, but eternal life, is the great promise of the covenant of grace, and abiding in Christ we possess it.

26, 27. *These things hath I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you,* What a wonderful declaration this is, — not only that we have this holy anointing, but that we have it always.

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27, 28. *And ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. And now little children, abide in him; —*

See how the apostle rings out this note again and again. Our Savior repeated the word “abide” or “remain” many times in the short parable of the Vine, and now John strikes this same silver bell over and over again: “And now, little children, abide in him; —

28, 29. *That, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.*

MAN'S SCORN AND GOD'S SUCCOR.

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ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, MAY 12TH, 1867.

‘My friends scorn me; but mine eye poureth out tears unto God.’—Job 16. 20.

WE know that Job's sorrows were recorded, not for his honor, but for our profit. We are told to consider the patience of Job, and truly we might often be sustained, cheered, and comforted if we would but look upon that patriarch in the depths of his grief. We are ‘born to sorrow’; and if our cup be not embittered with it tonight, we must not expect to be long without a taste of the gall in our mouths.

There is one particular sorrow, however, which appertains to the early days of our spiritual life, concerning which I intend to speak tonight. It is the sorrow caused by the scorning of us by our friends. This becomes a very little sorrow to us in after days, but at the first it is a ‘trial of cruel mockings,’ and a very severe one. I suppose the advanced Christian at last can even come to ‘rejoice in tribulations’ of this sort: he counts it to be an honor: he rejoices, and is exceeding glad, when men say all manner of evil against him falsely for Christ's name's sake. But at the first there is nothing, perhaps, more staggering to the young Christian than to find that his ‘worst foes’ are they of his own household, and that they who should have cherished and nurtured in him the piety which is so excellent a flower, do their cruel worst to nip it in the bud.

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Without further preface, therefore, we shall try, as the Holy Spirit shall beach and help us, to speak to you upon *a very common trial*, ‘My friends scorn me,’ and then, yet again, meditate on *a remarkable resort and*

exercise, “But mine eyes poureth out tears unto God.” First, then, let us think upon:—

I. A VERY COMMON TRIAL.

“My friends scorn me.” What is it they do? They *scorn* me. I shall apply the text tonight to scorn on account of religion. It is lately, my dear young friends—I address myself particularly to you—it is lately that you have been impressed; it is lately that you have considered your ways. There has been an evident alteration in you. You have become of a serious cast of mind; you are now a seeker; you desire salvation. For this reason your friends scorn you. Perhaps they say that you are so miserable that they cannot bear your company. Probably the remark is correct, and you feel it to be so, but they do not know that this misery of yours will end in perfect joy; they do not comprehend this rough ploughing of your soul, which is preparatory to the joyful harvest. They do not understand that the good Physician often uses the lancet, and opens wide the wound before he comes with his downy fingers to close it and to heal it. You are miserable, and you might expect them, therefore, to be the more gentle to you, and to help your faith as much as possible, but instead of that they continually tell you that your company is altogether unbearable, and so they scorn you. Meanwhile, they also insinuate that the attention which you are now paying to religious matters is with a sinister motive and design. They say that you are a hypocrite. They cannot understand that there can be such a thing as religious sincerity. To them it is all hypocrisy. They suppose that all those who seek to live godly lives in Christ Jesus are merely making a pretense with a view to some personal advantage. Do not be surprised if they insinuate that you “cant”; if they mimic any tone that may be peculiar to you; if in any and every way possible they throw in your face the insinuation that you are false and hypocritical. And, perhaps, they also twit you with your faults, which are alas! too many, and are near the surface, and so very easily visible to them.

The old proverb says, “It is easy enough to find a stick with which to beat a dog,” and it is very easy for our friends with whom we live to rake up some fault of ours, to exaggerate it, and then to strike us as hard as they can therewith. Very difficult, indeed, would it be for us to live, so as to

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give them no such opportunity. Even when most careful, our very carefulness is sneered at as sanctimoniousness, and if we are particular, then we are severe, rigid, and, worst of all, “puritanical.”

So that, do what we will, we must expect to have faults laid at our door. This is hard to bear. Your friends, in this respect, scorn you. And all the while they also tell you that, make what pretences you may, it is not at all likely that any good will come out of your religion. It is, they say, an old wives’ fable, and a cunning story. They have never proved the power of it in their own souls, and they know no better, and therefore they tell you to eat, drink, and be merry—feels as they are to think that this poor flesh and

blood ought to have the first care, before the soul that is born for better things; fools, I say, as they are, to think that it ever can be wisdom to live for this little span of time, and to forget eternity, which knows no end! Yet they will tell you to live while you live; that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, to snatch the present joy. They say, ‘Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die, and leave the spirit-world and the land that is to be revealed to those speculative minds who may care for such things,” and so, with a hoarse laugh, they would dismiss religion from you, or persuade you, if possible, to forget it. But, my dear friends, you cannot forget it, for if God is dealing with you, his arrows stick fast in the soul. When the Spirit of God comes to deal with a man, if all the devils in hell and all the sinners on earth should laugh around him all day long, it would only drive the shafts deeper into his soul. He who has never felt the power of the world to come is easily driven out of his profession, but he who has once been ploughed and harrowed by the mighty ploughman of conviction never can forget it. I recollect when my sins lay heavy upon me, I would not have been ashamed to have stood up before a parliament of kings and said that I knew sin to lye exceeding sinful, and then I thought that the sentence of my condemnation had gone forth from God. Yet, as to having any Scriptural thoughts, they were squeezed out of me by the rough hand of my conscience. I knew that sin was evil before God, and that sin would destroy my soul. How could I doubt it when the hot sweat of horror stood on my brow at the thought of my past life? Doubts then soon fled to the winds Ah! if God is so dealing with you, sore as the trial is, of being mocked by unbelieving friends, you will bear it, and will come out of the ordeal none the worse; but still, meanwhile, I remind you that Job himself had to say, ‘My friends scorn me.’

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Who are these people who scorn you? They *are your friends*, and that makes it the harder to bear. Caesar said, ‘Et tu Brute!’ —”And thou, Brutus! Dost thou stab?” So, too, one of our Lord’s sharpest griefs was, ‘*He that eateth bread with me* hath lifted up his heel against me.” It is hard for a young Christian to be persecuted by the father to whose judgment he has always looked up with respect. Harder still is it for a Christian woman to find the partner of her bosom steeled against her for the truth’s sake. Oh! how they can get at our hearts, these husbands and these wives of ours, and if they happen to be enemies of Christ, what wounds they can make! ‘My friends scorn me.” You would not mind if it were merely the workpeople in the shop. You could escape from them, but you cannot escape from your own family. You would not mind it if the ribald herds around you mocked and taunted you; but some of your friends are people of excellent character, in all points but one. One thing they lack, but the other things they have in such a degree that you almost blush to think that they excel you, and then it is very hard to have a jeer from such. You had hoped that they would sympathize with you, instruct you, and encourage you; but the very people to whom you looked for assistance have turned against you. One thing let me say: if those who have thus scorned you are

merely “friends,” and are not related to you, they prove that they are not true friends, and part from their company, I pray your But if they be those with whom Providence has united you with such bonds, that you must look upon it as being a part of the cross which you have to carry, well, then, you must take up that cross daily, even though it be a heavy and painful one, that you may follow your Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. When the three holy children were cast into the furnace, it was at least out of doors, and away from their dwelling, and but for God’s rescue it would have destroyed them. But to have a furnace indoors, and to have it always blazing, and to go home every night into that furnace, and to feel each day that the coals are heaped upon you, and still to hold on, and refuse to bow the knee to evil, but remain still the true servant of Jesus Christ—oh! the ordeal is terribly severe! Job said that his enemies scorned him, and why should you be suffered to escape, or expect to come off better than Job? I do trust that this will be in the nature of a good thing for you. It will make you feel less dependent upon an arm of flesh; it will drive you to God, and I am sure that those make the strongest Christians, who have to come out most distinctly and separately from their fellows. It is the very best enjoyment. The Covenanters tell us in their lives that the happiest seasons they ever had were among the bogs, and morasses, and the mountains, and

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the brown heath of Scotland, when Claverhouse’s dragoons were after them. Then Christ seemed doubly precious to them, when the world had cast them out on the heath. Oh! there is no talk with Christ so sweet as that which he gives his people when they walk up the bleak side of the hill with him, with the snow blowing in their teeth. Then he covers them with the mantle of his love, and lets his soul out in springs of love, and comfort, and delight to them. Some of you who do not have persecution might almost wish to have it that you might know those dear delights, those intimate communings, which Christ giveth to his people in the day of battle, and in the time of torment. Your friends may scorn you, but “there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” Come to him, and he will not scorn you, but will be your great comforter.

Your friends scorn you, but why do they do so? They do it you know not why. If it be on account of religion, I think I know the philosophy of it. They scorn you because *you are different from them*. I saw a canary bird light on the roof of a house opposite to a window where I was standing, and in almost a second afterwards some thirty or forty sparrows surrounded it, and began pecking away at it, and the reason was very obvious. It was of color different from themselves. If it had been a sparrow, of their own dark, smoky, dusty hue, they would have let it alone; but here was a golden-winged stranger from the sunny isles, and they must needs persecute it. And so, if you are a bird of paradise, you will find that word of the prophet to be true, “Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird; the birds round about are against her.” So you will find the birds round about you—the ravens, and hawks, and vultures—against you. You are not understood, you know. If you are a true Christian, you cannot be

understood. The greatest puzzle to a worldly man is a Christian. He is moved by motives which the worldling cannot understand; he is influenced by fears and hopes to which the worldling is a total stranger. They did not know your Lord, and how should they know you? They crucified the Lord of Glory, not understanding that he was God, and so "it doth not yet appear" what you are, nor does the world value you at your proper worth. Do not be astonished at it. It is partly malice and partly ignorance that leads men to scorn you. If, my dear friend, you are a thorough-going Christian, you must not expect to escape scorn, because your life is a standing protest against the lives of others. You fear God, and they do not. You cannot live as they live; you cannot talk as they talk, and when they note even your silence, it becomes provoking to them. If the world could

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have its way, it would not have a Christian living in it. "No," the worldlings would say, "That man is a living provocation to our conscience; he thrusts thorns into our pillows, and will not let us rest." I am thankful if this is the case with you; but if so, it accounts for very much of the scorning which your friends pour upon you. I will not dwell upon the subject, however. You will have to find out the reason probably in your after-experience. But now, what is *the best thing for you to do* if your friends scorn you? Well, do not defend yourself. Do not get bad-tempered about it. Do not answer them. The best reply is, in most cases, complete silence. Only speak when you are quite sure that it is better to speak than to hold your tongue. Never give scorn for scorning. Remember that a worldly man may resist evil if he will, but. Christ says to his friends, "I say unto you, resist not evil, and when thou art smitten on one cheek, turn the other also." I know that many of those good old non-resistance texts are looked upon as being quite out-of-date, as part of the Bible that is not to be preached. Well, when I get information from the skies that the text is to be covered over or silenced, I will say nothing about it, but so long as I find it there, I must say to you, that that which men of the world call "pluck" and "fine spirit" very often comes only from the devil. Whence come fightings and wars? They come from your own lusts. The Christian's only answer to the persecutor is the answer of the anvil to the blows of the hammer. He bears them, bears, bears them, and breaks the hammer by bearing them. This is how the Christian church triumphs. She has never made a good hand at carnal weapons. It was an ill-day for our Puritanic sires when they took up arms. It did religion no good in this land, but, I believe, threw it back for a long time. It is for the Christian church to suffer and to suffer on in confidence, and in faith, and to make the world see that the anvil will outlast a thousand sets of hammers, and will triumph when they are all broken to dust. You, dear friends, especially will find it to be your wisest, as well as the most Christian course, to bear everything that is put upon you, and to make no return, except by being more kind and more generous than ever towards those who are most unkind to you.

Let me say, however, take care that you do not give any cause of offense. It is very easy for a man to make a martyr of himself when it is, not his

religion, but his particular way of holding it, that brings on the martyrdom. Some people, really, are so ferocious in their convictions, and so grim in their conscientiousness, and so obtrusive continually, that if they be persecuted, it is their manner that is persecuted, and not the gospel which
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they profess to hold. Do not give people an opportunity of opening their mouths against you, but pray God to make you very wise, so that, as in Daniel's case, they may find nothing against you, save only touching the Lord God whom you worship. And then, that being done, if you are still scorned by your friends, look upon it as coming from God's hands, and that will very much soften it. Ask the Lord what is his purpose in it, what lessons he has to teach you. It may be, it is to keep your pride down, or to strengthen you for some future conflicts or labors in his cause; and when you have waited upon him for direction, rejoice and be exceeding glad that you are permitted to suffer at all for Christ's sake and so in patience ye shall possess your souls. Walk uprightly before God, live as Christ lived, and, my clear friend, the day will come when you shall have outlived all this enmity, and when those who now mock you will respect you. 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.' At such a time, it may be, some will be won by your gentleness and your holy conversation to become Christians, too, and what a joy that will be to you!

Now, I know that what I have been saying, does not belong to a great many of you; but still, I must sometimes take texts which will apply to these special cases, especially as just now there are many who have been saved-at the Agricultural Hall, and here, and elsewhere, and to whom the struggle for conscience' sake is quite a new thing, and a word or two by way of comfort to them I am sure you will not grudge. And now we shall turn to the second part of the sermon, and we find the patriarch engaged in:—

II. A REMARKABLE RESORT AND EXERCISE.

His friends were scorning him, but he did not answer them. He had a sharp word or two, certainly, but still, the direction of his mind and the bent of his spirit went another way. He thought of God and forgot them. Herein is wisdom. When you are perplexed with a trouble, when you are mortified by some wicked person, do not let that thing always fret you. Have you never noticed how you may torment yourselves with some little thing if you like? There is a fly in the room, and that fly may be almost as much a trouble to you as though it were an eagle, if you will let its buzz be always in your ear; and if you keep on thinking about that buzzing fly, you can magnify it into a big dragon with wings. But if you forget it, and go on with your writing or your needlework, the fly may buzz away fifty times as
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much, but it will not trouble you. It is a very blessed thing, when, having a care which you cannot get over, you take it to God in prayer, and so get

over it. I will tell you what I have sometimes done with some of my difficulties. I have turned them over: I have looked at them in all shapes and ways. I have considered every way of getting over them. I have been vexed, troubled, and distressed for the time, and at last I have come to feel, "Well now, I cannot do anything in this: it is a hard shell, I cannot crack it: and I have frequently been enabled by grace to deliberately take that matter and put it upon the shelf and say, 'I will never think about that again as long as I live, by God's grace: I have done the best I could with it, Lord, and if it does not come right that is now thy business, and not mine, and I will be done with it for ever.'" Sometimes you will find that the trouble will come right directly you leave it alone. It is just your meddling with it that makes the difficulty. You do not see that at the time, but as soon as you just get out of the way, the whole thing comes right at once. God's wheels of providence grind much more accurately than any of the wheels of our mental calculations, and when we are altogether out of joint, then it is that God comes in and shows us what his wisdom and power can do. Leave, then, the scorning friends, and betake yourselves to your God.

