

Sermons on Sovereignty

by Charles H. Spurgeon

A Defense of Calvinism

Note. This Message Is From *C.H. Spurgeon's Autobiography,*

Volume 1

IT is a great thing to begin the Christian life by believing good solid doctrine. Some people have received twenty different "Gospels" in as many years, how many more they will accept before they get to their journey's end, it would be difficult to predict. I thank God that He early taught me the Gospel and I have been so perfectly satisfied with it, that I do not want to know any other. Constant change of creed is sure loss. If a tree has to be taken up two or three times a year, you will not need to build a very large loft in which to store the apples. When people are always shifting their doctrinal principles, they are not likely to bring forth much fruit to the glory of God. It is good for young believers to begin with a firm hold upon those great fundamental doctrines which the Lord has taught in His Word. Why, if I believed what some preach about the temporary, trumpery salvation which only lasts for a time, I would scarcely be at all grateful for it, but when I know that those whom God saves He saves with an everlasting salvation, when I know that He gives to them an everlasting righteousness, when I know that He settles them on an everlasting foundation of everlasting love, and that He will bring them to His everlasting kingdom, oh, then I do wonder and I am astonished that such a blessing as this should ever have been given to me!

***"Pause, my soul! adore and wonder!
Ask, 'Oh, why such love to me?'
Grace hath put me in the number
Of the Savior's family.
Hallelujah!
Thanks, eternal thanks, to Thee***

I suppose there are some persons whose minds naturally incline towards the doctrine of free-will. I can only say that mine inclines as naturally towards the doctrines of sovereign grace. Sometimes, when I see some of the worst characters in the street, I feel as if my heart must burst forth in tears of gratitude that God has never let me act as they have done! I have thought, if God had left me alone and had not touched me by His grace, what a great sinner I should have been! I should have run to the utmost lengths of sin, dived into the very depths of evil, nor should I have stopped at any vice or folly, if God had not restrained me. I feel that I should have been a very king of sinners, if God had let me alone. I cannot understand the reason why I am saved, except upon the ground that God would have it so. I cannot, if I look ever so earnestly, discover any kind of reason in myself why I

should be a partaker of divine grace. If I am not at this moment without Christ, it is only because Christ Jesus would have His will with me and that will was that I should be with Him where He is and should share His glory. I can put the crown nowhere but upon the head of Him whose mighty grace has saved me from going down into the pit. Looking back on my past life, I can see that the dawning of it all was of God, of God effectually. I took no torch with which to light the sun, but the sun enlightened me. I did not commence my spiritual life—no, I rather kicked and struggled against the things of the Spirit. When He drew me, for a time I did not run after Him. There was a natural hatred in my soul of everything holy and good. Wooings were lost upon me—warnings were cast to the wind—thunders were despised and as for the whispers of His love, they were rejected as being less than nothing and vanity. But sure I am, I can say now, speaking on behalf of myself, “He only is my salvation.” It was He who turned my heart and brought me down on my knees before Him. I can in very deed, say with Doddridge and Toplady—

***“Grace taught my soul to pray,
And made my eyes o’erflow.”***

and coming to this moment, I can add—

***“Tis grace has kept me to this day,
And will not let me go.”***

Well can I remember the manner in which I learned the doctrines of grace in a single instant. Born, as all of us are by nature, an Arminian, I still believed the old things I had heard continually from the pulpit and did not see the grace of God. When I was coming to Christ, I thought I was doing it all myself and though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me. I do not think the young convert is at first aware of this. I can recall the very day and hour when first I received those truths in my own soul—when they were, as John Bunyan says, burnt into my heart as with a hot iron and I can recollect how I felt that I had grown on a sudden from a babe into a man—that I had made progress in Scriptural knowledge, through having found, once for all, the clue to the truth of God. One week-night, when I was sitting in the house of God, I was not thinking much about the preacher’s sermon, for I did not believe it. The thought struck me, How did you come to be a Christian? I sought the Lord. But how did you come to seek the Lord? The truth flashed across my mind in a moment—I should not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to make me seek Him. I prayed, thought I, but then I asked myself, How came I to pray? I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. How came I to read the Scriptures? I did read them, but what led me to do so? Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all and that He was the Author of my faith and so the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me and from that doctrine I have not departed to this day and I desire to make this my constant confession, “I ascribe my change wholly to God.”

I once attended a service where the text happened to be, “He shall choose our inheritance for us,” and the good man who occupied the pulpit was more than a little of an Arminian. Therefore, when he commenced, he said, “This passage refers entirely to our temporal inheritance, it has nothing whatever to do with our everlasting destiny, for,” said he, “we do not want Christ to choose for us in the matter of heaven or hell. It is so plain and easy, that every man who has a grain of

common sense will choose heaven and any person would know better than to choose hell. We have no need of any superior intelligence or any greater Being, to choose heaven or hell for us. It is left to our own free-will and we have enough wisdom given us, sufficiently correct means to judge for ourselves,” and therefore, as he very logically inferred, there was no necessity for Jesus Christ or anyone, to make a choice for us. We could choose the inheritance for ourselves without any assistance. “Ah!” I thought, “but, my good brother, it may be very true that we could, but I think we should want something more than common sense before we should choose aright.”

First, let me ask, must we not all of us admit an over-ruling Providence and the appointment of Jehovah’s hand, as to the means whereby we came into this world? Those men who think that, afterwards, we are left to our own free-will to choose this one or the other to direct our steps, must admit that our entrance into the world was not of our own will, but that God had then to choose for us. What circumstances were those in our power which led us to elect certain persons to be our parents? Had we anything to do with it? Did not God Himself appoint our parents, native place, and friends? Could He not have caused me to be born with the skin of the Hottentot, brought forth by a filthy mother who would nurse me in her “kraal,” and teach me to bow down to Pagan gods, quite as easily as to have given me a pious mother, who would each morning and night bend her knee in prayer on my behalf? Or, might He not, if He had pleased have given me some profligate to have been my parent, from whose lips I might have early heard fearful, filthy, and obscene language? Might He not have placed me where I should have had a drunken father, who would have immured me in a very dungeon of ignorance and brought me up in the chains of crime? Was it not God’s Providence that I had so happy a lot, that both my parents were His children and endeavored to train me up in the fear of the Lord?

John Newton used to tell a whimsical story and laugh at it, too, of a good woman who said, in order to prove the doctrine of election, “Ah! sir, the Lord must have loved me before I was born or else He would not have seen anything in me to love afterwards.” I am sure it is true in my case, I believe the doctrine of election, because I am quite certain that, if God had not chosen me, I should never have chosen Him and I am sure He chose me before I was born or else He never would have chosen me afterwards, and He must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why He should have looked upon me with special love. So I am forced to accept that great Biblical doctrine. I recollect an Arminian brother telling me that he had read the Scriptures through a score or more times and could never find the doctrine of election in them. He added that he was sure he would have done so if it had been there, for he read the Word on his knees. I said to him, “I think you read the Bible in a very uncomfortable posture and if you had read it in your easy chair, you would have been more likely to understand it. Pray, by all means and the more, the better, but it is a piece of superstition to think there is anything in the posture in which a man puts himself for reading And as to reading through the Bible twenty times without having found anything about the doctrine of election, the wonder is that you found anything at all. You must have galloped through it at such a rate that you were not likely to have any intelligible idea of the meaning of the Scriptures.”

If it would be marvelous to see one river leap up from the earth full-grown, what would it be to gaze upon a vast spring from which all the rivers of the earth should at once come bubbling up, a million of them born at a birth?

What a vision would it be! Who can conceive it. And yet the love of God is that fountain, from which all the rivers of mercy, which have ever gladdened our race—all the rivers of grace in time and of glory hereafter—take their rise. My soul, stand thou at that sacred fountain-head and adore and magnify, forever and ever, God, even our Father, who hath loved us! In the very beginning, when this great universe lay in the mind of God, like unborn forests in the acorn cup, long ere the echoes awoke the solitudes, before the mountains were brought forth and long ere the light flashed through the sky, God loved His chosen creatures. Before there was any created being—when the ether was not fanned by an angel's wing, when space itself had not an existence, when there was nothing save God alone—even then, in that loneliness of deity and in that deep quiet and profundity, His bowels moved with love for His chosen. Their names were written on His heart and then were they dear to His soul. Jesus loved His people before the foundation of the world—even from eternity! and when He called me by His grace, He said to me, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

Then, in the fullness of time, He purchased me with His blood. He let His heart run out in one deep gaping wound for me long ere I loved Him. Yea, when He first came to me, did I not spurn Him? When He knocked at the door and asked for entrance, did I not drive Him away and do despite to His grace? Ah, I can remember that I full often did so until, at last, by the power of His effectual grace, He said, "I must, I will come in," and then He turned my heart and made me love Him. But even till now I should have resisted Him, had it not been for His grace. Well, then, since He purchased me when I was dead in sins, does it not follow, as a consequence necessary and logical, that He must have loved me first? Did my Savior die for me because I believed on Him? No, I was not then in existence, I had then no being. Could the Savior, therefore, have died because I had faith, when I myself was not yet born? Could that have been possible? Could that have been the origin of the Savior's love towards me? Oh! no, my Savior died for me long before I believed. "But" says someone, "He foresaw that you would have faith and therefore, He loved you." What did He foresee about my faith? Did He foresee that I should get that faith myself and that I should believe on Him of myself? No, Christ could not foresee that, because no Christian man will ever say that faith came of itself without the gift and without the working of the Holy Spirit. I have met with a great many believers and talked with them about this matter, but I never knew one who could put his hand on his heart and say, "I believed in Jesus without the assistance of the Holy Spirit."

I am bound to the doctrine of the depravity of the human heart, because I find myself depraved in heart and have daily proofs that in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing. If God enters into covenant with unfallen man, man is so insignificant a creature that it must be an act of gracious condescension on the Lord's part, but if God enters into covenant with sinful man, he is then so offensive a creature that it must be, on God's part, an act of pure, free, rich, sovereign grace. When the Lord entered into covenant with me, I am sure that it was all of grace, nothing else but grace. When I remember what a den of unclean beasts and birds my heart was and how strong was my unrenewed will, how obstinate and rebellious against the sovereignty of the divine rule, I always feel inclined to take the very lowest room in my Father's house and when I enter heaven, it will be to go among the less than the least of all saints and with the chief of sinners.

The late lamented Mr. Denham has put, at the foot of his portrait, a most admirable text, "Salvation is of the Lord." That is just an epitome of Calvinism, it is the sum and substance of it. If anyone should ask me what I mean by a Calvinist, I should reply, "He is one who says, Salvation is of the Lord." I cannot find in Scripture any other doctrine than this. It is the essence of the Bible. "He only is my rock and my salvation." Tell me anything contrary to this truth and it will be a heresy, tell me a heresy and I shall find its essence here, that it has departed from this great, this fundamental, this rock-truth, "God is my rock and my salvation." What is the heresy of Rome, but the addition of something to the perfect merits of Jesus Christ—the bringing in of the works of the flesh, to assist in our justification? And what is the heresy of Arminianism but the addition of something to the work of the Redeemer? Every heresy, if brought to the touchstone, will discover itself here. I have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism. Calvinism is the Gospel and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the Gospel, if we do not preach justification by faith, without works, nor unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace, nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah, nor do I think we can preach the Gospel, unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the cross, nor can I comprehend a Gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called and suffers the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation after having once believed in Jesus. Such a Gospel I abhor.

***"If ever it should come to pass,
That sheep of Christ might fall away,
My fickle, feeble soul, alas!
Would fall a thousand times a day"***

If one dear saint of God had perished, so might all, if one of the covenant ones be lost, so may all be and then there is no Gospel promise true, but the Bible is a lie and there is nothing in it worth my acceptance. I will be an infidel at once when I can believe that a saint of God can ever fall finally. If God hath loved me once, then He will love me forever. God has a mastermind, He arranged everything in His gigantic intellect long before He did it and once having settled it, He never alters it, "This shall be done," saith He and the iron hand of destiny marks it down and it is brought to pass. "This is My purpose," and it stands, nor can earth or hell alter it. "This is My decree," saith He, "promulgate it, ye holy angels, rend it down from the gate of heaven, ye devils, if ye can, but ye cannot alter the decree, it shall stand forever." God altereth not His plans, why should He? He is Almighty and therefore can perform His pleasure. Why should He? He is the All-wise and therefore cannot have planned wrongly. Why should He? He is the everlasting God and therefore cannot die before His plan is accomplished. Why should He change? Ye worthless atoms of earth, ephemera of a day, ye creeping insects upon this bay-leaf of existence, ye may change your plans, but He shall never, never change His. Has He told me that His plan is to save me? If so, I am forever safe.

***"My name from the palms of His hands
Eternity will not erase,
Impress'd on His heart it remains,
In marks of indelible grace."***

I do not know how some people, who believe that a Christian can fall from grace, manage to be happy. It must be a very commendable thing in them to be able to get through a day without despair. If I did not believe the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, I think I should be of all men the most miserable, because I should lack any ground of comfort. I could not say, whatever state of heart I came into, that I should be like a well-spring of water, whose stream fails not, I should rather have to take the comparison of an intermittent spring, that might stop on a sudden or a reservoir, which I had no reason to expect would always be full. I believe that the happiest of Christians and the truest of Christians are those who never dare to doubt God, but who take His Word simply as it stands and believe it and ask no questions, just feeling assured that if God has said it, it will be so. I bear my willing testimony that I have no reason, nor even the shadow of a reason, to doubt my Lord and I challenge heaven and earth and hell, to bring any proof that God is untrue. From the depths of hell, I call the fiends and from this earth, I call the tried and afflicted believers, and to heaven I appeal and challenge the long experience of the blood-washed host, and there is not to be found in the three realms a single person who can bear witness to one fact which can disprove the faithfulness of God or weaken His claim to be trusted by His servants. There are many things that may or may not happen, but this I know shall happen—

***“He shall present my soul,
Unblemish’d and complete,
Before the glory of His face,
With joys divinely great”***

All the purposes of man have been defeated, but not the purposes of God. The promises of man may be broken—many of them are made to be broken—but the promises of God shall all be fulfilled. He is a promise-maker, but He never was a promise-breaker, He is a promise-keeping God and every one of His people shall prove it to be so. This is my grateful, personal confidence, “The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me”—unworthy me, lost, and ruined me. He will yet save me and—

***“I, among the blood-wash’d throng,
Shall wave the palm and wear the crown,
And shout loud victory”***

I go to a land which the plough of earth hath never upturned, where it is greener than earth’s best pastures, and richer than her most abundant harvests ever saw. I go to a building of more gorgeous architecture than man hath ever builded. It is not of mortal design, it is “a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” All I shall know and enjoy in heaven, will be given to me by the Lord and I shall say, when at last I appear before Him—

***“Grace all the work shall crown
Through everlasting days,
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise”***

I know there are some who think it necessary to their system of theology to limit the merit of the blood of Jesus. If my theological system needed such a limitation, I would cast it to the winds. I cannot, I dare not, allow the thought to find a lodging in my mind, it seems so near akin to blasphemy. In Christ's finished work I see an ocean of merit, my plummet finds no bottom, my eye discovers no shore. There must be sufficient efficacy in the blood of Christ, if God had so willed it, to have saved not only all in this world, but all in ten thousand worlds, had they transgressed their Maker's law. Once admit infinity into the matter and limit is out of the question. Having a divine Person for an offering, it is not consistent to conceive of limited value, bound and measure are terms inapplicable to the divine sacrifice. The intent of the divine purpose fixes the application of the infinite offering, but does not change it into a finite work. Think of the numbers upon whom God has bestowed His grace already. Think of the countless hosts in heaven. If thou wert introduced there today, thou wouldst find it as easy to tell the stars or the sands of the sea, as to count the multitudes that are before the throne even now. They have come from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South, and they are sitting down with Abraham and with Isaac and with Jacob in the Kingdom of God, and beside those in heaven, think of the saved ones on earth. Blessed be God, His elect on earth are to be counted by millions, I believe, and the days are coming, brighter days than these, when there shall be multitudes upon multitudes brought to know the Savior and to rejoice in Him. The Father's love is not for a few only, but for an exceeding great company. "A great multitude, which no man could number," will be found in heaven. A man can reckon up to very high figures, set to work your Newtons, your mightiest calculators, and they can count great numbers, but God and God alone can tell the multitude of His redeemed. I believe there will be more in heaven than in hell. If anyone asks me why I think so, I answer, because Christ, in everything, is to "have the pre-eminence," and I cannot conceive how He could have the pre-eminence if there are to be more in the dominions of Satan than in Paradise. Moreover, I have never read that there is to be in hell a great multitude, which no man could number. I rejoice to know that the souls of all infants, as soon as they die, speed their way to Paradise. Think what a multitude there is of them! Then there are already in heaven unnumbered myriads of the spirits of just men made perfect—the redeemed of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues up till now and there are better times coming, when the religion of Christ shall be universal, when—

***"He shall reign from pole to pole,
With illimitable sway,"***

when whole kingdoms shall bow down before Him and nations shall be born in a day and in the thousand years of the great millennial state there will be enough saved to make up all the deficiencies of the thousands of years that have gone before. Christ shall be Master everywhere and His praise shall be sounded in every land. Christ shall have the pre-eminence at last, His train shall be far larger than that which shall attend the chariot of the grim monarch of hell.

Some persons love the doctrine of universal atonement because they say, "It is so beautiful. It is a lovely idea that Christ should have died for all men, it commends itself," they say, "to the instincts of humanity, there is something in it full of joy and beauty." I admit there is, but beauty may be often associated with falsehood. There is much which I might admire in the theory of universal redemption, but I will just show what the supposition necessarily involves. If Christ on His cross intended to save

every man, then He intended to save those who were lost before He died. If the doctrine be true, that He died for all men, then He died for some who were in hell before He came into this world, for doubtless there were even then myriads there who had been cast away because of their sins. Once again, if it was Christ's intention to save all men, how deplorably has He been disappointed, for we have His own testimony that there is a lake which burneth with fire and brimstone and into that pit of woe have been cast some of the very persons who, according to the theory of universal redemption, were bought with His blood. That seems to me a conception a thousand times more repulsive than any of those consequences which are said to be associated with the Calvinistic and Christian doctrine of special and particular redemption. To think that my Savior died for men who were or are in hell, seems a supposition too horrible for me to entertain. To imagine for a moment that He was the Substitute for all the sons of men and that God, having first punished the Substitute, afterwards punished the sinners themselves, seems to conflict with all my ideas of divine justice. That Christ should offer an atonement and satisfaction for the sins of all men and that afterwards some of those very men should be punished for the sins for which Christ had already atoned, appears to me to be the most monstrous iniquity that could ever have been imputed to Saturn, to Janus, to the goddess of the Thugs, or to the most diabolical heathen deities. God forbid that we should ever think thus of Jehovah, the just and wise and good!

There is no soul living who holds more firmly to the doctrines of grace than I do and if any man asks me whether I am ashamed to be called a Calvinist, I answer—I wish to be called nothing but a Christian, but if you ask me, do I hold the doctrinal views which were held by John Calvin, I reply, I do in the main hold them and rejoice to avow it. But far be it from me even to imagine that Zion contains none but Calvinistic Christians within her walls or that there are none saved who do not hold our views. Most atrocious things have been spoken about the character and spiritual condition of John Wesley, the modern prince of Arminians. I can only say concerning him that, while I detest many of the doctrines which he preached, yet for the man himself I have a reverence second to no Wesleyan, and if there were wanted two apostles to be added to the number of the twelve, I do not believe that there could be found two men more fit to be so added than George Whitefield and John Wesley. The character of John Wesley stands beyond all imputation for self-sacrifice, zeal, holiness, and communion with God. He lived far above the ordinary level of common Christians and was one “of whom the world was not worthy.” I believe there are multitudes of men who cannot see these truths or at least, cannot see them in the way in which we put them, who nevertheless have received Christ as their Savior and are as dear to the heart of the God of grace as the soundest Calvinist in or out of heaven.

I do not think I differ from any of my Hyper-Calvinistic brethren in what I do believe, but I differ from them in what they do not believe. I do not hold any less than they do, but I hold a little more and I think, a little more of the truth revealed in the Scriptures. Not only are there a few cardinal doctrines by which we can steer our ship North, South, East, or West, but as we study the Word, we shall begin to learn something about the North-west and North-east and all else that lies between the four cardinal points. The system of truth revealed in the Scriptures is not simply one straight line, but two and no man will ever get a right view of the Gospel until he knows how to look at the two lines at once. For instance, I read in one book of the Bible, “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And

let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Yet I am taught, in another part of the same inspired Word, that "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." I see, in one place, God in providence presiding over all and yet I see and I cannot help seeing, that man acts as he pleases and that God has left his actions, in a great measure, to his own free-will. Now, if I were to declare that man was so free to act that there was no control of God over his actions, I should be driven very near to atheism and if, on the other hand, I should declare that God so overrules all things that man is not free enough to be responsible, I should be driven at once into Antinomianism or fatalism. That God predestines and yet that man is responsible, are two facts that few can see clearly. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory to each other. If, then, I find taught in one part of the Bible that everything is foreordained, that is true, and if I find, in another Scripture, that man is responsible for all his actions, that is true, and it is only my folly that leads me to imagine that these two truths can ever contradict each other. I do not believe they can ever be welded into one upon any earthly anvil, but they certainly shall be one in eternity. They are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the human mind which pursues them farthest will never discover that they converge, but they do converge and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring.

It is often said that the doctrines we believe have a tendency to lead us to sin. I have heard it asserted most positively, that those high doctrines which we love and which we find in the Scriptures, are licentious ones. I do not know who will have the hardihood to make that assertion, when they consider that the holiest of men have been believers in them. I ask the man who dares to say that Calvinism is a licentious religion, what he thinks of the character of Augustine or Calvin or Whitefield, who in successive ages were the great exponents of the system of grace, or what will he say of the Puritans, whose works are full of them? Had a man been an Arminian in those days, he would have been accounted the vilest heretic breathing, but now we are looked upon as the heretics and they as the orthodox. We have gone back to the old school, we can trace our descent from the apostles. It is that vein of free grace, running through the sermonizing of Baptists, which has saved us as a denomination. Were it not for that, we should not stand where we are today. We can run a golden line up to Jesus Christ Himself, through a holy succession of mighty fathers, who all held these glorious truths and we can ask concerning them, "Where will you find holier and better men in the world?" No doctrine is so calculated to preserve a man from sin as the doctrine of the grace of God. Those who have called it "a licentious doctrine" did not know anything at all about it. Poor ignorant things, they little knew that their own vile stuff was the most licentious doctrine under heaven. If they knew the grace of God in truth, they would soon see that there was no preservative from lying like a knowledge that we are elect of God from the foundation of the world. There is nothing like a belief in my eternal perseverance and the immutability of my Father's affection, which can keep me near to Him from a motive of simple gratitude. Nothing makes a man so virtuous as belief of the truth. A lying doctrine will soon beget a lying practice. A man cannot have an erroneous belief without by-and-by having an erroneous life. I believe the one thing naturally begets the other. Of all men, those have the most unselfish piety, the sublimest reverence, the most ardent devotion, who believe that they are saved by grace, without works, through faith and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God. Christians should take heed and see that it always is so, lest by any means Christ should be crucified afresh and put to an open shame.

Misrepresentations of True Calvinism Cleared Away

Note: In the year 1861, the church of which Mr. C. H. Spurgeon was pastor, completed its tremendous new structure, the Metropolitan Tabernacle. The first sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, in this new building, was preached on Monday afternoon, March 25th. A few days later in this new building, on Thursday, April 11th, Mr. Spurgeon had what we today would call a Bible Conference. The theme of the conference was, "Exposition of the Doctrines of "Grace." The speakers and their subjects were as follows: Election by John Bloomfield, Human Depravity by Evan Probert, Particular Redemption by James A. Spurgeon, Mr. Spurgeon's brother, Effectual Calling by James Smith, and the Final Perseverance of Believers in Christ Jesus by William O'Neil. Mr. Spurgeon, as pastor of the church, was the "Master of Ceremonies," and he gave the following introductory message as printed in Volume 7 of The New Park Street and Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit. The main body of this message is as follows.

THERE is nothing upon which men need to be more instructed than upon the question of what Calvinism really is. The most infamous allegations have been brought against us and sometimes, I must fear, by men who knew them to be utterly untrue and to this day, there are many of our opponents, who, when they run short of matter, invent and make for themselves a man of straw, call that, John Calvin and then shoot all their arrows at it. We are not come here to defend your man of straw—shoot at it or burn it as you will and if it suits your convenience, still oppose doctrines which were never taught and rail at fictions which, save in your brain, were never in existence. We come here to state what our views really are and we trust that any who do not agree with us will do us the justice of not misrepresenting us. If they can disprove our doctrines, let them state them fairly and then overthrow them, but why should they first caricature our opinions and then afterwards attempt to put them down?

Among the gross falsehoods which have been uttered against the Calvinists proper, is the wicked calumny that we hold *the damnation of little infants*. A baser lie was never uttered. There may have existed somewhere, in some corner of the earth, a miscreant who would dare to say that there were infants in hell, but I have never met with him, nor have I met with a man who ever saw such a person. We say, with regard to infants, Scripture saith but very little and therefore, where Scripture is confessedly scant, it is for no man to determine dogmatically. But I think I speak for the entire body or certainly with exceedingly few exceptions and those unknown to me, when I say, we hold that all infants are elect of God and are therefore saved, and we look to this as being the, means by which Christ shall see of the travail of His soul to a great degree and we do sometimes hope that thus the multitude of the saved shall be made to exceed the multitude of the *lost*. Whatever views our friends may

hold upon the point, they are not necessarily connected with Calvinistic doctrine. I believe that the Lord Jesus, who said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," doth daily and constantly receive into His loving arms those tender ones who are only shown and then snatched away to heaven. Our hymns are no ill witness to our faith on this point and one of them runs thus.

***"Millions of infant souls compose
The family above."***

Toplady, one of the keenest of Calvinists, was of this number. "In my remarks," says he, "on Dr. Nowell, I testified my firm belief that the souls of *all departed infants* are with God in glory, that in the decree of predestination to life, God hath included all whom He decreed to take away in infancy and that the decree of reprobation hath nothing to do with them." Nay, he proceeds farther and asks, with reason, how the anti-Calvinistic system of conditional salvation and election or good works foreseen, will suit with the salvation of infants? It is plain that Arminians and Pelagians must introduce a *new principle* of election and in so far as the salvation of infants is concerned, become Calvinists. Is it not an argument in behalf of Calvinism, that its principle is uniform throughout and that no change is needed on the ground on which man is saved, whether young or old?

John Newton, of London, the friend of Cowper, noted for his Calvinism, holds that the children in heaven exceed its adult inhabitants in all their multitudinous array. Gill, a very champion of Calvinism, held the doctrine, that all dying in infancy are saved. An intelligent, modern writer, (Dr. Russell of Dundee), also a Calvinist, maintains the same views and when it is considered that nearly *one—half* of the human race die in early years, it is easy to see what a vast accession must be daily and hourly making to the blessed population of heaven.

A more common charge, brought by more decent people—for I must say that the last charge is never brought, except by disreputable persons—a more common charge is, that we hold clear *fatalism*. Now, there may be Calvinists who are fatalists, but Calvinism and fatalism are two distinct things. Do not most Christians hold the doctrine of the providence of God? Do not all Christians, do not all believers in a God, hold the doctrine of His foreknowledge. All the difficulties which are laid against the doctrine of predestination might, with equal force, be laid against that of divine foreknowledge. We believe that God hath predestinated all things from the beginning, but there is a difference between the predestination of an intelligent, all-wise, all-bounteous God and that blind fatalism which simply says, "It is because it is to be." Between the *predestination* of Scripture and the *fate* of the Koran, every sensible man must perceive a difference of the most essential character. We do not deny that the thing is so ordained that it must be, but why is it to be, but that the Father, God, whose name is love, ordained it, not because of any necessity in circumstances that such and such a thing should take place. Though the wheels of providence revolve with rigid exactness, yet not without purpose and wisdom. The wheels are full of eyes and everything ordained is so ordained that it shall conduce to the grandest of all ends, the glory of God and next to that, the good of His creatures.

But we are next met by some who tell us that we preach the wicked and horrible doctrine of *sovereign and unmerited* reprobation. "Oh," say they, "you teach that men are damned because God made them to be damned and that they go to hell, not

because of sin, not because of unbelief, but because of some dark decree with which God has stamped their destiny.” Brethren, this is an unfair charge again. Election does not involve reprobation. There may be some who hold unconditional reprobation. I stand not here as their defender, let them defend themselves as best they can, I hold God’s election, but I testify just as clearly that if any man be lost he is lost for sin and this has been the uniform statement of Calvinistic ministers. I might refer you to our standards, such as “The Westminster Assembly’s Catechism,” and to all our Confessions, for they all distinctly state that man is lost for sin and that there is no punishment put on any man except that which he richly and righteously deserves. If any of you have ever uttered that libel against us, do it not again, for we are as guiltless of that as you are yourselves. I am speaking personally—and I think in this I would command the suffrages of my brethren—I do know that the appointment of God extendeth to all things, but I stand not in this pulpit, nor in any other, to lay the damnation of any man anywhere but upon himself. If he be lost, damnation is all of men, but if he be saved, still salvation is all of God.

To state this important point yet more clearly and explicitly, I shall quote at large from an able Presbyterian divine.

“The pious Methodist is taught that the Calvinist represents God as creating men in order to destroy them. He is taught that Calvinists hold that men are lost, not because they sin, but because they are non-elected. Believing this to be a true statement, it is not wonderful that the Methodist stops short and declares himself, if not an Arminian, at least an Anti-Predestinarian. But no *statement* can be more scandalously untrue. It is the uniform doctrine of Calvinism that God creates all for His own glory, that He is infinitely righteous and benignant, and that where men perish it is only for their sins.

“In speaking of suffering, whether in this world or in the world to come, whether it respects angels or men, the Westminster standards (which may be considered as the most authoritative modern statement of the system) invariably connect the punishment with previous sin and sin only. ‘As for those wicked and ungodly men, whom God as a *righteous* judge FOR FORMER SINS doth blind and harden, from them He not only withholdeth His grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings and wrought upon in their hearts, but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had and exposeth them to such objects as *their corruption* makes occasion of sin and withal gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass that they *harden themselves* even under those means which God useth for the softening of others.’ The Larger Catechism, speaking of the unsaved among angels and men, says, ‘God according to His sovereign power and the unsearchable counsel of His own will (whereby He extendeth or withholdeth favor as He pleaseth) hath passed by and foreordained the rest to dishonor and wrath, *to be for their sin inflicted*, to the praise of the glory of His justice.’ Again, ‘The end of God appointing this day (of the last judgment) is for the manifestation of the glory of His mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect and of His justice in the damnation of the reprobate *who are wicked and disobedient*.’

“This is no more than what the Methodist and all other Evangelical bodies acknowledge—that where men perish it is in consequence of their sin. If it be asked, why sin, which destroys, is permitted to enter the world, that is a question

which bears not only on the Calvinist, but equally on all other parties. They are as much concerned and bound to answer it as he, nay, the question is not confined to Christians. All who believe in the existence of God—in His righteous character and perfect providence, are equally under obligation to answer it. Whatever may be the reply of others, that of the Calvinist may be regarded as given in the statement of the Confession of Faith, which declares that God's providence extendeth itself even to the first fall and other sins of angels and men, etc., *'yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.'*

"It is difficult to see what more could be said upon the subject and if such be the undoubted sentiments of Calvinists, then what misrepresentation can be more gross than that which describes them as holding that sinners perish irrespective of their sin or that God is the author of their sin? What is the declaration of Calvin? *'Every soul departs (at death) to that place which it has prepared for itself while in this world.'*

"It is hard to be charged with holding as sacred truth what one abhors as horrid blasphemy and yet this is the treatment which has been perseveringly meted out to Calvinists in spite of the most solemn and indignant disclaimers. Against nothing have they more stoutly protested than the thought that the infinitely holy and righteous and amiable Jehovah is the author of sin and yet how often do the supporters of rival systems charge them with this as an article of faith?"

A yet further charge against us is, that *we dare not preach the Gospel to the unregenerate*, that, in fact, our theology is so narrow and cramped that we cannot preach to sinners. Gentlemen, if you dare to say this, I would take you to any library in the world where the old Puritan fathers are stored up and I would let you take down any one volume and tell me if you ever read more telling exhortations and addresses to sinners in any of your own books. Did not Bunyan plead with sinners and whoever classed him with any but the Calvinists? Did not Charnock, Goodwin, and Howe agonize for souls and what were they but Calvinists? Did not Jonathan Edwards preach to sinners and who more clear and explicit on these doctrinal matters? The works of our innumerable divines teem with passionate appeals to the unconverted. Oh, sirs, if I should begin the list, time should fail me. It is an indisputable fact that we have labored more than they all for the winning of souls. Was George Whitefield any the less seraphic? Did his eyes weep the fewer tears or his bowels move with the less compassion because he believed in God's electing love and preached the sovereignty of the Most High? It is an unfounded calumny. Our souls are not stony, our bowels are not withdrawn from the compassion which we ought to feel for our fellow-men, we can hold all our views firmly and yet can weep as Christ did over a Jerusalem which was certainly to be destroyed.

Again, I must say, I am not defending certain brethren who have exaggerated Calvinism. I speak of Calvinism proper, not that which has run to seed and outgrown its beauty and verdure. I speak of it as I find it in Calvin's Institutes and especially in his Expositions. I have read them carefully. I take not my views of Calvinism from common repute but from his books. Nor do I, in thus speaking, even vindicate Calvinism as if I cared for the name, but I mean that glorious system which teaches that salvation is of grace from first to last. And again, then, I say it is an utterly unfounded charge that we dare not preach to sinners.

And then further, that I may clear up these points and leave the less rubbish for my brethren to wheel away, we have sometimes heard it said, but those who say it ought to go to school to read the first book of history, that we who hold Calvinistic views are the *enemies of revivals*. Why, sirs, in the history of the church, with but few exceptions, you could not find a revival at all that was not produced by the orthodox faith. What was that great work which was done by Augustine, when the church suddenly woke up from the pestiferous and deadly sleep into which Pelagian doctrine had cast it? What was the Reformation itself but the waking up of men's minds to those old truths? However far modern Lutherans may have turned aside from their ancient doctrines and I must confess some of them would not agree with what I now say, yet, at any rate, Luther and Calvin had no dispute about Predestination. Their views were identical and Luther, "On the bondage of the will," is as strong a book upon the free grace of God as Calvin himself could have written. Hear that great thunderer while he cries in that book, "Let the Christian reader know, then, that God foresees nothing in a contingent manner, but that He foresees, proposes, and acts from His eternal and unchangeable will. This is the thunder stroke which breaks and overturns free will."

Need I mention to you better names than Huss, Jerome of Prague, Fartel, John Knox, Wickliffe, Wishart and Bradford? Need I do more than say that these held the same views and that in their day anything like an Arminian revival was utterly unheard of and undreamed of.

And then, to come to more modern times, there is the great exception, that wondrous revival under Mr. Wesley, in which the Wesleyan Methodists had so large a share, but permit me to say, that the strength of the doctrine of Wesleyan Methodism lay in its Calvinism. The great body of the Methodists disclaimed Pelagianism, in whole and in part. They contended for man's entire depravity, the necessity of the direct agency of the Holy Spirit, and that the first step in the change proceeds not from the sinner, but from God. They denied at the time that they were Pelagians. Does not the Methodist hold as firmly as ever we do, that man is saved by the operation of the Holy Ghost and the Holy Ghost only? And are not many of Mr. Wesley's sermons full of that great truth, that the Holy Ghost is necessary to regeneration? Whatever mistakes he may have made, he continually preached the absolute necessity of the new birth by the Holy Ghost, and there are some other points of exceedingly close agreement, for instance, even that of human inability. It matters not how some may abuse us, when we say man could not of himself repent or believe, yet, the old Arminian standards said the same. True, they affirm that God has given grace to every man, but they do not dispute the fact, that apart from that grace there was no ability in man to do that which was good in his own salvation.