It is a very great mercy, let me say, that we may go to God when we are cast out by our friends, that if there be no other ear that will listen, God's ear will always listen, and that if in all the earth there should not remain a sympathizing heart, there is the heart of the man, Christ Jesus, still to be appealed to; and we shall never appeal to the sympathies of the Son of God in vain. Oh! my brethren, when every other door is shut, the door of God's grace is ever open still. Let all other ports be blocked; your vessel can always run into that one harbour which all the devils in hell cannot close, the harbour of infinite love and unfailing care. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." In your darkest seasons, your very worst times, fly to your God and he will deliver you.

It seems from the text, however, that all Job could do was to pour out from his eyes a good of tears. The word "tears" is not in the original Hebrew; but it is put into the translation, as it is supposed to give simpler sense to our ears. His "eye poured out," however: by which he meant that he did not so much pour out tears, as his very heart itself. As that grand old expositor, Joseph Caryl, says, "Job's heart was hot within him, and the steam of his fierce trouble distilled itself in drops of tears which fell upon the ground." It was *Job's inmost soul that he poured out before God.*

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Now, there are many kinds of tears, but the best kind are those described in the text, "Tears unto God." What a capital sermon somebody might make out of that! "Tears unto God"! Tears not poured out to men, nor unto the earth, nor unto myself, but unto God. Tears put into his bottle. Libations poured at the foot of his altar. Tears wept for God: for God to see, for God to hear, for God to think upon, for God to accept. Not tears for tears' sake: but tears like those of the penitent, tears in the privacy of one's loneliness, tears only unto God. I hope, dear friends, there are some among us who know the meaning of these tears. Some of you, I trust, are even now pouring forth the tears of repentance. Oh! those are blessed tears,

tears of repentance that are tears unto God! It sometimes falls to my lot to have to talk to people about their sins. Sometimes they wish that I should do so, and when I have tried to set their sins in their true light, tears have come. There have been tears because the offense has damaged the young man's character, tears because it injured the young man's friends, tears because a mother was grieved. Well now, when I have seen all these tears, I have been glad of them, such as they were, but they are not all the tears that we want. If you can only get one tear because the sin grieved God, it is worth a whole bottleful of the other tears. To see sin in the light of God's countenance is to see it truly. David hit the nail on the head when he said, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." My dear hearer, you may be very sorry that you did wrong, because it brought you into trouble; you may be very sorry indeed, because you cannot take the position in life which you once occupied, but that is not a repentance that can serve you before God. But if you are sorry to think that you have grieved God; if, like the prodigal, you say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight"—these are tears unto God and are such as he receives.

The next kind of tears unto God are *the tears of desire*. I wish these were more frequent. Those are the prayers that prevail with God which are well salted with tears. I am afraid that the most of us do not pray as we should; but if we want to prevail, like Jacob, we must remember that Jacob wrestled with the angel, and then he prevailed. Weeping which reveals the soul's wrestling will often do what nothing else can, in bringing us great benedictions.

We have all felt the power of tears over our own feelings and affections, but the power of tears over God, who shall describe it? The blood of Jesus

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secures all he wills, and when our tears look towards and plead the blood of Jesus, then those tears cannot be refused.

My dear hearer, if you cannot get peace, do not cease praying until you have obtained it. If you long for your sins to be pardoned, and have been praying a long time for this—it may be for weeks or months—pray again tonight, and do not give over praying until you know you have prevailed with God. Can you bear to perish? Can you endure to be cast away? If you cannot, then be importunate. Lay hold upon the horns of the altar, and let this be your vow, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Then, when it comes to tears, you will get it. When it comes to your very souls being poured out before God, then shall God say unto you, "Try sins are forgiven thee; go in peace."

Once more; these tears may be *tears shed on behalf of others*. We should prevail for the salvation of others if we thought more of their cases, when on our knees, and worked our souls more thoroughly into tempests of sacred and holy passion on their behalf. We cannot expect to see our children saved unless we can weep over them. We must not expect to see our congregations blessed, unless our soul bleeds for that congregation. And when I say "tears," I do not mean those drops from the eyes alone, for

some of us could not cry if our souls depended on it, and yet we may, though we let fall no watery tears, shed some of the best tears, tears dropping like sweet-smelling myrrh upon the altar of the all-seeing God. Oh! we must get to feel that we cannot let men die. We must get to feel as if we should die ourselves if they were lost. We must feel so desperately in earnest about it that we cannot sleep, nor go our way in Peace, unless such and such persons be turned unto God, and find peace in Jesus. If this be our spirit, we shall have our desire, and we shall see our beloved ones saved.

Thus, then, it seems that Job, instead of dealing with his enemies, spent his time in dealing with his God, and as words failed him, he took himself to the more potent rhetoric of bears, and so melted his way into God's heart, resting by faith upon the merits of the Redeemer who was yet to come. Do you do the same, my dear friends, and God will give you the blessing you need.

But some of you say, 'I should never think of weeping before God: I have no dealings with God.' Nay, but he will have dealings with you. If you should not now repent of your sins, you shall repent some day, but that

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shall be when repentance is too late. Tears of repentance here on earth are signs of grace; but tears of sorrow in perdition are only signs of bitter and destroying remorse. 'There shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.' Oh! may God the Holy Spirit convince us of sin here and now, whilst there is a hope of mercy, that we may fly to Jesus' wounds, be washed in his blood, and be saved: for if not, rest assured that we shall be convinced of sin one day when sin can never be pardoned, but the worm undying of self-accusing shall gnaw at our consciences for ever, and for ever, and for ever. Ah! my dear hearer, do not boast because you cannot repent. Do not play the fool after that fashion, but the rather ask God to break your heart of sin and so help you to repent. A tender conscience is such a blessing, that you may well bemoan yourselves until God bestows it. Remember, however, that Jesus Christ can give a tender heart. It is one of the blessings of the covenant of which he is the Surety. 'A new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them: I will take away the stony heart, and give them a heart of flesh.' Plead that covenant promise, and if you plead it now, believing in Jesus and trusting in him, you shall get that new heart; you shall get a heart that can weep before God, and so you shall be accepted through the righteousness of Jesus, and your tears and your supplications shall prevail.

I may never speak to some of you again, but oh! I should like to leave that thought with you, that to suffer for Christ is honor, and that to weep before the Lord is the truest pleasure. But if you have despised in your heart those that are persecuted, recollect that day when Christ shall come, and all his holy angels with him. If you laugh at Christians now, you will no longer laugh, but lament then. Your song then—or rather wail—shall be very different from the one you sing now. Oh! may you now, while yet life lasts, and the clay of mercy is not over, seek Jesus, cast in your lot with his

people, take up his cross, that by-and-by you may wear his crown, suffering now—if need be—in sharing his reproach and shame, that then you may be delighted with his glory.

The Lord himself grant it to everyone of you! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.

PSALM 22:1-22; and SONG OF SOLOMON 1:1-7, 2:1-7. PSALM 22.

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Stand and look up at Christ upon the cross, and took upon these words, as his. He himself is the best exposition of this wondrous psalm.

Verses 1, 2. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.*

Gethsemane!—there is the key—a prayer unanswered at that time: ‘If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.’ It was not possible. He must drink it. ‘In the night season I am not silent.’

3. *But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.*

No hard thoughts of God, even when he was forsaken. A forsaken Christ still clings to the Father, and ascribes perfect holiness to him.

4-6. *Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, 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.*

How low did Christ descend for our sakes not only low as man, but lower still! Never was godly man forsaken of God, and yet Jesus was; so he is lower than we are while he hangs upon the tree “a reproach of men, and despised of the people.”

7, 8. *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.*

Was not this just what they said at the cross? Ah, little did they know that he saved others; himself he could not save, because a matchless love held his hands there, as with diamond rivets.

9, 10. *But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother’s belly.*

He remembers his wonderful birth. He was God’s, indeed, from the very first.

11. *Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.*

They have all gone. Peter and all the rest have fled. There is none to help. And there stand the Scribes and Pharisees, and the great men of the nation.

12-14. *Many bulls have compassed me; strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water,*

All dissolved—nothing could hold together—quite spent and gone.

14. *And all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax:*

He felt the inward sinking fever brought on him by the wounds he had upon the cross. “My heart is like wax.”

14-16. *It is malted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd: and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws: and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me:*

There they are—the cruel multitude—thrusting out the tongue and hooting at him. “For dogs have compassed me.”

16. *The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me:*

The hind of the morning is now surrounded by the dogs. He cannot escape.

16, 17. *They pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.*

Horrible, to the tender, modest soul of Jesus, were those vile stares of the ribald multitude as they gazed upon him.

18-22. *They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns. I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.*

The sun that was darkened, now shines again. The Savior's griefs are over. A calm is spread over his mind. He is about to say, “It is finished!” and his heart is comforted. We leave that passage there.

SONG OF SOLOMON I.

Now, concerning our love to him, let us read a few verses of the Song of Solomon, first chapter. You have been introduced to the Beloved, red with his own blood, but never so lovely as in his passion.

Verses 1, 2. *The song of songs, which is Solomon's. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth:*

No name. Is any name wanted? What name is good enough for him, our best Beloved? He plunges into the subject through excess of love. He forgets the name. “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.”

2, 3. *For thy love is better than wine. Because of the savor of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.*

There is such a sweetness in the name. It is not like a box of ointment shut up, but like a sweet perfume that fills the room. For the merits of Jesus are so sweet that they perfume heaven itself. It was not on Calvary alone that that sweet ointment was known: it was known in the seventh heaven.

4. Draw me, we will run after thee:

We want to get near to Christ, but we cannot. “Draw me,” we cry, “we will run after thee.”

4. The king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.

The wine shall help us to remember him to-night when we come to his table; but we will remember him more than wine.

5. I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.

A strange contrast is a believer. He is black in himself, but he is comely in Christ. In himself he is foul as the smoke-dried tents of Kedar: but in his Lord he is as comely and rich as the curtains of Solomon.

6, 7. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me; my mother's children were angry with me: they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept. Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy
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flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?

A few verses of the next chapter.

Song of Solomon 2:1. *I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.*
So he is, and much more than that.

*‘Nature, to make his beauties known,
Must mingle colors quite unknown.’*

So rich is he—rose and lily both in one.

*‘White is his soul, from blemish free,
Red with the blood he shed for me.’*

2. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.

His church stands out like a fair lily in a thorn-brake—separate and distinct—often suffering, standing where she does not wish to be, but all the lovelier by contrast. But if Christ praises his church, she praises him again.

3, 4. As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons, I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.

So full of joy is she, that she can bear it no longer. She seems ready to faint with bliss.

5-7. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,

—By every lovely, timid, tender, chaste thing.—

7. By the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

If I have fellowship with him—if I am near his cross—if I am drinking in his love, oh! do not hinder me. Do not call me away. Do not break the spell; but let me go on with this blessed day-dream, which is truer than
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reality itself, till I see him face to face, when the day breaks, and the shadows flee away.

OUR LAST JOURNEY.

NO. 1373

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,
SEPTEMBER 9TH, 1877,**

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*‘When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence
I shall not return.’ Job 16:22.*

THE season of the year may well remind us of our mortality. The corn, which a few weeks ago was green and vigorous, has now for the most part yielded to the sickle; many flowers which adorned our gardens have exchanged their bloom for ripening seed; the year has commenced to die, its glory and prime have gone. The dews of evening are heavy, and the mists linger in the morning, for the summer heat is declining. The leaves are just upon the turn, and the fall of the year is close at hand. These are creation's warnings, reminding us that the Lord hath set a harvest for us, and that we all do fade as a leaf. Nature hath her prophets as well as revelation, and autumn in his rugged garb is one of them, He has now come to us with this solemn message, "The harvest is passed and the summer is ended; prepare to meet your God!"

In addition to the warnings of nature, we have lately been saluted by voices from divine providence. Loud calls have come to us of late from almost every part of our church work. Death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces. Death, who seldom comes into the Orphanage, has forced his cruel hand into our nest of young ones, and has taken thence the widow's child. A funeral has left our gates, and little boys have gathered around a grave to see one like themselves laid in the silent earth. Death has set his axe also against the College, and has cut down one of our growing trees, upon which there were abundant tokens of future fruitfulness. Our brother Winter had sharpened his sword for the conflict,

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and was just about to leave us for actual service, when in a few days his strength departed, and he was not. Death has come also among the ministers who were once our students, and were our crown of rejoicing as laborers for the Lord. One of the ablest and best of them has put a whole town in mourning for he has been taken home at an early age, when he had already become foremost for usefulness. Middlesborough mourns our brother Priter with no common sorrow. Beyond all this, almost every day we have report of this one and that one in the membership and in the

congregation going home. These dying ones are God's voices to us, and I should be unworthy of addressing you if I did not first hear them in the silence of my own soul, and then endeavor to interpret them to you. All these things bring to my mind the language of our text, "When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return;" will they not have the same effect upon you? He that hath ears to hear let him hear. My subject is one upon which it would be quite impossible to say anything new, since death is neither novel nor uncommon, for from the days of Abel until now it has honeycombed the earth with graves. Nor need I seek out elegancies of speech, for these would be incongruous with such a theme. When we speak of eternal things the less attempt we make at flue language the better; such solemn topics are most powerful when suffered to have their own natural voice and speak for themselves. Begone all trifling thoughts! Let the mind put off all gay apparel, and wear awhile the shroud. Instead of rising with gaiety, let the imagination bow with solemnity, for now we have to do with the dying chamber, and the grave, and the judgment throne. The blast of the archangel's trumpet is ringing in our ears, and we are to anticipate the day in which we shall receive our final sentence from the Judge of all the earth. Solemnity, therefore, should possess our minds. Let us shut out the present world and become familiar with the world to come. Very simple and self-evident will be the considerations which I shall set before you, but if already moved to a solemn frame of mind, you will be prepared to derive profit from them. May God the Holy Spirit bless the word, and by its means prepare us for our last remove, of which the text speaks so plainly.

First, then, let us realize our inevitable journey- "I shall go the way whence I shall not return." Secondly, let us contemplate its nearness- "When a few years are come." Thirdly, let us consider our non-return from the journey- "Whence I shall not return;" and then we shall close in the fourth place by

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enquiring whither we are going. We are going whence we shall not return, but to what place are we bound? Is it endless bliss or ceaseless woe?

I. First then let us REALIZE OUR INEVITABLE JOURNEY. I desire that these words may be earnestly taken up in a personal manner by each of us. The language is in the singular number. "I shall go the way whence I shall not return. Let us apply it each one to himself. The fact that all men are mortal has little power over our minds, for we always make a tacit exception and put off the evil day for ourselves. We own ourselves mortal, but do not expect to die just now. Even the aged look forward to a continuance of life, and the consumptive dream of possible recovery. I will not, therefore, remind you so much of the general truth, but place before you the individual, pointed, personal declaration of the text. "I," the preacher; you, each one of you looking upon the preacher now,- "I shall go the way whence I shall not return." As surely as you live you will die. It may help you to realize this fact if I ask you to accompany me first of all into the

chamber of a dying man, and as you look upon him I entreat you to remember that you yourself will lie there in a like case ere long. It is sometimes my duty, and a very hard and painful task it is, to communicate to sick and dying persons the fact that it is not possible that they should recover. One beats about the bush a little, but at last you come with tenderness to the sad point and say, 'Friend, do you know that there is very little hope, if any, that you can recover? In fact, it is as nearly certain as a thing can be that you must die. Your physicians are compelled to believe that your end is near.' The news is taken in such different ways; sometimes it is not believed, at other times it occasions a thrill of pain which wounds your heart and cuts your soul to the quick. In many cases it is received with calm, patient resignation, but frequently have I seen the tidings accepted with joy, and the man of God has said, 'It is a thing I have longed for. Now shall I be rid of this weary pain, and see the face of him whom my soul loveth.' Yet it is a solemn business, take it how you may solemn to those who tell the news, and more solemn still to those who hear it. Look, then, at the poor dying man, wasting away before your eyes. He must now go to his long home. He must go. No one now can delay his departure. The chariot is at the door. If he could offer all the gold of the Indies he could not bribe inexorable death. No, he may be master of a mint of treasure, but it cannot buy him an hour's life; his time is come, and he must go. His beloved wife would fain detain him, but he must be torn from her embrace. His children weep, but he must not stay to dry their tears. A

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kind friend would almost make an exchange, and die in his stead, but there can be no proxies here. There is no discharge in this war. It is appointed unto all men once to die, and die he must. The hour is come! His pulse is slow! His eye is glazing! Look at him! Do you not feel for a man in such solemn circumstances? There must you also lie, and thus must you also depart. I ask you to place yourself in his stead, and try this morning to feel as he must feel, seeing it is absolutely certain that to such a condition you also must come, unless, indeed, the Lord should descend from heaven with a shout at once, of which we know so little as to when it may be.