And then, let me say, if you turn to the continent of America, how gross the falsehood that Calvinistic doctrine is unfavorable to revivals. Look at that wondrous shaking under Jonathan Edwards and others which we might quote. Or turn to Scotland—what shall we say of M'Cheyne? What shall we say of those renowned Calvinists, Chalmers, Wardlaw, and before them Livingstone, Haldane, Erskine and the like? What shall we say of the men of their school, but that, while they held and preached unflinchingly the great truths which we would propound today, yet God owned their word and multitudes were saved. And if it were not perhaps too much like boasting of one's own work under God, I might say, personally I have never found the preaching of these doctrines lull this church to sleep, but ever while they

have loved to maintain these truths, they have agonized for the souls of men, and the 1600 or more whom I have myself baptized, upon profession of their faith, are living testimonies that these old truths in modern times have not lost their power to promote a revival of religion.

I have thus cleared away these allegations at the outset, I shall now need a few minutes more to say, with regard to the Calvinistic system, that there are some things to be said in its layout, to which of course I attach but little comparative importance, but they ought not to be ignored. It is a fact that the system of doctrines called the Calvinistic, is so *exceedingly simple* and so readily learned, that as a system of Divinity it is more easily taught and more easily grasped by unlettered minds than any other. The poor have the Gospel preached to them in a style which assists their memories and commends itself to their judgments. It is a system which was practically acknowledged on high philosophic grounds by such men as Bacon, Leibnitz, and Newton and yet it can charm the soul of a child and expand the intellect of a peasant.

And then it has another virtue. I take it that the last is no mean one, but it has another—that when it is preached there is a something in it which *excites thought*. A man may hear sermons upon the other theory which shall glance over him as the swallow's wing gently sweeps the brook, but these old doctrines either make a man so angry that he goes home and cannot sleep for very hatred, or else they bring him down into lowliness of thought, feeling the immensity of the things which he has heard. Either way it excites and stirs him up not temporarily, but in a most lasting manner. These doctrines haunt him, he kicks against the pricks and full often the word forces a way into his soul. And I think this is no small thing for any doctrine to do, in an age given to slumber and with human hearts so indifferent to the truth of God. I know that many men have gained more good by being made angry under a sermon than by being pleased by it, for being angry they have turned the truth over and over again and at last, the truth has burned its way right into their hearts. They have played with edge-tools, but they have cut themselves at last.

It has this singular virtue also—it is so *coherent in all its parts*. You cannot vanquish a Calvinist. You may think you can, but you cannot. The stones of the great doctrines so fit into each other, that the more pressure there is applied to remove them, the more strenuously do they adhere. And you may mark, that you cannot receive one of these doctrines without believing all. Hold for instance that man is utterly depraved and you draw the inference then that certainly if God has such a creature to deal with, salvation must come from God alone and if from Him, the offended one, to an offending creature, then He has a right to give or withhold His mercy as He wills, you are thus forced upon election and when you have gotten that you have all. The others must follow. Some by putting the strain upon their judgments may manage to hold two or three points and not the rest, but sound logic, I take it, requires a man to hold the whole or reject the whole, the doctrines stand like soldiers in a square, presenting on every side a line of defense which is hazardous to attack, but easy to maintain. And mark you, in these times when error is so rife and neology strives to be so rampant, it is no little thing to put into the hands of a young man a weapon which can slay his foe, which he can easily learn to handle, which he may grasp tenaciously, wield readily, and carry without fatigue, A weapon, I may add, which no rust can corrode and no blows can break, trenchant and well-annealed, a

true Jerusalem blade of a temper fit for deeds of renown. The coherency of the parts, though it be of course but a trifle in comparison with other things, is not unimportant.

And then, I add—but this is the point my brethren will take up—it has this excellency, that it is *scriptural and* that it is *consistent with the experience of believers*. Men generally grow more Calvinistic as they advance in years. Is not that a sign that the doctrine is right? As they are growing riper for heaven, as they are getting nearer to the rest that remaineth for the people of God, the soul longs to feed on the finest of the wheat, and abhors chaff and husks.

And then, I add—and in so doing, I would refute a calumny that has sometimes been urged—this glorious truth has this excellency, that it *produces the holiest of men*. We can look back through all our annals and say to those who oppose us, you can mention no names of men more holy, more devoted, more loving, more generous than those which we can mention. The saints of our calendar, though uncanonized by Rome, rank first in the book of life. The name of Puritan needs only to be heard to constrain our reverence. Holiness has reached a height among them which is rare indeed and well it might for they loved and lived the truth. And if you say that our doctrine is inimical to human liberty, we point you to Oliver Cromwell and to his brave Ironsides—Calvinists to a man. If you say, it leads to inaction, we point you to the Pilgrim Fathers and the wilderness they subdued. We can put our finger upon every spot of land, the wide world o'er and say, "Here was something done by a man who believed in God's decrees and inasmuch as he did this, it is proof it did not make him inactive, it did not lull him to sloth."

The better way, however, of proving this point is for each of us who hold these truths, to be more prayerful, more watchful, more holy, more active than we have ever been before, and by so doing, we shall put to silence the gainsaying of foolish men. A living argument, is an argument which tells upon every man, we cannot deny what we see and feel. Be it ours, if aspersed and calumniated, to disprove it by a blameless life and it shall yet come to pass, that our church and its sentiments too shall come forth "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners."

(Taken from *The New Park Street and Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Volume 7.)

Divine Sovereignty

**DELIVERED MAY 4, 1856
AT NEW PARK STREET BAPTIST CHURCH
SOUTHWARK, LONDON, ENGLAND**

"Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"—Matthew 20:15

THE householder says, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" and even so does the God of heaven and earth ask this question of you this morning, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

There is no attribute of God more comforting to His children than the doctrine of divine sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe

troubles, they believe that sovereignty hath ordained their afflictions, that sovereignty overrules them, and that sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children of God ought more earnestly to contend than the dominion of their Master over all creation—the kingship of God over all the works of His own hands—the throne of God and His right to sit upon that throne.

On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldlings, no truth of which they have made such a football as the great, stupendous, but yet most certain doctrine of the sovereignty of the infinite Jehovah. Men will allow God to be everywhere except upon His throne. They will allow Him to be in His workshop to fashion worlds and to make stars. They will allow Him to be in His almonry to dispense His alms and bestow His bounties. They will allow Him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof or light the lamps of heaven or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean, but when God ascends His throne, His creatures then gnash their teeth, and when we proclaim an *enthroned God* and His right to do as He wills with His own, to dispose of His creatures as He thinks well, without consulting them in the matter, then it is that we are hissed and execrated, and then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us, for God on His throne is not the God they love. They love Him anywhere better than they do when He sits with His scepter in His hand and His crown upon His head. But it is God upon the throne that we love to preach. It is God upon His throne whom we trust. It is God upon His throne of whom we have been singing this morning and it is God upon His throne of whom we shall speak in this discourse. I shall dwell only, however, upon one portion of God's sovereignty and that is God's sovereignty in the distribution of His gifts. In this respect I believe He has a right to do as He wills with His own and that He exercises that right.

We must assume, before we commence our discourse, one thing certain, namely, that all blessings are gifts and that we have no claim to them by our own merit. This I think every considerate mind will grant. And this being admitted, we shall endeavor to show that He has a right, seeing they are His own, to do what He wills with them—to withhold them wholly if He pleaseth—to distribute them all if He chooseth—to give to some and not to others—to give to none or to give to all, just as seemed good in His sight. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

We shall divide God's gifts into five classes. First, we shall have gifts *temporal*, second, gifts *saving*, third, gifts *honorable*, fourth, gifts *useful*, and fifth, gifts *comfortable*. Of all these we shall say, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

1. In the first place then, we notice *gifts temporal*. It is an indisputable fact that God hath not, in temporal matters, given to every man alike, that He hath not distributed to all His creatures the same amount of happiness or the same standing in creation. There is a difference.

Mark what a difference there is in *men* personally (for we shall consider men chiefly), one that is born like Saul, a head and shoulders taller than the rest—another shall live all his life a Zaccheus—a man short of stature. One has a muscular frame and a share of beauty, another is weak and far from having anything styled comeliness. How many do we find whose eyes have never rejoiced in the sunlight, whose ears have never listened to the charms of music, and whose lips have never been moved to sounds intelligible or harmonious. Walk through the earth and you will

find men superior to yourself in vigor, health, and fashion and others who are your inferiors in the very same respects. Some here are preferred far above their fellows in their outward appearance and some sink low in the scale, and have nothing about them that can make them glory in the flesh. Why hath God given to one man beauty and to another none? to one all his senses and to another but a portion? Why, in some, hath He quickened the sense of apprehension, while others are obliged to bear about them a dull and stubborn body? We reply, let men say what they will, that no answer can be given except this, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." The old Pharisees asked, "Did this man sin or his parents, that he was born blind?" We know that there was neither sin in parents nor child, that *he* was born blind or that others have suffered similar distresses, but that God has alone as it has pleased Him in the distribution of His earthly benefits and thus hath said to the world, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

Mark, also, in the distribution of *mental gifts*, what a difference exists. All men are not like Socrates, there are but few Platos, we can discover but here and there a Bacon, we shall but every now and then converse with a Sir Isaac Newton. Some have stupendous intellects wherewith they can unravel secrets—fathom the depths of oceans—measure mountains—dissect the sunbeams and weigh the stars. Others have but shallow minds. You may educate and educate, but can never make them great. You cannot improve what is not there. They have not genius and you cannot impart it. Anybody may see that there is an inherent difference in men from their very birth. Some, with a little education, do surpass those who have been elaborately trained. There are two boys, educated it may be in the same school, by the same master, and they shall apply themselves to their studies with the same diligence, but yet one shall far outstrip his fellow. Why is this? Because God hath asserted His sovereignty over the intellect as well as the body. God hath not made us all alike, but diversified His gifts. One man is as eloquent as Whitefield, another stammers if he but speaks three words of his mother tongue. What makes these various differences between man and man? We answer, we must refer it all to the sovereignty of God, who does as He wills with His own.

Note, again, what are the differences of *men's* conditions in *this* world. Mighty minds are from time to time discovered in men whose limbs are wearing the chains of slavery and whose backs are laid bare to the whip—they have black skins, but are in mind vastly superior to their brutal masters. So, too, in England, we find wise men often poor and rich men not seldom ignorant and vain. One comes into the world to be arrayed at once in the imperial purple—another shall never wear aught but the humble garb of a peasant. One has a palace to dwell in and a bed of down for his repose, while another finds but a hard resting place and shall never have a more sumptuous covering than the thatch of his own cottage. If we ask the reason for this, the reply still is, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

So, in other ways you will observe in passing through life how sovereignty displays itself. To one man God giveth a long life and uniform health, so that he scarcely knows what it is to have a day's *sickness*, while another totters through the world and finds a grave at almost every step, feeling a thousand deaths in fearing one. One man, even in extreme old age, like Moses, has his eye undimmed and though his hair is grey, he stands as firmly on his feet as when a young man in his father's house. Whence, again, we ask, is this difference? And the only adequate answer is, it is the effect of Jehovah's sovereignty. You find, too, that some men are

cut off in the prime of their life—the very midst of their days——while others live beyond their threescore years and ten. One departs before he has reached the first stage of existence and another has his life lengthened out until it becomes quite a burden. We must, I conceive, necessarily trace the cause of all these differences in life to the fact of God's sovereignty. He is Ruler and King and shall He not do as He wills with His own?

We pass from this point—but before we do we must stop to improve it just a moment. O thou who art gifted with a noble frame, a comely body, boast not thyself therein, for thy gifts come from God. O glory not, for if thou gloriest thou becomest uncomely in a moment. The flowers boast not of their beauty, nor do the birds sing of their plumage. Be ye not vain ye daughters of beauty, be not exalted ye sons of comeliness, and O ye men of might and intellect, remember, that all you have is bestowed by a Sovereign Lord. He did create, He can destroy. There are not many steps between the mightiest intellect and the helpless idiot—deep thought verges on insanity. Thy brain may at any moment, be smitten and thou be doomed henceforth to live a madman. Boast not thyself of all that thou knowest, for even the little knowledge thou hast has been given thee. Therefore, I say, exalt not thyself above measure, but use for God what God has given thee, for it is a royal gift and thou shouldst not lay it aside. But if the Sovereign Lord has given thee one talent and no more, lay it not up in a napkin, but use it well and then it may be that He will give thee more. Bless God that thou hast *more* than others and thank Him also that He has given thee less than others, for thou hast less to carry on thy shoulders and the lighter thy burden, the less cause wilt thou have to groan as thou travellest on towards the better land. Bless God then if thou possessest less than thy fellows and see His goodness in withholding as well as in giving.

2. So far most men probably have gone with us, but when we come to the second point, *gifts saving*, there will be a large number who will go from us because they cannot receive our doctrine. When we apply this truth regarding the divine sovereignty to man's salvation, then we find men standing up to defend their poor fellow creatures whom they conceive to be injured by God's predestination.

But I never heard of men standing up for the devil and yet I think if any of God's creatures have a right to complain of His dealings it is *the fallen angels*. For their sin they were hurled from heaven at once and we read not that any message of mercy was ever sent to them. Once cast out, their doom was sealed, while men were respited, redemption sent into their world, and a large number of them chosen to eternal life. Why not quarrel with sovereignty in the one case as well as the other? We say that God has elected a people out of the human race and His right to do this is denied. But I ask, why not equally dispute the fact that God has chosen men and not fallen angels or His justice in such a choice? If salvation be a matter of right, surely the angels had as much claim to mercy as men. Were they not seated in more than equal dignity? Did they sin more? We think not. Adam's sin was so wilful and complete, that we cannot suppose a greater sin than that which he committed. Would not the angels who were thrust out of heaven been of greater service to their Maker if restored, than we can ever be? Had we been the judges in this matter, we might have given deliverance to angels but not to men. Admire then, divine sovereignty and love, that whereas the angels were broken into shivers, God hath raised an elect number of men to set them among princes, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Note again, the divine sovereignty, in that *God chose the Israelitish race and left the Gentiles for years in darkness*. Why was Israel instructed and saved, while Syria was left to perish in idolatry? Was the one race purer in its origin and better in its character than the other? Did not the Israelites take unto themselves false gods a thousand times and provoke the true God to anger and loathing? Why then should they be favored above their fellows? Why did the sun of heaven shine upon them while all around the nations were left in darkness and were sinking into hell by myriads? Why? The only answer that can be given is this, that God is a Sovereign and “will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy and whom He will He hardeneth.”

So now, also, why is it that God *hath sent His Word to us while a multitude of people are still without His Word*? Why do we each come up to God’s tabernacle, Sabbath after Sabbath, privileged to listen to the voice of the minister of Jesus, while other nations have not been visited thereby? Could not God have caused the light to shine in the darkness there as well as here? Could not He, if He had pleased, have sent forth messengers swift as the light to proclaim His Gospel over the whole earth? He could have done it if He would. Since we know that He has not done it, we bow in meekness, confessing His right to do as He wills with His own.

But let me drive the doctrine home once more. Behold how God displays His sovereignty in this fact, that *out of the same congregation, those who hear the same minister and listen to the same truth, the one is taken and the other left*. Why is it that one of my hearers shall sit in yonder pew and her sister by her side and yet that the effect of the preaching shall be different upon each? They have been nursed on the same knee, rocked in the same cradle, educated under the same auspices, they hear the same minister, with the same attention—why is it that one shall be saved and the other left? Far be it from us to weave any excuse for man who is damned. We know of none, but also, far be it from us to take glory from God. We assert that God makes the difference—that the saved sister will not have to thank herself but her God. There shall even be two men given to drunkenness. Some word spoken shall pierce one of them through, but the other shall sit unmoved, although they shall, in all respects, be equally the same both in constitution and education. What is the reason? You will reply, perhaps, because the one accepts and the other rejects the message of the Gospel. But must you not come back to the question, who made the one accept it and who made the other reject it? I *dare* you to say that the man made himself to differ. You *must* admit in your conscience that it is God alone to whom this power belongs.

But those who dislike this doctrine are nevertheless up in arms against us and they say, how can God justly make such a difference between the *members* of His family? Suppose a father should have a certain number of children and He should give to one all his favors and consign the others to misery—should we not say that he was a very unkind and cruel father? I answer, yes, but the cases are not the same. You have *not a father* to deal with, but *a judge*. You say all men are God’s children, I demand of you to prove that. I never read it in my Bible. I dare not say, “Our father which art in heaven” till I am regenerated. I cannot rejoice in the fatherhood of God towards me till I know that I am one with Him and a joint heir with Christ. I dare not claim the fatherhood of God as an unregenerated man. It is not father and child—for the child has a claim upon its father—but it is King and subject, and not even so high

a relation as that, for there is a claim between subject and King. A creature—a sinful creature, can have no claim upon God, for that would be to make salvation of works and not of grace. If men merit salvation, then to save them is only the payment of a debt and He gives them nothing more than He ought to give them. But we assert that grace must be distinguished if it be grace at all.

Oh, but some say is it not written that *“He giveth to every man a measure of grace to profit withal?”* If you are like to repeat that wonderful quotation so often hurled at my head, you are very welcome, for it is no quotation from Scripture, unless it be an Arminian edition. The only passage at all like it refers to the spiritual gifts of the saints and the saints only. But I say, granted your supposition, that a measure of grace is given to every man to profit withal, yet He hath given to some a measure of particular grace to make that profit. For what do you mean by grace, which I put out to profit? I can understand a man’s improvement in the use of grease, but grace improved and made use of by the power of man I cannot understand. Grace is not a thing which I use, grace is something which uses me.

But people talk of grace sometimes as if it were something they could use and not an influence having power over them. Grace is something not which I improve, but which improves me, employs me, works on me, and let people talk as they will about universal grace, it is all nonsense, there is no such thing, nor can there be. They may talk correctly of universal blessings, because we see that the natural gifts of God are scattered everywhere, more or less, and men may receive or reject them. It is not so, however, with grace. Men cannot take the grace of God and employ it in turning themselves from darkness to light. The light does not come to the darkness and say, use me, but the light comes and drives the darkness away. Life does not come to the dead man and say, use me and be restored to life, but it comes with a power of its own and restores to life. The spiritual influence does not come to the dry bones and say, use this power and clothe yourselves with flesh, but it comes and clothes them with flesh and the work is done. Grace is a thing which comes and exercises an influence on us.

***“The sovereign will of God alone
Creates us heirs of grace,
Born in the image of His Son,
A new-created race.”***

And we say to all of you who gnash your teeth at this doctrine, whether you know it or not, you have a vast deal of enmity towards God in your hearts, for until you can be brought to know this doctrine, there is something which you have not yet discovered which makes you opposed to the idea of God absolute, God unbounded, God unfettered, God unchanging, and God having a free will, which you are so fond of proving that the creature possesses. I am persuaded that the sovereignty of God must be held by us if we would be in a healthy state of mind. “Salvation is of the Lord alone.” Then give all the glory to His holy name, to whom all glory belongs.

3. We now come, in the third place, to notice the differences which God often makes in His church in *honorable gifts*. There is a difference made between God’s own children—when they are His children.

Note what I mean. One hath the honorable gift of knowledge, another knows but little. I meet, every now and then, with a dear Christian brother with whom I could talk for a month and learn something from him every day. He has had deep experience—he has seen the deep things of God—his whole life has been a perpetual study wherever he has been. He seems to have gathered thoughts, not from books merely, but from men, from God, from his own heart. He knows all the intricacies and windings of Christian experience. He understands the heights, the depths, the lengths, and the breadths of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. He has gained a grand idea, an intimate knowledge of the system of grace, and can vindicate the dealings of the Lord with His people.

Then you meet with another who has passed through many troubles, but he has no deep acquaintance with Christian experience. He never learned a single secret by all his troubles. He just floundered out of one trouble into another, but never stopped to pick up any of the jewels that lay in the mire—never tried to discover the precious jewels that lay in his afflictions. He knows very little more of the heights and depths of the Savior's love than when he first came into the world. You may converse with such a man as long as you like, but you will get nothing from him. If you ask why is it, I answer, there is a sovereignty of God in giving knowledge to some and not to others.

I was walking the other day with an aged Christian, who told me how he had profited by my ministry. There is nothing humbles me like that thought of you, old man, deriving experience in the things of God, receiving instruction in the ways of the Lord, from a mere babe in grace. But I expect that when I am an old man, if I should live to be such, that some babe in grace will instruct me. God sometimes shutteth the mouth of the old man and openeth the mouth of the child. Why should we be a teacher to hundreds who are, in some respects, far more able to teach us? The only answer we can find is in the divine sovereignty and we must bow before it, for has He not a right to do as He wills with His own? Instead of being envious of those who have the gift of knowledge, we should seek to gain the same, if possible. Instead of sitting down and murmuring that we have not more knowledge, we should remember that the foot cannot say to the head, nor the head to the foot, I have no need of thee, for God hath given us talents as it hath pleased Him.

Note, again, when speaking of honorable gifts. Not only knowledge, but office is an honorable gift. There is nothing more honorable to a man than the office of a deacon or a minister. We magnify our office, though we would not magnify ourselves. We hold there is nothing can dignify a man more than being appointed to an office in a Christian church. I would rather be a deacon of a church than Lord Mayor of London. To be a minister of Christ is in my estimation an infinitely higher honor than the world can bestow. My pulpit is to me more desirable than a throne and my congregation is an empire more than large enough, an empire before which the empires of the earth dwindle into nothing in everlasting importance. Why does God give to one man a special call by the Holy Ghost to be a minister and pass by another? There is another man more gifted, perhaps, but we dare not put him in a pulpit, because he has not had a special call. So with the deaconship, the man whom some would perhaps think most suitable for the office is passed by and another chosen. There is a manifestation of God's sovereignty in the appointment to office—in putting David on a throne, in making Moses the leader of the children of Israel through the wilderness, in choosing Daniel to stand among princes, in electing Paul to be the minister to the Gentiles, and Peter to be the apostle of the circumcision.

And you who have not the gift of honorable office, must learn the great truth contained in the question of the Master, "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with Mine own?"

There is another honorable gift, the gift of utterance. Eloquence hath mere power over men than all else besides. If a man would have power over the multitude, he must seek to touch their hearts and chain their ears. There are some men who are like vessels full of knowledge to the brim, but having no means of giving it forth to the world. They are rich in all gems of learning, but know not how to set them in the golden ring of eloquence. They can collect the choicest of flowers, but know not how to tie them up in a sweet garland to present them to the admirer's eye. How is this? We say again, the sovereignty of God is here displayed in the distribution of gifts honorable. Learn here, O Christian man, if you have gifts, to cast the honor of them at the Savior's feet and if you possess them not, learn not to murmur, remember that God is equally as kind when He keepeth back as when He distributeth His favors. If any among you be exalted, let him not be puffed up, if any be lowly, let him not be despised, for God giveth to every vessel His measure of grace. Serve Him after your measure and adore the King of heaven who doth as He pleaseth.

IV. We notice in the fourth place, the gift of *usefulness*. I have often done wrong in finding fault with brother ministers for not being useful. I have said you might have been as useful as I have been had you been in earnest. But surely there are others even more earnest and more efficient, others laboring as constantly, but with far less effect. And, therefore, let me retract my accusation and in lieu thereof assert that the gift of usefulness is the result of God's sovereignty. It is not in man to be useful, but in God to make him useful. We may labor ourselves with all our might, but God alone can make us useful. We can put every stitch of canvass when the wind blows, but we cannot make the wind blow.

The sovereignty of God is seen also in the *diversity of ministerial gifts*. You go to one minister and are fed with plenty of good food, another has not enough to feed a mouse. He has plenty of reproof, but no food for the child of God. Another can comfort the child of God, but he cannot reprove a backslider. He has not strength of mind enough to give those earnest home strokes which are sometimes needed. And what is the reason! God's sovereignty. One can wield the sledge hammer but could not heal a broken heart. If he were to attempt it, you would be reminded of an elephant trying to thread a needle. Such a man can reprove, but he cannot apply oil and wine to a bruised conscience. Why? Because God hath not given to him the gift. There is another one who always preaches experimental divinity and very rarely touches upon doctrine. Why? God hath not given him the gift of doctrine. Another is all doctrine and cannot preach much about Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Another always preaches Jesus—blessed Jesus, men of the Hawker school—and many say, "They do not give us experience enough. They do not go into the deep experience of the corruption which vexes the children of God." But we do not blame them for this.

You will notice that out of the same man will at one time flow streams of living water, while at another time, he will be as dry as possible. On one Sabbath you go away refreshed by the preaching and the next you get no good. There is divine sovereignty in all this and we must learn to recognize and admire it. I was preaching on one occasion last week to a large crowd of people and in one part of the sermon the people were very much affected, I felt that the power of God was there, one poor

creature absolutely shrieked out because of the wrath of God against sin, but at another time, the same words might have been uttered and there might have been the same desire in the minister's heart and yet no effect produced. We must trace, I say, divine sovereignty in all such cases.

We ought to recognize God's hand in everything. But the present is the most godless generation that ever trod this earth, I verily believe. In our fathers' days, there was hardly a shower but they declared that God caused it to fall and they had prayers for rain, prayers for sunshine, and prayers for harvest, as well when a haystack was on fire, as when a famine desolated the land, our forefather said, the Lord hath done it. But now our philosophers try to explain everything and trace all phenomena to second causes. But brethren, let it be ours to ascribe the origin and direction of all things to the Lord and the Lord alone.

V. Lastly, *gifts comfortable* are of God. O, what comfortable gifts do some of us enjoy in the ordinances of God's house and in a ministry that is profitable. But how many churches have not a ministry of that kind and why then have we? Because God hath made a difference. Some here have strong faith and can laugh at impossibilities, we can sing a song in all ill weathers—in the tempest as well as in the calm. But there is another with little faith who is in danger of tumbling down over every straw. We trace eminent faith entirely to God. One is born with a melancholy temperament and he sees a tempest brewing even in the calm, while another is cheerful and sees a silver lining to every cloud, however black, and he is a happy man. But why is that? Comfortable gifts come of God. And then observe that we ourselves differ at times. For a season we have blessed intercourse with heaven and be permitted to look within the veil, but anon, these delightful enjoyments are gone. But do we murmur on that account? May He not do as He will with His own? May He not take back what He has given? The comforts we possess were His before they were ours.

***“And shouldst Thou take them all away,
Yet would I not repine,
Before they were possessed by me
They were entirely Thine.”***

There is no joy of the Spirit—there is no exceeding blessed hope—no strong faith—no burning desire—no close fellowship with Christ, which is not the gift of God and which we must trace to Him. When I am in darkness and suffer disappointment, I will look up and say, He giveth songs in the night and when I am made to rejoice, I will say, my mountain shall stand fast forever. The Lord is a Sovereign Jehovah and therefore, prostrate at His feet I lie and if I perish, I will perish there.

But let me say, brethren, that so far from this doctrine of divine sovereignty making you to sit down in sloth, I hope in God it will have a tendency to humble you and so to lead you to say, “I am unworthy of the least of all Thy mercies. I feel that Thou hast a right to do with me as Thou wilt. If thou dost crush me, a helpless worm, Thou wilt not be dishonored and I have no right to ask Thee to have compassion upon me, save this, that I want Thy mercy. Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou art able to pardon and Thou never gavest grace to one that wanted it more. Because I am empty, fill me with the bread of heaven, because I am naked, clothe me with Thy robe, because I am dead, give me life.”

If you press that plea with all your soul and all your mind, though Jehovah is a Sovereign, He will stretch out His scepter and save, and thou shalt live to worship Him in the beauty of holiness, loving and adoring His gracious sovereignty. "He that believeth" is the declaration of Scripture, "and is baptized, shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." He that believeth in Christ alone and is baptized with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost shall be saved, but he who rejecteth Christ and believeth not in Him, shall be damned. That is the Sovereign decree and proclamation of heaven—bow to it, acknowledge it, obey it, and God bless you.

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The Infallibility of God's Purpose

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"But He is in one mind and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth."—Job 23:15

IT is very advantageous to the Christian mind frequently to consider the deep and unsearchable attributes of God. The beneficial effect is palpable in two ways, exerting a *sacred influence* both on the judgment and the heart. In respect to the one, it tends to confirm us in those good old orthodox doctrines which lie as the basis of our faith. If we study man and make him the only object of our research, there will be a strong tendency in our minds to exaggerate his importance. We shall think too much of the creature and too little of the Creator, preferring that knowledge which is to be found out by observation and reason to that divine truth which revelation alone could make known to us.

The basis and groundwork of Arminian theology lies in attaching undue importance to man and giving God rather the second place than the first. Let your mind dwell for a long time upon man as a free agent, upon man as a responsible being, upon man, not so much as being under God's claims as having claims upon God, and you will soon find upspringing in your thoughts a set of crude doctrines, to support which the letter of some few isolated texts in Scripture may be speciously quoted, but which really in spirit are contrary to the whole tenour of the Word of God. Thus your orthodoxy will be shaken to its very foundations and your soul will be driven out to sea again without peace or joy. Brethren, I am not afraid that any man, who thinks worthily about the Creator, stands in awe of His adorable perfections and sees Him sitting upon the throne, doing all things according to the counsel of His will, will go far wrong in his doctrinal sentiments. He may say, "My heart is fixed, O God," and when the heart is fixed with a firm conviction of the greatness, the omnipotence, the divinity indeed of Him whom we call God, the head will not wander far from truth.

Another happy result of such meditation is the *steady peace* the grateful calm it gives to the soul. Have you been a long time at sea and has the continual motion of the ship sickened and disturbed you? Have you come to look upon everything as moving till you scarcely put one foot before the other without the fear of falling down

because the floor rocks beneath your tread? With what delight do you put your feet at last upon the shore and say, "Ah! this does not move, this is solid ground. What though the tempest howl, this island is safely moored. She will not start from her bearings when I tread on her she will not yield beneath my feet." Just so it is with us when we turn from the ever-shifting, often boisterous tide of earthly things to take refuge in the Eternal God who hath been "our dwelling-place in all generations." The fleeting things of human life and the fickle thoughts and showy deeds of men are as moveable and changeable as the waters of the treacherous deep, but when we mount up, as it were, with eagle's wings to Him that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, before whom all its inhabitants are as grasshoppers, we nestle in the Rock of Ages, which from its eternal socket never starts and in its fixed immovability never can be disturbed.

Or to use another simile. You have seen little children running round and round and round, till they get giddy, and they stand still and hold fast a moment, and everything seems to be flying round about them, but by holding fast and still and getting into the mind the fact that that to which they hold at least is firm, at last the brain grows still again and the world ceases to whirl. So you and I have been these six days like little children running round in circles and everything has been moving with us, till perhaps, as we came into this place this morning, we felt as if the very promises of God had moved, as if Providence had shifted, our friends had died, our kindred passed away, and we came to look on everything as a floating mass—nothing firm, nothing fixed. Brethren, let us get a good grip today of the immutability of God. Let us stand still awhile and know that the Lord is God. We shall see at length that things do not move as we dreamed they did. "To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heavens." There is still a fixedness in that which seems most fickle. That which appears to be most dreamy has a reality, inasmuch as it is a part of that divinely substantial scheme which God is working out, the end whereof shall be His eternal glory. 'Twill cool your brain, 'twill calm your heart, my brother, 'twill make you go back to the world's fight quiet and composed. 'Twill make you stand fast in the day of temptation, if now through divine grace you can come near to God, who is without variableness or shadow of turning, and offer the tribute of your devotion.

The text will be considered by us this morning—first, as enunciating a general truth and secondly, out of that general truth, we shall fetch another upon which we will enlarge, I trust, to our comfort.

I. The text may be regarded as TEACHING A GENERAL TRUTH.

1. We will take the first clause of the sentence, "He is in one mind." Now, the fact taught here is, that in all the acts of God in Providence, He has a fixed and a settled purpose. "He is in one mind."

It is eminently consolatory to us who are God's creatures, to know that He did not make us without a purpose and that now in all His dealings with us He has the same wise and gracious end to be served. We suffer, the head aches, the heart leaps with palpitations, the blood creeps sluggishly along where its healthy flow should have been more rapid. We lose our limbs, crushed by accident, some sense fails us, the eye is eclipsed in perpetual night, our mind is racked and disturbed, our fortunes vary, our goods disappear before our eyes, our children, portions of ourselves, sicken

and die. Our crosses are as continual as our lives, we are seldom long at ease, we are born to sorrow and certainly it is an inheritance of which we are never deprived, we suffer continually.

Will it not reconcile us to our sorrows that they serve some end? To be scourged needlessly we consider to be a disgrace, but to be scourged if our country were to be served we should consider an honor, because there is a purpose in it. To suffer the maiming of our bodies, because of some whim of a tyrant, would be a thing hard to bear, but if we minister thereby to the weal of our families or to the glory of our God, we would be content not to be mutilated once, but to be cut piece-meal away, that so His great purpose might be answered. O, believer, ever look then on all thy sufferings as being parts of the divine plan and say, as wave upon wave rolls over thee, "He is in one mind!" He is carrying out still His one great purpose, none of these cometh by chance, none of these happeneth to me out of order, but everything cometh to me according to the purpose of His own will, answereth, too, the purpose of His own great mind. We have to labor, how hard do some men labor who have to toil for their daily bread! Their bread is saturated with their sweat, they wear no garment which they have not woven out of their own nerves and muscles. How sternly, too, do others labor, who have with their brain to serve their fellowmen or their God! How have some heroic missionaries spent themselves and been spent in their fond enterprise! How have many ministers of Christ exhausted not simply the body, but the mind! Their hilarity so natural to them has given place to despondency and the natural effervescence of their spirits has at last died out into loneliness of soul, through the desperateness of their ardor.

Well and sometimes this labor for God is unrequited. We plough, but the furrow yields no harvest. We sow, but the field refuses the grain and the devouring bellies of the hungry birds alone are satisfied therewith. We build, but the storm casts flown the stones which we had quarried, with Herculean efforts piling one on another. We sweat, we toil, we moil, we fail. How often we come back weeping because we have toiled, as we think, without success! Yet, Christian man, thou hast not been without success, for "He is still in one mind." All this was necessary to the fulfillment of His one purpose. Thou art not lost, thy labor has not rotted under the clods. All, though thou seest it not, has been working together towards the desired end. Stand upon the sea-beach for a moment. A wave has just come up careening in its pride. Its crown of froth is spent. As it leaps beyond its fellow, it dies, it dies. And now another and it dies and now another, and it dies. Oh! weep not, deep sea, be not thou sorrowful, for though each wave dieth, yet thou prevailest! O thou mighty ocean! onward does the flood advance, till it has covered all the sand and washed the feet of the white cliffs. So it is with God's purpose. You and I are only waves of His great sea, we wash up, we seem to retire, as if there had been no advance, another wave comes, still each wave must retire, as if there had been no advance, another wave comes, still each wave must retire as though there had been no progress, but the great divine sea of His purpose is still moving on. He is still of one mind and carrying out His plan.

How sorrowful it often seems to think how good men die! They learn through the days of their youth and often before they come to years to use their learning, they are gone. The blade is made and annealed in many a fire, but ere the foremen useth it, it snaps! How many laborers, too, in the Master's vineyard, who when by their experience they were getting more useful than ever, have been taken away just when the church wanteth them most! He that stood upright in the chariot, guiding the

steeds, suddenly falls back and we cry, "My father, my father, the horsemen of Israel and the chariot thereof!" Still notwithstanding all, we may console ourselves in the midst of our grief with the blessed reflection that everything is a part of God's plan. He is still of one mind, nothing happeneth which is not a part of the divine scheme.

To enlarge our thoughts a moment, have you ever noticed in reading history, how nations suddenly decay? When their civilization has advanced so far that we thought it would produce men of the highest mold, suddenly old age begins to wrinkle its brow, its arms grow weak, the scepter falls, and the crown drops from the head and we have said, "Is not the world gone back again?" The barbarian has sacked the city and where once everything was beauty, now there is nothing but ruthless bloodshed and destruction. Ah! but, my brethren, all those things were but the carrying out of the divine plan. Just so you may have seen sometimes upon the hard rock the lichen spring. Soon as the lichen race grows grand, it dies. But wherefore? It is because its death prepares the moss and the moss which is feeble compared with the lichen growth, at last increases till you see before you the finest specimens of that genus. But the moss decays. Yet weep not for its decaying, its ashes shall prepare a soul for some plants of a little higher growth and as these decay, one after another, race after race, they at last prepare the soil upon which even the goodly cedar itself might stretch out its roots.

So has it been with the race of men—Egypt and Assyria, Babylon, Greece and Rome, have crumbled, each and all when their hour had come to be succeeded by a better. And if this race of ours should ever be eclipsed, if the Anglo Saxons boasted pride should yet be stained, even then it will prove to be a link in the divine purpose. Still, in the end, His one mind shall be carried out, His one great result shall be thereby achieved. Not only the decay of nations, but the apparent degeneration of some races of men and even the total extinction of others, forms a part of the like fixed purpose. In all those cases there may be reasons of sorrow, but faith sees grounds of rejoicing. To gather up all in one, the calamities of earthquake, the devastations of storm, the extirpations of war, and all the terrible catastrophes of plague have only been co-workers with God—slaves compelled to tug the galley of the divine purpose across the sea of time. From every evil, good has come and the more the evil has accumulated, the more hath God glorified Himself in bringing out at last His grand, His everlasting design.

This, I take, is the first general lesson of the text—in every event of Providence, God has a purpose. "He is in one mind." Mark, not only a purpose, but only one purpose, for all history is but one. There are many scenes, but it is one drama. There are many pages, but it is one book. There are many leaves, but it is one tree. There are many provinces, yea and thereby lords many and rulers many, yet is there but one empire and God the only Potentate. "O come let us worship and bow down before Him, for the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods?"

2. "Who can turn Him?" This is the second clause of the sentence and here I think we are taught the doctrine that *the purpose of God is unchanged*. The first sentence shows that He has a purpose, the second shows that it is incapable of change. "Who can turn Him?" There are some shallow thinkers who dream that the great plan and design of God was thrown out of order by the fall of man. The fall they consider as being an accidental circumstance, not intended in the divine plan and so, God being placed in a delicate predicament of requiring to sacrifice His justice or

His mercy, used the plan of the atonement of Christ as a divine expedient. Brethren, it may be lawful to use such terms, it may be lawful to you, it would not be to me, for well am I persuaded that the very fall of man was a part of the divine purpose—that even the sin of Adam, though he did it freely, was nevertheless contemplated in the divine scheme, has by no means such a thing as to involve a digression from His primary plan.

Then came the deluge and the race of man was swept away, but God's purpose was not affected by the destruction of the race. In after years, His people Israel forsook Him and worshipped Baal and Ashtoreth, but His purpose was not changed any more by the defection of His chosen nation than by the destruction of His creatures. And when in after years the Gospel was sent to the Jews and they resisted it, and Paul and Peter turned to the Gentiles, do not suppose that God had to take down His books and make an erasure or an amendment. No, the whole was written there from the beginning. He knew everything of it. He has never altered a single sentence nor changed a single line of the divine purpose. What He intended the great picture to be, that it shall be at the end, and where you see some black strokes which seem not in keeping, these shall yet be toned down and where there are some brighter dashes, too bright for the somber picture, these shall yet be brought into harmony, and when in the end God shall exhibit the whole, He shall elicit both from men and angels tremendous shouts of praise, while they say, "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are Thy ways, thou King of Saints! Thou only art holy. All nations shall come and worship before Thee, for Thy judgments are made manifest." Where we have thought His government wrong, there shall it prove most right, and where we dreamed He had forgotten to be good, there shall His goodness be most clear.

It is a sweet consolation to the mind of one who muses much upon these deep matters, that God never has changed in any degree from His purpose and the result will be, notwithstanding everything to the contrary, just precisely in every jot and tittle what He fore-knew and fore-ordained it should be. Now then, wars, ye may rise and other Alexanders and Caesars may spring up, but He will not change. Now, nations and peoples, lift up yourselves and let your parliaments pass your decrees, but He changeth not. Now, rebels, foam at the mouth and let your fury boil, but He changeth not for you. Oh! nations and peoples and tongues and thou round earth, thou speedest on thy orbit still and all the fury of thine inhabitants cannot make thee move from thy predestinated pathway. Creation is an arrow from the bow of God and that arrow goes on, straight on, without deviation, to the center of that target, which God ordained that it should strike. Never varied in His plan, He is without variableness or shadow of turning.

Albert Barnes very justly says, "It is, when properly understood, a matter of unspeakable consolation that God *has* a plan—for who could honor a God who had no plan, but who did everything by haphazard? It is matter of rejoicing that He has one great purpose which extends through all ages and embraces all things, for then everything falls into its proper place and has its appropriate bearing on other events. It is a matter of joy that God does execute all His purposes, for as they were all good and wise, it is desirable that they should be executed. It would be a calamity if a good plan were not executed. Why, then, should men murmur at the purposes or the decrees of God?"

3. The text also teaches a third general truth. While God has a purpose and that purpose has never changed, the third clause teaches us that *this purpose is sure to be effected*. "What His soul desireth, that He doeth." He made the world out of nothing, there was no resistance there. "Light be," said He and light was, there was no resistance there. "Providence be," said He and Providence shall be and when you shall come to see the end as well as the beginning, you shall find that there was no resistance there. It is a wonderful thing how God effects His purpose while still the creature is free.

They who think that predestination and the fulfillment of the divine purpose is contrary to the free-agency of man, know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm. It was no miracle for God to effect His own purpose, if He were dealing with stocks and stones, with granite and with trees, but this is the miracle of miracles, that the creatures are free, absolutely free and yet the divine purpose stands! Herein is wisdom! This is a deep unsearchable truth. Man walks without a fetter, yet treads in the very steps which God ordained him to tread in, as certainly as though miracles had bound him to the spot. Man chooses his own seat, selects his own position, guided by his will he chooses sin or guided by divine grace, he chooses right and yet in his choice, God sits as sovereign on the throne, not disturbing, but still over-ruling and proving Himself to be able to deal as well with free creatures as with creatures without freedom, as well able to effect His purpose when He has endowed men with thought and reason and judgment, as when He had only to deal with the solid rocks and with the imbedded sea.

O Christians! you shall never be able to fathom this, but you may wonder at it. I know there is an easy way of getting out of this great deep, either by denying predestination altogether or by denying free-agency altogether, but if you can hold the two, if you can say, "Yes, my consciousness teaches me that man does as he wills, but my faith teaches me that God does as He wills, and these two are not contrary, the one to the other, and yet I cannot tell how it is. I cannot tell how God effects His end. I can only wonder and admire and say, 'Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out.'" Every creature free and doing as it wills, yet God more free still and doing as He wills, not only in heaven, but among the inhabitants of this lower earth.

I have thus given you a general subject upon which I would invite you to spend your meditations in your quiet hours, for I am persuaded that sometimes to think of these deep doctrines will be found very profitable. It will be to you like the advice of Christ to Simon Peter, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught." You shall have a draught of exceeding great thoughts and exceeding great graces if you dare to launch out into this exceeding deep sea and let out the net of your contemplation at the command of Christ. "Behold, God is great." "O, Lord! how great are Thy works and Thy thoughts are very deep! A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this."

II. I now come to the second part of my subject, which will be, I trust, cheering to the people of God, From the general doctrine that God has a plan, that this plan is invariable, and that this plan is certain to be carried out, I draw the most precious doctrine that IN SALVATION GOD IS OF ONE MIND—and who can turn Him?—and what His heart desireth, that He doeth. Now, mark I address myself at this hour only

to you who are the people of God. Dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all thine heart? Is the spirit of adoption given to thee whereby thou canst say, “Abba, Father?” If so, draw nigh, for this truth is for thee.

Come then, my brethren, in the first place let us consider that God is of one mind. Of old, my soul, He determined to save thee. Thy calling proves thine election and thine election teaches thee that God ordained to save thee. He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent. He is of one mind. He saw thee ruined in the fall of thy father Adam, but His mind never changed from His purpose to save thee. He saw thee in thy nativity. Thou wentest astray from the womb speaking lies. Thy youthful follies and disobedience He saw, but never did that gracious mind alter in its designs of love to thee. Then in thy manhood, thou didst plunge into vice and sin. Cover, O darkness, all our guilt and let the night conceal it from our eyes forever! Though we added sin to sin and our pride waxed exceeding high and hot, yet He was of one mind.

***“Determined to save,
He watched o’er my path,
When Satan’s blind slave,
I sported with death.”***

At last, when the happy hour arrived, He came to our door and knocked and He said, “Open to Me.” And do you remember, O my brother, how we said, “Get Thee gone, O Jesus, we want Thee not?” We scorned His grace, defied His love, but He was of one mind and no hardness of heart could turn Him. He had determined to have us for His spouse and He would not take “No” for an answer. He said He would have us and He persevered. He knocked again and do you remember how we half shut it in His very face and He said, “Open to Me, My dove, My head is wet with dew and My locks with the drops of the night”—yet we bolted and barred the door and would not let Him in. But He was on one mind and none could turn Him.

Oh! My soul weeps now when I think of the many convictions that I stifled, of the many movings of His Spirit that I rejected, and those many times when conscience bade me repent and urged me to flee to Him, but I would not, of those seasons when a mother’s tears united with all the intercession of the Savior, yet the heart harder than adamant and less easy to melt than the granite itself, refused to move and would not yield. But He was of one mind. He had no fickleness in Him. He said He would have us and have us He would. He had written our names in His book and He would not cross them out. It was His solemn purpose that yield we would. And O! that hour when we yielded at the last! Then did He prove that in all our wanderings He had been of one mind. And O since then, how sorrowful the reflection! Since then, how often have you and I turned! We have backslidden and if we had the Arminian’s God to deal with, we should either have been in hell or out of the covenant at this hour. I know I should be in the covenant and out of the covenant a hundred times a day if I had a God who put me out every time I sinned and then restored it when I repented. But no, despite our sin, our unbelief, our backslidings, or forgetfulness of Him, He was of one mind.

And, brethren, I know this, that, though we shall wander still, though in dark hours you and I may slip and often fall, yet His lovingkindness changes not. Thy strong arm, O God, shall bear us on, Thy loving heart will never fail, Thou wilt not turn Thy love

away from us or make it cease or pour upon us Thy fierce anger, but having begun, thou wilt complete the triumphs of Thy grace. Nothing shall make Thee change Thy mind. What joy is this to you believers? for your mind changes every day, your experience varies like the wind, and if salvation were to be the result of any purpose on your part, certainly it never would be effected. But since it is God's work to save and we have proved hitherto that He is of one mind, our faith shall revel in the thought, we shall sing of that fixed purpose and that immutable love, which never turned aside until the deed of grace was triumphantly achieved.

Now, believer, listen to the second lesson. "Who can *turn* Him?" While He is immutable from within, He is immovable from without. "Who can turn Him?" That is a splendid picture presented to us by Moses in the Book of Numbers. The children of Israel were encamped in the plains of Moab. As the trees like aloes which the Lord had planted and as cedar trees beside the waters were their tents. Quietly and calmly they were resting in the valley—the tabernacle of the Lord in their midst and the pillar of cloud spread over them as a shield. But on the mountain range there were two men—Balak, the son of Zippor, king of Moabites and Balaam, the prophet of Pethor. They had builded seven altars and offered seven bullocks and Balak said unto Balaam, "Come, curse me, Jacob, come, defy Israel." Four times did the prophet take up his parable. Four times did he use his enchantments, offering the sacrifices of God on the altars of Baal. Four times did he vainly attempt a false divination. But I would have you mark that in each succeeding vision the mind of God is brought out in deeper characters. First, he confesses his own impotence, "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed, how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?" Then the second oracle brings out more distinctly the divine blessing. "Behold, I have received commandment to bless, and He hath blessed and I cannot reverse it." A third audacious attempt is met with a heavier repulse, for the stifled curse recoils on themselves, "Blessed is he that blesseth thee and cursed is he that curseth thee." Once again in the vision that closes the picture, the eyes of Balaam are opened till he gets a glimpse of the Star that should come out of Jacob and the Sceptre that shall rise out of Israel, with the dawning glory of the latter days. Well might Balaam say, "There is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel."

And now transfer that picture in your mind to all your enemies and specially to the arch-fiend of hell. He comes before God today with the remembrance of your sins and he desired that he may curse Israel, but he has found a hundred times that there is no enchantment against Jacob nor divination against Israel. He took David into the sin of lust and he found that God would not curse him there, but bless him with a sorrowful chastisement and with a deep repentance. He took Peter into the sin of denying his Master and he denied Him with oaths and curses. But the Lord would not curse him even there, but turned and looked on Peter, not with a lightning glance that might have shivered him, but with a look of love that made him weep bitterly. He has taken you and me at divers times into positions of unbelief, and we have doubted God. Satan said, "Surely, surely, God will curse him there," but never once has He done it. He has smitten, but the blow was full of love. He has chastised, but the chastisement was fraught with mercy. He has not cursed us, nor will He. Thou canst not turn God's mind, then, fiend of hell, thine enchantments cannot prosper, thine accusations shall not prevail. "He is in one mind, who can turn Him?"

And, brethren, you know when men are turned, they are sometimes turned by advice. Now who can advise with God? Who shall counsel the Most High to cast off the darlings of His bosom or persuade the Savior to reject His spouse. Such counsel offered were blasphemy and it would be repugnant to His soul. Or else, men are turned by entreaties. But how shall God listen to the entreaties of the evil one? Are not the prayers of the wicked an abomination to the Lord? Let them pray against us, let them entreat the Lord to curse us. But He is of one mind and no revengeful prayer should change the purpose of His love. Sometimes men *are* changed by the ties of relationship. A mother *interposes* and love yields, but in our case, who can interpose? God's only begotten Son is as much concerned in our salvation as His Father and instead of interposing to change, He would—if such a thing were needed—still continue to plead that the love and mercy of God might never be withdrawn. Oh, let us rejoice in this—

***“Midst all our sin and care and woe,
His Spirit will not let us go.”***

The Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake, because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people. “He is in one mind and who can turn Him?”

I know not how it is, but I feel that I cannot preach from this text as I should like. But oh! the text itself is music to my ears. It seems to sound like the martial trumpet of the battle and my soul is ready for the fray. It seems now that if trials and troubles should come, if I could but hold my hand upon this precious text, I would laugh at them all. “Who can turn Him?”—I would shout—“Who can turn Him?” Come on, earth and hell, come on, for “Who can turn Him?” Come on, ye boisterous troubles, come on, ye innumerable temptations, come on, slanderer and liar, “Who can turn Him?” And since He cannot be changed, my soul must and will rejoice “with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” I wish I could throw the text like a bombshell into the midst of the army of doubters, that that army might be routed at once, for when we get a text like this, it must be the text which takes effect and not our explanation. This surely is a most marvellous death-blow to our doubts and fears. “He is in one mind and who can turn Him?”

And now with a few words upon the last sentence, I shall conclude. *God's purpose must be effected*—“What His soul desireth, that He doeth.” Beloved, what God's soul desireth is your salvation and mine, if we be His chosen. Well, that He doeth. Part of that salvation consists in our perfect sanctification. We have had a long struggle with inbred sin and as far as we can judge, we have not made much progress, for still is the Philistine in the land and still doth the Canaanite invade us. We sin still and our hearts still have in them unbelief and proneness to depart from the living God. Can you think it possible that you will ever be without fault before the throne of God—without spot or wrinkle or any such thing? But yet you shall be, His heart desireth it and that He doeth. He would have His spouse without any defilement. He would have His chosen generation without anything to mar their perfection. Now, inasmuch as He spake and it was done, He has but to speak and it shall be done with you.

You cannot rout your foes, but He can. You cannot overcome your besetting sins, but He can do it. You cannot drive out your corruptions, for they have chariots of iron, but He will drive out the last of them, till the whole land shall be without one enemy to

disturb its perpetual peace. O what a joy to know that it will be ere long! Oh! it will be so soon with some of us—such a few weeks, though we perhaps are reckoning on years of life! A few weeks or a few days and we shall have passed through Jordan's flood and stand complete in Him, accepted in the Beloved! And should it be many years—should we be spared till the snows of a century shall have fallen upon our frosted hair—yet even then we must not doubt that His purpose shall at least be fulfilled. We shall be spotless and faultless and unblameable in His sight ere long.

Another part of our salvation is that we should at last be without pain, without sorrow, gathered with the church of the first-born before the Father's face. Does it not seem, when you sit down to think of yourself as being in heaven, as a pretty dream that never will be true? What! shall these fingers one day smite the strings of a golden harp? O aching head! shalt thou one day wear a crown of glory that fadeth not away? O toil-worn body! shalt thou bathe thyself in seas of heavenly rest? Is not heaven too good for us, brothers and sisters? Can it be that we, poor we, shall ever get inside those pearly gates or tread the golden streets? Oh! shall we ever see His face? Will He ever kiss us with the kisses of His lips? Will the King immortal, invisible, the only wise God, our Savior, take us to His bosom and call us all His own? Oh! shall we ever drink out of the rivers of pleasure that are at the right hand of the Most High? Shall we be among that happy company who shall be led to the living fountains of waters and all tears be wiped away from our eyes?

Ah! that we shall be! for "He is in one mind and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth, that He doeth." "Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." That is an immortal and omnipotent desire. We shall be with Him where He is, His purpose shall be effected, and we shall partake of His bliss. Now rise, ye who love the Savior and put your trust in Him—rise like men who have God within you and sit no longer down upon your dunghills. Come, ye desponding ones, if salvation were to be your own work, ye might despair, but since it is His and He changes not, you must not even doubt.

***"Now let the feeble all be strong,
And make Jehovah's power their song,
His shield is spread o'er every saint,
And thus supported, who can faint?"***

If you perish—even the weakest of you—God's purpose cannot be effected. If you fall, His honour will be stained. If you perish, heaven itself will be dishonored, Christ will have lost one of His members, the divine Husband will be disappointed in part of His well-beloved spouse, He will be a king whose regalia has been stolen, nay, He will not be complete Himself, for the church is His fullness and how can He be full if a part of His fullness shall be cast away? Putting these things, together, let us take courage and in the name of God let us set up our banners. He that has been with us hitherto will preserve us to the end and we shall soon sing in the fruition of glory as we now recite in the confidence of faith, that His purpose is completed and His love immutable.

This I say by way of close. Such a subject ought to inspire every man with awe. I speak to some here who are unconverted. It is an awful thought, God's purpose will be subserved in you. You may hate Him, but as He got Him honor upon Pharaoh and all his hosts, so will He upon you. You may think that you will spoil His designs, that

shall be your idea, but your very acts, though guided with that intent, shall only tend to subserve His glory.

Think of that! To rebel against God is useless, for you cannot prevail. To resist Him is not only impertinence, but folly. He will be as much glorified by you, whichever way you go. You shall either yield Him willing honor or unwilling honor, but either way His purpose in you shall most certainly be subserved. O that this thought might make you bow your heads and say, "Great God, glorify Thy mercy in me, for I have revolted, show that Thou canst forgive. I have sinned, deeply sinned. Prove the depth of Thy mercy by pardoning me. I know that Jesus died and that He is set forth as a propitiator, I believe on Him as such. O God! I trust Him, I pray Thee, glorify Thyself in me by showing what thy grace can do in casting sin behind Thy back and blotting out iniquity, transgression, and sin."

Sinner, He will do it, He will do it, if thus you plead and thus you pray. He will do it, for there was never a sinner rejected yet that came to God with humble prayer and faith. Going to God today, confessing your sin and taking hold of Christ, as upon the horns of the altar of mercy and of sacrifice, you shall find that it was a part of the divine plan to bring you here today, to stroke your mind with awe, to lead you humbly to the cross, to lead you afterwards joyfully to your God, and to bring you perfect at last before His throne.

God add His blessing for Christ's sake. Amen.

(Taken from, *The New Park Street and Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*,
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The Late Dr. B. H. Carroll
Founder, South Western Baptist
Theological Seminary

Mr. Spurgeon was pre-eminently a preacher. He preached more sermons, perhaps, than any other man. More people have heard him than have heard any other man. More people have read and do read his sermons than the sermons of any other man. More of them have been translated into foreign tongues than any other sermons. More people have been converted by reading them, in more countries, than by, perhaps, all other published sermons.

He never found but one place that could hold his congregation—the open fields roofed by the skies. With whom among men can you compare him?

Election

DELIVERED SEPTEMBER 2, 1855
AT NEW PORK STREET BAPTIST CHURCH
SOUTHWARK, LONDON, ENGLAND

"But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through

sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. Whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

If there were no other text in the sacred word except this one, I think we should all be bound to receive and acknowledge the truthfulness of the great and glorious doctrine of God's ancient choice of His family. But there seems to be an *inveterate prejudice* in the human mind against this doctrine and although most other doctrines will be received by professing Christians, some with caution, others with pleasure, yet this one seems to be most frequently disregarded and discarded. In many of our pulpits, it would be reckoned a *high sin* and *treason* to preach a sermon upon *election*, because they could not make it what they call a “practical” discourse. I believe they have erred from the truth therein. Whatever God has revealed, He has revealed for a purpose. There is nothing in Scripture which may not, under the influence of God's Spirit, be turned into a practical discourse, for “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable” for some purpose of spiritual usefulness. It is true, it may not be turned into a free-will discourse—that we know right well—but it can be turned into a practical free-grace discourse and free-grace practice is the best practice, when the true doctrines of God's immutable love are brought to bear upon the hearts of saints and sinners.

Now, I trust this morning some of you who are startled at the very sound of this word, will say, “I will give it a fair hearing. I will lay aside my prejudices. I will just hear what this man has to say.” Do not shut your ears and say at once, “It is high doctrine.” Who has authorized you to call it high or low? Why should you oppose yourself to God's doctrine? Remember what became of the children who found fault with God's prophet and exclaimed, “Go up, thou bald-head, go up, thou bald-head.” Say nothing against God's doctrine, lest haply some evil beast should come out of the forest and devour you also. There are other woes besides the open judgment of heaven—take heed that these fall not on your head. Lay aside your prejudices, listen calmly, listen dispassionately. Hear what Scripture says and when you receive the truth, if God should be pleased to reveal and manifest it to your souls, do not be ashamed to confess it. To confess you are wrong yesterday, is only to acknowledge that you are a little wiser today, and instead of being a reflection on yourself, it is an honor to your judgment and shows that you are improving in the knowledge of the truth. Do not be ashamed to learn and to cast aside your old doctrines and views, but take up that which you may more plainly see to be in the Word of God.

But if you do not see it to be here in the Bible, whatever I may say or whatever authorities I may plead, I beseech you as you love your souls, reject it, and if from this pulpit you ever hear things contrary to this sacred Word, remember that the Bible must be first and God's minister must lie underneath it. We must not stand on the Bible to preach, but we must preach with the Bible above our heads. After all we have preached, we are well aware that the mountain of truth is higher than our eyes can discern, clouds and darkness are round about its summit and we cannot discern its topmost pinnacle, yet we will try to preach it as well as we can. But since we are mortal and liable to err, exercise your judgment, “Try the spirits whether they are of God,” and if on mature reflection on your bended knees, you are led to disregard election—a thing which I consider to be utterly impossible—then forsake it, do not hear it preached, but believe and confess whatever you see to be God's Word. I can say no more than that by way of exordium.

Now, first, I shall speak a little concerning the *truthfulness* of this doctrine. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." Secondly, I shall try to prove that this election is *absolute*. "He hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation," not *for* sanctification, but "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Thirdly, this election is eternal, because the text says, "God hath from *the beginning* chosen you." Fourthly, it is *personal*. "He hath chosen you." Then we will look at the *effects* of the doctrine—see what it does and lastly, as God may enable us, we will try and look at its tendencies and see whether it is indeed a terrible and licentious doctrine. We will take the flower and like true bees, see whether there be any honey whatever in it, whether any good can come of it or whether it is an unmixed, undiluted evil.

I. First, I must try and prove that the doctrine is TRUE.

And let me begin with an *argumentum ad hominem*. I will speak to you according to your different positions and stations. There are some of you who belong to the Church of England and I am happy to see so many of you here. Though now and then I certainly say some very hard things about church and state, yet I love the old church, for she has in her communion many godly ministers and eminent saints. Now, I know you are great believers in what the Articles declare to be sound doctrine. I will give you a specimen of what they utter concerning election, so that if you believe them, you cannot avoid receiving election. I will read a portion of the Seventeenth Article, upon Predestination and Election. "*Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) He hath continually decreed by His counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom He hath chosen in Christ out of mankind and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honor. Wherefore they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God be called according to God's purpose by His Spirit working in due season, they through grace obey the calling. They be justified freely. They be made sons of God by adoption. They be made like the image of His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ. They walk religiously in good works and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.*"

Now, I think any churchman, if he be a sincere and honest believer in Mother Church, must be a thorough believer in election. True, if he turns to certain other portions of the Prayer Book, he will find things contrary to the doctrines of free grace and altogether apart from scriptural teaching, but if he looks at the Articles, he must see that God hath chosen His people unto eternal life. I am not so desperately enamored, however, of that book as you may be and I have only used this article to show you, that if you belong to the Establishment of England, you should at least offer no objections to this doctrine of predestination.

Another human authority whereby I would confirm the doctrine of election, is the old Waldensian creed. If you read the creed of the old Waldenses, emanating from them in the midst of the burning heat of persecution, you will see that these renowned professors and confessors of the Christian faith did most firmly receive and embrace this doctrine as being a portion of the truth of God. I have copied from an old book one of the articles of their faith.

"That God saves from corruption and damnation those whom He has chosen from the foundations of the world, not for any disposition, faith or holiness that He foresaw

in them, but of His mere mercy in Christ Jesus His Son, passing by all the rest, according to the irreprehensible reason of His own free-will and justice.”

It is no novelty, then, that I am preaching no new doctrine. I love to proclaim these strong old doctrines, what are called by nickname Calvinism, but which are surely and verily the revealed truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus. By this truth I make a pilgrimage into the past and as I go, I see father after father, confessor after confessor, martyr after martyr, standing up to shake hands with me. Were I a Pelagian or a believer in the doctrine of free-will, I should have to walk for centuries all alone. Here and there a heretic, of no very honorable character, might rise up and call me brother. But taking these things to be the standard of my faith, I see the land of the ancients peopled with my brethren. I behold multitudes who confess the same as I do and acknowledge that this is the religion of God's own church.

I also give you an extract from the old Baptist confession. We are Baptists in this congregation—the greater part of us at any rate—and we like to see what our own forefathers wrote. Some two hundred years ago the Baptists assembled together and published their articles of faith, to put an end to certain reports against their orthodoxy which had gone forth to the world. I turn to this old book—which I have just published—and I find the following as the—3rd Article. *“By the decree of God, and the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ, to the praise of His glorious grace, others being left to act in their sins to their just condemnation, to the praise of His glorious justice. These angels and men thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished. Those of mankind that are predestinated to life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving Him thereunto.”*

As for these human authorities, I care not one rush for all three of them. I care not what they say, *pro* or *con*, as to this doctrine. I have only used them as a kind of confirmation to your faith to show you that whilst I may be railed upon as a heretic and as a hyper-Calvinist, after all I am backed up by antiquity. All the past stands by me. I do not care for the present. Give me the past and I will hope for the future. Let the present rise up in my teeth, I will not care. What though a host of the churches of London may have forsaken the great cardinal doctrines of God, it matters not. If a handful of us stand alone in an unflinching maintenance of the sovereignty of God, if we are beset by enemies, ay, and even by our own brethren, who ought to be our friends and helpers, it matters not, if we can but count upon the past, the noble army of martyrs, the glorious host of confessors, are our friends, the witnesses of truth stand by us. With these for us, we will not say that we stand alone, but we may exclaim, “Lo, God hath reserved unto Himself seven thousand that have not bowed the knee unto Baal!” But the best of all is, *God is with us*.

The great truth is always the Bible and the Bible alone. My hearers, you do not believe in any other book than the Bible, do you? If I could prove this from all books in Christendom, if I could fetch back the Alexandrian library and prove it

thence, you would not believe it any more, but you surely will believe what is in God's Word.

I have selected a few texts to read to you. I love to give you a whole volley of texts when I am afraid you will distrust a truth, so that you may be too astonished to doubt, if you do not in reality believe. Just let me run through a catalogue of passages where the people of God are called elect. Of course if the people are called *elect*, there must be *election*. If Jesus Christ and His apostles were accustomed to style believers by the title of elect, we must certainly believe that they were so, otherwise the term does not mean anything.

Jesus Christ says, "Except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved, but for the *elect's* sake, whom He hath chosen, He hath shortened the days." "False Christs and false prophets shall rise and shall show signs and wonders to seduce, if it were possible, even the *elect*." "Then shall He send His angels and shall gather together His *elect* from the four winds, from the uttermost parts of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven."—Mark 13:20, 22, 27. "Shall not God avenge His own *elect* who cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?"—Luke 18:7. Together with *many* other passages which might be selected, wherein either the word "elect," or "chosen," or "foreordained," or "appointed," is mentioned, or the phrase "My sheep," or some similar designation, showing that Christ's people are distinguished from the rest of mankind.

But you have concordances and I will not trouble you with texts. Throughout the epistles, the saints are constantly called "the elect." In Colossians, we find Paul saying, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies." When he writes to Titus, he calls himself, "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's *elect*." Peter says, "*Elect* according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." Then, if you turn to John, you will find he is very fond of the word. He says, "The elder to the *elect* lady," and he speaks of our "*elect* sister." And we know where it is written, "The church that is at Babylon, *elect* together with you."

They were not ashamed of the word in those days, they were not afraid to talk about it. Nowadays the word has been dressed up with diversities of meaning and persons have mutilated and marred the doctrine, so that they have made it a very doctrine of devils, I do confess, and many who call themselves believers have gone to rank Antinomianism. But notwithstanding this, why should I be ashamed of it, if men do wrest it? We love God's truth on the rack, as well as when it is walking upright. If there were a martyr whom we loved before he came on the rack, we should love him more still when he was stretched there. When God's truth is stretched on the rack, we do not call it falsehood. We love not to see it racked, *but* we love it even when racked, because we can discern what its proper proportions ought to have been if it had not been racked and tortured by the cruelty and inventions of men.

If you will read many of the epistles of the ancient Fathers, you will find them always writing to the people of God as "the elect." Indeed the common conversational term used among many of the churches by the primitive Christians to one another, was that of the "elect." They would often use the term to one another, showing that it was generally believed that all God's people were manifestly "elect."

But now for the verses that will positively prove the doctrine. Open your Bibles and turn to John 15:16 and there you will see that Jesus Christ has chosen His people, for He says, *“Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain, that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you.”* Then in the 19th verse, *“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”*

Then in the 17th chapter and the 8th and 9th verses, *“For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me and they have received them and have known surely that I came out from Thee and they have believed that Thou didst send Me. I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me, for they are Thine.”*

Turn to Acts 13:48, *“And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the Word of the Lord, and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”* They may try to split that passage into hairs if they like, but it says, “ordained to eternal life” in the original as plainly as it possibly can and we do not care about all the different commentaries thereupon.

You scarcely need to be reminded of Romans 8, because I trust you are well acquainted with that chapter and understand it by this time. In the 29th and following verses, it says. *“For where He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. 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. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 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? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?”*

It would also be unnecessary to repeat the whole of the 9th chapter of Romans. As long as that remains in the Bible, no man shall be able to prove Arminianism, so long as that is written there, not the most violent contortions of the passage will ever be able to exterminate the doctrine of election from the Scriptures. Let us read such verses as these, *“For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.”*

Then read the 22nd verse, *“What if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory.”*

Then go on to Romans 11:7, *“What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it and the rest were blinded.”* In the 5th verse of the same chapter we read, *“Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.”*

You, no doubt, all recollect the passage in I Corinthians 1:26-29, *“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty and base things of the world and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea and things which are not, to bring to naught things which are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.”*

Again, remember the passage in I Thessalonians 5:9, *“God hath not appointed US to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

And then you have my text, which methinks would be quite enough. But if you need any more, you can find them at your leisure, if we have not quite removed your suspicions as to the doctrine not being true.

Methinks, my friends, that this overwhelming mass of Scripture testimony must stagger those who dare to laugh at this doctrine. What shall we say of those who have so often despised it and denied its divinity, who have railed at its justice, and dared to defy God and call Him an almighty tyrant, when they have heard of His having elected so many to eternal life? Canst thou O rejector! cast it out of the Bible? Canst thou take the penknife of Jehudi and cut it out of the Word of God? Wouldst thou be like the woman at the feet of Solomon and have the child rent in halves, that thou mightest have thy half? Is it not here in Scripture? And is it not thy duty to bow before it and meekly acknowledge what thou understandest not—to receive it as the truth even though thou couldst not understand its meaning?

I will not attempt to prove the justice of God in having thus elected some and left others. It is not for me to vindicate my Master. He will speak for Himself and He does so, “Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?” Who is he that shall say unto his father, “What hast thou begotten?” Or unto his mother, “What hast thou brought forth?” “I am the Lord thy God, I create light and I create darkness. I the Lord do all these things.” Who are thou that repliest against God? Tremble and kiss His rod, bow down and submit to His scepter, impugn not His justice and arraign not His acts before thy bar, O man!

But there are some who say, “It is hard for God to choose some and leave others.” Now, I will ask you one question. Is there any of you here this morning who wishes to be holy, who wishes to be regenerate, to leave off sin and walk in holiness? “Yes, there is,” says someone, “I do.” Then God has elected you. But another says, “No, I don’t want to be holy, I don’t want to give up my lusts and my vices.” Why should you grumble, then, that God has not elected you to it? For if you were elected you would not like it, according to your own confession. If God, this morning, had chosen you to holiness, you say you would not care for it. Do you not acknowledge that you prefer drunkenness to sobriety, dishonesty to honesty? You love this world’s pleasures better than religion, then why should you grumble that God has not chosen you to religion? If you love religion, He *has* chosen you to it. If you desire it, He has chosen you to it. If you do not, what right have you to say that God ought to have given you what you do not wish for?

Supposing I had in my hand something which you do not value and I said I shall give it to such-and-such a person, you would have no right to grumble that I did not give it to you. You could not be so foolish as to grumble that the other has got what you do not care about. According to your own confession, many of you do not want religion, do not want a new heart and a right spirit, do not want the forgiveness of sins, do not want sanctification, you do not want to be elected to these things, then why should you grumble? You count these things but as husks and why should you complain of God who has given them to those whom He has chosen? If you believe them to be good and desire them, they are there for thee. God gives liberally to all those who desire, and first of all, He makes them desire, otherwise they never would, if you love these things, He has elected you to them and you may have them, but if you do not, who are you that you should find fault with God, when it is your own desperate will that keeps you from loving these things—your own simple self that makes you hate them?

Suppose a man in the street should say, “What a shame it is I cannot have a seat in the chapel to hear what this man has to say.” And suppose he says, “I hate the preacher, I can’t bear his doctrine, but still it’s a shame I have not a seat.” Would you expect a man to say so? No, you would at once say, “That man does not care for it. Why should he trouble himself about other people having what they value and he despises?” You do not like holiness, you do not like righteousness, if God has elected me to these things, has He hurt you by it?

“Ah! but,” say some, “I thought it meant that God elected some to heaven and some to hell.” That is a very different matter from the Gospel doctrine. He has elected men to holiness and to righteousness and through that to heaven. You must not say that He has elected them simply to heaven and others only to hell. He has elected you to holiness, if you love holiness. If any of you love to be saved by Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ elected you to be saved. If any of you desire to have salvation, you are elected to have it, if you desire it sincerely and earnestly. But if you don’t desire it, why on earth should you be so preposterously foolish as to grumble because God gives that which you do not like to other people?

II. Thus I have tried to say something with regard to the truth of the doctrine of election. And now briefly let me say that election is ABSOLUTE, that is, it does not depend upon what we are.

The text says, “God hath from the beginning chosen us unto salvation,” but our opponents say that God chooses people because they are good, that He chooses them on account of sundry works which they have done. Now, we ask, in reply to this, what works are those on account of which God elects His people? Are they what we commonly call “works of law”—works of obedience which the creature can render? If so, we reply to you, if men cannot be justified by the works of the law, it seems to us pretty clear that they cannot be elected by the works of the law, if they cannot be justified by their good deeds, they cannot be saved by them. Then the decree of election could not have been formed upon good works.