How the individuality of a man comes out in his dying hour! What an important being he becomes! You think more of that one man while dying than of all the thousands of the living who parade our streets. No matter who he is, he is dying, and we tread softly. Poor man, he must now die, and die alone. And now how important his character becomes! His life, his own life, is now being put into the balance, and he is looking back upon it; it is the most important thing in the universe to him. His outward circumstances are now a small matter, his life is the main consideration. Was he righteous or wicked? a fearer of God or a despiser of his grace? Be he rich or be he poor, his rank and station are subjects of indifference. The hangings of the bed are of very small account, the man who lies there is the sole concern. Whether he is now waited upon by the best physician, hired by the costliest fee, or whether he lies in the hospital tended by gentle charity, it is the man himself, the man's soul, the man's personal character

that is now seen in all its grandeur, demanding his whole thought. Be he peer or be he peasant, be he king or be he serf, it is much the same to each man to die. Differences on the dying bed arise out of character and not out of rank. Now he has to face for himself the great things of eternity, and cannot leave them to another. He used to hear about eternity as one of the mass, but now he has to experience it alone, and by himself. Into the cold river his own feet must descend, the cool waves must chill his blood, death must close his eye, and into the unknown future he must plunge alone. No brother's hand can grasp his hand when he has quitted the body, no fellowmortal can fly side by side with him through the tracks unknown. How vividly the individuality of the man comes out, and the need of a personal interest in the great salvation. How much it is to be desired that it could be made quite as plain under happier circumstances. And yet how clear it is that each one of us must believe in the Savior for himself each serve God

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personally, and each have a good hope through grace wrought in his own soul. Will men never think of this till they come to die?

And now that candle burning in the sick man's chamber sheds a strange light upon his past life. Some said he was fortunate, but if he was sinful where is his good fortune? Men said he was a poor unsuccessful muddler, but he will be worth as much in a short time as if he had been the most prudent, and had prospered in the world, for here men come to a level. "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked must I return thither." So must it be. In death the financial element looks contemptible, and the moral and the spiritual come to be most esteemed. How did he live? What were his thoughts? What was his heart towards God? Did he repent of sin? Does he still repent? Does he believe in Jesus? Is he resting upon the finished work of Christ or is he not? He, perhaps, failed to ask himself some of those questions a little while ago, but now, if he be in his sober senses, he is compelled to put his soul through its paces. How does his heart answer when cross-examined? Now he must reach down the accounts, the memoranda, and the day-book of his life, and he must look to what he did and what he was, and what he is. Ah me! how will the reckoning end? What will be the sum total? It matters little what he was before his fellow men, whose judgments are fallible, but the question is, what was he before the all-searching eye of the Most High God? Such an account you will have to render.

The individuality of the man is clear, and the man's character before God, and now it is also evident that death tests all things. If you look upon this poor dying man you see that he is past the time for pretences and shams. You yourself, if you knew but little of him before, feel very concerned to know whether the religion he professed was truthful or not, whether he was really regenerate or merely dreamed that he was so. If you wish to answer that question, how much more does that poor dying man want to know for himself? Here let me tell you that very much of the comfort with which we wrap ourselves up in days of health proves to be very sorry stuff when we come to die. While you are in good health and strength you often

derive a measure of peace of mind from things which will not stand the fiery ordeal of an approaching eternity. Some of the best men that ever lived have found this out. You may know the name of Mr. Durham, the author of a famous book on Solomon's Song, one of the most earnest of Scotland's ancient preachers. Some days before he died he seemed to be in some perplexity about his future well-being, and said to his friend Mr.

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Carstairs, 'Dear brother, for all that I have written or preached, there is but one Scripture which I can now remember or dare grip unto now that I am hastening to the grave. It is this-' Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.' Pray tell me if I dare lay the weight of my salvation upon it." Mr. Carstairs justly replied, 'Brother, you may depend upon it, though you had a thousand salvations at hazard.' You see it was a plain, sinner's text that he rested on. Just as Dr. Guthrie wanted them to sing a bairn's hymn, so do dying saints need the plain elementary doctrines of the gospel to rest upon. Those fine ideas and dainty notions of our nearing perfection and becoming completely sanctified dissolve like the hoar frost in the sun, when we come face to face with eternity. Those grand excitements, those high enjoyments, and those deep experiences, which lead us to think ourselves to be somebodies in the church of God are of small account in dying moments. Men cannot die on stilts. Death finds out the truth of our condition and blows away with his cold breath a heap of chaff which we thought to be good wheat. Then a man has to look to the mercy of God, to the blood of the covenant and to the promises of the gospel, and to cling as a poor needy, guilty sinner to free, rich, sovereign grace, or else his spirit will utterly sink. When life is ebbing nothing will do but the faithful saying, 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' I have heard children of God speak in their last moments just as seeking souls speak. They come to God again just as they came at first, and they find in Jesus all their hope. Dying men want realities, they want a sinner's Savior, they want atonement for guilt, for so only can they pass out of the world with hope. Oh, brethren, follow after that which is solid and real, for nothing else will serve your turn when you come to die.

Still keep your eye on that dying man whom I have tried to picture-he is vividly before me now. He must go; there is no alternative, He cannot resist the power which now summons him to depart. Willing or unwilling, it matters not, he must go. The sheriff's officer has him in his grip, and he must go. Is he prepared? Pray God he may be; but whether he be so or not it makes no difference, he must leave all and take his journey. Has he children dependent upon him, and a wife who needs his support? Their necessities cannot detain him, he must go. Has he made his will, or has he left all his business affairs in a tangle? Whichever it is, he must go. The tide which bears all before it has seized his barque, and even now it drifts adown the stream.

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That man who must go is yourself, projected only a little way further into time. Can you not realize what will certainly be the fact? Can you not

already hear the ticking of the watch at your bed-head in the silence of your last night? Can you not anticipate that mysterious consultation of physicians, when each one owns to his fellows his incompetence to suggest a remedy. It is clear that the hour is come; you must go. This must happen to every mortal man and woman sitting or standing in this house this morning. Will you not lay it to heart?

Now survey another scene to help you to realize your departure. Look no longer on the dying, but bend over the dead. It is all over now. He has breathed his last, and he now lies upstairs alone in the darkened chamber. A loving one has stolen in and tremblingly lifted the coffin lid to gaze once more upon the dear face, and say another adieu; but there can be no more of this. The friends have gathered, and the mourners must go through the streets and bear him to the tomb. That funeral is yours.

The corpse is borne to the grave, and on the road it silently preaches to all passers by. Archbishop Leighton one morning was asked by a friend, 'Have you heard a sermon?' He said, 'No, but I met a sermon, for I met a dead man carried out to be buried.' Let every funeral be a discourse to you. Within a short time to each one of us it will happen that within the narrow limits of the coffin we must lie, and then will come for us the opened grave, the lowering of the corpse, and the gathering of mourners around it. Upon your coffin lid and mine the mould shall fall- 'Earth to earth, dust to dust, and ashes to ashes.' A green mound, a daisy or two amid the grass, a friend to bring a few fading flowers to scatter on our graves ever and anon; perhaps a head-stone, perhaps not,-to this we must all come. 'Here he lies' is the universal epitaph. On the lap of earth you will lie; there shall I also lie. Do realize it; it is so near, so sure-when a few years shall come we shall be with the unnumbered throng.

Now let your realization go a little further. Can you picture the spirit of a man as it leaves the body? I confess my imagination does not enable me to picture it to myself, and certainly my words are not competent to convey to you what little I can realize to my mind. The soul finds itself rid of materialism; how will it feel when it has shaken itself loose of its shell of clay? I cannot tell. We all love this earthly house of our tabernacle, and leave it with reluctance.

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*'For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing, ling'ring look behind?'*

But it does not matter what lingering looks we cast, our soul will have done with the body in its present fashion, and it must for a while dwell apart from all materialism. At once it must come before God. Its state will immediately after death be known to it beyond a question. In a moment it will know beyond all doubt whether it is accepted before God, and beyond all hope it will know whether it is reprobate and condemned. That

knowledge will at once commence its happiness, a happiness which will be increased as ages roll on; or that knowledge will at once commence its misery, which will deepen evermore. The soul will abide in the disembodied state for a while, and then will come the clarion note of the resurrection trumpet, and the body shall rise again to be again inhabited by the soul. What will the meeting be? What will be the sensation of the remarriage of mind with matter, of soul with body? We know not. The resurrection is the blessed hope of the Christian, but it is a terrible dread to the ungodly. The soul shall never more return to the world's cares, nor to the world at all as the world now is, but it shall again inhabit the body, and stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the verdict from the lips of him who is appointed Judge of all mankind.

The divine verdict is given, and the soul must continue its journey. Still onward must it go; whether accepted or condemned, onward it must go. Onward, exulting in a bliss unspeakable like to the divine, if Christ pronounce it blessed; onward, in a misery unutterable if Christ pronounce it "cursed." I do not know whether you are able in imagination to place yourself in such a condition, but in such a condition you will certainly be found ere long. You will be stripped of this house of clay, and so you will die, but you will live again, ay, live for ever. You will live to be judged, to be justified or to be condemned, and then you will live for ever, in happiness or torment, and all this you will know in a short time to come. Thus I have helped you as best I could, and I fear but poorly, to realize the inevitable journey.

II. Now, let us very briefly CONTEMPLATE ITS MEANING. Very soon we shall have to start upon our solemn and mysterious pilgrimage. If we

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should fulfill the entire tale of our years the allotted period of human life is but short. The text in the Hebrew speaks of "years of number"; they are so few that a child may count them. At the commencement of life the view before us looks like an endless avenue, but as we advance along the path the end seems very near, and we perceive how short our time is. Middle life has but a short view, either backwards or forwards. As for some of you, upon whom age is descending, you should be well enough aware how short for certain your time for lingering here must be. Your lease has almost run out; can you doubt it?

What are seventy or eighty years, if we live so long? But then we are further warned by the consideration that we cannot safely reckon upon the whole of that brief period, for children are carried away and young men are cut down by the scythe; and we see frequently the maiden before she reaches the full bloom of her years carried off, with death as her bridegroom. Does not the text say, "a few years" Read it months, read it days, read it hours, read it minutes, for we cannot tell how soon we must set sail for the far-off land. In a short time we must join the great caravan, and cross the desert to a land whence we shall not return. Life is so short,

that we have scarce begun to live ere we are called to die.

Hence, dear brethren, if there is anything grievous to be borne, we may well bear it cheerfully, for it cannot last long. When a few years are come we shall be gone from the thorn and the briar which now prick and wound. Hence, too, if there is any work to be done for Jesus let us do it at once, or else we shall never do it, for when a few years are come we shall have gone whence we shall not return. Hence, too, if there be salvation to be sought let us seek it, for soon we shall be where salvation is no more proclaimed. Hence, again, if worldly goods are possessed by us let us hold them very loosely, for in a short time we must leave them. Let us lay them out for God's glory, for our stewardship will not last for long, and we shall soon have to give an account. Hence, above all things, the need of being always prepared to die. Oh, brothers, he who is to die next had need be ready. Who is he? An old man who used to sell goods from house to house had an eccentric cry of his own, which he was wont to utter whenever he sold goods at the door. He would cry out aloud, "Who'll be the next? Who'll be the next?" One day a funeral passed just as he had given out his usual cry, and strange enough sounded the question- "Who'll be the next?" I may ask with solemn emphasis whenever the cemetery's gates are opened, and the funeral passes through, "Who will be the next? Who will be the next?"

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Your hymn says, "Who will be the next to follow Jesus? "but I must ask this morning, "Who will be the next among us to be carried to the silent tomb? "To be ready to depart is wisdom. It is the mark of the beast that it looks not beyond the present mouthful of grass which it crops from the sward; it never thinks of the butcher's knife and the shambles. Be not as the brutes which perish, but, being gifted with minds, use them to look before you. It is the mark of time fool that he never looks before he leaps, but is content with present enjoyments though they leave him penniless Be not as the fool, but be prudent and look before you, and consider your latter end. It is the mark of the worldling that he confines his thoughts within the narrow range of time; the Christian looks into the everlasting future as an immortal being should do. Be not worldlings, lest ye perish with them.

May God make you wise unto salvation! To be prepared to die is an immediate duty, will you neglect it? Some imagine that to be prepared to die would involve a life of perpetual gloom. If it did so it were well to face it. When a man comes to die and finds himself prepared, even if he had endured fifty years of perpetual anguish of heart, and had denied himself every worldly comfort, he would think himself well repaid to have the prospect of a blessed future. Heaven at any price is well secured. A good hope through grace is worth a thousand worlds. But it is a mistake to suppose that melancholy attends upon fitness to die. Why should it? To be unprepared for death, and to know that it may come at any moment, is a fair reason for sadness, but to have that great matter secure must surely be a source of joy. To be prepared to die is to be prepared to live; to be ready for eternity is in the best sense to be ready for time. Who so fit to live on

earth as the man who is fit to live in heaven? Who hath brightness of the eye? Is it not the man who has looked within the gate of pearl, and seen his place prepared among the blessed? Who hath lightness of heart? Is it not the man who is unloaded of his sin, and has found mercy through the blood of Christ? Who can go to his bed and sleep in peace and wake with joy who but the man that is reconciled to God by the death of his Son? Who hath the best of this world as well as the world to come? Is it not he to whom death has now become a changed thing, a cherub that has lost its way-no longer destruction, but rather development, and admission into a higher and nobler life? Since readiness for death is peace and happiness, and is above measure needful in prospect of the eternal state, let us see to it at once. We are to be gone so soon let us gird up our loins for our solemn
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journey. There is no time to spare. The end is drawing near. Every flying moment is hastening on our last hour. It is high time to awake out of sleep, and in earnest make ready to meet the Bridegroom, who is already on his way.

III. Now, thirdly, I want you to CONSIDER THE FACT THAT WE SHALL NOT RETURN- "When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return." To the occupations of life-to sow and reap, amid mow; to the abodes of life-to the store and to the country house; to the pleasures of life,-the festival and the family, we shall not return. To the engagements of the sanctuary, the communion table, the pulpit, or the pew, we shall not return. To the chamber of love, to the hearth of affection, to the walk of friendship, we shall not return. To hopes and fears, and joys, and pains, we shall not return. To summer's flowers and winter's snows we shall not return. To our brothers, children, husband, or wife, we shall not return. To nothing that is done under the sun shall we return. Soul, unsaved soul, to the laud of the gospel and the mercy seat thou shalt not return. If you die unsaved you will not be able to come back to the house of God to hear again the ministry of reconciliation; you will hear no more invitations and exhortations, neither will Jesus be set before you as your hope. You will not be able to come back to the prayer meeting and to the earnest entreaties of a godly mother and other loving friends, nor even back to your Bible amid to the opportunity of searching it that you may find eternal life. You will not return to find space for repentance, nor a second opportunity for prayer, nor another season for believing in Jesus. It shall be said concerning you, "He which is filthy, let him be filthy still." Where the tree falleth there must it lie. Once pass the barriers of life unsaved, and ye cannot return to a new probation. The die is cast. Beloved Christian friends, we need not wish to return. What is there here that should either tempt us to stay in this world or induce us to return to it if we could? Still, I could suppose in a future state some reasons for wishing to return. I can suppose we might have it in our hearts, for instance, to wish to undo the mischief which we did in life. If a dying man

should receive mercy in his last moments, one might imagine him as desiring to return to earth to tell the glad tidings and beseech his family and friends to seek salvation. Who would not wish for once to plead with his children if he felt that he had neglected his duty to them. A man might wish, even if he were in the unquenchable flame, to come back to earth or to send a messenger, as the rich man did, to tell his brethren, lest they
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should come into the place of torment. Selfishness might wish to be spared the reproaches of those we helped to ruin. But you cannot come hack or send back to undo your ill deeds. Therefore seek to mend matters now. Avoid the doing of evil, and as for that which is already done, confess it before God, and seek to administer the antidote by an earnest and godly life.

You cannot come back to carry out those good resolutions, which as yet are as unripe fruit. Young man, you mean to do good some day, do you not? You have it in your heart to lead a grand life. Well, you must do it now, for you cannot come hack to revise your conduct; it will not be possible to correct amid amend it, for death stereotypes all. After death you cannot return to develop your promises into performances. Therefore bestir yourself betimes. We shall not be able to come back to finish the work we have began; the half-built house will never be completed by our labor. We have many projects which are but half developed, we had better proceed with them or they will never be completed. If we leave our ships on the stocks we shall not be able to return to launch them. When our lives below are at an end we have reached the finis of our earthly career.

Neither can we come hack to rectify any mistake we have made in our lifework, minor even return to look after it, in order to preserve that which was good in it. I sometimes think if I were in heaven I should almost wish to visit my work at the Tabernacle, to see whether it will abide the test of time and prosper when I am gone. Will you keep to the truth? Will you hold to the grand old doctrines of the gospel? Or will this church, like so many others, go astray from the simplicity of its faith, and set up gaudy services amid false doctrine? Methinks I should turn over in my grave if such a thing could be. God forbid it! But there will be no coming back, and therefore we must build well, rejecting all wood, hay and stubble, using nothing but gold, silver, and precious stones. We must build quickly to get the work done, but fast as we labor we must do it surely and honestly and thoroughly, for the fire will try it when we are gone. It will be a pity that our work should suffer loss, even though we ourselves should be saved. We cannot return to save the burning mass, nor to rebuild the ruin, but we shall, doubtless, see and know what comes of it. 'Establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.'

Therefore, dear brother, if your hand findeth anything to do, do it at once with all your might. If your heart suggests anything that should be done, let
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it be done at once; see to the bringing up of your children, the conversion of your neighbors, the laying out of your talents for Christ, the

consecration of your substance, the propagation of the precious truth which has been revealed to you. If a good work is to be done, do it! Do it, do it once. The curfew of time is sounding. Your own vesper bell is ringing out, and these are the words which I set to its music- "What thou doest do quickly, for when a few years are come, thou must go whither thou wilt not return." Again I say, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

IV. And now, lastly, let us ENQUIRE WHITHER WE SHALL GO? In some respects it happeneth alike to all, for all go upon the long journey. All go to the grave, which is the place of all living. It matters very little where our grave shall be, whether beneath a weeping willow or in the solemn deeps; the best of all, I think, that can happen to any of us is to be laid where we shall quickly moulder into the common earth, that none may afterwards profane our bones; but if they do, what matters it? we shall know nothing of it, and precious in the sight of the Lord will our dust be, though it be trodden under foot or blown of the winds. We shall all die, and then we shall all pass into the disembodied state. But of what character shall my death be and where shall I spend the time of waiting? May I urge upon you to ask yourselves this question? May I press a second enquiry upon you? If at this very instant you were to leave your body where would your soul be? You may know very readily. Where does it delight to be now? I once visited an aged Christian woman who said to me when she was near death, "Sir, I do not think that God will appoint me my portion with the ungodly, for I could never hear their company; and I do hope I shall be among his people, though I am very unworthy, for I never was so happy as when I was with them." Yes, you will keep the same company for ever. The sheep shall be with the sheep, and the goats with the goats. Your delight prophesies your destiny. What you have chosen here shall be your portion hereafter. The scoffer, the drunkard, the liar, the unchaste shall be your comrades in hell if they were so here. If you love sin you shall be steeped up to the throat in it, and it shall burn around you like liquid fire. If you have loved the wages of unrighteousness, you shall receive them in full tale, for the wages of sin is death, and death shall rage about you and gnaw you with his undying worm. But if your delights have been with your God, you shall dwell with him. If you have rejoiced in Christ Jesus, you shall reign with him, and if you have loved his people, you shall abide with them for ever. Your disembodied state shall be spent either with Christ and his

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people. or with sin and sinners. If not in paradise with Jesus, you know where you must lie. Did not our Lord himself tell us of the great gulf which cannot be passed, and of the torment of those upon the other side. You may know it all before yon clock strikes again. Do think of it and tremble. Then, as I have already stated, we shall all go forward in our journey towards resurrection. We shall, every one of us, stand in the latter day upon the earth. To the righteous this is the greatest joy. "I know that my next of kin still liveth, and though after my skin worms devour this body,

yet in my flesh shall I see God.” Oh, blessed hope, it were worth while to die with this in prospect. A child of God who died not long ago said to one who stood by, “I have enjoyed more in the two hours I have been dying than in the fifty years that I was living. It is so blessed a thing to die, for I have a clear prospect of the resurrection. But, oh, to have no blessed resurrection before you, but instead thereof the certainty of rising to shame and to everlasting contempt; rising so that both body and soul may be cast into hell, till the tongue that now dares to curse will ask in vain for a drop of water to cool its burnings, and every limb shall be made to suffer because it yielded itself up to be an instrument of unrighteousness and of rebellion against God. Which shall your resurrection be—a blessing or a horror? God help you to decide. Yea, may the Holy Ghost so work upon your heart and will that you may lay hold on Jesus at once and find eternal life in him.

Speedily shall come the great and terrible scene of the judgment, when all that are in the earth and in the sea shall stand before the great white throne. What an assemblage! These mighty gatherings in the Tabernacle, and the crowds we hear of on great festival days, are but as a drop in a bucket compared with the innumerable hordes of men that shall spring up from their graves when the last trumpet soundeth. If you can think of anything, then, besides your Judge, you will cast your eye as far as you can see, and over hill and dale you will see myriads of our race. Men have been so numerous a host that they will cover every speck of earth; yea, and the sea itself shall yield for once a solid basis for them to stand upon, and all shall teem like a hive when the bees swarm around it, the world shall appear black with the multitude of men. And what a sight when the Assessor shall sit upon his throne, and he shall begin to divide them as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. To the right! To the left! Blessed! Cursed! Come! Depart! Oh, the terror of that voice which shall pronounce a separate sentence upon each of the two great classes into which the

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population of earth shall then be divided. On which side would you be if now, instead of this poor voice saluting your ears, there should suddenly be a transformation scene, and Christ should sit upon his throne, and you be there and I be there to be judged before him?

And then, after the judgment cometh the end, but what then? Do not flatter yourselves with the idea, ye ungodly, that ye shall be annihilated. You have chosen sin, you have deliberately rejected Christ, and if you continue to do so you have settled your own destiny, and settled it for ever. Look the danger in the face like honest men, and then escape from the wrath to come.

But if you believe in Jesus now, look your future in the face and rejoice, for your redemption draweth nigh. See body and soul together, and both perfect, and Christ the Judge acquitting you, and saying, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world.” Can you conceive your overflowing joy, your ecstatic delight? The presence of angels, the fellowship of perfect saints,

the sight of your Savior, near communion with your God, and all this for ever and for ever! Why, methinks it makes me willing to use my solemn text no longer as a dirge, but as a sonnet, and say right joyously, “When a few years are come, I shall go whence I shall not return, nor ever wish to return, but shall be for ever with the Lord.” Amen, so let it be.

THE FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

NO. 1361

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 24TH, 1877,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The righteous also shall hold on his way."-Job 17:9.

THE man who is righteous before God has a way of his own. It is not the way of the flesh, nor the way of the world; it is a way marked out for him by the divine command, in which he walks by faith. It is the King's highway of holiness, the unclean shall not pass over it; only the ransomed of the Lord shall walk there, and these shall find it a path of separation from the world. Once entered upon the way of life, the pilgrim must persevere in it or perish, for thus saith the Lord, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Perseverance in the path of faith and holiness is a necessity of the Christian, for only "he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." It is in vain to spring up quickly like the seed that was sown upon the rock, and then by-and-by to wither when the sun is up; that would but prove that such a plant has no root in itself, but "the trees of the Lord are full of sap," and they abide and continue and bring forth fruit, even in old age, to show that the Lord is upright. There is a great difference between nominal Christianity and real Christianity, and this is generally seen in the failure of the one and the continuance of the other. Now, the declaration of the text is that the truly righteous man shall hold on his way; he shall not go back, he shall not leap the hedges and wander to the right hand or the left, he shall not lie down in idleness, neither shall he faint and cease to go upon his journey; but he "shall hold on his way." It will frequently be very difficult for him to do so, but he will have such resolution, such power of inward grace given him, that he will "hold on his way," with stern determination, as though he held on by his teeth, resolving

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never to let go. Perhaps he may not always travel with equal speed; it is not said that he shall hold on his pace, but he shall hold on his way. There are times when we run and are not weary, and anon when we walk are thankful that we do not faint; ay, and there are periods when we are glad to go on all fours and creep upward with pain; but still we prove that "the righteous

shall hold on his way.” Under all difficulties the face of the man whom God has justified is steadfastly set towards Jerusalem; nor will he turn aside till his eyes shall see the King in his beauty.

This is a great wonder. It is a marvel that any man should be a Christian at all, and a greater wonder that he should continue so. Consider the weakness of the flesh, the strength of inward corruption, the fury of Satanic temptation, the seductions of wealth and the pride of life, the world and the fashion thereof; all these things are against us, and yet behold, “greater is he that is for us than all they that be against us,” and defying sin, and Satan, and death, and hell, the righteous holds on his way.

I take our text as accurately setting forth the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints. “The righteous shall hold on his way.” Years ago when there was an earnest, and even a bitter controversy between Calvinists and Arminians it was the habit of each side to caricature the other. Very much of the argument is not directed against the real sentiment of the opposite party, but against what had been imputed to them. They made a man of straw, and then they burned him, which is a pretty easy thing to do, but I trust we have left these things behind. The glorious truth of the final perseverance of the saints has survived controversy, and in some form or other is the cherished belief of the children of God. Take care, however, to be clear as to what it is. The Scripture does not teach that a man will reach his journey’s end without continuing to travel along the road; it is not true that one act of faith is all, and that nothing is needed of daily faith, prayer, and watchfulness. Our doctrine is the very opposite, namely, that the righteous shall hold on his way; or, in other words, shall continue in faith, in repentance, in prayer, and under the influence of the grace of God. We do not believe in salvation by a physical force which treats a man as a dead log, and carries him whether he will it or not towards heaven. No, “he holds on,” he is personally active about the matter, and plods on up hill and down dale till he reaches his journey’s end. We never thought, nor even dreamed, that merely because a man supposes that he once entered on this way he may therefore conclude that he is certain of salvation, even if he leaves the way immediately. No, but we say
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that he who truly receives the Holy Ghost, so that he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall not go back, but persevere in the way of faith. It is written, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” and this he cannot be if he were left to go back and delight in sin as he did before; and, therefore, he shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Though the believer to his grief will commit many a sin, yet still the tenor of his life will be holiness to the Lord, and he will hold on in the way of obedience. We detest the doctrine that a man who has once believed in Jesus will be saved even if he altogether forsook the path of obedience. We deny that such a turning aside is possible to the true believer, and therefore the idea imputed to us is clearly an invention of the adversary. No, beloved, a man, if he be indeed a believer in Christ, will not live after the will of the flesh. When he does fall into sin it will be his grief

and misery, and he will never rest till he is cleansed from guilt; but I will say this of the believer, that if he could live as he would like to live he would live a perfect life. If you ask him if, after believing, he may live as he lists, he will reply, "Would God I could live as I list, for I desire to live altogether without sin. I would be perfect, even as my Father in heaven is perfect." The doctrine is not the licentious idea that a believer may live in sin, but that he cannot and will not do so. This is the doctrine, and we will first prove it; and, secondly, in the Puritanic sense of the word, we will briefly improve it, by drawing two spiritual lessons therefrom.

I. LET US PROVE THE DOCTRINE. Please to follow me with your Bibles open. You, dear friends, have most of you received as a matter of faith the doctrines of grace, and therefore to you the doctrine of final perseverance cannot require any proving, because it follows from all the other doctrines. We believe that God has an elect people whom he has chosen unto eternal life, and that truth necessarily involves the perseverance in grace. We believe in special redemption, and this secures the salvation and consequent perseverance of the redeemed. We believe in effectual calling, which is bound up with justification, a justification which ensures glorification. 'The doctrines of grace are like a chain-if you believe in one of them you must believe the next, for each one involves the rest; therefore I say that you who accept any of the doctrines of grace must receive this' also, as involved in them. But I am about to try to prove this to those who do not receive the doctrines of grace; I would not argue in a circle, and prove one thing which you doubt by another thing which you doubt, but 'to the law
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and to the testimony," to the actual words of Scripture we shall refer the matter.

Before we advance to the argument it will be well to remark that those who reject the doctrine frequently tell us that there are many cautions in the word of God against apostatizing, and that those cautions can have no meaning if it be true that the righteous shall hold on his way. But what if those cautions are the means in the hand of God of keeping his people from wandering? What if they are used to excite a holy fear in the minds of his children, and so become the means of preventing the evil which they denounce. I would also remind you that in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which Contains the most solemn warnings against apostasy, the apostle always takes care to add words which show that he did not believe that those whom he warned would actually apostatize. Turn to Hebrews 6:9. He has been telling these Hebrews that if those who had been once enlightened should fall away, it would be impossible to renew them again into repentance, and he adds, "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." In the 10th chapter he gives an equally earnest warning, declaring that those who should do despite to the spirit of grace are worthy of sorer punishment than those who despised Moses' law, but he closes the chapter

with these words, "Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." Thus he shows what the consequences of apostasy would be, but he is convinced that they will not choose to incur such a fearful doom.