“But” say others, “God elected them on the foresight of their faith.” Now, God gives faith, therefore He could not have elected them on account of faith, which He foresaw. There shall be twenty beggars in the street and I determine to give one of them a shilling, but will anyone say that I determined to give that one a shilling, that I

elected him to have the shilling, because I foresaw that he would have it? That would be talking nonsense. In like manner, to say that God elected men because He foresaw they would have faith, which is salvation in the germ, would be too absurd for us to listen to for a moment. Faith is the gift of God. Every virtue comes from Him. Therefore it cannot have caused Him to elect men, because it is His gift. Election, we are sure, is absolute and altogether apart from the virtues which the saints have afterward.

What though a saint should be as holy and devout as Paul, what though he should be as bold as Peter, or as loving as John, yet he would claim nothing from his Maker. I never knew a saint yet of any denomination, who thought that God saved him because He foresaw that he would have these virtues and merits. Now, my brethren, the best jewels that the saint ever wears, if they be jewels of his own fashioning, are not of the first water. There is nothing of earth mixed with them. The highest grace we ever possess has something of earthiness about it. We feel this when we are most refined, when we are most sanctified and our language must always be—

***“I the chief of sinners am,
Jesus died for me.”***

Our only hope, our only plea, still hangs on grace, as exhibited in the person of Jesus Christ. And I am sure we must utterly reject and disregard all thought that our graces which are gifts of our Lord, which are His right hand planting, could have ever caused His love. And we ever must sing.

***“What was there in us that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
‘Twas even so Father, we ever must sing,
Because it seemed good in Thy sight.”***

“He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy,” He saves because He will save. And if you ask me why He saves me, I can only say, because He would do it. Was there anything in me that should recommend me to God? No, I lay aside everything. I had nothing to recommend me. When God saved me, I was the most abject, lost, and ruined of the race. I lay before Him as an infant in my blood. Verily, I had no power to help myself. Oh, how wretched did I feel and know myself to be! If you had something to recommend you to God, I never had. I will be content to be saved *by grace*, unalloyed, pure grace. I can boast of no merits. If you can do so, I cannot. I must sing,

***“Free grace alone, from the first to the last,
Hath won my affection and held my soul fast.”***

III. Then, thirdly, this election is ETERNAL. “God hath from the beginning chosen you unto eternal life.”

Can any man tell me when the beginning was? Years ago we thought the beginning of this world was when Adam came upon it, but we have discovered that thousands of years before that God was preparing chaotic matter to make it a fit abode for men, putting races of creatures upon it, who might die and leave behind

the marks of His handiwork and marvellous skill, before He tried His hand on man. But that was not the beginning, for Revelation points us to a period long ere this world was fashioned, to the days when the morning stars were begotten, when, like drops of dew, from the fingers of the morning, stars and constellations fell trickling from the hand of God, when, by His own lips, He launched forth ponderous orbs, when with His own hand He sent comets, like thunderbolts, wandering through the sky, to find one day their proper sphere. We go back to years gone by, when worlds were made and systems fashioned, but we have not even approached the beginning yet.

Until we go to the time when all the universe slept in the mind of God, as yet unborn, until we enter the eternity where God, the Creator, lived alone, everything sleeping within Him, all creation resting in His mighty gigantic thought, we have not guessed the beginning. We may go back, back, back, ages upon ages. We may go back, if we might use such strange words, whole eternities and yet never arrive at the beginning. Our wing might be tired, our imagination would die away. Could it outstrip the lightning's flashing in majesty, power, and rapidity, it would soon weary itself ere it could get to the beginning.

But God from the beginning chose His people, when the unnavigated ether was yet unfanned by the wing of a single angel, when the space was shoreless or else unborn, when universal silence reigned and not a voice or whisper shocked the solemnity of silence, when there was no being and no motion, no time and naught but God Himself, alone in His eternity, when without the song of an angel, without the attendance of even the cherubim, long ere the living creatures were born or the wheels of the chariot of Jehovah were fashioned, even then, "In the beginning was the Word," and in the beginning, God's people were one with the Word and "In the beginning He chose them unto eternal life." Our election, then, is eternal. I will not stop to prove it, I only just run over these thoughts for the benefit of young beginners, that they may understand what we mean by eternal, absolute election.

IV. And, next, the election is PERSONAL. Here, again, our opponents have tried to overthrow election by telling us that it is an election of nations and not of people. But here the apostle says, "God hath from the beginning chosen you." It is the most miserable shift on earth to make out that God has not chosen persons, but nations, because the very same objection that lies against the choice of persons lies against the choice of a nation. If it were not just to choose a person, it would be far more unjust to choose a nation, since nations are but the union of multitudes of persons, and to choose a nation seems to be a more gigantic crime—if election be a crime—than to choose one person. Surely, to choose ten thousand would be reckoned to be worse than choosing one, to distinguish a whole nation from the rest of mankind does seem to be a greater extravaganza in the acts of divine sovereignty than the election of one poor mortal and leaving out another.

But what are nations but men? What are whole people but combinations of different units? A nation is made up of that individual and that and that. And if you tell me that God chose the Jews, I say, then, he chose that Jew and that Jew and that Jew. And if you say He chooses Britain, then I say He chooses that British man and that British man and that British man. So that it is the same thing after all. Election, then, is personal. It must be so. Everyone who reads this text and others like it, will

see that Scripture continually speaks of God's people, one by one, and speaks of them as having been the special subjects of election.

***“Sons we are through God's election,
Who in Jesus Christ believe,
By eternal destination
Sovereign grace is here received.”***

We know it is personal election.

V. The other thought is—for my time flies too swiftly to enable me to dwell at length upon these points—that election produces GOOD RESULTS. “He hath from the beginning chosen you unto sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.”

How many men mistake the doctrine of election altogether? And how my soul burns and boils at the recollection of the terrible evils that have accrued from the spoiling and the wrestling of that glorious portion of God's glorious truth! How many are there who have said to themselves, “I am elect,” and have sat down in sloth and worse than that! They have said, “I am the elect of God,” and with both hands they have done wickedness. They have swiftly run to every unclean thing, because they have said, “I am the chosen child of God, irrespective of my works, therefore I may live as I list and do what I like.”

O beloved! let me solemnly warn every one of you not to carry the truth too far or rather not to turn the truth into error, for we cannot carry it too far. We may overstep the truth, we can make that which was meant to be sweet for our comfort, a terrible mixture for our destruction. I tell you there have been thousands of men who have been ruined by misunderstanding election, who have said, “God. has elected me to heaven and to eternal life,” but they have forgotten that it is written, God has elected them “through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” This is God's election—election to sanctification and to faith. God chooses His people to be holy and to be believers.

How many of you here then are believers? How many of my congregation can put their hands upon their hearts and say, “I ‘trust in God that I am sanctified?” Is there one of you who says, “I am elect”—I remind you that you swore last week. One of you says, “I trust I am elect”—but I jog your memory about some vicious act that you committed during the last six days. Another of you says, “I am elect”—but I would look you in the face and say, “*Elect!* thou art a most cursed hypocrite! and that is all thou art.” Others would say, “I am elect”—but I would remind them that they neglect the mercy-seat and do not pray.

O beloved! never think you are elect unless you are holy. You may come to Christ as a sinner, but you may not come to Christ as an elect person until you can see your holiness. Do not misconstrue what I say—do not say, “I am. elect,” and yet think you can be living in sin. That is impossible. The elect of God are holy. They are not pure, they are not perfect, they are not spotless, but taking their life as a whole, they are holy persons. They are marked and distinct from others and no man has a right to conclude himself elect except in his holiness. He may be elect and yet lying in

darkness, but he has no right to believe it, no one can see it, there is no evidence of it. The man may live one day, but he is dead at present.

If you are walking in the fear of God, trying to please Him and to obey His commandments, doubt not that your name has been written in the Lamb's Book of Life from before the foundation of the world.

And lest this should be too high for you, note the other mark of election, which is faith, "belief of the truth." Whoever believes God's truth and believes on Jesus Christ is elect. I frequently meet with poor souls, who are fretting and worrying themselves about this thought—"How, if I should say not be elect!" "Oh, sir," they say, "I know I put my trust in Jesus, I know I believe in His name and trust in His blood, but how if I should not be elect?" Poor dear creature! You do not know much about the Gospel or you would never talk so, for *he that believes is elect*. Those who are elect unto sanctification and unto faith and if you have faith you are one of God's elect, you may know it and ought to know it, for it is an absolute certainty. If you, as a sinner, look to Jesus Christ this morning and say—

***"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling,"***

you are elect. I am not afraid of election frightening poor saints or sinners. There are many divines who tell the inquirer, "Election has nothing to do with you." That is very bad, because the poor soul is not to be silenced like that. If you could silence him so it might be well, but he will think of it, he can't help it. Say to him then, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you are elect. If you will cast yourself on Jesus, you are elect. I tell you—the chief of sinners—this morning, I tell you in His name, if you will come to God without any works of your own, cast yourself on the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, if you will come now and trust in Him, you are elect—you were loved of God from before the foundation of the world, for you could not do that unless God had given you the power and had chosen you to do it. Now you are safe and secure if you do but come and cast yourself on Jesus Christ and wish to be saved and to be loved by Him.

But think not that any man will be saved without faith and without holiness. Do not conceive, my hearers, that some decree, passed in the dark ages of eternity, will save your souls, unless you believe in Christ. Do not sit down and fancy that you are to be saved without faith and holiness. That is a most abominable and accursed heresy and has ruined thousands. Lay not election as a pillow for you to sleep on or you may be ruined.

God forbid that I should be sewing pillows under armholes that you may rest comfortably in your sins. Sinner! there is nothing in the Bible to palliate your sins. But if thou are condemned, O man! if thou art lost, O woman! thou wilt not find in this Bible one drop to cool thy tongue or one doctrine to palliate thy guilt, your damnation will be entirely your own fault and your sin will richly merit it. Because you believe not you are condemned. "Ye believed not because ye were not of My sheep and ye would not come to Me that ye might have life."

Do not fancy that election excuses sin—do not dream of it—do not rock yourself in sweet complacency in the thought of your irresponsibility. You're responsible. We

must give you both things. We must have divine sovereignty and we must have man's responsibility. We must have election, but we must ply your hearts, we must send God's truth at you, we must speak to you and remind you of this, that while it is written, "In Me is thy help," yet it is also written, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself."

VI. Now, lastly, what are the true and legitimate tendencies of right conceptions concerning the doctrine of election. *First*, I will tell you what the doctrine of election will make saints do under the blessing of God and *secondly*, what it will do for sinners if God blesses it to them.

First, I think election to a saint is one of the most *stripping* doctrines in all the world—to take away all trust in the flesh or all reliance upon anything except Jesus Christ. How often do we wrap ourselves up in our own righteousness and array ourselves with the false pearls and gems of our own works and doings. We begin to say, "Now I shall be saved, because I have this and that evidence." Instead of that, it is naked faith that saves, that faith and that alone unites to the Lamb, irrespective of works, although it is productive of them. How often do we lean on some work, other than that of our own Beloved and trust in some might, other than that which comes from on high. Now if we would have His might taken from us, we must consider election. Pause, my soul and consider this. God loved thee before thou hadst a being. He loved thee when thou wast dead in trespasses and sins and sent His Son to die for thee. He purchased thee with His precious blood, ere thou couldst lisp His name. Canst thou then be proud?

I know nothing, nothing, again, that is more humbling for us than this doctrine of election. I have sometimes fallen prostrate before it, when endeavoring to understand it. I have stretched my wings and eagle-like, I have soared toward the sun. Steady has been my eye and true my wing, for a season, but when I came near it and the one thought possessed me—"God hath from the beginning chosen you unto salvation," I was lost in its luster, I was staggered with the mighty thought and from the dizzy elevation, down came my soul, prostrate and broken, saying, "Lord I am nothing, I am less than nothing. Why me? Why me?"

Friends, if you want to be humbled, study election, for it will make you humble under the influence of God's Spirit. He who is proud of his election is not elect and he who is humbled under a sense of it may believe that he is. He has every reason to believe that he is, for it is one of the most blessed effects of election, that it helps us to humble ourselves before God.

Once again. Election in the Christian should make him very *fearless* and very *bold*. No man will be so bold as he who believes that he is the elect of God. What cares he for man, if he is chosen of his Maker? What will he care for the pitiful chirpings of some tiny sparrows when he knoweth that he is an eagle of a royal race? Will he care when the beggar pointeth at him, when the blood royal of heaven runs in his veins? Will he fear if all the world stand against him? If earth be all in arms abroad, he dwells in perfect peace, for he is in the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High, in the great pavilion of the Almighty. "I am God's," says he, "I am distinct from other men. They are of an inferior race. Am not I noble? Am not I one of the aristocrats of heaven? Is not my name written in God's book?" Does he care for the world? Nay, like the lion that careth not for the barking of the dog, he

smileth at all his enemies and when they come too near him, he moveth himself and dasheth them to pieces. What careth he for them? He walks about them like a Colossus, while little men walk under him and understand him not. His brow is made of iron, his heart is of flint—what doth he care for man? Nay, if one universal hiss came up from the wide world, he would smile at it, for he would say,

***“He that hath made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode.”***

“I am one of His elect. I am chosen of God and precious, and though the world cast me out, I fear not.” Ah! you time-serving professors, some of you can bend like the willows. There are few oaken Christians now-a-days, that can stand the storm and I will tell you the reason. It is because you do not believe yourselves to be elect. The man who knows he is elect will be too proud to sin, he will not humble himself to commit the acts of common people. The believer in this truth will say, “I compromise my principles? I change my doctrines? I lay aside my views? I hide what I believe to be true? No! since I know I am one of God’s elect, in the very teeth of all men I shall speak God’s truth, whatever men may say.” Nothing makes a man so truly bold as to feel that he is God’s elect. He shall not quiver, he shall not shake, who knows that God has chosen him.

Moreover, election will make us *holy*. Nothing under the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit can make a Christian more holy, than the thought that he is chosen. “Shall I sin,” he says, “after God hath chosen me? Shall I transgress after such love? Shall I go astray after so much loving-kindness and tender mercy? Nay, my God, since Thou hast chosen me, I will love Thee, I will live to Thee—

***‘Since thou, the everlasting God,
Father, art become,’***

I will give myself to Thee, to be Thine forever, by election and by redemption casting myself on Thee and solemnly consecrating myself to Thy service.”

And now, lastly, to the ungodly. What says election to you? First, ye ungodly ones, I will excuse you for a moment. There are many of you who do not like election and I cannot blame you for it, for I have heard those preach election, who have sat down and said, “I have not one word to say to the sinner.” Now, I say you *ought* to dislike such preaching as that and I do not blame you for it. But I say, take courage, take hope, O thou sinner, that there is election! So far from dispiriting and discouraging thee, it is a very hopeful and joyous thing that there is an election. What if I told thee perhaps none can be saved, none are ordained to eternal life, wouldst thou not tremble and fold thy hands in hopelessness and say, “Then how can I be saved, since none are elect?” But I say, there is a multitude elect, beyond all counting—a host that no mortal can number. Therefore, take heart, thou poor sinner! Cast away thy despondency—mayst not thou be elect as well as any other? For there is a host innumerable chosen. There is joy and comfort for thee!

Then, not only take heart, but go and try the Master. Remember, if you were not elect, you would lose nothing by it. What did the four Syrians say? “Let us fall unto the host of the Syrians, for if we stay here, we must die and if we go to them, we can but die.” O sinner! come to the throne of electing mercy. Thou mayest die

where thou art. Go to God and even supposing He should spurn thee, suppose His uplifted hand should drive thee away—a thing impossible—yet thou wilt not lose anything, thou wilt not be more damned for that.

Besides, supposing thou be damned, thou wouldst have the satisfaction at least of being able to lift up thine eyes in hell and say, “God, I asked mercy of Thee and Thou wouldst not grant it, I sought it, but Thou didst refuse it.” That thou never shalt say, O sinner! If thou goest to Him and askest Him, thou shall receive, for He ne’er has spurned one yet! Is not that hope for you? What though there is an allotted number, yet it is true that all who seek belong to that number. Go thou and seek and if thou shouldst be the first one to go to hell, tell the devils that thou didst perish thus—tell the demons that thou art a castaway, after having come as a guilty sinner to Jesus. I tell thee it would disgrace the Eternal—with reverence to His name—and He would not allow such a thing. He is jealous of His honor and He could not allow a sinner to say that. But ah, poor soul! not only think thus, that thou canst not lose anything by coming, there is yet one more thought—Dost thou love the thought of election this morning? Art thou willing to admit its justice? Dost thou say, “I feel that I am lost, I deserve it, and that if my brother is saved, I cannot murmur. If God destroy me, I deserve it, but if He saves the person sitting beside me, He has a right to do what He will with His own and I have lost nothing by it.” Can you say that honestly from your heart?

If so, then the doctrine of election has had its right effect on your spirit and you are not far from the kingdom of heaven. You are brought where you ought to be, where the Spirit wants you to be and being so this morning, depart in peace, God has forgiven your sins. You would not feel that if you were not pardoned, you would not feel that if the Spirit of God were not working in you. Rejoice, then, in this. Let your hope rest on the cross of Christ. Think not on election, but on Christ Jesus. Rest on Jesus—Jesus first, midst, and without end.

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Election: Its Defenses and Evidences

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“Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance. And ye became followers of us and of the Lord having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.”—1 Thessalonians 1:4-6

AT the very announcement of the text some will be ready to say, “Why preach upon so profound a doctrine as election?” I answer, because it is in God’s word and whatever is in the Word of God is to be preached. “But some truths ought to be kept back from the people,” you will say, “lest they should make an ill use thereof.” That is

Popish doctrine, it was upon that very theory that the priests kept back the Bible from the people. They did not give it to them lest they should misuse it. "But are not some doctrines dangerous?" Not if they are true and rightly handled. Truth is never dangerous. It is error and reticence that are fraught with peril. "But do not men abuse the doctrine of grace?" I grant you that they do, but if we destroyed everything that men misuse, we should have nothing left. Are there to be no ropes because some fools will hang themselves?—and must cutlery be discarded and denounced, because there are some who will use dangerous weapons for the destruction of their adversaries? Decidedly not. Besides all this, remember that men do read the Scriptures and think about these doctrines and therefore often make mistakes about them, who then shall set them right if we, who preach the Word, hold our tongues about the matter?

I know that some men who have embraced the doctrine of election have become Antinomians, such men would probably have found other excuses for their misdeeds if they had not sheltered themselves under the shadow of this doctrine. The sun will ripen the noxious weed as well as the fruitful plant, but that is not the fault of the sun, but of the nature of the weed itself. We believe, however, that more persons are made Antinomians through those who deny the doctrine than through those who preach it. One evidence of this is that in Scotland you will scarcely find a congregation of Hyper-Calvinists, the simple reason being that the church in Scotland holds entire the whole doctrine upon this matter and her ministers, as a rule, are not ashamed to preach it fearlessly and boldly and in connection with the rest of the faith.

Take any doctrine and preach upon it exclusively and you distort it. The fairest face in the world, with the most comely features, would soon become unseemly if one feature were permitted to expand while the rest were kept in their usual form. Proportion, I take it, is beauty and to preach every truth in its fair proportion, neither keeping back any nor giving undue prominence to any, is to preach the whole truth as Christ would have it preached. On a Gospel thus entire and harmonious we may expect to have the blessing of the Most High. So much by way of preface, not by way of apology. It is not my wont to offer any apology for speaking the truth.

I. WHAT IS THIS DOCTRINE OF ELECTION? Let us try to understand it as spoken of in the text. "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."

There is such a thing as election. Any man who should deny that man is a free agent might well be thought unreasonable, but free-will is a different thing from free-agency. Luther denounced free will when he said that "free-will is the name for nothing" and President Edwards demolished the idea in his masterly treatise. God is the universal agent and doeth as He wills and His will is supremely good. He is the superlative agent and man, acting according to the devices of his own heart, is nevertheless overruled by that sovereign and wise legislation which causeth the wrath of man (that agency in which the creature cannot govern himself) to praise Him and the remainder thereof He restrains. How these two things are true I cannot tell. It is not necessary for our good, either in this life or the next, that we should have the skill to solve such problems. I am not sure that in heaven, we shall be able to know where the free agency of man and the sovereignty of God meet, but both are great truths. God has predestinated everything, yet man is responsible, for he acts freely and no constraint is put upon him even when he sinneth and disobeyeth wantonly

and wickedly the will of God. But so many as are saved, you will say, are saved because they believe. Certainly it is so, it is meet true—God forbid I should deny it—but wherefore do they believe? They believe as the result of the working of the grace of God in their hearts. Since every man who is saved confesses this, since every true believer in the world acknowledges that something special has been done for him more than for the impenitent, the fact is established that God does make a difference. No one ever heard it laid as an impeachment against the Lord that He has made such a difference, so I cannot see why He should be impeached for intending to make that difference, which is just the doctrine of election. I am saved, but I know it is not because of any goodness in me and if you are saved you will freely confess that it is the distinguishing love of God that has made you to differ. The doctrine of election is simply God's intention to make the difference between people which you know exists. While He gives mercy to all, He gives more mercy to some so that the mercy already received shall be made effectual to their eternal salvation.

This election of God is sovereign. He chooseth as He will. Who shall call Him to account? "Can I not do as I will with My own?" is His answer to every caviler. "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" is the solemn utterance that silences everyone who would impugn the justice of the Most High. He has a right, seeing we are all criminals, to punish whom He will. As king of the universe He doubtless acts with discretion, but still according to His sovereignty. Wisely, not wantonly, He rules, but ever according to the counsel of His own will. Election, then, is sovereign.

Again, *election is free.* Whatever may be God's reason for choosing a man, certainly it is not because of any good thing in that man. He is chosen because God will do so. We can get no further. We get as far as those words of Christ, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight," and there we stop, for beyond that no philosophy and no Scripture can take us.

As it is sovereign and free, so *election is irreversible.* Having chosen His people, He doth not caste them away nor call back the word that has gone out of His lips, for it is written, "He hateth putting away." He is of one mind and who can turn Him?

Once more, *election is effectual.* For "whom He did predestinate, them He also called, and whom He called, them He also justified, and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

And this *election is personal,* for He calleth out His children one by one by their names. He calleth them even as He leadeth out the stars and so He bringeth them every one to the Father's house above.

We have thus given a statement as to what this doctrine is. There we will leave it. Our present object is not so much to expound the doctrine, as to strike a blow or two at certain errors which are very common and which spring out of it. I know, dear friends, there are some who are so afraid of this doctrine that the mention of it produces alarm. If they were to meet a lion in their way, they would not be more terrified than they are when they see this doctrine in Scripture or hear it from the pulpit.

II. Therefore, secondly, we will NOTICE WHAT ARE THE DEFENCES OF THIS DOCTRINE and try, if we can, should you be laboring under any distress of mind about it, to remove your difficulties.

Will you please remember then that *this is not a point which you can understand at the commencement of spiritual and religious life?* You would not teach your children, I suppose, to say their prayers backwards and begin at “Amen,” and you are beginning at the wrong end when you want first of all to know your election instead of commencing with repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Election is a lesson for the more advanced students. Faith and hope must be learnt, first of all, in the infant class, to which we all must go if we would be wise unto salvation. Now, if a child should have a book of algebra put into his hand and should puzzle himself and say, “I shall never get an education, for I cannot understand this,” and then take down some ancient classic and say, “I cannot comprehend this,” you would say, “Dear child, you have nothing to do with these yet. Here is a sampler book for you—a primer. Here you have A, B, C, learn this first and then, step by step, you shall attain to the rest.” Even so it is with us. Simple trust in Christ is the first thing you have to understand, after that you shall know the high, the sublime, and the glorious doctrine of God’s decrees, but do not begin with these. You will mystify and ruin yourself, you will lose your way in a fog and get no good thereby.

Again, it is very certain, that whatever this doctrine may be—and we will have no dispute about it just now—*this doctrine cannot possibly be inconsistent with certain plain promises in God’s Word.* Such promises are these—“Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” Why, I might quote by the hour together some of these promises which are as wide as the poles, invitations that must not be narrowed, exhortations which are addressed to every man and woman under heaven, in which every one of them is bidden to hear and live. “Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.” You know the class of promises to which I allude. Now, these are the words of God which are for you, get hold of them, come to Jesus Christ with them in your hand and rest assured the doctrine of election, instead of pushing you back, shall stand like the servants about your father’s table to make music, while your whole being shall dance to the glorious tune, it shall be like a dish upon the table at the feast of the returning prodigal, of which you shall eat to the very full, it shall by no means repulse you or show anything to you which may keep you from hoping in Christ.

Once more, it is quite certain that, whatever it may be, *this doctrine of election does not deliver you from your duty.* Now what is your duty? “This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.” So much is this your absolute duty that, “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed.” This more than anything else is the reason of men’s condemnation. The Scripture says this is the one great sin. Of the Spirit of truth, we read that “when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin—of sin because they believe not on Me.” Very well, then, in as much as God has so put it, that He commands you this day to trust Christ and to believe on Him, that is what you have to see to and you may rest perfectly sure that falling back on the doctrine of election in order to exonerate you from what God commands you to perform is but a pitiful pretense. You are commended to believe and what God commands no doctrine may teach that it is unfit for you to do.

May God help you to believe, for here this doctrine comes not to excuse you. The Gospel commands you and election through the Holy Ghost enables you. It is your duty to believe, but no man ever was saved as a matter of duty, for that which saves is the gift of God. But your business now is with Christ only and not with the decrees of the Father, which are all in the keeping of Christ and shall presently be revealed to you. You have to go to Christ first and to His Father afterwards, for saith He, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." You must go round the cross to get to the decree, you must go round by redemption to get to election, there is no other way.

III. In the third place, let us see **WHAT ARE THE EVIDENCES OF ELECTION.** Our text says, very plainly too, that the apostle knew the election of the Thessalonians. How did he know it? The way by which the apostle knew it must be the method by which you and I are to know our election of God too.

We have known more than once in our day of some men who pretended to know their election by their impudence. They had got into their head the presumption that they were elected and though they lived on in sin and still did as they liked, they imagined they were God's chosen. This is what I call presuming upon election by sheer impudence.

We know of others, alas! who have imagined themselves to be elect, because of the visions that they have seen when they have been asleep or when they have been awake—for men have waking dreams—and they have brought these as evidences of their election. These are of as much value as cobwebs would be for a garment. They will be of as much service to you at the day of judgment as a thief's convictions would be to him if he were in need of a character to commend him to mercy. You may dream long enough before you dream yourself into heaven and you may have as many stupid notions in your head as there are romances in your circulating libraries, but because they are in your head, they are not therefore in God's book. We want a more sure word of testimony than this and if we have it not, God forbid that we should indulge our vain heart with the dainty thought that we are chosen of God. I have heard of one who said in an ale-house that he could say more than any of the rest, that he was one of God's children, meanwhile he drank deeper into intoxication than the rest, Surely he might have said, with an emphasis, that he was one of the devil's children, he would have been correct. When immoral men and men who live constantly in sin, prate about being God's children, we discern them at once. Just as we know a crab-tree when we see the fruit hanging upon it, we understand what spirit these men are of when we see their walk and conversation. Oh, it is detestable, loathsome above all loathsomeness, to hear men, whose characters in secret are infamous and whose lives are destitute of every Christian virtue, boasting as though they had the keys of heaven and could set up whomsoever they would and pull down whomsoever they might please. Blessed be God, we are not under their domination, for a more terrific set of tyrants than they are the world has never known and a more frightful reign of vice than they would inaugurate, if they had their way, I am sure villainy itself cannot conceive. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." If grace does not make us holy, teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, it is not worth the having. Brethren, if we are God's elect we must have some substantial evidence to attest it.

According to our text, what are these evidences? They seem to be four.

The first evidence appears to be the Word of God coming home with power. If you will turn to the verse you will soon see how the apostle says, "Our Gospel came not unto you in word only but also in power and in the Holy Ghost." The Gospel is preached in the ears of all, it only comes with power to some. The power that is in the Gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher, otherwise men would be the converters of souls. Nor does it lie in the preacher's learning, otherwise it would consist in the wisdom of man. The power which converts souls does not even lie in the preacher's simplicity or adaptation to his work, that is a secondary agency, but not the cause. Again, the power which converts souls does not even lie in the pathos which the speaker may employ. Men may weep to the tragic muse in a theater as well as to prophetic strains in a chapel. Their creature passions may be impressed through the acting of the stage as well as by the utterance of God's own servants. No, there is something more than this wanted and where it is absent all preaching is a nullity. We might preach till our tongues rotted, till we should exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless there were the mysterious power of the Holy Ghost going with it, changing the will of man. O sirs! we might as well preach to stone walls as preach to humanity unless the Holy Ghost be with the Word, to give it power to convert the soul. We are reminded of Mr. Rowland Hill, who once met a man in the street at night, not quite drunk, but almost so. The man said, "Mr. Hill, I am one of your converts." "Yes," said he, "I dare say you are one of mine, but if you were one of God's you would not be in the state in which you are now." Our converts are worth nothing. If they are converted by man they can be unconverted by man. If some charm or power of one preacher can bring them to Christ, some charm or power of another preacher can take them from Christ. True conversion is the work of the Holy Ghost and of the Holy Ghost alone.

Well, then, my hearers did you ever, when listening to the Word, feel a divine power coming with it? Never mind where you were, whether in Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, in this Tabernacle, or at some special service at one of the theatres, the place matters nothing. "Well," perhaps you will say, "I have felt some impression." Ah, but that may be wiped away. Have you ever felt something coming with the Word which you could not understand, which, while it wooed you and won your heart, smote you as though a sword had gone through you and that not with a flesh wound, but with a wound that divideth between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow, as if the truth were, as indeed it is, a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the hearts.

Those who are really God's elect can tell a tale something like this. "There was a time when the Word was to me like a great ten thonged-whip, my shoulders were stripped bare and every time the Word was preached it seemed to make a gash within my soul. I trembled, I saw God in arms against me, I understood that I was in debt to justice and could not pay, that I was involved in a controversy against my Maker and could not conquer. I saw myself stripped naked to my shame, leprous from head to foot, a bankrupt and a felon ready to be given over to a traitor's doom." Truly the Word came with power to your soul. "And," you continue, "I remember too when the truth came home to my heart and made me leap for very joy, for it took all my load away, it showed me Christ's power to save. I had known the truth before, but now I felt it. I had understood that Christ could save, but now that fact came home to me. I went to Jesus just as I was, I touched the hem of His garment, I was made whole. I found now that the Word was not a fiction—that it was the one reality. I had

listened scores of times and he that spake was as one that played a tune upon an instrument, but now he seemed to be dealing with me, putting his hand right into my heart and getting hold of me. He brought me first to God's judgment-seat and there I stood and heard the thunders roll, then he brought me to the mercy-seat and I saw the blood sprinkled on it and I went home triumphing because sin was washed away." Oh, again I ask you, did the Word ever come home with this power to your souls?

Since the day of your conversion has the Word ever rebuked you? Has it sometimes cut down your hopes! Do you sometimes, after hearing a sermon, feel as if it had been like a great hurricane bearing right through the forest of your thoughts, cleaving its own course, and leaving many a dead thing, that you thought alive, swept down to the ground? Do you feel, too, when you go home from the sanctuary, as if God Himself had been there, you did not know what else it could be. It could not have been the speaker nor the words he uttered, but the very God did come and look into your eyes and searched the thoughts of your mind, and turned your heart upside down and then filled it full again with His love and with His light, with His truth and with His joy, with His peace and with His desire after holiness? Is it so with you? Where the Word is not with power to your souls you lack the proof of election.

Remember, I do not say that it will be as always. You must not expect every time that God will speak with you, in fact, the preacher himself fails often and is painfully conscious of it. How shall one man always speak without sometimes feeling that he himself is not in a fit frame to be God's mouthpiece. But though it be a clown from the country, if he preach God's Word, the Spirit will go with it. It is not the clown, nor yet the archbishop that does the work, it is the Word that is quick and powerful. Your evidence of election is blotted and blurred, unless the Word has come to you with demonstration of the Spirit and with power. People come and hear sermons in this place and then they go out and say, "How did you like it"—as if that signified to anybody—"How did you like it?" and one says, "Oh, very well," and another says, "Oh, not at all." Do you think we live on the breath of your nostrils? Do you believe that God's servants, if they are really His, care far what you think of them? Nay, verily, but if you should reply, "I enjoyed the sermon," they are inclined to say, "Then we must have been unfaithful or else you would have been angry, we must surely have slurred over something or else the Word would have cut your conscience as with the jagged edges of a knife. You would have said, 'I did not think how I liked it, I was thinking how I liked myself and about my own state before God, that was the matter that exercised me, not whether he preached well, but whether I stood accepted in Christ or whether I was a castaway.'" My dear hearers, are you learning to hear like that? If you are not, if going to church and to chapel be to you like going to an oratorio, or like listening to some orator who speaks upon temporal matters, then you lack the evidence of election, the Word has not come to your souls with power.

But there is yet a second evidence of election. *Those whom God has chosen receive the Word "in much assurance."* They do not all receive it with full assurance, that is a grace they get afterwards—but they receive it with much assurance. There are some professors who go upon very strange principles. It is indeed somewhat difficult to know what principles are enforced and acknowledged in this age, for there are persons whose principles allow them to say black and white at the same time, and there are certain persons whose religious principles are not much unlike this.

They put a hymn book in their pockets when they are going to meeting, they put a comic song book in their pockets when they are going somewhere else, they can hold with the hare and run with the hounds. Such people as these never have any very great confidence in their religion and it is very proper that they should not, for their religion is not worth the time they spend in making a profession of it. But the true Christian, when he gets hold of principles, keeps them and there is no mistake about the grip with which he maintains his hold of them. "Ah!" saith he, "that Word which I have heard with my ears is the very truth of God and it is true to me, real and substantial to me, and here I clasp it with both my hands, with a clasp that neither time, nor tribulation, nor death, shall ever cause me to let go." To a Christian man, his religion is a part of himself, he believes the truth, not because he has been told it or taught it by mother or friend, but because it is true to him in his inmost soul. He is like the servant girl who, when she could not answer her infidel master, said, "Sir, I cannot answer you, but I have a something in here that would if it could speak." There is "much assurance."

Sinners, who have once felt their need of a Savior, feel very much assurance about His preciousness and saints, that have once found Him precious, have very much assurance about His divinity, about His atonement, about His everlasting love, about His immortal dignity as a prophet, a priest, and a king. They are sure of it. I know some persons who say if a man speaks positively, he is dogmatical. Glorious old dogmatism, when wilt thou come back again to earth? It is these "ifs," and "buts," and qualifications, these "perhapses" and "maybe so's" that have ruined our pulpits. Look at Luther, when he stood up for the glory of his God, was there ever such a dogmatist? "I believe it," he said, "and therefore I speak it." From that day, when on Pilate's staircase he was trying to creep up and down the stairs to win heaven, when the sentence out of the musty folio came before him, "Justified by faith, we have peace with God," that man was as sure that works could not save him as he was of his own existence. Now, if he had come out and said, "Gentlemen, I have a theory to propound that may be correct, excuse my doing so," and so on, the Papacy would have been dominant to this day. But he knew God had said it and he felt that that was God's own way to his own soul, and he could not help dogmatizing with that glorious force of secession which soon laid his foes prostrate at his feet.

Now have *you* received the Gospel "with much assurance?" If you have and you can say, "Christ is mine, I trust in Him, and though I may have sometimes doubts about my own interest in Him, yet I do know by experience in my soul that He is a precious Christ—I know not by 'Paley's Evidences' nor by 'Butler's Analogy,' but I know by my heart's inward evidence, I know by the analogy of my own soul's experience, that the truth which I have received is no cunningly devised fable, but something that came from God to draw my soul up to God"—that is another evidence of election. If you have that, never mind the rest, I hardly care whether you believe the doctrine of election or not, you are elect. As I have sometimes told a brother who has denied the doctrine of final perseverance, when I have seen his holy life, "Never mind, my brother, you will persevere to the end and you will prove the doctrine that you do not believe. You may not be able to receive the doctrine I now preach, but if such has been your experience, when you get to heaven you will wake up and say, 'Well, I am one of the elect. I made a deal of fuss about it while on the earth and I will make a deal of music about it now that I have got to heaven, and I will sing more sweetly and loudly than all the rest, "Unto Him that hath loved me and washed me from my sins in His blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever."'"