Again, objectors sometimes mention instances of apostasy which are mentioned in the word of God, but on looking into them it will be discovered that these are cases of persons who did but profess to know Christ, but were not really possessors of the divine life. John, in his first Epistle, 2:19, fully describes these apostates; "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." The like is true of that memorable passage in John, where our Savior speaks of branches of the vine which are cut off and cast into the fire; these are described as branches in Christ that bear no fruit. Are those real Christians? How can they be so if they bear no fruit? "By their fruits ye shall know them." The branch which bears fruit is purged, but it is never cut off. Those which bear no fruit are not figures of

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true Christians, but they fitly represent mere professors. Our Lord, in Matthew 7:22, tells us concerning many who will say in that day "Lord, Lord," that he will reply, "I never knew you." Not "I have forgotten you," but "I never knew you"; they were never really his disciples.

But now to the argument itself. First we argue the perseverance of the saints, most distinctly from the nature of the life which is imparted at regeneration. What saith Peter concerning this life? (1 Peter 1:23.) He speaks of the people of God as "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." The new life which is planted in us when we are born again is not like the fruit of our first birth, for that is subject to mortality, but it is a divine principle, which cannot die nor be corrupt; and, if it be so, then he who possesses it must live for ever, must, indeed, be evermore what the Spirit of God in regeneration has made him. So in 1 John 3:9 we have the same thought in another form. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." That is to say, the bent of the Christian's life is not towards sin. It would not be a fair description of his life that he lives in sin; on the contrary, he fights and contends against sin, because he has an inner principle which cannot sin. The new life sinneth not; it is born of God, and cannot transgress; and though the old nature warreth against it, yet doth the new life so prevail in the Christian that he is kept from living in sin. Our Savior, in his simple teaching of the gospel to the Samaritan woman, said to her (John 4:13), "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Now, if our Savior taught this to a sinful and ignorant woman, at his first interview with her, I take it that this doctrine is not to

be reserved for the inner circle of full-grown saints, but to be preached ordinarily among the common people, and to be held up as a most blessed privilege. If you receive the grace which Jesus imparts to your souls, it shall be like the good part which Mary chose, it shall not be taken away from you; it shall abide in you, not as the water in a cistern, but as a living fountain springing up unto everlasting life. We all know that the life given in the new birth is intimately connected with faith. Now, faith is in itself a conquering principle. In the First Epistle of John, which is a great treasury of argument (1 John 5:4) we are told, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world,"
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even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" See, then, that which is born of God in us, namely, the new life, is a conquering principle; there is no hint given that it can ever be defeated; and faith, which is its outward sign, is also in itself triumphant evermore. Therefore of necessity, because God has implanted such a wondrous life in us in bringing us out of darkness into his marvellous light, because he has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, because the eternal and ever blessed Spirit hath come to dwell in us, we conclude that the divine life within us shall never die. "The righteous shall hold on his way."

The second argument to which I shall call your attention shall be drawn from our Lord's own express declarations. Here we shall look to the gospel of John again, and in that blessed third of John, where our Lord was explaining the gospel in the simplest possible style to Nicodemus, we find him laying great stress upon the fact that the life received by faith in himself is eternal. Look at that precious verse, the fourteenth:- "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." Do men therefore believe in him and yet perish? Do they believe in him and receive a spiritual life which comes to an end? It cannot be, for "God gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish"; but he would perish if he did not persevere to the end; and therefore he must persevere to the end. The believer has eternal life, how then can he die, so as to cease to be a believer? If he does not abide in Christ, he evidently has not eternal life, therefore he shall abide in Christ, even to the end. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." To this some reply that a man may have everlasting life and lose it. To which we answer, the words cannot so mean. Such a statement is a self-evident contradiction. If the life be lost the man is dead how, then, did he have everlasting life? It is clear that he had a life which lasted only for a while; he certainly had not everlasting life, for if he had it he must live everlastingly. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36). The saints in heaven have eternal life, and no one expects them to perish. Their life is eternal; but eternal life is eternal life, whether the person possessing it dwells on earth or in heaven.

I need not read all the passages in which the same truth is taught; but further on, in John 6:47, our Lord told the Jews, "Verily, verily, I say unto
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you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life;" not temporary life, but "everlasting life." And in the 51st verse he said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." Then comes that famous declaration of the Lord Jesus Christ, which, if there were no other at all, would be quite sufficient to prove our point. John 10:28: "And I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any" (the word "man" is not in the original) "pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." What can he mean but this, that he has grasped his people, and that he means to hold them securely in his mighty hand?

*"Where is the power can reach us there,
Or what can pluck us thence?"*

Over and above the hand of Jesus which was pierced comes the hand of the omnipotent Father as a sort of second grasp. "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Surely this must show that the saints are secure from anything and everything which would destroy them, and consequently safe from total apostasy.

Another passage speaks to the same effect-it is to be found in Matthew 24:24, where the Lord Jesus has been speaking of the false prophets that should deceive many. "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect;" which shows that it is impossible for the elect to be deceived by them. Of Christ's sheep it is said, "A stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers," but by divine instinct they know the voice of the Good Shepherd, and they follow him. Thus has our Savior declared, as plainly as words possibly can express it, that those who are his people possess eternal life within themselves, and shall not perish, but shall enter into everlasting felicity. "The righteous shall hold on his way."

A very blessed argument for the safety of the believer is found in our Lord's intercession. You need not turn to the passage, for you know it well, which shows the connection between the living intercession of Christ and the perseverance of his people- "Wherefore also he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to
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make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). Our Lord Jesus is not dead; he has risen, he has gone up into the glory, and now before the eternal throne he pleads the merit of his perfect work, and as he pleads there for all his people whose names are written on his heart, as the names of Israel were written on the jewelled breastplate of the high priest, his intercession

saves his people even to the uttermost. If you would like an illustration of it you must turn to the case of Peter which is recorded in Luke 22:31 where our Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon, be hold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.’ The intercession of Christ does not save his people from being tried, and tempted, and tossed up and down like wheat in a sieve, it does not save them even from a measure of sin and sorrow, but it does save them from total apostasy. Peter was kept, and though he denied his Master, yet it was an exception to the great rule of his life. By grace he did hold on his way, because not only then, but many a time beside, though he sinned, he had an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

If you desire to know how Jesus pleads, read at your leisure at home that wonderful 17th of John-the Lord’s prayer. What a prayer it is! ‘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.’ Judas was lost, but he was only given to Christ as an apostle and not as one of his sheep. He had a temporary faith, and maintained a temporary profession, but he never had eternal life or he would have lived on. Those groans and cries of the Savior which accompanied his pleadings in Gethsemane were heard in heaven, and answered. ‘Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me ‘; the Lord does keep them by his word and Spirit, and will keep them. If the prayer of Christ in Gethsemane was answered, how much more that which now goeth up from the eternal throne itself!

*‘With cries and tears he offered up
His humble suit below;
But with authority he asks,
Enthroned in glory now.
‘For all that come t o God by him,
Salvation he demands;
Points to their names upon his breast,
And spreads his wounded hands.’*

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Ah, if my Lord Jesus pleads for me I cannot be afraid of earth or hell; that living, intercessory voice hath power to keep the saints, and so hath the living Lord himself, for he hath said- ‘Because I live ye shall live also.’ (John 14:19.)

Now for a fourth argument. We gather sure confidence of the perseverance of the saints from the character and work of Christ. I will say little about that, for I trust my Lord is so well known to you that he needeth no word of commendation from me to you; but if you know him you will say what the apostle does in 2 Timothy 1:12,- ‘I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.’ He did not say ‘I know in whom I have believed,’ as most people quote it, but, ‘I know whom I have believed.’ He knew Jesus,

he knew his heart and his faithfulness, he knew his atonement and its power, he knew his intercession and its might; and he committed his soul to Jesus by an act of faith, and he felt secure. My Lord is so excellent in all things that I need give you but one glimpse of his character and you will see what he was when he dwelt here among men. At the commencement of John 13: we read, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." If he had not loved his disciples to the end when here we might conclude that he was changeable now as then; but if he loved his chosen to the end while yet in his humiliation below, it bringeth us the sweet and blessed confidence that now he is in heaven he will love to the end all those who confide in him.

Fifthly, we infer the perseverance of the saints from the tenor of the covenant of grace. Would you like to read it for yourselves? If so, turn to the Old Testament, Jeremiah 32., and there you will find the covenant of grace set forth at some length. We shall only be able to read the fortieth verse: "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me," He will not depart from them, and they shall not depart from him, - what can be a grander assurance of their perseverance even to the end? Now, that this is the covenant of grace under which we live is clear from the Epistle to the Hebrews, for the apostle in the 8th chapter quotes that passage to this very end. The question runs thus- "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt;

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because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." The old covenant had an "if" in it, and so it suffered shipwreck; it was- "If you will be obedient then you shall be blessed"; and hence there came a failure on man's part, and the whole covenant ended in disaster. It was the covenant of works, and under it we were in bondage, until we were delivered from it and introduced to the covenant of grace, which has no "if" in it, but runs upon the strain of promise; it is "I will" and "You shall" all the way through. "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." Glory be to God, this covenant will never pass away, for see how the Lord declares its enduring character in the book of Isaiah (liv. 10): "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." And again in Isaiah 55:3: "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." The idea of falling utterly away from grace is a relic of the old legal spirit, it is a going away from grace to come under law again, and I charge you who have once been manumitted slaves, and have had the fetters of legal

bondage struck from off your hands, never consent to wear those bonds again. Christ has saved you, if indeed you are believers in him, and he has not saved you for a week, or a month, or a quarter, or a year, or twenty years, but he has given to you eternal life, and you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of his hands. Rejoice ye in this blessed covenant of grace.

The sixth most forcible argument is drawn from the faithfulness of God. Look at Romans 11:29; what saith the apostle there, speaking by the Holy Ghost? ‘For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance,’ which means that he does not give life and pardon to a man and call him by grace and afterwards repent of what he has done, and withdraw the good things which he has bestowed. ‘God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent.’ When he putteth forth his hand to save he doth not withdraw it till the work is accomplished. His word is, ‘I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed’ (Malachi 3:6). ‘The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent’ (1 Samuel 15:29). The apostle would have us ground our confidence of perseverance upon the confirmation which divine faithfulness is sure to bestow upon us.

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He says in 1 Corinthians 1:8, ‘Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.’ And again he speaks to the same effect in 1 Thess. 5:24, ‘Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.’ It was of old the will of God to save the people whom he gave to Jesus, and from this he has never turned, for our Lord said (John 6:39), ‘And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.’ Thus you see from these passages, and there are numbers of others, that God’s faithfulness secures the preservation of his people, and ‘the righteous shall hold on his way.’

The seventh and last argument shall be drawn from what has already been done in us. I shall do little more than quote the Scriptures, and leave them to sink into your minds. A blessed passage is that in Jeremiah 31:3: ‘The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.’ If he did not mean that his love should be everlasting he would never have drawn us at all, but because that love is everlasting therefore with lovingkindness has he drawn us. The apostle argues this in a very elaborate manner in Romans 5:9, 10: ‘Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.’ I cannot stop to show how every word of this passage is emphatic, but so it is; if God reconciled us when we were enemies, he certainly will save us now we are his friends, and if our Lord Jesus has reconciled us by his death, much more will he save us by his life; so that we may be certain he will not leave nor forsake

those whom he has called. Do you need me to bring to your minds that golden chapter, the 8th of Romans, the noblest of all language that was ever written by human pen? "Whom ye did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." There is no break in the chain between justification and glory; and no supposable breakage can occur, for the apostle puts that out of all hazard, by saying, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again,

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who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Then he heaps on all the things that might be supposed to separate, and says, "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 the same manner the apostle writes in Philippians 1:6. "Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." I cannot stay to mention the many other Scriptures in which what has been done is made an argument that the work shall be completed, but it is after the manner of the Lord to go through with whatever he undertakes. "He will give grace and glory," and perfect that which concerneth us.

One marvellous privilege which has been bestowed upon us is of peculiar significance; we are one with Christ by close, vital, spiritual union. We are taught of the Spirit that we enjoy a marriage union with Christ Jesus our Lord—shall that union be dissolved? We are married to him. Has he ever given a bill of divorce? There never has been such a case as the heavenly bridegroom divorcing from his heart a chosen soul to whom he has been united in the bonds of grace. Listen to these words from the prophecy of Hosea 2:19, 20. "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord."

This marvellous union is set forth by the figure of the head and the body; we are members of the body of Christ. Do the members of his body rot away? Is Christ amputated? Is he fitted with new limbs as old ones are lost? Nay, being members of this body, we shall not be divided from him. "He that is joined unto the Lord," says the apostle, "is one spirit," and if we are made one spirit with Christ, that mysterious union does not allow of the supposition of a separation.

The Lord has wrought another great work upon us, for he has sealed us by the Holy Spirit. The possession of the Holy Ghost is the divine seal which sooner or later is set upon all the chosen. There are many passages in which that seal is spoken of, and is described as being an earnest, an earnest of the inheritance. But how an earnest if after receiving it we do

not attain the purchased possession? Think over the words of the apostle in
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1 Corinthians 1:21,22; ‘For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom.’ To the same effect the Holy Spirit speaks in Ephesians 1:13, 14; ‘In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.’ Beloved, we feel certain that if the Spirit of God dwelleth in us, he that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead will keep our souls and will also quicken our mortal bodies and present us complete before the glory of his face at the last.

Therefore we sum up the argument with the confident expression of the apostle when he said (2 Timothy 4:18), ‘The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.’

II. Now, how shall we IMPROVE THE DOCTRINE PRACTICALLY? THE FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

The first improvement is for encouragement to the man who is on the road to heaven. ‘The righteous shall hold on his way.’ If I had to take a very long journey, say from London to John o’ Groats, with my poor tottering limbs to carry me, and such a weight to carry too, I might begin to despair, and, indeed, the very first day’s walking would knock me up; but if I had a divine assurance unmistakably saying, ‘You will hold on your way, and you will get to your journey’s end,’ I feel that I would brace myself up to achieve the task. One might hardly undertake a difficult journey if he did not believe that he would finish it, but the sweet assurance that we shall reach our home makes us pluck up courage. The weather is wet, rainy, blustering, but we must keep on, for the end is sure. The road is very rough, and runs up hill and down dale; we pant for breath, and our limbs are aching; but as we shall get to our journey’s end we push on. We are ready to creep into some cottage and lie down to die of weariness, saying, ‘I shall never accomplish my task;’ but the confidence which we have received sets us on our feet, and off we go again. To the right-hearted man the assurance of success is the best stimulus for labor. If it be so, that I shall overcome the world, that I shall conquer sin, that I shall not be an apostate, that I shall not give up my faith, that I shall not fling away my
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shield, that I shall come home a conqueror-then will I play the man, and fight like hero. This is one of the reasons why British troops have so often won the fight, because the drummerboys did not know how to beat a retreat, and the rank and file did not believe in the possibility of defeat. They were beaten oftentimes by the French, so the French tell us, but they

would not believe it, and therefore would not run away. They felt like winning, and so they stood like solid rocks amidst the dread artillery of the foe till victory declared on their side. Brethren, we shall do the same if we realize that we are preserved in Christ Jesus, kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Every true believer shall be a conqueror, and hence the reason for warring a good warfare. There is laid up for us in heaven a crown of life that fadeth not away. The crown is laid up for us, and not for chance comers. The crown reserved for me is such that no one else can wear it; and if it be so, then will I battle and strive to the end, till the last enemy is overcome, and death itself is dead.