But there is a third evidence. *Those who are chosen of the Lord desire to be like Him.* "Ye became followers of us and of the Lord," the apostle says in the text, by which he does not mean that they said, "I am of Paul, I am of Silas, I am of Timothy," but that they imitated Paul so far as he imitated Christ. Thomas a Kempis wrote a book about the Imitation of Christ, and a blessed book in some respects it is, but I would like the Holy Spirit to write in your hearts the imitation of Christ. It shall be to you a sweet proof that you are chosen of God. Are you Christlike or do you want to be? Can you forgive your enemy and can you love him and do him good? Can you say tonight, "I am no more any man's enemy than is the babe that is new born?" and do you desire now to live unselfishly, to live for others, to live for God? Are you prayerful? Do you come to God in prayer as Jesus did? Are you careful of your words and of your acts as Christ was? I do not ask you if you are perfect, but I do ask whether you follow the Perfect One? We are to be followers of Christ, if not with equal steps, still with steps that would be equal if they could. If we follow Christ, that will be to others one of the surest proofs of our election, though perhaps to ourselves, if we be humble-minded, it will be no proof, since we shall rather see our blemishes than our virtues and mourn over our sins more than we rejoice in our graces. If a man follow not Christ, those who look on may be safe enough in concluding that, whatever he may say about election and however much he may prate about it, he is not the Lord's. On that point I shall not say anything more, because I have already enlarged upon it in a former part of the discourse.

In the last place I will say, *the fourth evidence is the existence of spiritual joy in spiritual service.* If you look further, it seems that those of whose election the apostle was sure, received the Word of God "in much affliction," but "with joy in the Holy Ghost." What say you to this, you whose religion consists of a slavish attendance upon forms that you detest? See how many there are who go to a place of worship just because it is not respectable to stay away, but who often wish it were. And when many of your Christians get on the Continent, where is the Sabbath with them then? Where is then their care for God's house? See, too, with what misery some people at home go up to the house of the Lord. Why? Because they have come to regard it as a place where they ought to be very solemn. It is not a home to them, it is a prison. How different it is with your children when they come home for their holidays. How do they come into their father's house? Dull, demure, as if they could not speak? No, bless their little hearts, they come running up to their father's knees, so glad to be there, so glad to be home. That is how a man whose religion is his delight comes up to the house of the Lord. He feels that it is his Father's house. He would be reverent, for his Father is God, but he must be happy, for God is his Father.

See again the Christian when he goes to his closet. Ungodly persons will not go there at all or, if they do, it is because they want to win heaven by it. But see, they go through their dreary prayers and what a dreary thing it must be for a man to pray when he never expects to be heard and when he has no spirit of prayer! It is like a horse going round a mill, grinding for somebody else and never getting any farther, doing the same tomorrow, the same the day after, and ever on and on. Sometimes as the little church bells go of a morning in certain churches, to fetch people out, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, there are some persons to be found there to early prayers and they go to evening prayers too and a very good thing this would be, if those who attend went there with holy joy, but there is the sexton and he says it is a great trouble to be always opening the doors like

that when nobody comes except three old women that have got alms-houses and two that expect them and are therefore there. Do you think that an acceptable service to God? But they who go because they would not stay away if they could, they who worship God because it is an instinct and a pleasure, a holy thing and honorable—these are men who delight in God’s Word and they give the best evidence of being chosen of God.

Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, who make your faces miserable that ye may appear unto men to fast. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that reads the heart asketh not that your head may hang down like a bulrush, but that ye may do deeds of mercy and walk humbly with your God and ye who can delight yourselves in your God shall have the desires of your heart. Ye that rejoice in the Lord always and triumph in His names, shall go from strength to strength and going at last to glory, you shall find that you came there as the result of His divine purpose and decree, and you shall give Him all the praise.

But now, I think, I hear some say, “Oh, I want to know whether I am elect. I cannot say that the Word ever came to me with power, I cannot say I received it in much assurance, I cannot say I am a follower of Christ, I cannot say I have received the Word with joy.” Well, dear brother, then leave that question alone. Instead of that, let me propound another, “Dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Wilt thou now trust Christ to save thy souls?” He will do it, if, just as thou art, whoever thou mayest be, thou wilt come to Christ and give thyself up to him to save thee, to have thee, to hold thee for better, for worse, in life and through death. The moment thou believest thou art saved, that act of faith, through the precious blood of Christ will put away your every sin. You will not begin to be saved, you *are* saved. You will not be put into a savable condition, but you shall be saved the moment you believe—completely and perfectly saved. “Oh,” saith one, “I would I could trust Christ.” Sayest thou so, man? “Whosoever will, let him take,” let him trust, Christ. God help thee now to do it. Trust Jesus and you are saved. This is addressed to every one of you without exception, for “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” The Lord help you to trust Jesus and then you may go on your way with joy, “knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.”

(Taken from Spurgeon’s *Expository Encyclopedia*, Volume 7)

Speeches at Home and Abroad

Mr. Spurgeon was in great demand to speak at all sorts of meetings and special sessions. (He never visited the United States, although repeatedly offered several thousand dollars to do so.) These speeches (or sermons) were delivered at such meetings as the British and Foreign Bible Society Annual Meeting, the New Year’s Assembly of London City Missionaries, the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, the Baptist Union, the London Baptist Association, the Baptist College at Bristol, etc. Eighteen messages, 190 pages, paperback.

Particular Redemption

No. 181

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 28, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS**

“Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many”—Matthew 20:28

WHEN first it was my duty to occupy this pulpit and preach in this hall, my congregation assumed the appearance of an irregular mass of persons collected from all the streets of this city to listen to the Word. ‘Twas then simply an evangelist, preaching to many who had not heard the Gospel before. By the grace of God, the most blessed change has taken place and now, instead of having an irregular multitude gathered together, my congregation is as fixed as that of any minister in the whole city of London. I can from this pulpit observe the countenances of my friends, who have occupied the same places, as nearly as possible, for these many months and I have the privilege and the pleasure of knowing that a very large proportion, certainly three-fourths of the persons who meet together here, are not persons who stray hither from curiosity, but are my regular and constant hearers.

And observe, that my character also has been changed. From being an evangelist, it is now my business to become your pastor. You were once a motley group assembled to listen to me, but now we are bound together by the ties of love. Through association we have grown to love and respect each other and now you have become the sheep of my pasture and members of my flock and I have now the privilege of assuming the position of a pastor in this place, as well as in the chapel where I labor in the evening. I think, then, it will strike the judgment of every person that as both the congregation and the office have now changed, the teaching itself should in some measure suffer a difference. It has been my wont to address you from the simple truths of the Gospel, I have very seldom, in this place, attempted to dive into the deep things of God. A text which I have thought suitable for my congregation in the evening, I should not have made the subject of discussion in this place in the morning. There are many high and mysterious doctrines which I have often taken the opportunity of handling in my own place, that I have not taken the liberty of introducing here, regarding you as a company of people casually gathered together to hear the Word.

But now, since the circumstances are changed, the teaching will be changed also. I shall not now simply confine myself to the doctrine of the faith or the teaching of believer’s baptism, I shall not stay upon the surface of matters, but shall venture, as God shall guide me, to enter into those things that lie at the basis of the religion that we hold so dear. I shall not blush to preach before you the doctrine of God’s divine sovereignty. I shall not stagger to preach in the most unreserved and unguarded manner the doctrine of election. I shall not be afraid to propound the great truth of the final perseverance of the saints. I shall not withhold that undoubted truth of Scripture the effectual calling of God’s elect. I shall endeavor, as God shall help me, to keep back nothing from you who have become my flock. Seeing that many of you have now “tasted that the Lord is gracious,” we will endeavor to go through the whole system of the doctrines of grace, that saints may be edified and built up in their most holy faith.

I begin this morning with the doctrine of redemption. “He gave his life a ransom for many.”

The doctrine of redemption is one of the most important doctrines of the system of faith. A mistake on this point will inevitably lead to a mistake through the entire system of our belief.

Now, you are aware that there are different theories of redemption. All Christians hold that Christ died to redeem, but all Christians do not teach the same redemption. We differ as to the nature of atonement and as to the design of redemption. For instance, the Arminian holds that Christ, when he died, did not die with an intent to save any particular person and they teach that Christ's death does not in itself secure, beyond doubt, the salvation of any one man living. They believe that Christ died to make the salvation of all men possible or that by the doing of something else, any man who pleases may attain unto eternal life, consequently, they are obliged to hold that if man's will would not give way and voluntarily surrender to grace, then Christ's atonement would be unavailing. They hold that there was no particularity and speciality in the death of Christ. Christ died, according to them, as much for Judas in hell as for Peter who mounted to heaven. They believe that for those who are consigned to eternal fire, there was as true and real a redemption made as for those who now stand before the throne of the Most High. Now, we believe no such thing. We hold that Christ, when he died, had an object in view and that object will most assuredly and beyond a doubt, be accomplished. We measure the design of Christ's death by the effect of it. If anyone asks us, "What did Christ design to do by His death?" we answer that question by asking him another—"What has Christ done or what will Christ do by His death?" For we declare that the measure of the effect of Christ's love, is the measure of the design of it. We cannot so belie our reason as to think that the intention of Almighty God could be frustrated or that the design of so great a thing as the atonement, can by any way whatever, be missed of. We hold—we are not afraid to say what we believe—that Christ came into this world with the intention of saving "a multitude which no man can number," and we believe that as the result of this, every person for whom he died must, beyond the shadow of a doubt, be cleansed from sin and stand, washed in blood, before the Father's throne. We do not believe that Christ made any effectual atonement for those who are forever damned, we dare not think that the blood of Christ was ever shed with the intention of saving those whom God foreknew never could be saved and some of whom were even in hell when Christ, according to some men's account, died to save them.

I have thus just stated our theory of redemption and hinted at the differences which exist between two great parties in the professing church. It shall be now my endeavor to show the greatness of the redemption of Christ Jesus and by so doing, I hope to be enabled by God's Spirit, to bring out the whole of the great system of redemption, so that it may be understood by us all, even if all of us cannot receive it. For you must bear this in mind, that some of you, perhaps, may be ready to dispute things which I assert, but you will remember that this is nothing to me. I shall at all times teach those things which I hold to be true, without let or hindrance from any man breathing. You have the like liberty to do the same in your own places and to preach your own views in your own assemblies, as I claim the right to preach mine, fully and without hesitation.

Christ Jesus "gave His life a ransom for many," and by that ransom He wrought out for us a great redemption. I shall endeavor to show the greatness of this redemption, measuring it in five ways. We shall note its greatness, first of

all, *from the heinousness of our own guilt*, from which He hath delivered us, secondly, we shall measure His redemption by the sternness of divine justice, thirdly, we shall measure it *by the price which He paid*, the pangs which He endured, then we shall endeavor to magnify it by noting *the deliverance which He actually wrought out*, and we shall close by noticing *the vast number for whom this redemption is made*, who in our text are described as “many.”

I. First, then, we shall see that the redemption of Christ was no little thing, if we do but measure it, first, by our OWN SINS. My brethren, for a moment look at the hole of the pit whence ye were digged and the quarry whence ye were hewn. Ye, who have been washed and cleansed, and sanctified, pause for a moment and look back at the former state of your ignorance, the sins in which you indulged, the crimes into which you were hurried, the continual rebellion against God in which it was your habit to live. One sin can ruin a soul forever, it is not in the power of the human mind to grasp the infinity of evil that cumbereth in the bowels of one solitary sin. There is a very infinity of guilt couched in one transgression against the majesty of heaven. If, then, you and I had sinned but once, nothing but an atonement infinite in value could ever have washed away the sin and made satisfaction for it.

But has it been once that you and I have transgressed? Nay, my brethren, our iniquities are more in number than the hairs of our head, They have mightily prevailed against us. We might as well attempt to number the sands upon the sea-shore or count the drops which in their aggregate do make the ocean, as attempt to count the transgressions which have marked our lives.

Let us go back to our childhood. How early we began to sin! How we disobeyed our parents and even then learned to make our mouth the house of lies! In our childhood, how full of wantonness and waywardness we were! Headstrong and giddy, we preferred our own way and burst through all restraints which godly parents put upon us. Nor did our youth sober us. Wildly we dashed, many of us, into the very midst of the dance of sin. We became leaders in iniquity, we not only sinned ourselves, but we taught others to sin. And as for your manhood, ye that have entered upon the prime of life, ye may be more outwardly sober, ye may be somewhat free from the dissipation of your youth, but how little has the man become bettered! Unless the sovereign grace of God hath renewed us, we are now no better than we were when we began and even if it has operated, we have still sins to repent of, for we all lay our mouths in the dust and cast ashes on our head and cry, “Unclean! Unclean !”

And oh! ye that lean wearily on your staff, the support of your old age, have ye not sins still clinging to your garments? Are your lives as white as the snowy hairs that crown your head? Do you not still feel that transgression besmears the skirts of your robe and mars its spotlessness? How often are you now plunged into the ditch, till your own clothes do abhor you! Cast your eyes over the sixty, the seventy, the eighty years, during which God hath spared your lives and can ye for a moment think it possible, that ye can number up your innumerable transgressions or compute the weight of the crimes which you have committed? O ye stars of heaven! the astronomer may measure your distance and tell your height, but O ye sins of mankind! ye surpass all thought. O ye lofty mountains! the home of the tempest, the birthplace of the storm! man may climb your summits and stand wonderingly upon your snows, but ye hills of sin! ye tower higher than our thoughts, ye chasms of transgressions! ye are deeper than our imagination dares to dive. Do you accuse me of slandering human nature? It is because you know it not. If God had once

manifested your heart to yourself, you would bear me witness, that so far from exaggerating, my poor words fail to describe the desperateness of our evil.

Oh! if we could each of us look into our hearts today—if our eyes could be turned within, so as to see the iniquity that is graven as with the point of the diamond upon our stony hearts, we should then say to the minister, that however he may depict the desperateness of guilt, yet can he not by any means surpass it. How great then, beloved, must be the ransom of Christ, when he saved us from all these sins! The men for whom Jesus died, however great their sin, when they believe, are sanctified from all their transgressions. Though they may have indulged in every vice and every lust which Satan could suggest and which human nature could perform, yet once believing, all their guilt is washed away. Year after year may have coated them with blackness, till their sin hath become of double dye, but in one moment of faith, one triumphant moment of confidence in Christ, the great redemption takes away the guilt of numerous years. Nay, more, if it were possible for all the sins that men have done, in thought or word or deed, since worlds were made or time began, to meet on one poor head—the great redemption is all-sufficient to take all these sins away and wash the sinner whiter than the driven snow.

Oh! who shall measure the heights of the Saviour's all-sufficiency? First, tell how high is sin and then, remember that as Noah's flood prevailed over the tops of earth's mountains, so the flood of Christ's redemption prevails over the tops of the mountains of our sins. In heaven's courts there are today men that once were murderers and thieves and drunkards and whoremongers and blasphemers and persecutors, but they have been washed—they have been sanctified. Ask them whence the brightness of their robes hath come and where their purity hath been achieved and they, with united breath, tell you that they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. O ye troubled consciences! O ye weary and heavy-laden ones! O ye that are groaning on account of sin! the great redemption now proclaimed to you is all-sufficient for your wants, and though your numerous sins exceed the stars that deck the sky, here is an atonement made for them all—a river which can overflow the whole of them and carry them away from you forever.

This, then, is the first measure of the atonement—the greatness of our guilt.

II. Now, secondly, we must measure the great redemption BY THE STERNNESS OF DIVINE JUSTICE. "God is love," always loving, but my next proposition does not at all interfere with this assertion. *God is sternly just*, inflexibly severe in His dealings with mankind. The God of the Bible is not the God of some men's imagination, who thinks so little of sin that He passes it by without demanding any punishment for it. He is not the God of the men who imagine that our transgressions are such little things, such mere peccadilloes that the God of heaven winks at them and suffers them to die forgotten. No Jehovah, Israel's God, hath declared concerning Himself, "The Lord thy God is a jealous God." It is His own declaration, "I will by no means clear the guilty." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Learn ye, my friends, to look upon God as being as severe in His justice as if He were not loving and yet as loving as if He were not severe. His love does not diminish His justice nor does His justice, in the least degree, make warfare upon His love. The two things are sweetly linked together in the atonement of Christ. But mark, we can never understand the fullness of the atonement till we have first grasped the Scriptural truth of God's immense justice. There was never an ill word spoken, nor an ill thought conceived, nor an evil deed done for which God will not have punishment from some one or another. He

will either have satisfaction from you or else from Christ. If you have no atonement to bring through Christ, you must forever lie paying the debt which you never can pay, in eternal misery, for as surely as God is God, He will sooner lose His Godhead than suffer one sin to go unpunished or one particle of rebellion unrevenged. You may say that this character of God is cold and stern and severe. I cannot help what you say of it, it is nevertheless true. Such is the God of the Bible and though we repeat it is true that He is love, it is no more true that He is love than that He is full of justice for every good thing meets in God and is carried to perfection, whilst love reaches to consummate loveliness, justice reaches to the sternness of inflexibility in Him. He has no bend, no warp in His character, no attribute so predominates as to cast a shadow upon the other. Love hath its full sway and justice hath no narrower limit than His love.

Oh! then, beloved, think how great must have been the substitution of Christ, when it satisfied God for all the sins of His people. For man's sin, God demands eternal punishment and God hath prepared a hell into which He casts those who die impenitent. Oh! my brethren, can ye think what must have been the greatness of the atonement which was the substitution for all this agony which God would have cast upon us, if He had not poured it upon Christ. Look! Look! Look with solemn eye through the shades that part us from the world of spirits and see that house of misery which men call hell! Ye cannot endure the spectacle. Remember that in that place there are spirits forever paying their debt to divine justice, but though some of them have been there these four thousand years sweltering in the flame, they are no nearer a discharge than when they began, and when ten thousand times ten thousand years shall have rolled away, they will no more have made satisfaction to God for their guilt than they have done up till now.

And now can you grasp the thought of the greatness of your Saviour's mediation when He paid your debt and paid it all at once so that there now remaineth not one farthing of debt owing from Christ's people to their God, except a debt of love. To justice, the believer oweth nothing, though he owed originally so much that eternity would not have been long enough to suffice for the paying of it, yet, in one moment Christ did pay it all, so that the man who believeth is entirely sanctified from all guilt and set free from all punishment, through what Jesus hath done. Think ye, then, how great His atonement if He hath done all this.

I must just pause here and utter another sentence. There are times when God the Holy Spirit shows to men the sternness of justice in their own consciences. There is a man here today who has just been cut to the heart with a sense of sin. He was once a free man, a libertine, in bondage to none, but now the arrow of the Lord sticks fast in his heart and he has come under a bondage worse than that of Egypt. I see him today, he tells me that his guilt haunts him everywhere. The negro slave, guided by the pole star, may escape the cruelties of his master and reach another land where he may be free, but this man feels that if he were to wander the wide world over, he could not escape from guilt. He that hath been bound by many irons, can yet find a file that can unbind him and set him at liberty, but this man tells you that he has tried prayers and tears and good works, but cannot get the chains from his wrist, he feels as a lost sinner still, and emancipation, do what he may, seems to him impossible. The captive in the dungeon is sometimes free in thought, though not in body, through his dungeon walls his spirit leaps and flies to the stars, free as the eagle that is no man's slave. But this man is a slave in his thoughts, he cannot think one bright, one happy thought. His soul is cast down within him, the iron has entered into his spirit and he is sorely afflicted. The captive sometimes forgets his slavery in

sleep, but this man cannot sleep, by night he dreams of hell, by day he seems to feel it. He bears a burning furnace of flame within his heart and do what he may he cannot quench it. He has been confirmed, he has been baptized, he takes the sacrament, he attends a church, or he frequents a chapel, he regards every rule and obeys every canon, but the fire burns still. He gives his money to the poor, he is ready to give his body to be burned, he feeds the hungry, he visits the sick, he clothes the naked, but the fire burns still and do what he may he cannot quench it.

O, ye sons of weariness and woe, this that you feel is God's justice in full pursuit of you and happy are you that you feel this, for now to you I preach this glorious Gospel of the blessed God. You are the man for whom Jesus Christ has died, for you he has satisfied stern justice and now all you have to do to obtain peace and conscience, is just to say to your adversary who pursues you "Look you there! Christ died for me, my good works would not stop you, my tears would not appease you. Look you there! There stands the cross, there hangs the bleeding God! Hark to His death-shriek! See Him die! Art thou not satisfied now?" And when thou hast done that, thou shalt have the peace of God which passeth all understanding, which shall keep thy heart and mind through Jesus Christ thy Lord and then shalt thou know the greatness of His atonement.

III. In the third place, we may measure the greatness of Christ's redemption by THE PRICE HE PAID.

It is impossible for us to know how great were the pangs of our Savior, but yet some glimpse of them will afford us a little idea of the greatness of the price which He paid for us. O Jesus, who shall describe Thine agony?

***"Come, all ye springs,
Dwell in my head and eyes, come, clouds and rain!
My grief hath need of all the wat'ry things,
That nature hath produc'd.***

***Let ev'ry vein
Suck up a river to supply mine eyes,
My weary weeping eyes, too dry for me,
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies
To bear them out and with my state agree."***

O Jesus! Thou wast a sufferer from Thy birth, a man of sorrows and grief's acquaintance. Thy sufferings tell on Thee in one perpetual shower, until the last dread hour of darkness. Then not in a shower, but in a cloud, a torrent, a cataract of grief Thine agonies did dash upon Thee. See Him yonder! It is a night of frost and cold, but He is all abroad. It is night. He sleeps not, but He is in prayer. Hark to His groans! Did ever man wrestle as He wrestles? Go and look in His face! Was ever such suffering depicted upon mortal countenance as you can there behold? Hear His own words? "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He rises. He is seized by traitors and is dragged away.

Let us step to the place where just now He was engaged in agony. O God! and what is this we see? What is this that stains the ground? It is blood! Whence came it? Had He some wound which oozed afresh through His dire struggle? Ah! no. "He sweat, as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground." O agonies that surpass the word by which we name you! O sufferings that cannot be compassed in

language! What could ye be that thus could work upon the Saviour's blessed frame and force a bloody sweat to fall from His entire body?

This is the beginning, this is the opening of the tragedy. Follow Him mournfully, thou sorrowing church, to witness the consummation of it. He is hurried through the streets. He is first to one bar and then to another. He is cast and condemned before the Sanhedrin. He is mocked by Herod. He is tried by Pilate. His sentence is pronounced—"Let Him be crucified!" And now the tragedy cometh to its height. His back is bared. He is tied to the low Roman column, the bloody scourge ploughs furrows on His back and with one stream of blood His back is red—a crimson robe that proclaims Him emperor of misery. He is taken into the guard room. His eyes are bound and then they buffet Him and say, "Prophecy, who it was that smote Thee?"

They spit into His face. They plait a crown of thorns and press His temples with it. They array Him in a purple robe. They bow their knees and mock Him. All silently He sits, He answers not a word. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again," but committed Himself unto Him whom He came to serve. And now they take Him and with many a jeer and jibe, they drive Him from the place and hurry Him through the streets. Emaciated by continual fastings and depressed with agony of spirit, He stumbles beneath His cross. Daughters of Jerusalem! He faints in your streets. They raise Him up, they put His cross upon another's shoulders, and they urge Him on, perhaps with many a spear-prick, till at last He reaches the mount of doom. Rough soldiers seize Him and hurl Him on His back. The transverse wood is laid beneath Him. His arms are stretched to reach the necessary distance, the nails are grasped, four hammers at one moment drive four nails through the tenderest parts of His body, and there He lies upon His own place of execution dying on His cross. It is not done yet. The cross is lifted by the rough soldiers. There is the socket prepared for it. It is dashed into its place. They fill up the place with earth and there it stands.

But see the Saviour's limbs, how they quiver! Every bone has been put out of joint by the dashing of the cross into that socket! How He weeps! How He sighs! How He sobs! Nay, more, hark how at last He shrieks in agony, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" O sun, no wonder thou didst shut thine eye and look no longer upon a deed so cruel! O rocks! no wonder that ye did melt and rend your hearts with sympathy, when your Creator died! Never man suffered as this man suffered. Even death itself relented and many of those who had been in their graves arose and came into the city. This, however, is but the outward. Believe me, brethren, the inward was far worse. What our Savior suffered in His body was nothing, compared to what He endured in His soul You cannot guess and I cannot help you to guess, what He endured within. Suppose for one moment—to repeat a sentence I have often used—suppose a man who has passed into hell—suppose his eternal torment could all be brought into one hour and then suppose it could be multiplied by the number of the saved, which is a number past all human enumeration. Can you now think what a vast aggregate of misery there would have been in the sufferings of all God's people, if they had been punished through all eternity? And recollect that Christ had to suffer an equivalent for all the hells of all His redeemed. I can never express that thought better than by using those oft—repeated words. It seemed as if hell was put into His cup, He seized it and, "At one tremendous draught of love, He drank damnation dry." So that there was nothing left of all the pangs and miseries of hell for His people ever to endure. I say not that He suffered the same, but He did endure an equivalent for all this and gave God the satisfaction for all the sins of all

His people and consequently gave Him an equivalent for all their punishment. Now can ye dream, can ye guess the great redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ?

IV. I shall be very brief upon the next head. The fourth way of measuring the Savior's agonies is this, we must compute them by THE GLORIOUS DELIVERANCE WHICH HE HAS EFFECTED.

Rise up, believer, stand up in thy place and this day testify to the greatness of what the Lord hath done for thee! Let me tell it for thee. I will tell thy experience and mine in one breath. Once my soul was laden with sin, I had revolted against God and grievously transgressed. The terrors of the law got hold upon me, the pangs of conviction seized me. I saw myself guilty. I looked to heaven and I saw an angry God sworn to punish me, I looked beneath me and I saw a yawning hell ready to devour me. I sought by good works to satisfy my conscience, but all in vain. I endeavored by attending to the ceremonies of religion to appease the pangs that I felt within, but all without effect. My soul was exceeding sorrowful almost unto death. I could have said with the ancient mourner, "My soul chooseth strangling and death rather than life." This was the great question that always perplexed me. "I have sinned, God must punish me, how can He be just if He does not? Then, since He is just, what is to become of me?" At last, mine eye turned to that sweet word which says, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin." I took that text to my chamber. I sat there and meditated. I saw one hanging on a cross. It was my Lord Jesus. There was the thorn-crown and there the emblems of unequalled and peerless misery. I looked upon Him and my thoughts recalled that word which says. "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Then said I within myself, "Did this man die for sinners? I am a sinner, then He died for me. Those He died for He will save. He died for sinners. I am a sinner, He died for me. He will save me." My soul relied upon that truth. I looked to Him and as I "viewed the flowing of His soul-redeeming blood," my spirit rejoiced, for I could say,

***"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to this cross I cling,
Naked look to Him for dress,
Helpless, come to Him for grace!
Black, I to this fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior or I die!"***

And now, believer, you shall tell the rest. The moment that you believed, your burden rolled from your shoulder and you became light as air. Instead of darkness you had light, for the garments of heaviness, you had the robes of praise. Who shall tell your joy since then? You have sung on earth hymns of heaven and in your peaceful soul you have anticipated the eternal Sabbath of the redeemed. Because you have believed you have entered into rest. Yes, tell it the wide world over, they that believe, by Jesus' death, are justified from all things from which they could not be freed by the works of the law. Tell it in heaven, that none can lay anything to the charge of God's elect. Tell it upon earth, that God's redeemed are free from sin in Jehovah's sight. Tell it even in hell, that God's elect can never come there, for Christ hath died for them and who is he that shall condemn them?

V. I have hurried over that to come to the last point, which is the sweetest of all. Jesus Christ, we are told in our text, came into the world "to give His life a ransom for

many.” The greatness of Christ’s redemption may be measured by the EXTENT OF THE DESIGN OF IT. He gave His life “a ransom for many.” I must now return to that controverted point again. We are often told (I mean those of us who are commonly nicknamed by the title of Calvinists—and we are not very much ashamed of that, we think that Calvin, after all, knew more about the Gospel than almost any man who has ever lived, uninspired)—We are often told that we limit the atonement of Christ, because we say that Christ has not made a satisfaction for all men or all men would be saved. Now, our reply to this is, that, on the other hand, our opponents limit it, we do not. The Arminians say, Christ died for all men. Ask them what they mean by it. Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of all men? They say, “No, certainly not.” We ask them the next question—Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of any man in particular? They answer, “No.” They are obliged to admit this if they are consistent. They say “No, Christ has died that any man may be saved if”—and then follow certain conditions of salvation. We say, then, we will just go back to the old statement—Christ did not die so as beyond a doubt to secure the salvation of anybody, did he? You must say, “No,” you are obliged to say so, for you believe that even after a man has been pardoned, He may yet fall from grace and perish. Now, who is it that limits the death of Christ? Why, you. You say that Christ did not die so as to infallibly secure the salvation of anybody. We beg your pardon, when you say we limit Christ’s death, we say, “No, my dear sir, it is you that do it. We say Christ so died that He infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number, who through Christ’s death not only may be saved, but are saved, must be saved, and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved. You are welcome to your atonement, you may keep it. We will never renounce ours for the sake of it.

Now, beloved, when you hear anyone laughing or jeering at a limited atonement, you may tell Him this. General atonement is like a great wide bridge with only half an arch, it does not go across the stream. It only professes to go half way, it does not secure the salvation of anybody. Now, I had rather put my foot upon a bridge as narrow as Hungerford, which went all the way across, than on a bridge that was as wide as the world, if it did not go all the way across the stream. I am told it is my duty to say that all men have been redeemed and I am told that there is a Scriptural warrant for it—“Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” Now, that looks like a very, very great argument indeed on the other side of the question. For instance, look here. “The whole world is gone after Him.” Did all the world go after Christ? “Then went all Judea and were baptized of Him in Jordan.” Was all Judea or all Jerusalem baptized in Jordan? “Ye are of God, little children,” and “the whole world lieth in the wicked one.” Does “the whole world” there mean everybody? If so, how was it, then, that there were some who were “of God?” The words “world” and “all” are used in some seven or eight senses in Scripture and it is very rarely that “all” means all persons, taken individually. The words are generally used to signify that Christ has redeemed some of all sorts—some Jews, some Gentiles, some rich, some poor, and has not restricted His redemption to either Jew or Gentile.

Leaving controversy, however, I will now answer a question. Tell me then, sir, who did Christ die for? Will you answer me a question or two and I will tell you whether He died for *you*. Do you want a Savior? Do you feel that you need a Savior? Are you this morning conscious of sin? Has the Holy Spirit taught you that you are lost? Then Christ died for you and you will be saved. Are you this morning conscious that you have no hope in the world but Christ? Do you feel that you of yourself

cannot offer an atonement that can satisfy God's justice? Have you given up all confidence in yourselves? And can you say upon your bended knees, "Lord, save or I perish?" Christ died for you. If you are saying this morning, "I am as good as I ought to be, I can get to heaven by my own good works," then, remember, the Scripture says of Jesus, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." So long as you are in that state, I have no atonement to preach to you. But if this morning you feel guilty, wretched, conscious of your guilt, and are ready to take Christ to be your only Savior, I can not only say to you that you may be saved, but what is better still, that you will be saved. When you are stripped of everything but hope in Christ, when you are prepared to come empty-handed and take Christ to be your all and to be yourself nothing at all, then you may look up to Christ and you may say, "Thou dear, Thou bleeding Lamb of God! Thy griefs were endured for me, by Thy stripes I am healed and by Thy sufferings I am pardoned." And then see what peace of mind you will have for if Christ has died for you, you cannot be lost. God will not punish twice for one thing. If God punished Christ for your sin, He will never punish you. "Payment, God's justice cannot twice demand, first, at the bleeding surety's hand and then again at mine." We can today, if we believe in Christ, march to the very throne of God, stand there and if it is said, "Art thou guilty?" We can say, "Yes, guilty." But if the question is put, "What have you to say why you should not be punished for your guilt," we can answer, "Great God, Thy justice and Thy love are both our guarantees that Thou wilt not punish us for sin, for didst Thou not punish Christ for sin for us? How canst Thou, then, be just—how canst Thou be God at all, if Thou dost punish Christ the substitute and then punish man himself afterwards?" Your only question is, "Did Christ die for me?" And the only answer we can give is—"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world to save sinners." Can you write your name down among the sinners—not among the complimentary sinners, but among those that feel it, bemoan it, lament it, seek mercy on account of it? Are you a sinner? That felt, that known, that professed, you are now invited to believe that Jesus Christ died for you, because you are a sinner and you are bidden to cast yourself upon this great immovable rock, and find eternal security in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Plenteous Redemption

No. 351

**A SERMON DELIVERED AT EXETER HALL, STRAND,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON**

"With Him is plenteous redemption."—Psalm 130:7

REDEMPTION is a word which has gladdened many ears, when there was no heavenly sound in its blessed chime. Apart from any theological use of it, the word is a very sweet one and has been melodious to many hearts. In those days when piracy was carried on continually along the coast of Africa, when our fellow Christian subjects were caught by corsairs and carried away captive, you can well understand how the burdened soul of the manacled slave, chained to the oar of his galley, was

gladdened by the hope that possibly there would be *redemption*. His cruel master, who had forced him into his possession, would not willingly emancipate him, but a rumor came, that in some distant nation they had raised a sum of money to purchase the freedom of slaves—that some wealthy merchant had dedicated of his substance to buy back his fellow-countrymen, that the king himself upon his throne had promised to give a liberal redemption that the captives among the Moors might return to their homes. Truly I can suppose the hours would run happily along and the dreariness of their toil would be assuaged, when once that word “*redemption*” had sounded in their ears. So with our fellow-subjects and our fellow-men, who once were slaves in our West India settlements. We can well conceive that to their lips the word *redemption* must have been a very pleasing song. It must have been well-nigh as sweet to them as the marriage peals to a youthful bridegroom, when they knew that the noble British nation would count down the twenty millions of their redemption money, that on a certain morning their fetters should be snapped asunder, so that they should no more go out to the plantations to sweat in the sun, driven by the whip, but they should call themselves their own and none should be their masters to possess their flesh and have property in their souls. You can conceive when the sun of that happy morn arose, when emancipation was proclaimed from sea to sea and the whole land was at liberty, how joyful must their new-found freedom have appeared. O there are many sonnets in that one word “*redemption*.”

Now, ye who have sold for nought your glorious heritage, ye who have been carried bondslaves into Satan’s dominion, ye who have worn the fetters of guilt and groaned under them, ye who have smarted beneath the lash of the law, what the news of redemption has been to slaves and captives, that will it be to you tonight. It will cheer your souls and gladden your spirits and more especially so when that rich adjective is coupled with it—“*plenteous redemption*.”

This evening I shall consider the subject of *redemption* and then notice the *adjective appended to the word*, “*plenteous redemption*.”

I. First, then, we shall consider the subject of REDEMPTION.

I shall commence in this way, by asking, *What has Christ redeemed?* And in order to let you know what my views are upon this subject, I would announce at once what I conceive to be an authoritative doctrine, consistent with common sense and declared to us by Scripture, namely, that whatever Christ has redeemed, Christ will most assuredly have. I start with that as an axiom, that whatever Christ has redeemed, Christ must have. I hold it to be repugnant to reason and much more to revelation, that Christ should die to purchase what He never shall obtain and I hold it to be little less than blasphemy to assert that the intention of our Savior’s death can ever be frustrated. Whatever was Christ’s intention when He died—we lay it down as a very groundwork truth, which ought to be granted to us by every reasonable man—that Christ will most certainly gain. I cannot see how it can be that the intention of God in anything can be frustrated. We have always thought God to be so superior to creatures, that when He has once intended a thing, it must most assuredly be accomplished and if I have that granted to me, I cannot for a moment allow you to imagine that Christ should shed His blood in vain, that He should die with an intention of doing something and yet should not perform it, that He should die with a full intention in His heart and with a promise on the part of God, that a certain thing should be given to Him as a reward of His sufferings, and yet should fail to obtain it. I

start with that and I think that everyone who will weigh the matter and truly consider it, must see it to be so, that Christ's intention in His death must be fulfilled and that the design of God, whatever that may be, must certainly be carried out. Well then, I believe that the efficacy of Christ's blood knows no other limit than the purpose of God. I believe that the efficacy of Christ's atonement is just as great as God meant it should be and that what Christ redeemed is precisely what He meant to redeem and exactly what the Father had decreed He should redeem. Therefore I cannot for one moment give any credence whatever to that doctrine which tells us that all men are redeemed. Some may hold it, as I know they do and hold it very strongly, and even urge it as being a fundamental part of the doctrine of revelation. They are welcome to it, this is a land of liberty. Let them hold their views, but I must tell them solemnly my persuasion, that they cannot hold such doctrine if they do but well consider the matter, for if they once believe in universal redemption, they are driven to the blasphemous inference that God's intention is frustrated and that Christ has not received what He died to procure. If, therefore, they can believe that, I will give them credit for being able to believe anything and I shall not despair of seeing them landed at the Salt Lake or in any other region where enthusiasm and credulity can flourish without the checks of ridicule or reason.

Starting, then, with this assumption, I beg now to tell you what I believe, according to sound doctrine and Scripture, Christ has really redeemed. His redemption is a very compendious redemption. He has redeemed many things, He has redeemed the souls of His people, He has redeemed the bodies of His people, He has redeemed the original inheritance which man lost in Adam, He has redeemed, in the last place, the world, considered in a certain sense—in the sense in which He will have the world at last.

Christ has redeemed *the souls of all His people who shall ultimately be saved*. To state it after the Calvinistic form, Christ has redeemed His elect, but since you do not know His elect until they are revealed, we will alter that and say, Christ has redeemed all penitent souls, Christ has redeemed all believing souls, and Christ has redeemed the souls of all those who die in infancy, seeing it is to be received, that all those who die in infancy are written in the Lamb's book of life and are graciously privileged by God to go at once to heaven, instead of toiling through this weary world. The souls of all those who were written before all worlds in the Lamb's book of life, who in process of time are humbled before God, who in due course are led to lay hold of Christ Jesus as the only refuge of their souls, who hold on their way and ultimately attain to heaven, these, I believe, were redeemed and I most firmly and solemnly believe the souls of none other men were in that sense subjects of redemption. I do not hold the doctrine that Judas was redeemed, I could not conceive my Savior bearing the punishment for Judas or if so, how could Judas be punished again. I could not conceive it possible that God should exact first at Christ's hands the penalty of His sin and then at the sinner's hands again. I cannot conceive for a moment that Christ should have shed His blood in vain and though I have read in the books of certain divines, that Christ's blood is fuel for the flames of hell, I have shuddered at the thought and have cast it from me as being a dreadful assertion, perhaps worthy of those who made it, but utterly unsupported by the Word of God. The souls of God's people, whoever they may be and they are a multitude that no man can number—and I could fondly hope they are all of you—are redeemed effectually. Briefly, they are redeemed in three ways. They are redeemed from the guilt of sin, from the punishment of sin, and from the power of sin. The souls of

Christ's people have guilt on account of sin, until they are redeemed, but when once redemption is applied to my soul, my sins are, every one of them, from that moment forever blotted out.

***“The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified Lord,
His pardon at once he receives,
Salvation in full through His blood.”***

The guilt of our sin is taken away by the redemption of Christ. Whatever sin you may have committed, the moment you believe in Christ, not only will you never be punished for that sin, but the very guilt of that sin is taken from you. You cease to be in God's sight any longer a guilty person, you are reckoned by God as a justified believer to have the righteousness of Christ about you and therefore, you can say—to recall a verse which we often repeat—

***“Now freed from sin I walk at large
My Savior's blood's my full discharge,
At His dear feet my soul I lay,
A sinner saved and homage pay.”***

Every sin, every particle of guilt, every atom of transgression, is by the redemption of Christ, effectually taken away from all the Lord's believing family.

And mark, next, not only the guilt, but the punishment of sin is taken away. In fact, when we cease to be guilty, we cease to be the objects of punishment altogether. Take away the guilt, the punishment is gone, but to make it more effectual, it is as if were written over again, that condemnation is taken away, as well as the sin for which we might be condemned. “There is, therefore, now, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” None of those who were redeemed by Christ can ever be damned, they can never be punished on account of sin, for Christ has suffered their punishment in their stead and therefore, they cannot, unless God be unjust, be sued a second time for debts already paid. If Christ their ransom died, they cannot die, if He, their surety, paid their debt, then unto God's justice they owe no longer anything, for Christ hath paid it all. If He hath shed His blood, if He hath yielded up the ghost, if He hath “died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God,” how, then, would God be just and yet the punisher of those whom He has already punished once in the person of Jesus Christ their Savior? No beloved, through the plenteous redemption of Christ we are delivered from all punishment on account of sin and from all guilt which we had incurred thereby.

Moreover the believing family of Christ—or rather, all for whom He died—are most effectually delivered from the power of sin. Oh! there are some who suck in the two truths I have been mentioning, as if they were honey, but they cannot endure this other point—Christ delivers us from the power of sin. Mark you this, then—we affirm it very strongly—no man can ever be redeemed from the guilt of sin or from the punishment of sin, unless he be at the same time delivered from the power of sin. Unless he is made by God to hate His own sin, unless he is enabled to cast it to the ground, unless he is made to abhor every evil way and to cleave unto God with full purpose of heart, walking before Him in the land of the living, in the strength of the Holy Spirit, such a man has no right to believe himself redeemed. If thou art still

under the dominion of thy lusts, O wicked sinner, thou hast no right to think thyself a purchased heir of heaven. If thou canst be drunk, if thou canst swear, if thou canst curse God, if thou canst lie, if thou canst profane the Sabbath, if thou canst hate His people, if thou canst despise His Word, then thou hast no right whatever, any more than Satan in hell, to boast that thou art redeemed, for all the Lord's redeemed are in due time brought out of the house of bondage, out of the land of Egypt, and they are taught the evil of sin, the horrible penalty of it and the desperate character of it in the sight of God. Art thou delivered from the power of sin, my hearer? Hast thou mortified it? Art thou dead unto it? Is it dead unto thee? Is it crucified unto thee and thou unto it? Dost thou hate it as thou wouldst a viper? Dost thou tread on it as thou wouldst tread upon a serpent? If thou dost, albeit there be sins of frailty and infirmity, yet if thou hatest the sin of thy heart, if thou hast an unutterable enmity to it, take courage and comfort. The Lord hath redeemed thee from the guilt and penalty and also from the power of sin. That is the first point of redemption. And hear me distinctly again, lest any should mistake me. I always like to preach so that there can be no mistake about it. I do not want so to preach that you will say in the judgment of charity, he could not have meant what he said. Now, I mean solemnly again to say what I have said—that I do believe that none others were redeemed than those who are or shall be redeemed from the guilt, the punishment, and the power of sin, because I say again, it is abhorrent to my reason, much less to my views of Scripture, to conceive that the damned ever were redeemed and that the lost in perdition were ever washed in the Savior's blood or that His blood was ever shed with an intention of saving them.

2. Now let us think of the second thing Christ has redeemed. Christ has redeemed the *bodies of all His children*. In that day when Christ redeemed our souls, He redeemed the tabernacles in which our souls dwell. At the same moment when the spirit was redeemed by blood, Christ who gave His human soul and His human body to death, purchased the body as well as the soul of every believer. You ask, then, in what way redemption operates upon the body of the believer. I answer, first, it ensures it a resurrection. Those for whom Christ died, are ensured by His death a glorious resurrection. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ, shall all be made alive." All men are, by virtue of the death of Christ, quickened to a resurrection, but even here there is a special property of the elect, seeing that they are quickened to a blessed resurrection, whilst others are quickened only to a cursed resurrection, a resurrection of woe, a resurrection of unutterable anguish. O Christian, thy body is redeemed.

***"What though thine inbred sins require
Thy flesh to see the dust,
Yet, as the Lord thy Savior rose,
So all His followers must."***

What! though in a little time I shall slumber in the tomb, though worms devour this body, I know that my Redeemer liveth, and because He lives I know that in my flesh I shall see God. These eyes which soon shall be glazed in death, shall not be always closed in darkness, death shall be made to give back his prey, he shall restore all that he has taken. Lo, I see him there! He hath the bodies of the just locked up in his dungeons, they are wrapped up in their grave clothes and he thinks they are secure. He has sealed their tombs and marked them for his own. O death! foolish death! thy caskets shall be rifled, thy storehouses shall be broken open. Lo, the morning is

come! Christ hath descended from on high. I hear the trump, "Awake! Awake!" and lo! from their tombs, the righteous start, while death sits in confusion howling in vain, to find his empire all bereft of its subjects, to find all his dungeons rifled of their prey. "Precious shall their blood be in His sight," precious shall be their bones! their very dust is blessed and Christ shall raise them with Himself. Think of that, ye that have lost friends—ye weeping children of sorrow! your redeemed friends shall live again. The very hands that grasped yours with a death clutch, shall grasp them in paradise, those very eyes that wept themselves away in tears, shall, with eye-strings that never shall be broken, wake up in the noon-day of felicity. That very frame which thou didst sorrowfully convey, with dread attire of funeral, to bury in its tomb—yes, that selfsame body, made like the image of Jesus Christ, spiritualized and changed, but nevertheless the selfsame body, shall rise again and thou, if thou art redeemed, shalt see it, for Christ has purchased it and Christ shall not die in vain. Death will not have one bone of the righteous—nay, not a particle of their dust—nay, not a hair of their heads. It shall all come back. Christ has purchased all our body and the whole body shall be completed and united forever in heaven with the glorified soul. The bodies of the righteous are redeemed and redeemed for eternal happiness.

3. In the next place, all the *possessions of the righteous* which were lost in Adam are redeemed. Adam! where art thou? I have a controversy with thee, man, for I have lost much by thee. Come thou hither. Adam! thou seest what thou art now, tell me what thou once wast, then I shall know what I have lost by thee, and then I shall be able to thank my Master that all thou didst lose He has freely bought back to all believers. What didst thou lose? "Alas!" cries Adam, "I had a crown once. I was king of all the world. The beasts crouched at my feet and did me reverence. God made me that I might have supreme command over the cattle upon the hills and over all fowls of the air, but I lost my crown. I had a mitre once," said Adam, "for I was a priest to God and oftentimes in the morning did I climb the hills and sing sweet orisons of praise to Him that made me. My censer of praise hath often smoked with incense and my voice has been sweet with praise,

***'These are thy glorious works, parent of good,
Almighty, thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair, thyself how wondrous then,'***

Oft have I bidden misty exhalations, sun and moon and stars, sing to His praise, daily have I bidden the herds upon the hills low out His glories and the lions roar His honors, nightly have I told the stars to shine it out and the little flowers to blossom it forth, but ah! I lost my mitre and I, who was once a priest to God, ceased any longer to be His holy servant." Ah! Adam, thou hast lost me much, but yonder I see my Savior, He takes His crown off His head, that He may put a crown on my head and He puts a mitre on His head, to be a priest, that He may put a mitre on my head too, and on the head of all His people, for, as we have just been singing,

***"Thou hast redeemed our souls with blood,
Hast set the prisoners free,
Hast made us kings and priests to God,
And we shall reign with Thee."***

Just what Adam lost, the kingship and the priesthood of Christ, is won for all His believing people. And what else didst thou lose, Adam? "Why, I lost paradise." Hush,

man! say nothing upon that, for Christ hath bought me a paradise worth ten thousand such Edens as thine. So we can well forgive thee that. And what else didst thou lose? "Why, I lost the image of my Maker." Ah! hush, Adam! In Jesus Christ we have something more than that, for we have the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ and sure that is even better than the image of the Maker, for it is the very dress and robe that the Maker wore. So, Adam, all that thou hast lost, I have again. Christ has redeemed all that we sold for nought. I who have sold for nought a heritage divine, shall have it back unbought—the gift of love, says Christ, e'en mine. Oh! hear it, then! The trump of Jubilee is blown, Christ hath redeemed the lost possessions of His people.

4. And now I come to the last thing that Christ has redeemed, though not the last point of the discourse. Christ has redeemed this world. "Well, now," says one, "that is strange, sir, you are going to contradict yourself flatly." Stop a moment. Understand what I mean by *the world*, if you please. We do not mean every man in it, we never pretended such a thing. But I will tell you how Christ has redeemed the world. When Adam fell, God cursed the world with barrenness. "Thorns also and briars shall it bring forth unto thee and in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread."

God cursed the earth. When Christ came into the world they twisted a crown made of the cursed thorn and they put that on His head and made Him king of the curse, and in that day He purchased the redemption of the world from its curse and it is my very belief, and I think it is warranted by Scripture, that when Christ shall come a second time, this world will become everywhere as fertile as the garden of Paradise used to be. I believe that Sahara, the literal desert, shall one day blossom like Sharon and rejoice like the garden of the Lord. I do not conceive that this poor world is to be a forlorn planetary wanderer forever. I believe that she is yet to be clothed with verdure, such as she once wore. We have evidences in the beds of coal underneath the earth, that this world was once much more fertile than it is now. Gigantic trees once spread their mighty arms and I had almost said one arm of a tree in that day would have builded half a forest for us now. Then mighty creatures, far different from ours, stalked through the earth and I believe firmly that a luxuriant vegetation, such as this world once knew shall be restored to us and that we shall see again a garden such as we have not known. No more cursed with blight and mildew, with no more blast and withering, we shall see a land like heaven itself—

***"Where everlasting spring abides,
And never withering flowers."***

When Christ cometh He shall do even this.

In the day of the fall, too, it is currently believed that animals for the first time received their ferocious temperament and began to fall on each other, of this we are not sure, but if I read Scripture rightly, I find that the lion shall lie down with the kid and that the leopard shall eat straw like the ox, and that the weaned child shall put His hand on the cockatrice den. I do believe that in millennial years that are coming and coming soon, there shall be known no more devouring lions, no blood-thirsty tigers, no creatures that shall devour their kind. God shall restore to us again and even to the beasts of the field, the blessing which Adam lost.

And, my friends, there is a worse curse than that which has fallen on this world. It is the curse of ignorance and sin. That, too, is to be removed. Seest thou yonder planet? It is whirling along through space—bright, bright and glorious. Hearest thou the morning stars sing together, because this new sister theirs is made? That is the earth, she is bright now. Stay! Didst remark that shadow sweep across her? What caused it? The planet is dimmed and on her trace there lies a sorrowful shadow. I am speaking, of course, metaphorically. See there the planet, she glides along in ten-fold night, scarce doth a speck of light irradiate her. Mark again, the day is not come, when that planet shall renew her glory, but it is hastening with great strength. As the serpent slips its slough and leaves it behind it in the valley, so yon planet hath slipped its clouds and shone forth bright as it was before. Do you ask who hath done it? Who hath cleared away the mist? Who hath taken away the darkness? Who hath removed the clouds? “I have done it,” says Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, “I have scattered darkness and made that world bright again.” Lo, I see a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. To explain myself, lest I should be mistaken, I mean this. This world is now covered with sin, ignorance, mistake, idolatry, and crime, the day is coming when the last drop of blood shall be drunk by the sword, it shall be no more intoxicated with blood, God shall make wars to cease unto the ends of the earth. The day is coming—oh that it were now!—when the feet of Christ shall tread this earth. Then down shall go idols from their thrones, down superstitions from their pinnacles, then slavery shall cease, then crime shall end, then peace shall spread its halcyon wings over all the world and then shall you know that Christ hath died for the world and that Christ hath won it. “The whole creation,” said Paul, “groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now,” waiting for what? “waiting for the redemption,” and by the redemption, I understand what I have just explained to you, that this world shall be washed of all her sin, her curse shall be removed, her stains taken away, and this world shall be as fair as when God first struck her from His mind, as when, like a glowing spark, smitten from the anvil by the eternal hammer she first flashed in her orbit. This Christ has redeemed, this, Christ shall and most assuredly must have.

II. And, now, a word or two concerning the last thought—“PLENTEOUS REDEMPTION.”

It is plenteous enough, if you consider what I have already told you Christ has bought. Sure I should have made it no more plenteous, if I had lied against my conscience and told you that He had bought every man, for of what avail is it that I am bought with blood, if I am lost? Of what use is it to me that Christ has died for me, if I yet sink in the flames of hell? How will that glorify Christ, that He hath redeemed me and yet failed in His intentions? Surely it is more to His honor to believe, that according to His immutable, sovereign and all-wise will, He laid the foundation as wide as He intended the structure to be and then made it just according to His will. Nevertheless, it is “plenteous redemption.” Very briefly, lend me your ears just a moment.

It is “plenteous,” when we consider the millions that have been redeemed. Think if ye can, how great that host who have already washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and then think how many now with weary feet are plodding their way to paradise, all of them redeemed. They all shall sit down at the marriage supper of the lamb. Is it not “plenteous redemption,” when you reflect that it is a “multitude that no man can number” that will be gathered in? Let us close that by

saying, "And why not you? If so many are redeemed, why should not you be? Why should you not seek for mercy on the strength of that, knowing that all who seek will most assuredly receive, for they would not have sought unless it had been prepared for them?"

It is "plenteous," again, if we consider the sins of all who are redeemed. However great the sins of any redeemed soul, this redemption is enough to cover it all to wash it all away—

***"What though your numerous sins exceed
The stars that spread the skies,
And aiming at th' eternal throne,
Like pointed mountains rise."***

Yet this plenteous redemption can take all your sins away. They are no greater than Christ foresaw and vowed to remove. Therefore, I beseech you, fly to Jesus, believing that however great your guilt, His atonement is great enough for all who come to Him and therefore you may safely come.

Remember, again, that this "plenteous redemption" is plenteous, because it is enough for all the distresses of all the saints. Your wants are almost infinite, but this atonement is quite so. Your troubles are almost unutterable, but this atonement is quite unutterable. Your needs you can scarce tell, but this redemption I know you cannot tell. Believe, then, that it is "plenteous redemption." O believing sinner, what a sweet comfort it is for you, that there is "plenteous redemption," and that you have a lot in it. You will most certainly be brought safely home, by Jesu's grace.

Are you seeking Christ? Or rather, do you know yourselves to be sinners? If you do, I have authority from God to say to everyone who will confess His sins, that Christ has redeemed him. "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Are you a sinner? I do not mean a sham sinner, there are lots of them about, but I have no Gospel to preach to them just now. I do not mean one of those hypocritical sinners, who cry, "Yes, I am a sinner,"—who are sinners out of compliment and do not mean it, I will preach another thing to you. I will preach against your self-righteousness another day, but I shall not preach anything to you just now about Christ, for He "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

But are you a sinner, in the *bona fide* sense of the word? Do you know yourself to be a lost, ruined, undone sinner? Then in God's name, I urge you to believe this—that Christ has died to save you, for as sure as ever He has revealed to you your guilt by the Holy Ghost, He will not leave you till He has revealed to you your pardon by His only Son. If you know your lost estate, you shall soon know your glorious estate. Believe in Jesus now, then thou art saved and thou mayest go away happy—blest beyond what kings could dream. Believe that since thou art a sinner, Christ hath redeemed thee—that just because thou knowest thyself to be undone, guilty, lost, and ruined, thou hast this night a right, a privilege, and a title to bathe in the fountain filled with blood, "shed for many for the remission of sins." Believe that and then thou shalt know the meaning of this text—"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom also we have received the atonement." God dismiss you with a blessing, for Jesus' sake!

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Prevenient Grace

No. 656

**BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON**

“When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me.”—Galatians 1:15

YOU all know the story of the apostle Paul, he had been a persecutor and went armed with letters to Damascus to hail men and women and drag them to prison. On the road thither, he saw a light exceeding bright above the brightness of the sun and a voice spake out of heaven to him saying, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” By this miraculous interposition he was converted. Three days he spent in darkness, but when Ananias came to tell him of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, there fell from his eyes as it were scales. He was baptized, became the most mighty of all Christian teachers, and could truly say that he was not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles.

Paul’s conversion is generally considered so very remarkable for its suddenness and distinctness and truly it is, yet, at the same time, it is no exception to the general rule of conversions, but is rather a type or model or pattern of the way in which God shows forth His longsuffering to them that are led to believe on Him. It appears from my text, however, that there is another part of Paul’s history which deserves our attention quite as much as the suddenness of his conversion, namely, the fact that although he was suddenly converted, yet God had had thoughts of mercy towards him from his very birth. God did not begin to work with him when he was on the road to Damascus. That was not the first occasion on which eyes of love had darted upon this chief of sinners, but he declares that God had separated him and set him apart even from his mother’s womb, that he might by-and-by be called by grace and have Jesus Christ revealed in him.

I selected this text, not so much for its own sake, as to give me an opportunity for saying a little this evening upon a doctrine not often touched upon, namely, that of PREVENIENT GRACE or the grace which comes before regeneration and conversion. I think we sometimes overlook it. We do not attach enough importance to the grace of God in its dealings with men before He actually brings them to Himself. Paul says that God had designs of love towards him even before He had called him out of the dead world into spiritual life.

I. To begin, then, let us talk for a little while upon THE PURPOSE OF GOD PRECEDING SAVING GRACE, AS IT MAY CLEARLY BE SEEN DEVELOPING ITSELF IN HUMAN HISTORY.

You generally judge what a man's purpose is by his actions. If you saw a man very carefully making molds in sand, if you then watched him take several pieces of iron and melt them down, and if you further noticed him running the melted iron into the molds, you might not know precisely what class of machine he was making, but you would very justly conclude that he was making some part of an engine or other machinery—a beam or a lever or a crank or a wheel, and according to what you saw the molds in the sand to be, you would form your idea of what the man was intending to make. Now, when I look at the life of a man, even before conversion, I think I can discover something of God's molding and fashioning in him even before regenerating grace comes into his heart. Let me give you an illustration of my course of thought. When God created man—we are told in the book of Genesis—He made him "out of the dust of the earth." Mark him beneath his Maker's hand, the framework of a man, the tabernacle for an immortal soul, a man made of clay, fully made, I suppose and perfect in all respects excepting one and that soon followed, for after God had formed him out of the dust, then He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul. Now it strikes me that during the early part of the history of the people whom God means to save, though they have not received into their hearts any spiritual life, nor experienced any of the work of regeneration, yet their life before conversion is really a working of them in the clay.

Let us endeavor to bring this out more distinctly. Can you not perceive God's purpose in the apostle Paul, when you think of the singular gifts with which he was endowed? Here was a man, a rhetorician, so noble that there are in his works passages of eloquence not to be equaled, much less excelled, by Demosthenes and Cicero. As a logician, his arguments are most conclusive as well as profound. Never had man such an eagle-eye to pierce into the depths of a matter, never had man such an eagle-wing to mount up into its sublimities. He argues out questions so abstruse, that at all times they have been the battlegrounds of controversies, and yet he seems to perceive them clearly and distinctly, and to unfold and expound them with a precision of language not to be misunderstood. All apostles of Jesus Christ put together are not equal to Paul in the way of teaching. Truly he might have said of them all, "You are but as children compared with me." Peter dashes and dashes gloriously, against the adversary, but Peter cannot build up, nor instruct, like the great apostle of the Gentiles, he has to say himself of Paul's writings that they "contain some things hard to be understood." Peter can confirm, but scarcely can he understand Paul, for where intellect is concerned, Paul is far, far above him. Paul seems to have been endowed by God with one of the most massive brains that ever filled human cranium and to have been gifted with an intellect which towered far above anything that we find elsewhere. Had Paul been merely a natural man, I do not doubt but what he would take the place either of Milton among the poets or of Bacon among the philosophers.

He was, in deed and in truth, a master-mind. Now, when I see such a man as this cast by God in the mold of nature, I ask myself—"What is God about? What is He doing here?" As every man has a purpose, so also has God and I think I see in all this that God foreknew that such a man was necessary to be raised up as a vessel through whom He might convey to the world the hidden treasures of the Gospel, that such a man was needful so that God might speak His great things by him. You will say, probably, that God reveals great things by fools. I beg your pardon. God did once permit an ass to speak, but it was a very small thing that he said, for any ass might readily have said it. Whenever there is a wise thing to be said, a wise man is

always chosen to say it. Look the whole Bible through and you will find that the revelation is always congruous to the person to whom it is given. You do not find Ezekiel blessed with a revelation like that of Isaiah. Ezekiel is all imagination, therefore he must soar on the eagle's wing. Isaiah is all affection and boldness and therefore he must speak with evangelical fullness. God does not give Nahum's revelation to the herdsman Amos. The herdsman Amos cannot speak like Nahum, nor can Nahum speak like Amos. Each man is after his own order and a man of this masterly order of mind, like the apostle Paul, must have been created, it seems to me, for no other end than to be the appropriate means of revealing to us the fullness and the blessing of the Gospel of peace.

Mark, again, the apostle's education. Paul was a Jew, not half Greek and half Jew, but a pure Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, speaking still the Jews' native tongue and not a stranger to the ancient speech of Israel. There was nothing in the traditions of the Jews which Paul did not know and understand. He was educated at the feet of Gamaliel. The best master of the age is selected to be the master of the hopeful young scholar and the school in which he is placed must be a Rabbinical one. Now, just observe in this the purpose of God. Paul's life-long struggle was to be with Jewish superstition. In Iconium, in Lystra, in Derbe, in Athens, in Corinth, in Rome, he must always be confronting the Judaizing spirit, and it was well that he should know all about it, that he should be well-schooled in it, and it does strike me that God separated him from his mother's womb on purpose that he might go forth to proclaim the Gospel instead of law and shut the mouths of those who were constantly abiding by the traditions of the fathers, instead of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. All this, remember, was going on while as yet he was unconverted, though he was even then, as we see, being prepared for his work.

Then observe, the spiritual struggles through which Paul passed. I take it that mental struggles are often a more important part of education than what a man learns from his schoolmaster. What is learned here in my heart is often of more use to me than what can be put into my head by another. Paul seems to have had a mind bent upon carrying out what he believed to be right. To serve God appears to have been the great ambition, the one object of the apostle's life. Even when he was a persecutor, he says he thought he was doing God service. He was no groveler after wealth, never in his whole lifetime was Paul a Mammonite. He was no mere seeker after learning—never, he was learned, but it was all held and used subject to what he deemed far more highly, the indwelling grace of God. Even before he knew Christ, he had a sort of religion and an attachment and an earnest attachment too, to the God of his fathers, though it was a zeal not according to knowledge. He had his inward fightings and fears and struggles and difficulties and all these were educating him to come out and talk to his fellow-sinners and lead them up out of the darkness of Judaism into the light of Christianity.

And then, what I like in Paul and that which leads me to see the purpose of God in him, is the singular formation of his mind. Even as a sinner, Paul was great. He was "the chief of sinners," just as he afterwards became, "not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles." There are some of us who are such little men that the world will never see US, the old proverb about the chips in porridge giving one pleasure either way, might apply to a great many people, but never to Paul. If there was anything to be done, Paul would do it, ay and if it came to the stoning of Stephen, he says he gave his vote against him and though he was not one of the actual

executioners, yet we are told that “the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul.” He would do all that was to be done and was a thoroughgoing man everywhere. Believing a thing to be right, Paul never consulted with flesh and blood, but girded up his loins and wrought with the whole powers of his being and that was no mean force, as his enemies felt to their cost. Why, as I see him riding to Damascus, I picture him with his eyes flashing with fanatic hate against the disciples of the man whom he thought to be an impostor, while his heart beat high with the determination to crush the followers of the Nazarene. He is a man all energy and all determination, and when he is converted, he is only lifted into a higher life, but unchanged as to temperament, nature, and force of character. He seems to have been constituted naturally a thorough-going, thorough-hearted man, in order that when grace did come to him, he might be just as earnest, just as dauntless and fearless, in the defense of what he believed to be right. Yes and such a man was wanted to lead the vanguard in the great crusade against the God of this world. No other could have stood forward thus as Paul did, for no other had the same firmness, boldness, and decision that he possessed. “But,” I hear someone say, “was not Peter as bold?” Yes, he was, but Peter, you remember, always had the failing of being just where he ought not to be when he was wanted. Peter was unstable to the very last, I think, certainly in Paul’s day, Paul had to withstand him. He was a great and good man, but not fitted to be the foremost. Perhaps you say, “But there is John, would not John do?” No, we cannot speak in too high terms of John, but John is too full of affection. John is the plane to smooth the timber, but not the axe to cut it down. John is too gentle, too meek, he is the Phillip Melancthon, but Paul must be the Luther and Calvin rolled into one. Such a man was wanted and I say, that from his very birth, God was fitting him for this position and before he was converted, prevenient grace was thus engaged, fashioning, molding, and preparing the man, in order that by-and-by there might be put into his nostrils the breath of life.

Now what is the drift of all this? A practical one and to show you what it is, we will stay a minute here before we go on to anything else. Some of the good fathers amongst us are mourning very bitterly just now over their sons. Your children do not turn out as you wish they would, they are getting skeptical, some of them, and they are also falling into sin. Well, dear friends, it is yours to mourn, it is enough to make you weep bitterly, but let me whisper a word into your ear. Do not sorrow as those who are without hope, for God may have very great designs to be answered, even by these very young men who seem to be running so altogether in the wrong direction. I do not think I could go so far as John Bunyan did, when he said he was sure God would have some eminent saints in the next generation, because the young men in his day were such gross sinners, that he thought they would make fine saints, and when the Lord came and saved them by his mercy, they would love him much, because they had had so much forgiven. I would hardly like to say so much as that, but I do believe that sometimes in the inscrutable wisdom of God, when some of those who have been skeptical come to see the truth, they are the very best men that could possibly be found to do battle against the enemy.

Some of those who have fallen into error, after having passed through it and happily come up through its deep ditch, are just the men to stand and warn others against it. I cannot conceive that Luther would ever have been so mighty a preacher of the faith if he had not himself struggled up and down Pilate’s staircase on his knees, when trying to get to heaven by his penances and his good works. O let us have hope. We do not know but that God may be intending yet to call them and

bless them. Who can tell, there may be a young man here tonight who will one day be the herald of the cross in China, in India, in Africa, and in the islands of the sea? Remember John Williams wishing to keep an appointment with another young man who committed a certain sin. He wanted to know what time it was and so just stepped into Moorfield's Chapel, someone saw him and he did not like to go out and the Word, preached by Mr. Timothy East, who still survives amongst us, fell on his ears and the young sinner was made a saint and you all know how he afterwards perished as a martyr on the shores of Erromanga.

Why may there not be another such a case tonight? There may be some young man here who has been receiving a first-class education, he has no idea what for, he has been learning a multitude of things, perhaps a great deal which it would be much better if he did not know, but the Lord is meaning to make something of him. I do not know where you are, young man, but O, I wish I could fire you tonight with a high ambition to serve God! What is the good of my being made at all if I do not serve my Maker? What is the use of my being here if I do not bring any glory to Him who put me and keeps me here? Why, I had better have been a piece of rotten dung strewn upon the field and bringing forth something for the farmer's use, than to have been a mere consumer of bread and meat, and to have breathed the air and lived upon God's bounty and yet to have done nothing for Him. O young man, if such an army of you as we have tonight, could all be led by divine grace to say with the apostle Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," why, there would be hope for Old England yet. We would yet fling Popery back to the seven hills whence it came. Oh that God would grant us this blessing, but if He should not be pleased to call all of us by His grace, yet may some here live to prove that they were separated from their mother's womb to God's work and set apart that they might have the Son of God revealed in them and might proclaim His Gospel with power. We will now leave this point, but shall continue the same subject in another form.

II. You would, perhaps, say that all I have talked about as yet has been providence rather than grace. Very likely, but I think that providence and grace are very near akin, at any rate, if providence is the wheel, grace is the hand which turns and guides it. But I am now about to speak of GRACE PRECEDING CALLING IN ANOTHER SENSE.

It strikes me that it is impossible to say, concerning the elect, when the grace of God begins to deal with them. You can tell when the quickening grace comes, but not when the grace itself comes. For know, in one sense, grace was exercised upon the chosen

***"Before the day-star knew its place,
Or planets ran their round."***

I should say that there is what I cannot call by any other name than formative grace, exercised upon the vessels of mercy at their very birth. It seems to me to be no small mercy that some of us were born of such parents as we were and that we were born where we were. Some of us began right and were surrounded by many advantages. We were cradled upon the lap of piety and dandled upon the knee of holiness. There are some children who are born with a constitution which cannot escape sin and which at the same time seems as if it inevitably led them to it. Who

can deny that there are some whose passions seem naturally to be so violent, that, notwithstanding almost any and every restraint, they run headlong into sin! and often those failings may be distinctly traced to their parents. It is no small blessing when we can look back and thank God, that if no blue-blood of nobility flows in our veins, yet from our very childhood we have not heard the voice of blasphemy, nor strayed into the haunts of vice, but that in the very formation of our character, divine grace has ever been present with us. This formative grace many of you, I have no doubt, can trace in the examples and influences which have followed you from the cradle through life. Why, what a blessing to have had such a Sunday-school teacher as some of you had! Other children went to schools, but they had not such a teacher or such a class as yours. What a privilege to have had such a minister as some of you had, though perhaps he has fallen asleep now! You know there were others who went to places where there was no earnestness, no life, but that good man who was blessed to you was full of anxiety for your soul and at the very first, before you were converted, his preaching helped to form your character. Why, it strikes me that every word I heard and everything I saw while I was yet a child or a youth, had a part in the formation of my after-life. Oh! what a mercy it is to be placed where a holy example and godly conversation tend to form the man in a godly mold. All this may be, you know, without grace. I am not speaking now of the work of effectual calling, but of that prevenient grace which is too much forgotten, though it so richly deserves to be remembered. Think, too, of the prayers which brought tears to our eyes and the teaching that would not let us sin so deeply as others, of the light which glowed in us, even in our childhood and seems to have dispelled something of our natural darkness. Think of that earnest face that used to look so steadily on us when we did wrong and of that mother's tear which seemed as if it would burn itself into our hearts, when there had been something amiss, that made that mother anxious. All this, though it did not convert us, yet it helped to make us what we now are and unto God let us give the glory.

Furthermore, while there was this formative grace, there seems to me to have gone with it very much of preventive grace. How many saints fall into sins which they have to regret even after conversion, while others are saved from leaving the path of morality to wander in the morass of lust and crime! Why, some of us were, by God's grace, placed in positions where we could not well have been guilty of any gross acts of immorality, even if we had tried. We were so hedged about by guardian-care, so watched and tended on every side, that we should have been dashing our heads against a stone wall if we had run into any great or open sin. Oh! what a mercy to be prevented from sinning, when God puts chains across the road, digs ditches, makes hedges, builds walls, and says to us, "No, you shall not go that way, I will not let you, you shall never have that to regret, you may desire it, but I will hedge up your way with thorns, you may wish it, but it never shall be yours." Beloved, I have thanked God a thousand times in my life, that before my conversion, when I had ill desires I had no opportunities, and on the other hand, that when I had opportunities I had no desires, for when desires and opportunities come together like the flint and steel, they make the spark that kindles the fire, but neither the one nor the other, though they may both be dangerous, can bring about any very great amount of evil so long as they are kept apart. Let us, then, look back and if this has been our experience bless the preventing grace of God.