Another improvement is this; what an encouragement this is to sinners who desire salvation. It should lead them to come and receive it with grateful delight. Those who deny this doctrine offer sinners a poor twopennyhalfpenny salvation, not worth having, and it is no marvel that they turn away from it. As the Pope gave England to the Spanish king-if he could get it-so do they proffer Christ's salvation if a man will deserve it by his own faithfulness. According to some, eternal life is given to you, but then it may not be eternal; you may fall from it, it may last only for a time. When I was but a child I used to trouble myself because I saw some of my young companions, who were a little older than myself, when they became apprentices and came to London, become vicious; I have heard their mother's laments, and seen their tears about them; I have heard their fathers expressing bitterest sorrow over the boys whom I knew in my class to be quite as good as ever I had been, and it used to strike me with horror that I perhaps might sin as they had done. They became Sabbath-breakers; in one case there was a theft from the till to go into Sunday pleasuring. I dreaded the very thought; I desired to maintain an unsullied character, and when I heard that if I gave my heart to Christ he would keep me, that was the very thing which won me; it seemed to be a celestial life assurance for my character, that if I would really trust Christ with myself he would save me from the errors of youth, preserve me amid the temptations of manhood, and keep me to the end. I was charmed with the thought that if I was made righteous by believing in Christ Jesus I should hold on my way

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by the power of the Holy Spirit. That which charmed me in my boyhood is even more attractive to me in middle life; I am happy to preach to you a sure and everlasting salvation. I feel that I have something to bring before you this morning which is worthy of every sinner's eager acceptance. I have neither "if" nor "but" with which to dilute the pure gospel of my message. Here it is; "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." I dropped a piece of ice upon the floor yesterday, and I said to one who was in the room, "Is not that a diamond?" "Ah," he said, "you would not leave it on the floor, I warrant you, if it were a diamond of that size." Now I have a diamond here-eternal life, everlasting life! Methinks you will be in haste to take it up at once, to be saved now, to be saved in living, to be saved in dying, to be saved in rising again, for ever and ever, by the eternal power and infinite love of God. Is not this worth having? Grasp at it, poor

soul; thou mayest have it if thou dost but believe in Jesus Christ, or, in other words, trust thy soul with him. Deposit thine eternal destiny in this divine bank, then thou canst say, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THE RIGHTEOUS HOLDING ON HIS WAY.

NO. 749

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 12TH, 1807,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The righteous also shall hold on his way." -Job 17:9.

WE are thrice happy in having a goodly number of young beginners in our midst. Oar springtide is cheered and beautified with many blossoms of hopeful converts. They have just begun to go on pilgrimage, and would be as happy as the birds of the air were it not that some of them are grievously afflicted with the fear that they shall not hold out to the end. This is one of their daily torments, that, after all, they shall be false to Christ; that the grace of God will fail them, or that they will fail to depend upon it; that so, having begun well, they shall by-and-by be hindered, and shall not obey the truth. Now, perhaps a little plain conversation upon that subject may help to relieve them of their fears. Ignorance about divine truth is not bliss, and is not the friend to bliss: "that the soul be without knowledge is not good." The more we know concerning the doctrines of the gospel the better for our comfort, if by faith we are able to receive them. Many and many a doubt and fear now oppressing the people of God might be driven like chaff before the wind, if they were but better established in the truth relating to the points under their consideration. If they did but know more fully what God has revealed they would tremble less at what Satan suggests. It is, therefore, with the view of very simply talking about this matter of holding on the way of the heavenly pilgrimage, that I have taken this text this morning. May God the Holy Spirit bless it to us.

First, we intend to say, this morning, that the believer must hold on his way-it is necessary that he should do so; secondly, it exceedingly difficult

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for him to do so-the perseverance of the saints is surrounded with enormous perils; yet, thirdly, this perseverance is guaranteed by divine promise; but, fourthly, it is only guaranteed to certain persons whose character is described in the text as being "the righteous." These shall hold on their way.

I. First, then, it is absolutely essential to final salvation that we should be PARTICIPATORS IN FINAL PERSEVERANCE.

It has been said by some that he who once believes is therefore saved. I shall not deny the truth of that statement; but it is an unguarded mode of speech, and does not place the truth in the most Scriptural form. I would infinitely prefer to assert, that ‘He who truly believes, shall by grace continue to do so, and therefore shall be saved.’ For it is not true that, supposing a man did once believe, and then became altogether an unbeliever he should be saved. If that were possible, that the believer should altogether fall from the grace of God, and become in all respects changed into an unbeliever, he would be damned; for on this point the word of God is very clear and decided; read the twenty-fourth verse of the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel: ‘But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.’ If it were possible for one who had entered upon the way of righteousness truly entered upon it-to turn from it, utterly and totally, the consequences must be his final destruction; for Paul tells us ‘It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.’ Hebrews 6:4-6. That is not the point we raise at all in the discussion of final perseverance. We do not admit the possibility of total apostasy in the case of the real believer in Jesus, but believe that he will hold on his way, and so be saved, but only saved by being enabled to hold on his way. We hold that in order to ultimate salvation, it is absolutely indispensable that every one who is a believer, should continue to be a believer; that he who is made by grace to be holy, should continue to be holy; that he in whom the divine life is placed, should never lose that divine life. It is the keeping of that life which we believe ultimately ends in perfection and everlasting bliss.

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1. The necessity of final perseverance is very clear, if you look at the representation of the believer in the Word of God. He is frequently compared to a traveler; but no traveler reaches his journey’s end merely by starting upon the road. If it should be a journey of seven weeks’ length, if he shall sit down after journeying six weeks, he certainly will not reach the goal of his desires. It is necessary, if I would reach a certain city, that I should go every mile of the road; for one mile would not take me there; nor if the city be a hundred miles distant, would ninety-nine miles bring me to its streets. I must journey all the length if I would reach the desired place. Frequently, in the New Testament, the Christian is compared to a runner-he runs in a race for a great prize; but it is not by merely starting, it is not by making a great spurt, it is not by distancing your rival for a little time, and then pulling up to take breath, or sauntering to either side of the

road, that you will win the race: we must never stop till we have passed the winning-post; there must be no loitering throughout the whole of the Christian career, but onward, like the Roman charioteer, with glowing wheels, we must fly more and more rapidly till we actually obtain the crown. The Christian is sometimes, by the apostle Paul, who somewhat delights to quote from the ancient games, compared to the Grecian wrestler or boxer. But it is of little avail for the champion to give the foe one blow or one fall: he must continue in the combat until his adversary is beaten. Our spiritual foes will not be vanquished until we enter where the conquerors receive their crowns, and therefore we must continue in fighting attitude. It is in vain for us to talk of what we have done or are doing just now, he that continueth to the end, the same shall be saved, and none but he. The believer is commonly compared to a warrior: he is engaged in a great battle, a holy war. Like Joshua, he has to drive cut the Cannanites, that have chariots of iron, before he can fully take possession of his inheritance; but it is not the winning of one battle that makes a man a conqueror; nay, though he should devastate one province of his enemy's territories, yet, if he should be driven out by-and-by, he is beaten in the campaign, and it will yield him but small consolation to win a single battle, or even a dozen battles, if the campaign as a whole should end in his defeat. It is not commencing as though the whole world were to be cleared by one display of fire and sword, but continuing, going from strength to strength, from victory to victory, that makes the man the conqueror of his foe. The Christian is also culled a disciple or scholar. But who does not know that the boy by going to school for a day or two does not therefore become wise? If the lad should give himself most diligently to his grammar

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for six months, yet he will never become a linguist unless he shall continue perseveringly in his classic studies. The great mathematicians of our times did not acquire their science in a single year; they pressed forward with aching brow; they burnt the midnight oil and tortured their brains; they were not satisfied to rest, for they could never have become masters of their art if they had lingered on the road. The believer is also called a builder, but you know of whom it was said, "This man began to build, but was not able to finish!" The digging out of the foundation is most important, and the building up of stone upon stone is to be carried on with diligence, but though the man should half finish the walls, or even complete them, yet if he do not roof in the structure, he becomes a laughing-stock to every passer-by. A good beginning, it is said, is more than half, but a good ending is more than the whole. Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.

In every aspect of the Christian, continuance in faith and well-doing is essential to his safety; without a perpetual perseverance his profession is of no value. We will look at one more illustration, and see this most clearly. Take that simple metaphor of wheat: of what value is the corn in the blade or even in the ear? What man can live upon the green blade or the half-formed ear? The joyous shout of the reaper is only evoked by the full corn

in the ear; and you, young believer, you, growing Christian, must press forward and ripen into the perfection of your Christian manhood, for it is only then that the shout of ‘Hallelujah,’ and ‘Glory to God,’ shall be fully heard. Take the Christian in any way in which God describes him, and he is one in whose ear is whispered the words, ‘Forward! Onward!’ He is not one who can say, ‘I have attained.’ In a certain sense it is true he is saved, but as to his ultimate salvation, his perfection before the throne can only be wrought in him by the continual, sustained, and abiding work of the Holy Ghost.

2. But the fact that final perseverance is absolutely necessary is also clear, if you for a moment take into consideration the nature of the case and suppose that the man did not persevere. Imagine a man who started with sincere simple faith in Christ, and with a new heart, and a right spirit; imagine him to have gone back to the world: can you suppose that he will enter heaven? He has deserted good for evil, he has shut his eyes to the light, and gone back to the darkness from which he professed to have escaped. He has, not ignorantly, but knowingly and deliberately quenched within his soul the spark of heavenly flame. He knew that the road led to

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hell, and he turned from it, he knew that the other path led to heaven, and he ran in it; but after awhile he tired, he fainted, and he deliberately set his face hell-ward and gave up eternal life, pawning and throwing it away like Esau for a mess of pottage. Do you think it could be said otherwise of him than it was of that selfsame profane Esau, that he found no place for repentance, though he sought, sought it diligently and with tears? For this man, you see, has denied the Lord that bought him. He said he rested on Christ and depended on his precious blood; but he deliberately denies the faith, deliberately returns either to the beggarly elements of his own selfrighteousness to rest under the law, or else to plunge again into open sin, and follow the devices of his flesh. What shall be said of this man, but that his last end shall be worse than the first? Enter heaven! how can it be? It is the place of the perfect, and this man, so far from being perfect, does not even press towards it. He has turned aside from perfection, he has given up everything which constituted him a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light; he has, after being illuminated, gone back to the darkness; after being quickened, has gone back to the tomb. What remaineth for him? Take the case into consideration, and you will see at once the impossibility of a non-persevering Christian were entering into heaven.

3. Thirdly, I must strengthen that consideration by reminding you that we have very express declarations in Scripture about professors, and about believers too, if such could be, who do not persevere. Do you not recollect the Savior’s words, ‘No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God’? Luke 9:62. Do you not remember that terrible sentence about the salt, ‘Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned. It is neither fit for the

laud, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out”? To the same effect is that fearful warning, “Remember Lot’s wife!” she came out of the city of destruction, but she looked back, and became a pillar of salt as an everlasting warning to us against so much as the thought and look of apostasy. Then comes in that warning, where we are told concerning some, that it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; and that word of Paul, “For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned;” and that of Peter, in his second epistle, and second chapter: “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior 313 Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” Supposing a man, then, to have been washed in the blood of Jesus, to be quickened of the Spirit of God-supposing him to have gone back and to have entirely and totally lost all grace, he would be the hopeless man, beyond the reach of mercy, damned while yet living, a living hell even in the midst of this world. O beloved, how necessary then is it that the Christian should persevere and hold on even to the end!

4. I would have you observe the form of many of the promises, and as we have little time this morning, I ask you to read the second and third chapters of the Book of Revelation. There are some very choice promises made to the seven churches, but they are all put in this shape, “To him that overcometh will I give,” and so on. Not to him that begins the fight; not to him that buckles on his harness; not to him that proclaims war; but “to him that overcometh will I give.” The promises are reserved for such; and you know how, in contradistinction to such promises, it is written, “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

Brethren, before I leave this subject this morning, there is something which I wish to press upon your minds: it is not very pleasant, but it is needful for us to hear it. Let me remind you of some whom you yourselves have known, who did appear to be amongst the most gracious and excellent of the earth, who are at this moment so far cast off as to have become entirely forgetful, even of the outward forms of religion, and have gone aside, by fearful sins, we fear, into perdition. That, mark you, has happened in some cases after many years of profession: the vessel has been wrecked at the harbour’s mouth. The fire of religious excitement burned all day, at least, so they said (we do not search hearts), and it went out at night, just when it was most required, when the chamber, the chill, cold chamber, most needed the genial flame. Doubtless John was right when he said, “They

went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.” But what a dreadful thing, not to persevere, and yet to have had the name of a Christian! When a man goes up a ladder, if he shall fall at the first step, that is bad; but if he shall fall when he has nearly reached the top, what a falling is there! God save us
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from it! If ever I prayed in my life, I think I did this morning when we were singing those words, ‘Let us not fall! Let us not fall!’ for oh! to fall backward into perdition is the worst way of falling into hell! Christian, it is not with you that you may persevere or not—it is not an optional blessing you must persevere, or else all you have ever known and felt will be good for nothing to you. You must hold on your way if you are ultimately to be saved.

Let me here say, and I leave the point, that I do not assert that a Christian must daily make progress in grace; he ought to do so, he should do so; but even if he should not do so, he will not be cast away for that. Neither do I assert that a Christian should always be conscious that he is in the way, for many of the best of God’s saints are tormented with many doubts and fears. Nor do I say that every departure from the way of God is inevitably fatal: far from it, for many have departed for a season, and have been brought back and restored as penitent backsliders. Christian went down By-path meadow, and yet returned to the right road: that is a very different case from Demas, who forsook the way to dig in the silver mine, and perished in it. The general current of the soul, however, must be onward: the general current and tendency of the believer must be in the way of truth—both as to his heart and his life; and if it be not so, whatever boastings he may make about his faith, whatever experiences he may think he has had, if he do not hold out to the end, there is no salvation, no heaven, no bliss for him.

II. Secondly, it is possible that I may plunge thoughtful minds into deeper gloom still, while I remind you that while final perseverance is necessary, IT IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT.

The way itself renders it so. The way to heaven is no smooth-shaven lawn, no well-rolled gravel path, it is a rough road, up-hill, down-dale, across rivers, and over mountains. He that would get to heaven must have the spirit of Hannibal, who, when he led his troops over the Alps, said, ‘I will either find a way, or I will make one.’ You will need all the fortitude that grace itself can give you, in order to reach, along such a road, the city of your desire.

Moreover, the road is long. It is a life-long road. To keep near to God by the space of a week is not the easiest thing conceivable; to deny one’s passions, to overcome one’s evil desires for the space of a month might be difficult, but this is for life; we shall not be able to lay down this charge till
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we lay down our bodies. Here we stand upon our watch-tower, not by day

alone, though the hot noontide might make us faint, but until the evening star arises, and onward through the dark night till the gleams of morning come; and so day after day, from the first childhood of our spiritual existence until we have matured into a ripe old age, it is watching, watching continually, and laboring and pressing forward. My brethren, I do not know how it is with some of you, but I do feel this and must confess it, that in the early part of our Christian career there is a freshness and a novelty about everything which enables us to travel readily, but after awhile-there is no monotony, it is true, except in ourselves, but it begins to be heavy work to hold on in the ways of the Lord. It ought not to be so, but, alas! it is so; and we have to cry to the strong for strength that we may be renewed, or else the length of the way would wear us out.