Again, there is another form of grace I must mention, namely, restraining grace. Here, you see, I am making a distinction. There are many who did go into sin, they

were not wholly prevented from it, but they could not go as far into it as they wanted to do. There is a young man here tonight—he will say how should I know—well, I do know—there is a young man here tonight who wants to commit a certain sin, but he cannot. Oh! how he wishes to go, but he cannot, he is placed in such a position of poverty that he cannot play the fine gentleman he would like. There is another, he wants to be dancing at such-and-such a place, but thank God he is lame, there is another, who, if he had had his wish would have lost his soul, but since his blindness has come upon him there is some hope for him. Oh! how often God has thrown a man on a sick bed to make him well! He would have been such as he was even unto death if he had been well, but God has made him sick and that sickness has restrained him from sin. It is a mercy for some men that they cannot do what they would and though “to will is present” with them, yet even in sin, “how to perform that which they would they find not.” Ah! my fine fellow, if you could have had your own way, you would have been at the top of the mountain by now! So you think, but no, you would have been over the precipice long before this if God had you climb at all and so He has kept you in the valley because He has designs of love towards you and because you shall not sin as others sin. Divine grace has its hand upon the bridle of your horse. You may spur your steed and use the lash against the man who holds you back or perhaps it is a woman and you may speak bitter words against that wife, that sister, or that mother, whom God has put there to hold you back, but you cannot go on, you shall not go on. Another inch forward and you will be over the precipice and lost, and therefore God has put that hand there to throw your horse back on its haunches and make you pause and think, and turn from the error of your ways. What a mercy it is that when God’s people do go into sin to any extent, He speaks and says, “Hitherto shalt thou go, but no further, here shall thy proud sins be stayed!” There is, then, restraining grace.

We shall get still further into the subject when we come to what Dr. John Owen calls the preparatory work of grace. Have you ever noticed that parable about the different sorts of ground and the sower of the seeds? A sower went forth to sow and some of the seed fell on stony ground. You can understand that, because all men have stones in their hearts. Some fell on the thorns and thistles. You can comprehend that, because men are so given to worldly care. Another part of the seed fell on the beaten path, you can understand that—men are so occupied with worldliness. But how about the “good ground”? “Good ground!” Is there such a thing as “good ground” by nature? One of the evangelists says that it was “honest and good ground.” Now, is there such a difference between hearts and hearts? Are not all men depraved by nature? Yes, he who doubts human depravity had better begin to study himself. Question: If all hearts are bad how are some hearts good? Reply: They are good comparatively. They are good in a certain sense. It is not meant in the parable that that good ground was so good that it ever would have produced a harvest without the sowing of the seed, but that it had been prepared by providential influences upon it to receive the seed and in that sense it may be said to have been “good ground.”

Now let me show you how God’s grace does come to work on the human heart so as to make it good soil before the living seed is cast into it, so that before quickening grace really visits it, the heart may be called a good heart, because it is prepared to receive that grace. I think this takes place thus. First of all, before quickening grace comes, God often gives an attentive ear and makes a man willing to listen to the Word. Not only does he like to listen to it, but he wants to know the meaning of it.

There is a little excitement in his mind to know what the Gospel tidings really are. He is not saved as yet, but it is always a hopeful sign when a man is willing to listen to the truth and is anxious to understand it. This is one thing which prevenient grace does in making the soul good. In Ezekiel's vision, as you will recollect, before the breath came from the four winds, the bones began to stir and they came together bone to his bone. So, before the Spirit of God comes to a man in effectual calling, God's grace often comes to make a stir in the man's mind, so that he is no longer indifferent to the truth, but is anxious to understand what it means.

The next mark of this gracious work is an ingenuousness of heart. Some persons will not hear you or if they do they are always picking holes and finding fault, they are not honest and good ground. But there are others who say, "I will give the man a fair and an honest hearing, I will read the Bible, I will read it, too, honestly, I will really see whether it be the Word of God or not. I will come to it without any prejudices or if I have any prejudices, I will throw them aside." Now, all this is a blessed work of preparatory grace, making the heart ready to receive effectual calling.

Then, when this willingness and ingenuousness are attended with a tender conscience, as they are in some unconverted people, this is another great blessing. Some of you are not converted, but you would not do wrong, you are not saints, but you would not tell a lie for the world. I thank God that there are some of you so excellent in morals, that if you were proposed to us for church membership, we could not raise any objection to you on that ground, at any rate. You are as honest as the day is long. As for the things of God, you are outwardly as attentive to them and as diligent in them as the most earnest and indefatigable Christians. Now, this is because your conscience is tender. When you do wrong you cannot sleep at night and you do not feel at all easy in being without a Savior—I know some of you do not. You have not come to any decision, the grace of God has not really made you feel your thoroughly mined state, still you are not quite easy. In fact, to go farther, your affections, though not weaned altogether from earth, yet begin to tremble a little as though they would go heavenward. You want to be a Christian. When the communion table is spread, you dare not come downstairs, but I see you looking on from the gallery and you wish you were with us. You know you have not believed in Jesus Christ and the world keeps you back from doing so, but still there is a kind of twitching in your conscience. You do not know what it is, but there is a something got into you that makes you say at times, "O God, let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his," yes and you even go farther than this and ask to live the righteous man's life too. Now, remember, this will not save you. "Ye must be born again." But for all this the church of God should feel deeply grateful, for they have seen in themselves that this is often God's preparatory work—clearing away the rubbish and rubble and digging out the foundations, that Jesus Christ might be laid therein, the cornerstone of future hope and of future happiness.

Another work of grace is the creation of dissatisfaction with their present state. How many men we have known who were consciously "without God and without hope in the world." The apples of Sodom had turned to ashes and bitterness in their mouth, though at one time all was fair and sweet to their taste. The mirage of life with them has been dispelled, and instead of the green fields and waving trees and rippling waters, which their fevered imagination had conjured up in the desert, they can see now nought but the arid sand and wasteness of desolation, which appall

their fainting spirits and promise nothing. No, not even a grave to cover their whited bones, which shall remain a bleached memorial that, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Multitudes have been brought to see the deluge of sin which has covered even the high places of the earth. They find no rest for the sole of their foot, but as yet they know not of an ark, nor of a loving hand prepared to pull them in, as did Noah the dove in olden time. Look at the life of St. Augustine, how wearily he wanders hither and thither with a death-thirst in his soul, that no fount of philosophy or scholastic argument or heretical teaching could ever assuage. He was aware of his unhappy estate and turned his eye round the circle of the universe looking for peace, not fully conscious of what he wanted, though feeling an aching void the world could never fill. He had not found the center, fixed and stedfast, around which all else revolved in ceaseless change. Now, all this appetite, this hunger and thirst, I look upon as not of the devil, nor of the human heart alone, it was of God. He strips us of all our earthly joy and peace, that, shivering in the cold blast, we might flee, when drawn by his Spirit, to the "Man who is as a hiding-place from the storm, a covert from the tempest, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

Of course, I have not gone fully into this doctrine of prevenient grace, but I trust I have said just enough to waken the gratitude of all the saints who have experienced it and to make them sing with greater emotion than they have ever done before—

***"Determined to save,
He watched o'er my path,
When, Satan's blind slave,
I sported with death."***

III. And now we come to the last point, which is, PAUL'S ACTUAL CALLING BY DIVINE GRACE.

All preparatory work of which we have spoken was not the source or origin of the vital godliness which afterwards distinguished that renowned servant of God—that came to him on a sudden. Beloved, there may be some here tonight, who cannot discern anything in themselves of God's work of grace at all. I do not wonder at this. I do not suppose that the apostle could discern it in himself or even thought of looking for it. He was as careless of Christ as is the butterfly of the honey in the flowers. He lived with no thought of honoring Jesus and no desire to magnify Him, but with the very reverse passion, glowing like a hot coal within his soul and yet in a moment he was turned from an enemy into a friend! Oh! what a mercy it would be if some here tonight were turned from enemies into friends in a moment, and we are not without hope but that this will be the case.

You have hated Christ, my friend, you have hated Him boldly and decidedly. You have not been a sneaking sort of adversary, but have opposed Him frankly and openly. Now, why did you do it? I am sorry for your sin, but I like your honesty. What is there in the person of Christ for you to hate? Men hated Him while He was on earth and yet He died for them! Can you hate Him for that? He came into this world to gain no honor for Himself—He had honor enough in heaven, but He gave it up for the sake of men. When He died, He had not amassed a fortune, nor gathered about Him a troop of soldiers, nor had He conquered provinces, but He died naked on a cross! Nothing brought Him here but disinterested affection and when He came, He spent his life in deeds of holiness and good. For which of these things can you hate

Him? The amazing lovingkindness of Christ Jesus towards sinners, should in itself disarm their animosity and turn their hatred of Him to love. Alas! I know that this thought of itself will not do it, but the Spirit of God can. If the Spirit of God once comes in contact with your souls and shows you that Christ died for you, your enmity towards Christ will be all over then. Dr. Gifford once went to see a woman in prison who had been a very gross offender. She was such a hardened reprobate, that the doctor began by discoursing with her about the judgments of God and the punishments of hell, but she only laughed him to scorn and called him opprobrious names. The doctor burst into tears and said, "And yet, poor soul, there is mercy for you, even for such as you are, though you have laughed in the face of him who would do you good. Christ is able to forgive you, hard though you are, and I hope that He will yet take you to dwell with Him at His right hand." In a moment the woman stopped her laughing, sat down quietly, burst into tears and said, "Don't talk to me in that way, I have always been told that I should be damned and I made up my mind to be. I knew there was no chance and so I have gone on from one sin to another, but oh! if there is a hope of mercy for me, that is another thing, if there is a possibility of my being forgiven, that is another thing." The doctor at once opened his Bible and began to read to her these words, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin," the greatest brokenness of heart followed. In subsequent visits, the doctor was gratified to find that she was brought to Christ and though she had to undergo a sentence of transportation for many years at the time, yet in after days, the godly man saw her walking honestly and uprightly as a believer in Jesus Christ.

Sinner, I wish that thought would bring thee to Christ! O that thou wouldst know that He hath chosen thee, that He hath separated thee for Himself, and to be His even from thy mother's womb! Ah! thou hast played the harlot, but He will bring thee back. Thou hast sinned very greatly, but thou shalt one day be clothed in the white robe and wear the everlasting crown. Oh! blush and be confounded that thou shouldst ever have sinned as thou hast done. Thou hast been a thief and a drunkard, thou hast brought thy mother's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, but her prayers are going up even now to heaven and thou shalt be brought in yet. O stubborn sinner, my Master means to have thee. Run as thou wilt, thou wandering sheep, the Shepherd is after thee. Yield thee, yield thee, yield thee now.

O prodigal, thy Father's heart is open, arise, go thou to thy Father. Thou art ashamed to go, art thou? Oh! let that shame make thee go the faster, let it not keep thee back. Jesus bled, Jesus wept, Jesus lives in heaven. "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters and he that hath no money, let him buy wine and milk, without money and without price." "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." There is no sinner too black to be forgiven. There are no iniquities that can damn you if you believe in Jesus. All manner of sin and iniquity shall be forgiven unto him who puts his trust in the shadow of Jehovah-Jesus. Look to Him, He dies, He lives, look, He rises, He pleads above! "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else." I trust that the whole of your past mysterious life, my dear fellow-sinner, will be explained to you tonight, by your believing in Jesus. That will be the golden key which will open the secret and you will say, "Now I see it, I could not tell what that mysterious hand was that kept me back from doing a certain thing. I could not understand why I was led into such a path, but now I know that it was to take me to the feet of the blessed

Savior, where I might be happy forever.” As you look back and think of all the dealings of divine grace and providence with you throughout your life, you will sing—

***“Ah! who am I, that God hath saved
Me from the doom I did desire,
And crossed the lot myself did crave,
To set me higher!”***

I must give one word of warning to those who are afflicting themselves with a notion that in order to true, real conversion, they must have a long course of agonizing soul-conflict. You must mark, that I am not teaching this, the new birth was instantaneous, at once. Saul of Tarsus calls Him Lord and it is only three days that darkness rests upon him. This is the longest case recorded in the Bible—and how short a time in darkness and anguish that is, compared with the experience of some, whom you are regarding as models on which God must act in your case. Remember, that God is not the God of uniformity, though He is of union and peace. He may lead you at once into joy and peace, as Nathanael, who said as soon as he saw Christ, “Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel.” God may and doubtless has been blessing you through His grace from your birth, but He needs not to plunge you many days in the cold, dark waters of conviction to wash away your sin. The blood of Christ at once can cleanse from all sin, if you confide your soul to Him. Believe therefore and you are at once justified and at peace with God.

May the Lord bless you all, for Jesus’ sake.

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Human Inability

No. 182

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 7, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS**

*“No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him”
John 6:44*

“COMING to Christ” is a very common phrase in Holy Scripture. It is used to express those acts of the soul wherein leaving at once our self-righteousness and our sins, we fly unto the Lord Jesus Christ and receive His righteousness to be our covering and His blood to be our atonement. Coming to Christ, then, embraces in it repentance, self-negation, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it sums within itself all those things which are the necessary attendants of these great states of heart, such as the belief of the truth, earnestness of prayer to God, the submission of the soul to the precepts of God’s Gospel, and all those things which accompany the dawn of salvation in the soul. Coming to Christ is just the one essential thing for a sinner’s salvation. He that cometh not to Christ, do what He may or think what He may, is yet in “the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.” Coming to Christ is the very first effect of regeneration. No sooner

is the soul quickened than it at once discovers its lost estate, is horrified thereat, looks out for a refuge, and believing Christ to be a suitable one, flies to Him and reposes in Him. Where there is not this coming to Christ, it is certain that there is as yet no quickening, where there is no quickening, the soul is dead in trespasses and sins, and being dead it cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

We have before us now an announcement very startling, some say very obnoxious. Coming to Christ, though described by some people as being the very easiest thing in all the world, is in our text declared to be a thing utterly and entirely impossible to any man, unless the Father shall draw Him to Christ. It shall be our business, then, to enlarge upon this declaration. We doubt not that it will always be offensive to carnal nature, but nevertheless, the offending of human nature is sometimes the first step towards bringing it to bow itself before God. And if this be the effect of a painful process, we can forget the pain and rejoice in the glorious consequences.

I shall endeavor this morning, first of all, to notice man's *inability*, wherein it consists. Secondly, *the Father's drawings*—what these are and how they are exerted upon the soul. And then I shall conclude by noticing *a sweet consolation* which may be derived from this seemingly barren and terrible text.

I. First, then, MAN'S INABILITY. The text says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." Wherein does this inability lie?

First, it does not lie in any *physical* defect. If in coming to Christ, moving the body or walking with the feet should be of any assistance, certainly man has all physical power to come to Christ in that sense. I remember to have heard a very foolish Antinomian declare, that He did not believe any man had the power to walk to the house of God unless the Father drew him. Now the man was plainly foolish, because He must have seen that as long as a man was alive and had legs, it was as easy for Him to walk to the house of God as to the house of Satan. If coming to Christ includes the utterance of a prayer, man has no physical defect in that respect, if He be not dumb, He can say a prayer as easily as He can utter blasphemy. It is as easy for a man to sing one of the songs of Zion as to sing a profane and libidinous song. There is no lack of physical power in coming to Christ that can be wanted with regard to the bodily strength man most assuredly has and any part of salvation which consists in that is totally and entirely in the power of man without any assistance from the Spirit of God.

Nor, again, does this inability lie in any *mental* lack. I can believe this Bible to be true just as easily as I can believe any other book to be true. So far as believing on Christ is an act of the mind, I am just as able to believe on Christ as I am able to believe on anybody else. Let His statement be but true, it is idle to tell Me I cannot believe it. I can believe the statement that Christ makes as well as I can believe the statement of any other person. There is no deficiency of faculty in the mind. It is as capable of appreciating as a mere mental act the guilt of sin, as it is of appreciating the guilt of assassination. It is just as possible for me to exercise the mental idea of seeking God, as it is to exercise the thought of ambition. I have all the mental strength and power that can possibly be needed, so far as mental power is needed in salvation at all. Nay, there is not any man so ignorant that He can plead a lack of intellect as an excuse for rejecting the Gospel. The defect, then, does not lie either in the body or what we are bound to call, speaking theologically, the mind. It is not any lack or deficiency there, although it is the vitiation of the mind, the corruption or the ruin of it, which, after all, is the very essence of man's inability.

Permit me to show you wherein this inability of man really does lie. It lies deep *in his nature*. Through the fall and through our own sin, the nature of man has become so debased and depraved and corrupt that it is impossible for him to come to Christ without the assistance of God the Holy Spirit. Now, in trying to exhibit how the nature of man thus renders him unable to come to Christ, you must allow me just to take this figure. You see a sheep, how willingly it feeds upon the herbage! You never knew a sheep sigh after carrion, it could not live on lion's food. Now bring me a wolf and you ask me whether a wolf cannot eat grass, whether it cannot be just as docile and as domesticated as the sheep. I answer, no, because its nature is contrary thereunto. You say, "Well, it has ears and legs. Can it not hear the shepherd's voice and follow him whithersoever he leadeth it?" I answer, certainly, there is no physical cause why it cannot do so, but its nature forbids and therefore I say it *cannot* do so. Can it not be tamed? Cannot its ferocity be removed? Probably it may so far be subdued that it may become apparently tame, but there will always be a marked distinction between it and the sheep, because there is a distinction in nature.

Now, the reason why man cannot come to Christ, is not because He cannot come, so far as His body or His mere power of mind is concerned, but because His nature is so corrupt that He has neither the will nor the power to come to Christ unless drawn by the Spirit. But let me give you a better illustration. You see a mother with her babe in her arms. You put a knife into her hand and tell her to stab that babe to the heart. She replies and very truthfully, "I cannot." Now, so far as her bodily power is concerned, she can, if she pleases, there is the knife and there is the child. The child cannot resist and she has quite sufficient strength in her hand immediately to stab it to its heart. But she is quite correct when she says she cannot do it.

As a mere act of the mind, it is quite possible she might think of such a thing as killing the child and yet she says she cannot think of such a thing and she does not say falsely, for her nature as a mother forbids her doing a thing from which her soul revolts. Simply because she is that child's parent she feels she cannot kill it. It is even so with a sinner. Coming to Christ is so obnoxious to human nature that, although, so far as physical and mental forces are concerned, (and these have but a very narrow sphere in salvation) men could come if they would. It is strictly correct to say that they cannot and will not unless the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them. Let us enter a little more deeply into the subject and try to show you wherein this inability of man consists, in its more minute particulars.

1. First it lies in the *obstinacy of the human will*. "Oh!" saith the Arminian, "men may be saved if they will." We reply, "My dear sir, we all believe that, but it is just the *if they will* that is the difficulty. We assert that no man will come to Christ unless he be drawn, nay, we do not assert it, but Christ Himself declares it—'Ye will not come unto one that ye might have life,' and as long as that 'ye will not come' stands on record in Holy Scripture, he shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will." It is strange how people, when talking about free will, talk of things which they do not at all understand "Now" says one, "I believe men can be saved if they will." My dear sir, that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the Gospel of Christ? We declare, upon Scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief—so depraved and so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human will will ever be constrained towards Christ. You reply that men sometimes are willing, without the help of the Holy Spirit. I answer—Did you ever meet with any person who was? Scores and hundreds, nay, thousands of Christians have I conversed with, of

different opinions, young and old, but it has never been my lot to meet with one who could affirm that he came to Christ of himself without being drawn. The universal confession of all true believers is this—"I know that unless Jesus Christ had sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God, I would to this very hour have been wandering far from Him, at a distance from Him, and loving that distance well." With common consent, all believers affirm the truth, that men will not come to Christ till the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them.

2. Again, not only is the will obstinate, but the *understanding is darkened*. Of that we have abundant Scriptural proof. I am not now making mere assertions, but stating doctrines authoritatively taught in the Holy Scriptures and known in the conscience of every Christian man—that the understanding of man is so dark, that he cannot by any means understand the things of God until his understanding has been opened. Man is by nature blind within. The cross of Christ, so laden with glories and glittering with attractions, never attracts him, because He is blind and cannot see its beauties. Talk to him of the wonders of the creation, show to him the many-coloured arch that spans the sky, let him behold the glories of a landscape, he is well able to see all these things, but talk to him of the wonders of the covenant of grace, speak to him of the security of the believer in Christ, tell him of the beauties of the person of the Redeemer, he is quite deaf to all your description, you are as one that playeth a goodly tune, it is true, but he regards not, he is deaf, he has no comprehension. Or, to return to the verse which we so specially marked in our reading, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned," and inasmuch as he is a natural man, it is not in his power to discern the things of God.

"Well," says one, "I think I have arrived at a very tolerable judgment in matters of theology, I think I understand almost every point." True, that you may do in the letter of it, but in the spirit of it, in the true reception thereof into the soul and in the actual understanding of it, it is impossible for you to have attained, unless you have been drawn by the Spirit. For as long as that Scripture stands true, that carnal men cannot receive spiritual things, it must be true that you have not received them, unless you have been renewed and made a spiritual man in Christ Jesus. The will, then, and the understanding are two great doors, both blocked up against our coming to Christ, and until these are opened by the sweet influences of the divine Spirit, they must be forever closed to anything like coming to Christ.

3. Again, *the affections*, which constitute a very great part of man, are depraved. Man, as he is, before he receives the grace of God, loves anything and everything above spiritual things. If ye want proof of this, look around you. There needs no monument to the depravity of the human affections. Cast your eyes everywhere—there is not a street, nor a house, nay, nor a heart, which doth not bear upon it sad evidence of this dreadful truth. Why is it that men are not found on the Sabbath Day universally flocking to the house of God? Why are we not more constantly found reading our Bibles? How is it that prayer is a duty almost universally neglected? Why is it that Christ Jesus is so little beloved? Why are even His professed followers so cold in their affections to Him? Whence arise these things? Assuredly, dear brethren we can trace them to no other source than this, the corruption and vitiation of the affections. We love that which we ought to hate and we hate that which we ought to love. It is but human nature, fallen human nature, that man should love this present life better than the life to come. It is but the effect of the fall, that man should love sin better than righteousness, and the ways of this world better than the ways of God. And

again, we repeat it, until these affections be renewed and turned into a fresh channel by the gracious drawings of the Father, it is not possible for any man to love the Lord Jesus Christ

4. Yet once more—*conscience* too, has been overpowered by the fall. I believe there is no more egregious mistake made by divines than when they tell people that conscience is the vicegerent of God within the soul, and that it is one of those powers which retains its ancient dignity and stands erect amidst the fall of its compeers. My brethren, when man fell in the garden, manhood fell entirely. There was not one single pillar in the temple of manhood that stood erect. It is true, conscience was not destroyed. The pillar was not shattered, it fell and it fell in one piece, and there it lies alone, the mightiest remnant of God's once perfect work in man. But that conscience is fallen, I am sure. Look at men. Who among them is the possessor of a "good conscience toward God," but the regenerated man? Do you imagine that if men's consciences always spoke loudly and clearly to them, they would live in the daily commission of acts, which are as opposed to the right as darkness to light? No, beloved, conscience can tell me that I am a sinner, but conscience cannot make me *feel* that I am one. Conscience may tell me that such-and-such a thing is wrong, but how wrong it is, conscience itself does not know. Did any man's conscience, unenlightened by the Spirit, ever tell him that his sins deserved damnation? Or if conscience did do that, did it ever lead any man to feel an abhorrence of sin as sin? In fact, did conscience ever bring a man to such a self-renunciation that he did totally abhor himself and all his works and come to Christ? No, conscience, although it is not dead, is ruined. Its power is impaired, it hath not that clearness of eye and that strength of hand and that thunder of voice, which it had before the fall, but hath ceased to a great degree, to exert its supremacy in the town of Mansoul. Then, beloved, it becomes necessary for this very reason, because conscience is depraved, that the Holy Spirit should step in, to show us our need of a Savior and draw us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Still," says one, "as far as you have hitherto gone, it appears to me that you consider that the reason why men do not come to Christ is that they will not, rather than they cannot." True, most true. I believe the greatest reason of man's inability is the obstinacy of His will. That once overcome, I think the great stone is rolled away from the sepulcher and the hardest part of the battle is already won. But allow me to go a little further. My text does not say, "No man will come," but it says, "No man can come." Now, many interpreters believe that the *can* here, is but a strong expression conveying no more meaning than the word *will*. I feel assured that this is not correct. There is in man, not only unwillingness to be saved, but there is a spiritual powerlessness to come to Christ, and this I will prove, to every Christian at any rate.

Beloved, I speak to you who have already been quickened by the divine grace, does not your experience teach you that there are times when you have a will to serve God and yet have not the power? Have you not sometimes been obliged to say that you have wished to believe, but you have had to pray, "Lord, help mine unbelief?" Because, although willing enough to receive God's testimony, your own carnal nature was too strong for you and you felt you needed supernatural help. Are you able to go into your room at any hour you choose and to fall upon your knees and say, "Now, it is my will that I should be very earnest in prayer and that I should draw near unto God?" I ask, do you find your power equal to your will? You could say, even at the bar of God Himself, that you are sure you are not mistaken in your willingness, you are willing to be wrapt up in devotion, it is your will that your soul should not wander from a pure contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but you find that you cannot do that, even when you are willing,

without the help of the Spirit. Now, if the quickened child of God finds a spiritual inability, how much more the sinner, who is dead in trespasses and sin? If even the advanced Christian, after thirty or forty years, finds himself sometimes willing and yet powerless—if such be his experience—does it not seem more than likely that the poor sinner who has not yet believed, should find a need of strength as well as a want of will?

But again, there is another argument. If the sinner has strength to come to Christ, I should like to know how we are to understand those continual descriptions of the sinner's state which we meet with in God's holy Word? Now, a sinner is said to be dead in trespasses and sins. Will you affirm that death implies nothing more than the absence of a will? Surely a corpse is quite as unable as unwilling. Or again, do not all men see that there is a distinction between will and power. Might not that corpse be sufficiently quickened to get a will and yet be so powerless that it could not lift as much as its hand or foot? Have we never seen cases in which persons have been just sufficiently re-animated to give evidence of life, and have yet been so near death that they could not have performed the slightest action? Is there not a clear difference between the giving of the will and the giving of power? It is quite certain, however, that where the will is given, the power will follow. Make a man willing and he shall be made powerful, for when God gives the will, He does not tantalize man by giving him to wish for that which he is unable to do, nevertheless He makes such a division between the will and the power, that it shall be seen that both things are quite distinct gifts of the Lord God.

Then I must ask one more question. If all that were needed were to make a man willing, do you not at once degrade the Holy Spirit? Are we not in the habit of giving all the glory of salvation wrought in us to God the Spirit? But now, if all that God the Spirit does for me is to make me willing to do these things for myself, am I not in a great measure a sharer with the Holy Spirit in the glory? and may I not boldly stand up and say, "It is true the Spirit gave me the will to do it, but still I did it myself, and therein will I glory, for if I did these things myself without assistance from on high, I will not cast my crown at His feet, it is my own crown, I earned it and I will keep it." Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is evermore in Scripture set forth as the person who worketh in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure, we hold it to be a legitimate inference that He must do something more for us than the mere making of us willing and that therefore there must be another thing besides want of will in a sinner—there must be absolute and actual want of power.

Now, before I leave this statement, let me address myself to you for a moment. I am often charged with preaching doctrines that may do a great deal of hurt. Well, I shall not deny the charge, for I am not careful to answer in this matter. I have my witnesses here present to prove that the things which I have preached have done a great deal of hurt, but they have not done hurt either to morality or to God's church, the hurt has been on the side of Satan. There are not ones or twos, but many hundreds who this morning rejoice that they have been brought near to God, from having been profane Sabbath-breakers, drunkards, or worldly persons, they have been brought to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, and if this be any hurt, may God of His infinite mercy send us a thousand times as much.

But further, what truth is there in the world which will not hurt a man who chooses to make hurt of it? You who preach general redemption are very fond of proclaiming the great truth of God's mercy to the last moment. But how dare you preach that? Many people make hurt of it by putting off the day of grace and thinking that the last hour may do as well as the first. Why, if we never preached anything which man could misuse and

abuse, we must hold our tongues forever. Still says one, "Well then, if I cannot save myself and cannot come to Christ, I must sit still and do nothing." If men do say so, on their own heads shall be their doom. We have very plainly told you that there are many things you can do. To be found continually in the house of God is in your power, to study the Word of God with diligence is in your power, to renounce your outward sin, to forsake the vices in which you indulge, to make your life honest, sober and righteous, is in your power. For this you need no help from the Holy Spirit, all this you can do yourself, but to come to Christ truly is not in your power until you are renewed by the Holy Ghost. But mark you, your want of power is no excuse, seeing that you have no desire to come and are living in wilful rebellion against God. Your want of power lies mainly in the obstinacy of nature. Suppose a liar says that it is not in His power to speak the truth, that he has been a liar so long that he cannot leave it off, is that an excuse for him? Suppose a man who has long indulged in lust should tell you that he finds his lusts have so girt about him like a great iron net that he cannot get rid of them, would you take that as an excuse? Truly it is none at all. If a drunkard has become so foully a drunkard, that he finds it impossible to pass a public-house without stepping in, do you therefore excuse him? No, because his inability to reform lies in his nature, which he has no desire to restrain or conquer. The thing that is done and the thing that causes the thing that is done, being both from the root of sin, are two evils which cannot excuse each other. What though the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots? It is because you have learned to do evil that you cannot now learn to do well and instead, therefore, of letting you sit down to excuse yourselves, let me put a thunderbolt beneath the seat of your sloth, that you may be startled by it and aroused. Remember, that to sit still is to be damned to all eternity. Oh! that God the Holy Spirit might make use of this truth in a very different manner! Before I have done, I trust I shall be enabled to show you how it is that this truth, which apparently condemns men and shuts them out, is, after all, the great truth, which has been blessed to the conversion of men.

II. Our second point is THE FATHER'S DRAWINGS. "No man can come to **Me** except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." How then does the Father draw men? Arminian divines generally say that God draws men by the preaching of the Gospel. Very true, the preaching of the Gospel is the instrument of drawing men, but there must be something more than this. Let me ask to whom did Christ address these words? Why, to the people of Capernaum, where He had often preached, where He had uttered mournfully and plaintively the woes of the law and the invitations of the Gospel. In that city, He had done many mighty works and worked many miracles. In fact, such teaching and such miraculous attestation had He given to them that He declared that Tyre and Sidon would have repented long ago in sack-cloth and ashes, if they had been blessed with such privileges.

Now if the preaching of Christ Himself did not avail to the enabling these men to come to Christ, it cannot be possible that all that was intended by the drawing of the Father was simply preaching. No, brethren, you must note again, He does not say no man can come except the *minister* draw him, but except the *Father* draw him. Now there is such a thing as being drawn by the Gospel and drawn by the minister without being drawn by God. Clearly it is a divine drawing that is meant, a drawing by the Most High God—the First Person of the most glorious Trinity sending out the Third Person, the Holy Spirit, to induce men to come to Christ.

Another person turns round and says with a sneer, "Then do you think that Christ drags men to Himself, seeing that they are unwilling!" I remember meeting once with a man who said to me, "Sir, you preach that Christ takes people by the hair of their heads

and drags them to Himself.” I asked him whether he could refer to the date of the sermon wherein I preached that extraordinary doctrine, for if he could, I should be very much obliged. However, he could not. But said I, while Christ does not drag people to Himself by the hair of their heads, I believe that He draws them by the heart quite as powerfully as your caricature would suggest. Mark that in the Father’s drawing there is no compulsion whatever, Christ never compelled any man to come to Him against his will. If a man be unwilling to be saved, Christ does not save him against his will. How, then, does the Holy Spirit draw him? Why, by making him willing. It is true He does not use “moral suasion,” He knows a nearer method of reaching the heart. He goes to the secret fountain of the heart, and He knows how, by some mysterious operation to turn the will in an opposite direction, so that, as Ralph Erskine paradoxically puts it, the man is saved “with full consent against his will” that is, against his old will he is saved. But he is saved with full consent for he is made willing in the day of God’s power. Do not imagine that any man will go to heaven kicking and struggling all the way against the hand that draws him. Do not conceive that any man will be plunged in the bath of a Saviour’s blood while he is striving to run away from the Savior. Oh, no. It is quite true that first of all man is unwilling to be saved. When the Holy Spirit hath put His influence into the heart, the text is fulfilled—“Draw me and I will run after Thee.” We follow on while He draws us, glad to obey the voice which once we had despised. But the gist of the matter lies in the turning of the will. How that is done no flesh knoweth, it is one of those mysteries that is clearly perceived as a fact, but the cause of which no tongue can tell and no heart can guess.

The apparent way, however, in which the Holy Spirit operates, we can tell you. The first thing the Holy Spirit does when He comes into a man’s heart is this. He finds him with a very good opinion of himself and there is nothing which prevents a man coming to Christ like a good opinion of himself. Why, says man, “I don’t want to come to Christ. I have as good a righteousness as anybody can desire. I feel I can walk into heaven on my own rights.” The Holy Spirit lays bare his heart, lets him see the loathsome cancer that is there eating away his life, uncovers to him all the blackness and defilement of that sink of hell, the human heart, and then the man stands aghast. “I never thought I was like this. Oh! those sins I thought were little, have swelled out to an immense stature. What I thought was a molehill has grown into a mountain, it was but the hyssop on the wall before, but now it has become a cedar of Lebanon. Oh,” saith the man within himself, “I will try and reform, I will do good deeds enough to wash these black deeds out.” Then comes the Holy Spirit and shows him that he cannot do this, takes away all his fancied power and strength, so that the man falls down on his knees in agony and cries, “Oh! once I thought I could save myself by my good works, but now I find that

***‘Could my tears forever flow,
Could my zeal no respite know,
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save and Thou alone.’”***

Then the heart sinks and the man is ready to despair. And saith he, “I never can be saved. Nothing can save me.” Then, comes the Holy Spirit and shows the sinner the cross of Christ, gives him eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve and says, “Look to yonder cross, that Man died to save sinners. You feel that you are a sinner, He died to save you.” And He enables the heart to believe and to come to Christ. And when it comes to Christ, by this sweet drawing of the Spirit, it finds “a peace with God which passeth all understanding, which keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Now, you will plainly perceive that all this may be done without any compulsion. Man is as much drawn willingly, as if he were not drawn at all and He comes to Christ with full consent, with as full a consent as if no secret influence had ever been exercised in his heart. But that influence must be exercised or else there

never has been and there never will be any man who either can or will come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. And, now, we gather up our ends and conclude by trying to make a practical application of the doctrine, and we trust a comfortable one. "Well," says one "if what this man preaches be true, what is to become of my religion? for do you know I have been a long while trying and I do not like to hear you say a man cannot save himself. I believe he can and I mean to persevere, but if I am to believe what you say, I must give it all up and begin again." My dear friends, it will be a very happy thing if you do. Do not think that I shall be at all alarmed if you do so. Remember, what you are doing is building your house upon the sand and it is but an act of charity if I can shake it a little for you. Let me assure you, in God's name, if your religion has no better foundation than your own strength, it will not stand you at the bar of God. Nothing will last to eternity, but that which came from eternity. Unless the everlasting God has done a good work in your heart, all you may have done must be unraveled at the last day of account. It is all in vain for you to be a church-goer or chapel-goer, a good keeper of the Sabbath, an observer of your prayers. It is all in vain for you to be honest to your neighbors and reputable in your conversation, if you hope to be saved by these things. It is all in vain for you to trust in them. Go on, be as honest as you like, keep the Sabbath perpetually, be as holy as you can. I would not dissuade you from these things. God forbid, grow in them, but oh, do not trust in them, for if you rely upon these things you will find they will fail you when most you need them. And if there be anything else that you have found yourself able to do unassisted by divine grace, the sooner you can get rid of the hope that has been engendered by it, the better for you, for it is a foul delusion to rely upon anything that flesh can do. A spiritual heaven must be inhabited by spiritual men and preparation for it must be wrought by the Spirit of God.

"Well," cries another, "I have been sitting under a ministry where I have been told that I could, at my own option, repent and believe and the consequence is that I have been putting it off from day to day. I thought I could come one day as well as another, that I had only to say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' and believe and then I should be saved. Now you have taken all this hope away for me, sir. I feel amazement and horror taking hold upon me." Again, I say, "My dear friend, I am very glad of it. This was the effect which I hoped to produce. I pray that you may feel this a great deal more. When you have no hope of saving yourself, I shall have hope that God has begun to save you. As soon as you say 'Oh, I cannot come to Christ. Lord, draw me, help me,' I shall rejoice over you. He who has got a will, though he has not power, has grace begun in his heart and God will not leave him until the work is finished."