Besides that, the road is so contrary to fallen nature. It is a way of faith. If it were a way of sight, one might walk in it easily, but it is a way of faith from the beginning to the end- "the just live by faith;" not a way of sensible comforts; not always a way of joyful experiences, but frequently a path of deep tribulation, solemn heart-searchings, bitterness, and of gall; a way outside the camp where none can sympathize with you; a way of scourging and of flagellation even from the hand of the great Father himself, who hides himself from us for a season. It is a way so contrary to flesh and blood that he who holds out in it has received power from on high, and has the Holy Ghost within him. God himself must dwell in a persevering Christian's heart. The Hebrew word, for hold on, in the text, is very expressive, 'it signifies to hold with strength, to hold toughly, to hold as with the teeth, resolving never to let go, but ever to go on.' Beloved, we must hold on with tooth and nail: if we cannot run, we must walk; if we cannot walk, we must clamber on hands and knees up the hill; and if we cannot even do this, we must stand fast. All Christians who have had any experience of divine life will say, that from the way itself it is no easy thing to continue in it.

Then, take into consideration, in the next place, as to our difficulties, our flesh-that heavy load which we have to take along this weary way. We have constitutional sins, any one of which, if left unwatched for a little season, would cause us to make shipwreck of our faith. Some of us are constitutionally idle, we would scarce do anything unless the solemn obligation of duty compelled us. Others are constitutionally angry-quick tempered-and for them to become like little children (which they must do if

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they would be saved) is no easy task. Some, I know, are naturally desponding; their eyes have always a blue tinge, everything looks blue as they look abroad, and it is not so easy for them to trust in the Lord and do good, waiting patiently for the Lord's appearing. These natural infirmities and weaknesses of ours render it hard to drag our flesh along the road to heaven.

Besides this, who doth not know that he bears a cage of unclean birds within himself? If my passions were all naturally on God's side, and would, without grace, run towards heaven, then there might be no difficulty in

holding on the way; but, alas! the whole of our nature, when let alone, straineth and tuggeth to go back to the land of Egypt; and sometimes it seems as if our baser passions would get the victory, and compel us to wear once more the galling yoke, and to fret under the fierce bondage of the Pharaoh of hell. It must not be, it shall not be; but, O God, save me from that evil man, myself. ‘O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ Paul said so, and we have often had to say it; and, when living nearest to God, we have had to groan most over indwelling sin.

Besides our flesh, however, my brethren, we are all conscious of other foes in our way to heaven. For instance, there is the world. Can you mix with it, and obtain from it any quickening in the spiritual life? You are compelled to mix in it; your business calls you; common society demands of you that you should in seine measure mix with the world, for if you are not to speak to sinners, you must go out of the world altogether. But is it not hard work, after a week perhaps of toil with ungodly, blaspheming workmen, to come up to the house of God with the mind quite calm? To be in business with its worries, and its cares, and in the world with its customs, and its maxims, and still to be a child of God, is not easy! Ah! you must be a child of God indeed to remain true in such a world as this. Sometimes the world persecutes the Christian, and it is not always the easiest thing to fight with old Giant Grim, and keep the middle of the way and overcome him. Then there is that Vanity Fair, and he is a man indeed who can turn a deaf ear to all are crying, ‘Buy, buy, buy!’ Worst of all there is Madam Bubble, with her sweet speech, and her words softer than butter, while inwardly they are drawn swords. You know how Mr. Standfast had to take to his knees before he could get rid of that old witch, when she offered him all sorts of delights, having caught him just in the frame for it, when he said he was as poor as an owlet, and weary and faint, then it was she offered him all that

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is fleshly and pleasant; only tears and prayers got him out of that difficulty. ‘The righteous shall hold on his way.’ O God, thou hast said it, but if thou hadst not said so, we should have declared that in such a world as this it would be impossible for a Christian, through a life of trial, to maintain his integrity.

Then there is the devil: we put him last, for he is the most terrible foe. When he stretches his feet across the middle of the way, and swears that he will spill our souls, and we shall go no farther; when he brings the past up and tells us of our unfaithfulness; when he insinuates that there is no hereafter, that there is no heaven, but that our faith is all a foolish invention, and an old wives’ fable; and then when he holds out present enjoyment and present gain, and tells us that if we do not get these we shall have nothing, and hisses out the accusation that we are hypocrites, and I know not what-ah! then, unless we carry the true Jerusalem blade of the Word of God, and have the grace of God to nerve our arm while we wield that sword of the Spirit, we shall not be ‘more than conquerors,’ but die on the road. It is difficult for us to persevere for awhile, but it is difficult in

the extreme to do so to the end. To get to heaven is no child's work. He that getteth there will have to fight for every inch of the road; and when he gets there, oh! how he will clap his hands as he looks back upon the danger; how he will shout with them that triumph when he once finds himself emancipated from ten thousand dangers, and "with God eternally shut in."

III. Thirdly, and, I trust, most comforting to our souls, the
PERSEVERANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN IS GUARANTEED.

Would you prefer to hear one or two of the passages of Scripture read which guarantee the perseverance of believers? I have little time this morning, but here is one, the thirty-second chapter of Jeremiah, fortieth verse: "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 into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." There is a double blessing: God will not depart from his people; his people shall not depart from him. Thus doubly are they kept by grace. Our Savior's words in the sixth chapter of John, at the thirty-ninth and fortieth verses, are sweetly to the same import: "This is the Father's which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me. I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and
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believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." You know that memorable passage a little farther on - the tenth chapter of John, twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth verses: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." If more were wanted, you might turn to that inexpressibly precious passage in the eighth chapter of Romans, where, towards the close, the apostle, having challenged heaven, and earth, and hell, to condemn the believer, saith, "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." The beloved apostle John, to quote from him once more, has told us in the nineteenth verse of the second chapter of his first epistle, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." These are just a handful of texts, and a mere handful from a vast mass. So clear is the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, that I venture to assert boldly, that if the Bible does not teach it, it does not teach anything at all. If that be not a clear doctrine of revelation, then neither is the doctrine of the deity of Christ, nor indeed any doctrine, and the Bible must be a mere nose of wax, to be moulded according to our will.

But, beloved, there are these considerations which make the perseverance of the Christian certain to us. Unless the Christian shall persevere, the eternal purpose of God will be defeated; for from the beginning God hath chosen his people unto holiness, to be set apart for his service, to be purified by his grace, that they may be presented at last without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. If believers do not persevere, we have shown that they must perish as other apostates do; therefore, since the purpose of God for the sanctification and safety of his chosen cannot be frustrated, and the design of the Most High standeth fast, we believe that the righteous shall hold on his way.

In addition to this, the work of Jesus Christ would be of no avail unless the bloodwashed held on their way. The Lord Jesus has redeemed his people from among men; but if, though they have been redeemed, they should not

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persevere unto the end, they would perish, then it would follow that Christ shed his blood in vain; bought those whom he will never have; suffered for the sins of men who afterwards have to suffer for their own sins; which always seems to us to be a supposition fraught with blasphemous impossibility-that Christ should be a surety for men's sins, and be punished in their stead, and yet those men should be punished for the sins which were laid upon their scapegoat. Such must be emphatically the case, brethren, unless those who are redeemed by blood persevere to the end. Jesus has evidently taken their sins, and taken them in vain, suffered for them in vain. He has been their substitute, and yet these men perish. Moreover, through the righteousness of Christ, believers are justified they are declared to be no longer under the law; but if they do not persevere in holiness, they perish. How can he perish who is justified? How shall he be condemned who is not under the law, and consequently has no law which can condemn him? The thing becomes impossible. We are involved in a mesh of difficulties, a labyrinth from which we cannot escape, if we suppose it to be possible for a saint to finally fall from grace.

Moreover, all true believers are one with Christ. They are married to him. Shall Christ lose his spouse? They are members of his body: they are declared to be parts of himself; and shall Christ be dismembered? Shall he be a dislocated, disjointed, broken-up humanity? Nay, the church is his fullness-the fullness of him that filleth all in all. If Jesus save not his church, he is not a perfect Christ-he is. a maimed and wounded Savior. My brethren, the Lord Jesus Christ has gone to heaven as our representative: he represents every believer. Does he represent those who shall ultimately be cast into hell? Has he gone to prepare a place for believers? Ay, then they shall have the place prepared for them, for otherwise the places will be prepared, but the people will not come. Has he not said that he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him? How then shall it be possible for those who have come to God by him to perish, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them? Paul uses an overwhelming argument which I cannot this morning open up in full, but it has a triple power about it. "If," said he, "when we were enemies, we were reconciled

unto God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." If when we were enemies, without a thought towards God reconciled us, much more will he save us now that we are his children. If we were reconciled, much more shall we be saved, which is by far the least difficult work of the two; and if the death of Christ sufficed to

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reconcile us, what shall not the life of the glorious, immortal Savior do? Surety if the death has done so much, the life shall do yet more, and it shall be true as it is written, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

Further, my brethren, as we have spoken of the Father and of the Son, there is the Holy Spirit's work to be taken into consideration. He dwelleth in us: shall he be expelled? It is written that we are the temples of the Holy Spirit: shall the temples of the Holy Spirit become like the temples of Jove or of Saturn? Shall they be given up to the moles and the bats, degraded and defiled? God forbid! He that dwells there will drive out the foe and maintain a shrine for himself in purity. The Holy Ghost has begun to sanctify us: will he begin and not conclude? Shall the Holy Spirit be defeated by the devil and the flesh? Shall the banner of the devil be hanged up in Satan's hall because he hath overcome the elect? Beloved, God gave the victory over to Satan for a moment in the garden of Eden, but with the determination to win it from the strong man; and he has bound captivity captive, and there shall be none of the spoils of the elect left in the hands of the enemy. God shall be conqueror all through the campaign; and at the last the Spirit shall not be defeated in a single heart wherein he came to dwell. Let us rejoice, then, that when we consider the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it does seem impossible that the righteous should be lost. They must, therefore, hold on their way. Beloved, let us fall back upon this truth in our times of worst discouragement; and if any say, "This is not a practical truth, but calculated to lull us into slumber," let us prove, by our activity, that they err, not knowing the truth. I can never conceive that it dispirits the soldier, when he is fighting, to tell him that he must win the victory. This is what Cromwell's ironsides said when they saw the great general riding along the ranks, "Tis he!" they said, "tis he!" they felt the victory was sure where Cromwell was, and like thunderbolts they dashed upon their enemies, until as thin clouds before the tempest the foemen flew apace. The certainty of victory gives strength to the arm that wields the sword. To say to the Christian you shall persevere till you get to the journey's end - will that make him sit down on the next mile-stone? No; he will climb the mountain, wiping the sweat from his brow; and as he looks upon the plain, he will descend with surer and more cautious footsteps, because he knows he shall reach the journey's end. God will speed the ship over the waves into the desired haven; will the conviction of that on the part of the captain make him neglect the vessel? Yes, if he be a fool; but if he be a man in his wits, the very certainty that he shall cross the deep will

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only strengthen him in time of storm to do what he would not have dreamt of doing if he had been afraid the vessel would be cast away. Brethren, let

this doctrine impel us to a holy ardency of watchfulness, and may the Lord bless us and enable us to persevere to the end.

IV. Lastly, PERSEVERANCE IS GUARANTEED, BUT NOT TO EVERYBODY.

There are some here who are not believers in Christ. A text rose up last night out of the Bible and struck me very painfully. I was afraid as I read it that some of you would persevere to the end and would go to hell, for I read these words, ‘He that is filthy, let him be filthy still;’ and I wondered whether Christ would say that of some of you. I am afraid of you; you have been warned; you have heard the gospel; you have been entreated to wash in the fountain, and you will not come. You have put off many and many a stroke of conscience, and said, ‘Go thy way; when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee.’ Now, mind, mind lest Christ should say, ‘Let him alone; he is unjust, let him be unjust still; he is prayerless, let him be prayerless still; he never feels the word, let him be unfeeling still; he is a tearless, Christless soul, he shall be so for ever.’ God forbid it! Now, do not any of you who are in that case go home and talk about the comfortable doctrine I have preached; it is nothing to you, you are like the poor shivering outcast in the street, who sees Christmas festivities through the window, in which he has no share. Go home, and God break your heart over this; may God cause you to mourn that there is no gracious perseverance for you, because you have no grace to persevere in; and that if you persevere in the road you are now in, it will only be to keep to the road of destruction that will at last end in the dreadful terminus of hell-fire. There are, on the other hand, some of you who have made a profession of faith; it may be these hands baptized you, in the name of the Lord Jesus, in this pool beneath. Ah! well, Christ has not said that you shall all persevere. Perhaps you made a profession merely to please parents, or friends, or to do what seemed to be a custom with others; perhaps you never had a deep sense of sin; perhaps you never did rest in Christ: I pray God that you may not persevere, but may repent and begin anew. Do not say, ‘Peace, peace,’ where there is no peace. Come as a poor sinner to Christ, and you will never be cast away; but if you merely make a profession of a notional religion that you have in your head, and not in your heart, it will be all ill with you at the last. You will be like the plant which had not much earth; when the sun arose, the root was scorched and the plant withered away.

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May God give you grace-may you be deeply rooted with grace in your heart.

But it is to you who have faith in God-it is to you that this final perseverance is promised, and I ask you to come this morning and take it. ‘How,’ say you, ‘shall I take it?’ Why, come to Jesus just as you did when you first came. That is the true final perseverance, to come always to Christ, having nothing in self, but having all in him. I hope you and I feel this morning that the sweet verse of Toplady still fits our case-

*‘Nothing in my hand I bring:
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to thee for dress;
Helpless, look to thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Savior, or I die.’*

Keep to that, never get an inch beyond that. Stand at the cross’s foot and view the sin-atonement blood; rest there living, rest there dying. and then when your spirit mounts to heaven, may your last song be of being washed in blood; and in heaven may it be said of you as of your fellow-sinners, “They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” The Lord bless you and keep you, and cause his face to shine upon you, and give you peace. Amen and Amen.

THE HUNGER-BITE.

NO. 1510

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

‘His strength shall be hunger -bitten.’ — Job 18:12.

Bildad was declaring the history of the hypocritical, presumptuous, and wicked man; and he intended, no doubt, to insinuate that Job was just such a person, that he had been a deceiver, and that therefore at last God’s providence had found him out and was visiting him for his sins. In this Bildad was guilty of great injustice to his friend. All the three miserable comforters of Job were mistaken in the special aim of their discourses, and yet concerning the speeches of each one it may be said that their general statements were, for the most part, true. They uttered truths, but they drew mistaken inferences, and they were ungenerous in the imputations which they east upon Job. It is true that, sooner or later, either in this world or the next, all conceivable curses do fall upon the hypocrite and the ungodly man, but it is not true that when a Christian is in trouble we are to judge that he is suffering for his sin. It would be both cruel and wicked for us to think so. Nevertheless, because what Bildad said was, in the main, true, though unkindly and wrongly applied, we feel ourselves quite at liberty to take a text out of his mouth.

It is true of many persons that their strength shall be hunger-bitten, and I shall speak concerning these words in three ways, noticing, first, that *this is a curse which will surely be fulfilled upon the ungodly*. Secondly, *this is a discipline which God often exercises upon the self-righteous when he means to save them*. And, thirdly — and it is grievous work to have to say it — *this is a form of chastisement upon believers who are not living near to God as they ought to be* — their strength becomes hunger-bitten.

I. First we shall view our text as A, CURSE WHICH WILL BE FULFILLED UPON THE UNGODLY. ‘His strength shall be hunger -bitten.’

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It is not said that *they* are hunger-bitten merely, but that their strength is so; and if their *strength* be hunger-bitten what must their weakness be? When a man’s strength is bitten with hunger, what a hunger must be raging throughout the whole of his nature.

Now, a large proportion of men make their gold to be their strength, their castle and their high tower, and for awhile they do rejoice in their wealth, and find great satisfaction in gathering it, in seeing it multiplied, and in hoping by-and-by that it shall come to great store. But every ungodly man ought to know that riches are not forever, and often they take to themselves wings and fly away. Men of colossal fortunes have dwindled down to beggars; they made great ventures and realized great failures. None are secure. As long as a man is in this world he is like a ship at sea, he is still liable to be shipwrecked. O you that are boasting in your gold, and calling your treasure your chief good, the day may come to you when your strength will be hunger-bitten, and, like the victims of famine, you will find yourselves helpless,-you whose money aforetime answered all things, and made you feel omnipotent.

But it will be said, of course, that it is not in every case that the ungodly man's strength of wealth is hunger-bitten; and I willingly concede it. But it comes to pass in another fashion. How many there are who keep their wealth, and yet, for all that, are very poor. It is not that the gold goes, but it stays by them and does not comfort them. I do not know which would be the worse of the two-to be hungry for want of bread, or to have abundance of bread, and yet remain hungry eat whatever you might. Thousands in this world are precisely in that condition. They have all that heart could wish, if their heart were right, but it seems nothing to them because they have envy in their spirits. Remember Haman. He is invited to the banquet of wine, he is a chief noble of the empire, he has his monarch's favor, but all that avails him nothing because Mordecai sits in the gate. Envy has cankered his soul, and if he were able to mount to the throne of Ahasuerus himself it would make no difference to him; he would be unhappy there; and all because one poor Jew will not bow to him. There are persons going up and down Cheapside every day who are intolerably wretched about a something which they would hardly like to mention to reasonable men. A wretched trifle frets them like a moth in a garment, and all the glory of their position is eaten away: their strength is hunger-bitten.

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Where the canker does not happen to be envy it may come to be a passion akin to it, namely, revenge. Alas, that we should have to talk of revenge as still existing upon this earth after Christ has been here and taught us to pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Yet there are ungodly men who even think it right to foster resentments. A word uncourteously spoken, a deed unkindly done, will be laid up, and an opportunity sought for retaliation; or, if not, a hope will be cherished that some blight, or blow from God, may fall upon the offender: and if that offender still bears himself aloft, and lives right merrily, and makes no recompense for the wrong done, the aggrieved one has eaten out his own heart with chagrin, and the strength of his wealth has been hunger-bitten. Where this has not been the case, it has, perhaps, more frequently happened that persons have been afflicted by avarice. Nothing more tends to impoverish a man than being rich. It is a hard thing to find a rich man

who enjoys riches. A rich man is a man who has all he wants, and many a man is rich on a few shillings a week: a poor man is a man who does not get what he wants, and people with twenty thousand a-year are in that list. In fact, where shall you find such poverty as among those poor rich men? The miser is often pictured as afraid to sleep because thieves may break in; he rises at midnight to tell over his hoarded treasure, he is afraid lest bonds, securities, mortgages, and the like may, after all, turn out to be mere waste paper; he frets and stews and mars his life because he has too great a means of living-such a man may not be very common, but it is an easy thing to find people who have very much, and yet are just as careful, just as grasping, just as fretful after more, as if they had but newly started in business, and were almost penniless-their strength is hunger-bitten. If somebody had told them, "You will one day reach to so many thousand pounds," they would have said, "Ah, if ever I get that amount I shall be perfectly satisfied." They have saved that sum long ago, and ten times as much, and now they say, "Ah, you don't know what it is to want money till you have a good portion of it. Now we have so much we must have more. We are up to our necks in the golden stream, and we must needs swim where the bottom cannot be touched." Poor fools! They have enough water to float them, but they must have enough to drown in. One stick is a capital thing for a lame man, as I know right well, but a thousand sticks would make a terrible lead for a man to carry. When any one has a sufficiency let him be thankful for so convenient a staff, but if he will not

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use what he has until he has accumulated much more, the comfort of his substance is gone, and his strength is hunger-bitten.

There are cases in which the hunger-bite does not take a shape which I could well describe. Instances are met with of persons who have made their gold their strength, who are altogether unrestful. Some have thought that their brain was diseased, but it is likely that the disease was lower down, and in their hearts. We have known wealthy men who believed themselves to be poor, and were haunted with the idea that they should die in the poor-house, even when they were worth a million; and others who have quarreled about the division of a farthing, when the loss of ten thousand pounds would have been a fleabite to them. In great substance they have found no substantial rest. They have often wished they could be as cheerful as their own menial servants. As they have lolled in their carriage, and looked at the rosy cheeks of the urchins in the village, they have coveted their health and felt willing to wear their rags if they could possess their appetites. As they have looked upon poor persons with family loves and domestic joys, and felt that their own joys were few in that direction, they have greatly envied them. It is a great mercy when the worldling is made uneasy in this world; it is a ground for hope that God means to wean him from his idols. But, alas, there are some who do not rest *here*, and yet will not rest hereafter. They have no rest in all that God has given them under the sun, and yet they will not fly to him who is the soul's sure repose. I need not dwell for another moment upon the failure of the strength,

which is found in riches. It is the same with all sorts of men who try to find comfort out of Christ and away from God, their strength shall be hungerbitten.” What a melancholy instance of this is Solomon.

He had an opportunity to try everything in his quest for the chief good, and he did test everything, so that we need not repeat the experiment. He was the great alchemist who tried to turn all manner of metals into gold, but failed with them all. At one time he was building great palaces, and when the building fit was on him he seemed happy; but when once the gorgeous piles were finished he said, “Vanity of vanities: all is vanity.” Then he would take to gardening and to the planting of rare plants and trees, and to the digging of fountains, but when he had done enough of this he looked upon his orchard and vineyards and again muttered, “Vanity of vanities: all is vanity.” Then he thought he would try laughter and madness: the comic side of human life he would test, as well as the useful; so he plunged into

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all manner of pleasures, and gathered to himself singing men and singing women, and all delights of the flesh, but after he had drank deep of that cup he said again, “Vanity of vanities: all is vanity.” Poor Solomon! He had great strength, but his strength was hunger-bitten. He looked here and there, up and down, on the right hand and on the left, and found no bread for his soul; he snatched at shadows and tried to feed himself with bubbles; he was devoured with hunger in the midst of plenty; and where the humble people of Israel were blessing the God who satisfied their mouth with good things and renewed their youth like the eagles, poor Solomon was complaining that there was nothing new under the sun, and that it was better for a man not to be born than to have lived at all.

Now remark that if this hunger does not come upon the ungodly man during the former part of his life, it will come to him at the close of it. While we have much to do and our minds are occupied we may be able to put off thought, but when, at last, God sends to us that messenger with the bony hand, whose oratory is soul piercing, the dullness of whose eyeless eye darts fire into the soul, then will all human strength be hunger-bitten. When death is left alone with the man, then he perceives that his money bags contain nothing precious, because he must leave them. How now with his broad acres? How now with his large estates? How now with his palatial residence? How now with all that he called dear? How now with his doctor’s degree and his learning? How now with his fame and his honor? How now even with his domestic comforts and the joys of life? Hunger-bitten are they all. When he comes to die they cannot help him. The soul that is within him, which he would not allow to speak, now opens its hungry mouth and cries, “Thou hast denied me bread. God, and God alone, could fill me; and thou hast denied me God; and now thou feelest the hunger which has come upon me, and thou *must* feel it, and feel it, too, for ever.” Alas, alas, alas, for a man to have spent all his life in earning a disappointment, laboring hard to lose his soul, sweating and straining to lose the race, tugging and toiling to be damned; for that is the case of many a man, and that is whereunto the tide drifteth with all mankind who seek

for lasting good apart from God and apart from the blood and righteousness of God's dear Son. Of each one of them it shall be said, "His strength shall be hunger-bitten."

I have said these things mournfully to my own heart; but I would say to any of you who may not be rich, but who are looking for your good in your own little home and the comforts of it-any of you young men who are 921

seeking the great object of life in learning, or the like-if you are not living for God, your strength will be hunger-bitten. If you do not "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," whatever you gain and however satisfied you may be for a little while, an awful hunger must ultimately come upon you, and you will then lament that you spent your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which satisfieth not.

II. Briefly, in the second place, we shall speak of our text as indicating A KIND OF DISCIPLINE THROUGH WHICH GOD PUTS THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS WHEN MEANS TO SAVE THEM.

Many people are very religious, and yet are not saved. They are unsaved because they go about to establish their own righteousness, and have not submitted themselves to the righteousness which is of God in Jesus Christ. Now, these persons may for awhile be very well satisfied with their own righteousness, and if they are not the children of God they will be satisfied with it for life. Some of them talk in this way,—"I don't know that I ever wronged anybody. I have always been honest and honorable in my transactions, and I have brought up my children respectably. I have had a hard fight of it, and for all that nobody could say that I ever disgraced my character." It is not very long ago that I was driven by a cabman, an aged man, and when I got out of his cab I referred to his age, and he remarked upon it himself: I said, "Well, I trust when this life is over you will have a portion in a better world." "Yes, I think so, sir," he said: "I was never drunk, that I know of, in my life; was always reckoned a civil man; never used bad language; and I go to church sometimes." He seemed to be perfectly satisfied, and to be quite astonished that I did not express my assurance of his safety. His confidence is the common reliance of all classes of Englishmen, and though they may not always put it in that shape, yet that is the notion-that by a sort of goodness, a very poor and mangled goodness, men may after all enter heaven. Now, when God means to save a man the hunger of the heart comes in and devours all his boasted excellence. Why, a spiritually hungry soul would take fifty years of selfrighteousness and swallow them up like a morsel, and cry for more. Our goodness is nothing compared with the demands of the law and the necessities of the case. Our fine righteousnesses, how they shrivel up like autumn leaves when the Spirit of God acts as a frost to them. Our virtues are as a meadow in the spring bedecked with golden kingcups, but when the Spirit of God bloweth upon it the grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth, for all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the

flower of grass. It is a part of the operation of the Holy Ghost to wither all the goodliness of human nature, and to destroy all those lovely flowers of natural virtue in which we put such store, cutting them down as with a mower's scythe. In truth, there is none good, no, not one. We are all shut up in unbelief and sin by nature. In the best of natures sin affects the whole body, "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint," and it is a great blessing when the Holy Spirit makes us feel this. Painful is the feeling but blessed is the result when, once for all, our strength is hunger-bitten.

Ay, and there are some who are very satisfied because, in addition to a commendable life, they have performed certain ceremonies to which they impute great sanctity. There is a theory abroad nowadays which some persons who are not in either the lunatic or the idiot asylum believe, namely, the theory that sacramental performances convey grace. It is wonderful how a rational being can ever think so, but there are persons, who are apparently rational in other things, who believe that the sprinkling of drops of water upon an infant's brow regenerates it, that the eating of bread and the drinking of wine really convey Christ to the soul, and so on: that aqueous applications and materialistic festivities can bring spiritual good to the heart—a monstrous doctrine, worthy of the priests of Baal, but so foolish as to make one doubt his ears when he hears it stated. Because they have gone through these operations, and have been confirmed, and I do not know what besides, many are content. Others who happen to belong to a dissenting community have passed through the ordeal of joining the church, or have attended class-meetings, and have subscribed to the various societies, think that, therefore, they are saved. Heirs of hell will rest content with such outward things, but heirs of heaven never can. Their strength, if they make external religion their strength, will by-and-by be hunger-bitten, and they will cry out, "My God, my soul panteth for thee as the hart pants for the water-brooks. I cannot be satisfied with outward forms, I want inward grace, and I cannot be content with being told that the grace went with the form. I want to know the grace of God in truth, I long to feel it, I pine to exhibit it in my own life." To be told I was born again when I was a babe will not satisfy me; I want to feel the inner life, the new life of God within my spirit. To be told that I did eat Christ when I ate the bread will not content me; my heart longs to know that Christ is really in me the hope of glory, and that I am living upon him. If I cannot have communion with God and with his dear Son for myself in my very soul, I turn with loathing from every substitute, ritualistic, priestly, or otherwise.

Beloved, I would have you flee from every sacrament to the Savior; I would have you fly away from ceremonies to the cross of Christ. There is your only hope. Look to him by faith: for all the rest without this is but outward and carnal, and can minister no good to your spirit. May your strength be hunger-bitten if you are resting in anything which is external and unspiritual.

Many a person has known what it is to have this hunger-bite go right

through everything he rested in. I once knew what it was to get a little comfort from my prayers before I found the Savior, but when the Spirit of God dealt with me I saw that my prayers wanted praying over again. I thought I had some sort of repentance, and I began to be contented with it; but when the Spirit of God came I found that my repentance needed to be repented of. I had felt some confidence in my Bible readings, and hoped that my regular attendance upon public worship would bring me salvation, but I found that I was after all mocking the Word, for I was reading it, but not believing it; hearing it, but not accepting it; was increasing my knowledge and my responsibility, and yet was not rendering obedience to God. Dear soul, if you are resting anywhere short of Christ, may your strength be hunger-bitten. You are at your strongest when you are utter weakness apart from him. When you rest in him completely, and alone, then is salvation accomplished in you, but not till then. May God in his infinite mercy grant that all your strength apart from Christ may be hungerbitten, and that speedily.

III. Lastly, and very earnestly — and perhaps this last part may have more reference to most of you than anything I have said — I believe THERE ARE MANY OF GOD’S SERVANTS WHOSE STRENGTH IS LAMENTABLY HUNGERBITTEN. In this age we are all busy, and through being busy we are apt to neglect the soul-feeding ordinances; I mean the reading of Scripture, the hearing of the word, meditation upon it, prayer and communion with God. Some of you do not rise so soon as you might in the morning, and prayer is hurried over; and too often at eventide you are half-asleep with the many cares of the day, and prayer is offered in a slovenly way. Nor is this all, for during the day when, if you were as you should be, you would be praying without ceasing, there is this to think of, and that, and the other, and such a pressure of business that ejaculations are few. How can you pray? You did at one time: get a text of Scripture in the morning and chew it all day, and you used to get much sweetness out of it, and your soul grew; but now, instead of a text of Scripture, you have pressing engagements as soon as

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you are out of bed. You would, now and then, steal into a mid-day prayermeeting, perhaps, or get two or three minutes alone, but you have gradually dropped that habit, and you have felt justified in doing so for “really, time is so precious, and there is so much to do in this age of competition.” Dear friend, I am no judge for you, but let me ask you whether you are not becoming hunger-bitten through not feeding upon the word of God. Souls cannot be strong without spiritual meat any more than bodies can be well when meals are neglected. There is a good rule I have heard mothers say about children and chickens-’little and often’; and I think it is true with Christians. They want little and often during the day; not a long passage of Scripture, perhaps memory would fail, but a short passage now and a short passage then, and a little prayer here and a little prayer there. It is wonderful how souls grow in that way. Alas! I fear all

this is neglected, and spiritual strength is hunger-bitten. Let us begin from this time forward to give attention to the sustenance of our souls. Let us daily feed upon the word of God, that we may grow thereby; so shall our strength no more be hunger-bitten.