But careless sinner, learn that thy salvation now hangs in God's hand. Oh, remember thou art entirely in the hand of God. Thou hast sinned against Him and if He wills to damn thee, damned thou art. Thou canst not resist His will nor thwart His purpose. Thou hast deserved His wrath and if He chooses to pour the full shower of that wrath upon thy head, thou canst do nothing to revert it. If, on the other hand, He chooses to save thee, He is able to save thee to the very uttermost. But thou liest as much in His hand as the summer's moth beneath thine own finger. He is the God whom thou art grieving every day. Doth it not make thee tremble to think that thy eternal destiny now hangs upon the will of Him whom thou hast angered and incensed? Dost not this make thy knees knock together and thy blood curdle? If it does so, I rejoice, inasmuch as this may be the first effect of the Spirit's drawing in thy soul. Oh, tremble to think that the God whom thou hast angered, is the God upon

whom thy salvation or thy condemnation entirely depends. Tremble and “kiss the Son lest He be angry and ye perish from the way while His wrath is kindled but a little.”

Now, the comfortable reflection is this—Some of you this morning are conscious that you are coming to Christ. Have you not begun to weep the penitential tear? Did not your closet witness your prayerful preparation for the hearing of the Word of God? And during the service of this morning, has not your heart said within you, “Lord, save me or I perish, for save myself I cannot?” And could you not now stand up in your seat and sing,

***“Oh, sovereign grace my heart subdue,
I would be led in triumph, too,
A willing captive of my Lord,
To sing the triumph of His Word”?***

And have I not myself heard you say in your heart—“Jesus, Jesus, my whole trust is in Thee. I know that no righteousness of my own can save me, but only Thou, O Christ—sink or swim, I cast myself on Thee?” Oh, my brother, thou art drawn by the Father, for thou couldst not have come unless He had drawn thee. Sweet thought! And if He has drawn thee, dost thou know what is the delightful inference? Let me repeat one text and may that comfort thee, “The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” Yes, my poor weeping brother, inasmuch as thou art now coming to Christ, God has drawn thee and inasmuch as He has drawn thee, it is a proof that He has loved thee from before the foundation of the world. Let thy heart leap within thee, thou art one of His. Thy name was written on the Saviour’s hands when they were nailed to the accursed tree. Thy name glitters on the breast-plate of the great High Priest today, and it was there before the day-star knew its place or planets ran their round. Rejoice in the Lord ye that have come to Christ and shout for joy all ye that have been drawn of the Father. For this is your proof, your solemn testimony, that you from among men have been chosen in eternal election and that you shall be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto the salvation which is ready to be revealed.

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EFFECTUAL CALLING

No. 73

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 30, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK**

*“When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him and said unto him,
Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for today I must abide at thy house.”
Luke 19:5*

NOTWITHSTANDING our firm belief that you are, in the main, well-instructed in the doctrines of the everlasting Gospel, we are continually reminded in our

conversation with young converts how absolutely necessary it is to repeat our former lessons and repeatedly assert and prove over and over again those doctrines which lie at the basis of our holy religion. Our friends, therefore, who have many years ago been taught the great doctrine of effectual calling, will believe that whilst I preach very simply this morning, the sermon is intended for those who are young in the fear of the Lord, that they may better understand this great starting point of God in the heart, the effectual calling of men by the Holy Spirit. I shall use the case of Zaccheus as a great illustration of the doctrine of effectual calling. You will remember the story. Zaccheus had a curiosity to see the wonderful man Jesus Christ, who was turning the world upside-down and causing an immense excitement in the minds of men. We sometimes find fault with curiosity and say it is sinful to come to the house of God from that motive. I am not quite sure that we should hazard such an assertion. The motive is not sinful, though certainly it is not virtuous, yet it has often been proved that curiosity is one of the best allies of grace. Zaccheus, moved by this motive, desired to see Christ, but there were two obstacles in the way. First, there was such a crowd of people that he could not get near the Savior and again, he was so exceedingly short in stature that there was no hope of his reaching over people's heads to catch a glimpse of Him.

What did he do? He did as the boys were doing—for the boys of old times were no doubt just like the boys of the present age and were perched up in the boughs of the tree to look at Jesus as He passed along. Elderly man though he is, Zaccheus jumps up and there he sits among the children. The boys are too much afraid of that stern old publican whom their fathers dreaded, to push him down or cause him any inconvenience. See him there. With what anxiety he is peeping down to see which is Christ—for the Savior had no pompous distinction, no beadle is walking before Him with a silver mace. He did not hold a golden crozier in His hand. He had no pontifical dress. In fact, He was just dressed like those around Him. He had a coat like that of a common peasant, made of one piece from top to bottom and Zaccheus could scarcely distinguish Him. However, before he has caught a sight of Christ, Christ has fixed His eye upon him and standing under the tree, He looks up and says, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for today I must abide at thy house." Down come Zaccheus, Christ goes to his house, Zaccheus becomes Christ's follower, and enters into the kingdom of heaven.

I. Now, first, effectual calling is a very *gracious* truth. You may guess this from the fact that Zaccheus was a character whom we should suppose the last to be saved. He belonged to a bad city—Jericho—a city which had been cursed and no one would suspect that anyone would come out of Jericho to be saved. It was near Jericho that the man fell among thieves. We trust Zaccheus had no hand in it, but there are some who, while they are publicans, can be thieves also. We might as well expect converts from St. Giles's or the lowest parts of London, from the worst and vilest dens of infamy, as from Jericho in those days. Ah! my brethren, it matters not where you come from, you may come from one of the dirtiest streets, one of the worst back-slums in London, but if effectual grace call you, it is an effectual call, which knoweth no distinction of place.

Zaccheus also was of an exceedingly bad trade and probably cheated the people in order to enrich himself. Indeed, when Christ went into his house, there was a universal murmur that He had gone to be a guest with a man that was a sinner. But my brethren, grace knows no distinction, it is no respecter of persons, but God

calleth whom He wills and He called this worst of publicans, in the worst of cities, from the worst of trades. Besides, Zaccheus was one who was the least likely to be saved because he was rich. It is true, rich and poor are welcome, no one has the least excuse for despair because of his condition, yet it is a fact that “not many great men,” after the flesh, “not many mighty,” are called, but “God hath chosen the poor of this world—rich in faith.” But grace knows no distinction here.

The *rich* Zaccheus is called from the tree, down he comes, and he is saved. I have thought it one of the greatest instances of God’s condescension that He can look *down* on man, but I will tell you there was a greater condescension than that, when Christ looked *up* to see Zaccheus. For God to look down on His creatures—that is mercy, but for Christ so to humble Himself that He has to look up to one of His own creatures, that becomes mercy indeed. Ah! many of you have climbed up the tree of your own good works and perched yourselves in the branches of your holy actions and are trusting in the free will of the poor creature or resting in some worldly maxim, nevertheless, Christ looks up even to proud sinners and calls them down. “Come down,” says He, “today I must abide in thy house.” Had Zaccheus been a humble-minded man, sitting by the wayside or at the feet of Christ, we should then have admired Christ’s mercy, but here he is lifted up and Christ looks up to him and bids him come down.

2. Next it was a *personal* call. There were boys in the tree as well as Zaccheus, but there was no mistake about the person who was called. It was, “Zaccheus, make haste and come down.” There are other calls mentioned in Scripture. It is said especially, “Many are called, but few are chosen.” Now that is not the effectual call which is intended by the apostle, when he said, “Whom He called, them He also justified.” That is a general call which many men, yea, all men reject, unless there come after it the personal, particular call, which makes us Christians. You will bear me witness that it was a personal call that brought you to the Savior. It was some sermon which led you to feel that *you* were, no doubt, the person intended. The text, perhaps, was, “Thou, God, seest me,” and the minister laid particular stress on the word “me,” so that you thought God’s eye was fixed upon *you* and ere the sermon was concluded, you thought you saw God open the books to condemn *you* and your heart whispered, “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord.” You might have been perched in the window or stood packed in the aisle, but you had a solemn conviction that the sermon was preached to you and not to other people. God does not call His people in shoals, but in units. “Jesus saith unto her, *Mary* and she turned and said unto Him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master.” Jesus seeth Peter and John fishing by the lake and He saith unto them, “Follow Me.” He seeth Matthew sitting at the table at the receipt of custom and He saith unto him, “Arise and follow Me,” and Matthew did so. When the Holy Ghost comes home to a man, God’s arrow goes into his heart. It does not graze his helmet or make some little mark upon his armor, but it penetrates between the joints of the harness, entering the marrow of the soul. Have you felt, dear friends, that personal call? Do you remember when a voice said, “Arise, He calleth thee.” Can you look back to some time when you said, “My Lord, *my* God?” When you knew the Spirit was striving with you and you said, Lord, *I* come to Thee, for I know that thou callest *me*.” I might call the whole of you throughout eternity, but if God call one, there will be more effect through His personal call of one than my general call of multitudes.

3. Thirdly, it is a *hastening* call. "Zaccheus, *make haste*." The sinner, when he is called by the ordinary ministry, replies, "Tomorrow." He hears a telling sermon and he says, "I will turn to God by-and-bye." The tears roll down his cheek, but they are wiped away. Some goodness appears, but like the cloud of the morning it is dissipated by the sun of temptation. He says, "I solemnly vow from this time to be a reformed man. After I have once more indulged in my darling sin, I will renounce my lusts and decide for God." Ah! that is only a minister's call and is good for nothing. Hell, they say, is paved with good intentions. These good intentions are begotten by general calls. The road to perdition is laid all over with branches of the trees whereon men are sitting, for they often pull down branches from the trees, but they do not come down themselves. The straw laid down before a sick man's door causes the wheels to roll more noiselessly. So there be some who strew their path with promises of repentance and so go more easily and noiselessly down to perdition.

But God's call is not a call for tomorrow. "*Today* if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, when your fathers tempted Me." God's grace always comes with despatch and if thou art drawn by God, thou wilt run after God and not be talking about delays. Tomorrow—it is not written in the almanac of time. Tomorrow—it is in Satan's calendar and nowhere else. Tomorrow—it is a rock whitened by the bones of mariners who have been wrecked upon it, it is the wrecker's light gleaming on the shore, luring poor ships to destruction. Tomorrow—it is the idiot's cup which he fableth to lie at the foot of the rainbow, but which none hath ever found. Tomorrow—it is the floating island of Loch Lomond, which none hath ever seen. Tomorrow—it is a dream. Tomorrow—it is a delusion. Tomorrow, ay, tomorrow you may lift up your eyes in hell, being in torments. Yonder clock saith, "Today," thy pulse whispereth, "Today," I hear my heart speak as it beats and it says, "Today," everything crieth, "Today," and the Holy Ghost is in union with these things and saith, "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Sinners, are you inclined now to seek the Savior? are you breathing a prayer now? are you saying, "Now or never! I must be saved now?" If you are, then I hope it is an effectual call, for Christ, when He giveth an effectual call, says, "Zaccheus, *make haste*."

4. Next, it is a *humbling* call. "Zaccheus, *make haste and come down*." Many a time hath a minister called men to repentance with a call which has made them proud, exalted them in their own esteem, and led them to say, "I can turn to God when I like, I can do so without the influence of the Holy Ghost." They have been called to *go up* and not to *come down*. God always humbles a sinner. Can I not remember when God told me to come down? One of the first steps I had to take was to go right down from my good works and oh! what a fall was that! Then, I stood upon my own self-sufficiency and Christ said, "Come down! I have pulled you down from your good works and now I will pull you down from your self-sufficiency." Well, I had another fall and I felt sure I had gained the bottom, but Christ said "Come down!" and he made me come down till I fell on some point at which I felt I was yet salvable. "Down, sir! come down, yet." And down I came until I had to let go every bough of the tree of my hopes in despair and then I said, "I can do nothing, I am ruined." The waters were wrapped round my head and I was shut out from the light of day, and thought myself a stranger from the commonwealth of Israel. "Come down lower yet, sir! thou hast too much pride to be sated." Then I was brought down to see my corruption, my wickedness, my filthiness. "Come down," says God, when He means to save. Now, proud sinners, it is of no use for you to be proud, to stick yourselves up in the trees, Christ will have you down. Oh, thou that dwellest with the eagle on

the craggy rock, thou shalt come down from thy elevation, thou shalt fall by grace or thou shalt fall with a vengeance one day. He "hath cast down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble and meek."

5. Next, it is an *affectionate* call. "Today I must abide in *thy house*." You can easily conceive how the faces of the multitude change! They thought Christ to be the holiest and best of men and were ready to make Him a king. But He says, "Today I must abide in thy house." There was one poor Jew who had been inside Zaccheus' house, he had "been on the carpet," as they say in country villages, when they are taken before the justice, and he recollected what sort of a house it was. He remembered how he was taken in there and his conceptions of it were something like what a fly would have of a spider's den after he had once escaped. There was another who had been distrainted of nearly all his property and the idea he had of walking in there was like walking into a den of lions. "What!" said they, "Is this holy man going into such a den as that, where we poor wretches have been robbed and ill-treated. It was bad enough for Christ to speak to him up in the tree, but the idea of going into his house!" They all murmured at His going to be "a guest with a man who was a sinner."

Well, I know what some of His disciples thought. They thought it very imprudent, it might injure His character, and He might offend the people. They thought He might have gone to see this man at night, like Nicodemus and give him an audience when nobody saw Him, but publicly to acknowledge such a man was the most imprudent act He could commit.

But why did Christ do as He did? Because He would give Zaccheus an *affectionate* call. "I will not come and stand at thy threshold or look in at thy window, but I will come into thine house—the same house where the cries of widows have come into thine ears and thou hast disregarded them. I will come into thy parlour, where the weeping of the orphan has never moved thy compassion. I will come there, where thou, like a ravenous lion hast devoured thy prey. I will come there, where thou hast blackened thine house and made it infamous. I will come into the place where cries have risen to high heaven, wrung from the lips of those whom thou hast oppressed. I will come into thy house and give thee a blessing." Oh! what affection there was in that!

Poor sinner, my Master is a very affectionate Master. He will come into your house. What kind of a house have you got? A house that you have made miserable with your drunkenness—a house you have defiled with your impurity—a house you have defiled with your cursing and swearing—a house where you are carrying on an ill-trade that you would be glad to get rid of. Christ says, "I will come into thine house." And I know some houses now that once were dens of sin, where Christ comes every morning, the husband and wife who once could quarrel and fight, bend their knees together in prayer. Christ comes there at dinner-time, when the workman comes home for his meals. Some of my hearers can scarce come for an hour to their meals, but they must have word of prayer and reading of the Scriptures. Christ comes to them. Where the walls were plastered up with the lascivious song and idle picture, there is a Christian almanac in one place, there is a Bible on the chest of drawers, and though it is only one room they live in, if an angel should come in and God should say, "What hast thou seen in that house?" he would say, "I have seen good furniture, for there is a Bible there, here and there a religious book, the filthy

pictures are pulled down and burned, there are no cards in the man's cupboard now, Christ has come into his house." Oh! what a blessing that we have our household God as well as the Romans! Our God is a household God. He comes to live with His people, He loves the tents of Jacob. Now, poor ragamuffin sinner, thou who livest in the filthiest den in London, if such a one be here, Jesus saith to thee, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for today *I must abide in thy house.*"

6. Again, it was not only an affectionate call, but it was an *abiding* call. Today I must *abide* at thy house." A common call is like this "Today I shall walk in at thy house at one door and out at the other." The common call which is given by the Gospel to all men is a call which operates upon them for a time and then it is all over, but the saving call is an abiding call. When Christ speaks, He does not say, "Make haste, Zaccheus and come down, for I am just coming to look in," but "I must abide in thy house, I am coming to sit down to eat and drink with thee, I am coming to have a meal with thee. Today I must *abide* in thy house." "Ah!" says one, "you cannot tell how many times I have been impressed, sir, I have often had a series of solemn convictions and I thought I really was saved, but it all died away, like a dream, when one awaketh, all hath vanished that he dreamed, so was it with me." Ah! but poor soul, do not despair. Dost thou feel the strivings of Almighty grace within thine heart bidding thee repent today? If thou dost, it will be an abiding call. If it is Jesus at work in thy soul, He will come and tarry in thine heart and consecrate thee for His own forever. He says, "I will come and dwell with thee and that forever. I will come and say,

***Here I will make My settled rest,
No more will go and come,
No more a stranger or a guest,
But Master of this home."***

"Oh!" say you, "that is what I want, I want an *abiding* call, something that will last. I do not want a religion that will wash out, but a fast-color religion." Well, that is the kind of call Christ gives. His ministers cannot give it, but when Christ speaks, He speaks with power and says, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for today I must *abide* at thy house."

7. There is one thing, however, I cannot forget and that is that it was a *necessary* call. Just read it over again. "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for today I *must* abide at thy house." It was not a thing that he might do or might not do, but it was a necessary call. The salvation of a sinner is as much a matter of necessity with God as the fulfillment of His covenant that the rain shall no more drown the world. The salvation of every blood-bought child of God is a necessary thing for three reasons. It is necessary because it is God's purpose. It is necessary because it is Christ's purchase. It is necessary because it is God's promise. It is necessary that the child of God should be saved. Some divines think it is very wrong to lay a stress on the word "must," especially in that passage where it is said, "He must needs go through Samaria." "Why," they say, "He must needs go through Samaria, because there was no other way He could go and therefore He was forced to go that way." Yes, gentlemen, we reply, no doubt, but then there might have been another way. Providence made it so that He must needs go through Samaria and that Samaria should lie in the route He had chosen. So that we have you anyway.

“He must needs go through Samaria.” Providence directed man to build Samaria directly in the road and grace constrained the Savior to move in that direction. It was not, “Come down, Zaccheus, because I *may* abide at thy house,” but “I *must*.” The Savior felt a strong necessity. Just as much a necessity as there is that man should die, as stern a necessity as there is that the sun should give us light by day and the moon by night, just so much a necessity is there that every blood-bought child of God shall be saved. “Today I must abide at thy house.” And oh! when the Lord comes to this, that He must and He will, what a thing it is with the poor sinner then at other times we ask, “Shall I let Him in at all? there is a stranger at the door, He is knocking now. He has knocked before, shall I let Him in?” But this time it is, “I *must* abide at thy house.” There was no knocking at the door, but smash went the door into atoms! and in He walked. I must, I shall, I will, I care not for your protecting your vileness, your unbelief, I must, I will, I must abide in thy house.” “Ah!” says one, “I do not believe God would ever make me to believe as you believe or become a Christian at all.” Ah! but if He shall but say, “Today I must abide at thy house,” there will be no resistance in you. There are some of you who would scorn the very idea of being a canting Methodist, “What, sir! do you suppose I would ever turn one of your religious people?” No, my friend, I don’t *suppose* it, I *know* it for a certainty. If God says, “I must,” there is no standing against it. Let Him say, “must,” and it must be.

I will just tell you an anecdote proving this. A father was about sending his son to college, but as he knew the influence to which he would be exposed, he was not without a deep and anxious solicitude for the spiritual and eternal welfare of his favourite child. Fearing lest the principles of Christian faith, which he had endeavored to instill into his mind, would be rudely assailed, but trusting in the efficacy of that word which is quick and powerful, he purchased, unknown to his son, an elegant copy of the Bible and deposited it at the bottom of his trunk. The young man entered upon his college career. The restraints of a pious education were soon broken off and he proceeded from speculation to doubts and from doubts to a denial of the reality of religion. After having become in his own estimation, wiser than his father, he discovered one day, while rummaging his trunk, with great surprise and indignation, the sacred deposit. He took it out and while deliberating on the manner in which he should treat it, he determined that he would use it as waste paper, on which to wipe his razor while shaving. Accordingly, every time he went to shave, he tore out a leaf or two of the holy book and thus used it till nearly half the volume was destroyed. But while he was committing this outrage upon the sacred book, a text now and then met his eye and was carried like a barbed arrow to his heart. At length, he heard a sermon, which discovered to him his own character and his exposure to the wrath of God, and riveted upon his mind the impression which he had received from the last torn leaf of the blessed, yet insulted volume. Had worlds been at his disposal, he would freely have given them all, could they have availed, in enabling him to undo what he had done. At length he found forgiveness at the foot of the cross. The torn leaves of that sacred volume brought healing to his soul, for they led him to repose on the mercy of God, which is sufficient for the chief of sinners.

I tell you there is not a reprobate walking the streets and defiling the air with his blasphemies, there is not a creature abandoned so as to be well-nigh as bad as Satan himself, if he is a child of life, who is not within the reach of mercy. And if God says “Today I *must* abide in thy house,” He then assuredly will. Do you feel, my dear hearer, just now, something, in your mind which seems to say you have held out against the Gospel a long while, but today you can hold out no longer? Do you feel

that a strong hand has got hold of you and do you hear a voice saying, "Sinner, I must abide in thy house, you have often scorned Me, you have often laughed at Me, you have often spit in the face of mercy, often blasphemed Me, but sinner, I must abide in thy house. You banged the door yesterday in the missionary's face, you burned the tract, you laughed at the minister, you have cursed God's house, you have violated the Sabbath, but, sinner, I must abide in thy house and I will," "What, Lord!" you say, "abide in my house! why it is covered all over with iniquity. Abide in my house! why there is not a chair or a table but would cry out against me. Abide in my house! why the joists and beams and flooring would all rise up and tell Thee that I am not worthy to kiss the hem of Thy garment. What, Lord! abide in my house!" "Yes," says He, "I *must*, there is a strong necessity, my powerful love constrains Me and whether thou wilt let Me or no, I am determined to make thee willing and thou shalt let Me in."

Does not this surprise you, poor trembler—you who thought that mercy's day was gone and that the bell of your destruction had tolled your death-knell? Oh! does not this surprise you, that Christ not only asks you to come to Him, but invites Himself to your table and what is more, when you would put Him away, kindly says, "I must, I will come in." Only think of Christ going after a sinner, crying after a sinner, begging a sinner to let Him save him and that is just what Jesus does to His chosen ones. The sinner runs away from Him, but free-grace pursues him and says, "Sinner, come to Christ," and if our hearts be shut up, Christ puts His hand in at the door and if we do not rise, but repulse Him coldly, He says, "I must, I will come in." He weeps over us till His tears win us. He cries after us till His cries prevail and at last in His own well-determined hour, He enters into our heart and there He dwells. "I must abide in thy house," said Jesus.

8. And now, lastly, this call was an *effectual* one, for we see the fruits it brought forth. Open was Zaccheus' door, spread was his table, generous was his heart, washed were his hands, unburdened was his conscience, joyful was his soul. "Here, Lord," says he, "the half of my goods I give to the poor, I dare say I have robbed them of half my property—and now I restore it." "And if I have taken anything from any one by false accusation, I will restore it to him fourfold."—away goes another portion of his property. Ah! Zaccheus, you will go to bed tonight a great deal poorer than when you got up this morning—but infinitely richer, too—poor, very poor, in this world's goods, compared with what thou wert when thou first didst climb that sycamore tree, but richer—ininitely richer—in heavenly treasure. Sinner, we shall know whether God calls you by this. If He calls, it will be an effectual call—not a call which you hear and then forget, but one which produces good works. If God hath called thee this morning, down will go that drunken cup, up will go thy prayers. If God hath called thee this morning, there will not be *one* shutter up today in your shop, but *all* and you will have a notice stuck up, "This house is closed on the Sabbath day and will not again on that day be opened." Tomorrow, there will be such-and-such worldly amusement, but if God hath called you, you will not go. And if you have robbed anybody (and who knows but I may have a thief here?), if God call you, there will be a restoration of what you have stolen? You will give up all that you have, so that you will follow God with all your heart. We do not believe a man to be converted unless he doth renounce the error of his ways, unless, practically, he is brought to know that Christ Himself is Master of his conscience and His law is his delight. "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, I must abide at thy house." And he made haste and came down and received Him joyfully. "And Zaccheus stood and said unto the Lord,

Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Now, one or two lessons. *A lesson to the proud.* Come down, proud heart, come down! Mercy runneth in valleys, but it goeth not to the mountain top. Come down, come down, lofty spirit! The lofty city, He layeth it low even to the ground and then He buildeth it up. Again, *a lesson to thee, poor despairing soul.* I am glad to see thee in God’s house this morning, it is a good sign. I care not what you came for. You heard there was a strange kind of man that preached here, perhaps. Never mind about that. You are all quite as strange as he is. It is necessary that there should be strange men to gather in other strange men. Now, I have a mass of people here and if I might use a figure, I should compare you to a great heap of ashes, mingled with which are a few steel filings. Now, my sermon, if it be attended with divine grace, will be a sort of magnet. It will not attract any of the ashes—they will keep just where they are—but it will draw out the steel filings. I have got a Zaccheus there, there is a Mary up there, a John down there, a Sarah or a William or a Thomas, there—God’s chosen ones—they are steel filings in the congregation of ashes and my Gospel, the Gospel of the blessed God, like a great magnet, draws them out of the heap. There they come, there they come. Why? because there was a magnetic power between the Gospel and their hearts. Ah! poor sinner, come to Jesus, believe His love, trust His mercy. If thou hast a desire to come, if thou art forcing thy way through the ashes to get to Christ, then it is because Christ is calling thee. Oh! all of you who know yourselves to be sinners—every man, woman, and child of you—yea, ye little children (for God has given me some of you to be my wages), do you feel yourselves sinners? then believe on Jesus and be saved.

You have come here from curiosity, many of you. Oh! that you might be met with and saved. I am distressed for you lest you should sink into hell-fire. Oh! listen to Christ while He speaks to you. Christ says, “*Come down,*” this morning Go home and humble yourselves in the sight of God. Go and confess your iniquities that you have sinned against Him. Go home and tell Him that you are a wretch, undone without His sovereign grace and then look to Him, for rest assured, He has first looked to you. You say, “Sir, oh! I am willing enough to be saved, but I am afraid He is not willing.” Stop! stop! no more of that! Do you know that is part blasphemy—not quite. If you were not ignorant, I would tell you that it was part blasphemy. You cannot look to Christ before He has looked to you. If you are willing to be saved, He gave you that will. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized and thou shalt be saved. I trust the Holy Spirit is calling you. Young man up there, young man in the window, make haste! come down! Old man, sitting in these pews, come down. Merchant in yonder aisle, make haste. Matron and youth, not knowing Christ, oh, may He look at you. Old grandmother, hear the gracious call and thou, young lad, Christ may be looking at thee—I trust He is—and saying to thee, “Make haste and come down, for today I must abide at thy house.”

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Resurrection With Christ

No. 805

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 12, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved.)”—Ephesians 2:4-5

THERE have been conferences of late of all sorts of people upon all kinds of subjects, but what a remarkable thing a conference would be if it were possible of persons who have been raised from the dead! If you could somehow or other get together the daughter of the Shunamite, the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow at the gates of Nain, Lazarus and Eutychus, what strange communings they might have one with another! what singular inquiries they might make and what remarkable disclosures might they present to us! The thing is not possible and yet a better and more remarkable assembly may be readily gathered on the same conditions and more important information may be obtained from the confessions of its members. This morning we have a conference of that very character gathered in this house, for many of us were dead in trespasses and sins, even as others, but we hope that through the divine energy we have been quickened from that spiritual death and are now the living to praise God. It will be well for us to talk together, to review the past, to rejoice in the present, to look forward to the future. “You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins,” and as ye sit together, an assembly of men possessed of resurrection life, ye are a more notable conclave than if merely your bodies and not your spirits had been quickened.

The first part of this morning's discourse will be occupied with a solemnity in which we shall take you into the charnel house. Secondly, we shall spend awhile in reviewing a miracle and we shall observe dead men living. We shall then turn aside to observe a sympathy indicated in the text and we shall close with a song, for the text reads somewhat like music—it is full of thankfulness and thankfulness is the essence of true song, it is full of holy and adoring wonder, it is evermore true poetry even though expressed in prose.

I. Celebrate first a great SOLEMNITY and descend into the charnel house of our poor humanity.

According to the teaching of sacred Scripture, men are dead, spiritually dead. Certain vain men would make it out that men are only a little disordered and bruised by the fall, wounded in a few delicate members, but not mortally injured. However, the Word of God is very express upon the matter and declares our race to be not wounded, not hurt merely, but slain outright and left as dead in trespasses and sin. There are those who fancy that fallen human nature is only in a sort of syncope or fainting fit, and only needs a process of reviving to set it right. You have only, by education and by other manipulations, to set its life-floods in motion and to excite within it some degree of action and then life will speedily be developed. There is much good in every man, they say, and you have only to bring it out by training and example. This fiction is exactly opposite to the teaching of sacred Scripture. Within

these truthful pages, we read of no fainting fit, no temporary paralysis, but death is the name for nature's condition and quickening is its great necessity. Man is not partly dead, like the half-drowned mariner, in whom some spark of life may yet remain, if it be but fondly tendered and wisely nurtured. There is not a spark of spiritual life left in man—manhood is to all spiritual things an absolute corpse. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," said God to our first parents and die they did—a spiritual death and all their children alike by nature lie in this spiritual death, not a sham death or a metaphorical one, but a real, absolute, spiritual death.

Yet it will be said, "Are they not alive?" Truly so, but not spiritually. There are grades of life. You come first upon the vegetable life, but the vegetable is a dead thing as to the vitality of the animal. Above the animal life rises the mental life, a vastly superior life, the creature, which is only an animal, is dead to either the joys or the sorrows of mental life. Then, high above the mental, as much as the mental is above the animal, rises what Scripture calls the spiritual life—the life in Christ Jesus. All men have more or less of the mental life and it is well that they should cultivate it—get as much as they can of it, that they should put it to the best uses and make it subserve the highest ends. Man, even looked upon as merely living mentally, is not to be despised or trifled with, but still the mental life cannot of itself rise to the spiritual life. It cannot penetrate beyond that mystic wall which separates forever the mere life of mind from the life of that new principle, the Spirit, which is the offspring of God and is the living and incorruptible which He casts into the soul. If you could conceive a man in all respects like yourselves, with this one difference, that his soul had died out of him, that he only possessed his animal faculties, but had no intellectual faculties, so that he could breathe and walk, sleep and eat, and drink and make a noise, but all mental power was gone, you would then speak of him as being entirely dead to mental pursuits. He might be a most vigorous and well-developed animal, but his manhood would be dead. It would be of no use explaining a proposition to him or working out a problem on the black board for his instruction or offering him even the simplest school-book, for if he had no mind to receive, how could you impart?

Now, spiritually, this is the condition of every unregenerate man. It is of no use whatever, apart from the Spirit of God, to hope to make the man understand spiritual things, for they are spiritually discerned, says the apostle. The carnal mind cannot understand the things which be of God—when best trained, it has no glimmering of the inward sense of spiritual things, it stumbles over the letter and loses the real meaning, not from want of mental capacity, but from the absence of spiritual life. O sons of men, if ye would know God, "Ye must be born again," "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," he cannot understand it, he cannot know it. The carnal man cannot understand the things, which are of God, which are eternal and invisible, any more than an ox can understand astronomy or a fish can admire the classics. Not in a moral sense, nor a mental sense, but in a spiritual sense, poor humanity is dead and so the Word of God again and again most positively describes it.

Step with me, then, into the sepulcher-house and what do you observe of yonder bodies which are slumbering there? They are quite unconscious? Whatever goes on around them, neither occasions them joy nor causes them grief. The dead in their graves may be marched over by triumphant armies, but they shout not with them that triumph. Or friends they have left behind may sit there and water the grass upon the green mound with their tears, but no sigh responsive comes from

the gloomy cavern of the tomb. It is thus with men spiritually dead. They are unaffected by spiritual things. A dying Savior, whose groans might move the very adamant and make the rocks dissolve, they can hear of all unmoved. Even the all-present Spirit is undiscerned by them and His power unrecognized. Angels, holy men, godly exercises, devout aspirations, all these are beyond and above their world. The pangs of hell do not alarm them and the joys of heaven do not entice them. They hear after a sort mentally, but the spirit-ear is fast shut up and they do not hear. They are unconscious of all things which are of a spiritual character. Eyes have they, but they see not and ears, but they hear not. You can interest them in the facts of geology or the discoveries of art, but you cannot win their hearts to spiritual emotions and pursuits, because they are as unaware of their meaning as an oyster or whelk is unacquainted with the dis-establishment of the Irish church. Carnal men blunder over the first words of spiritual knowledge as Nicodemus did who, when he was told that he must be born again, began to inquire, "How can a man be born again when he is old?" or like the woman of Samaria, who, when she was told of living water, could not understand the spiritual truth and exclaimed in wonder, "Thou hast nothing to draw with and the well is deep; from whence then hast thou that living water?" Men are spiritually unconscious of spiritual truth and so far dead to it.

Observe that corpse. You may strike it, you may bruise it, but it will not cry out. You may pile burdens upon it, but it is not weary. You may shut it up in darkness, but it feels not the gloom. So the unconverted man is laden with the load of his sin, but he is not weary of it. He is shut up in the prison of God's justice, but he pants not for liberty. He is under the curse of God, as it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," but that curse causes no commotion in his spirit, because he is dead. Well may some of you be peaceful, because ye are not aware of the terrors which surround you. A man totally deaf is not startled by thunder-claps. If totally blind, he is not alarmed by the flashing of the lightning. He fears not the tempest which he does not discern. Even thus is it with you who are at ease in your sins, you cannot discern the danger of your sin, you do not perceive the terror that rises out of it, else let me tell you, there were no sleep to those wanton eyes, no rest to those giddy spirits, you would cry out in grief the very moment you received life, nor would you rest till delivered from those evils which DO ensure for you a sure damnation. Oh! were you but alive, you would never be quiet till you were saved from the wrath to come. Man remains unconscious of spiritual things and unmoved by them because, in a spiritual sense, he is dead.

Invite yonder corpse to assist you in the most necessary works of philanthropy. The pestilence is abroad, ask the buried one to kneel with you and invoke the power of heaven to recall the direful messenger, or if he prefers it, ask him to assist you in purifying the air and attending to sanitary arrangements. You ask in vain, however needful or simple the act, he cannot help you in it. And in spiritual things, it is even so with the graceless. The carnal man can put himself into the posture of prayer, but he cannot pray. He can open his mouth and make sweet sounds in earth-born music, but the true praise he is an utter stranger to. Even repentance, that soft and gentle grace which ought to be natural to the sinful, is quite beyond his reach. How shall he repent of a sin the weight of which he cannot feel? How shall he pray for a blessing the value of which he has no power to perceive? How shall he praise a God in whom he feels no interest and in whose existence he takes no delight?

I say that to all spiritual things the main is quite as unable as the dead are unable to the natural works and services of daily life. "And yet," says one, "we heard you last Lord's-day tell these dead people to repent and be converted." I know you did and you shall hear me yet again do the like. But why speak I to the dead thus and tell them to perform actions which they cannot do? Because my Master bids me and as I obey my Master's errand, a power goes forth with the Word spoken and the dead start in their sleep, and they wake through the quickening power of the Holy Spirit and they who naturally cannot repent and believe, do repent and believe in Jesus and escape from their former sins and live. Yet, believe me, it is no power of theirs which makes them thus start from their death-sleep and no power of mine which arrests the guilty, slumbering conscience—it is a power divine which God has yoked with the Word which He has given forth when it is fully and faithfully preached. Therefore have we exercised ourselves in our daily calling of bidding dead men live, because life comes at the divine bidding. But dead they are, most thoroughly so and the longer we live, the more we feel it to be so and the more closely we review our own condition before conversion and the more studiously we look into our own condition even now, the more fully do we know that man is dead in sin and life is a gift, a gift from heaven, a gift of undeserved love and sovereign grace, so that the living must every one of them praise God and not themselves.

One of the saddest reflections about poor dead human nature is what it will be. Death in itself, though a solemn matter, is not so dreadful as that which comes of it. Many a time when that dear corpse has first been forsaken of the soul, those who have lost a dear one have been fain to imprint that cold brow with kisses still. The countenance has looked even more lovely than in life and when friends have taken the last glimpse, there has been nothing revolting, but much that was attractive. Our dead ones have smiled like sleeping angels, even when we were about to commit them to the grave. Ah! but we cannot shake from us a wretched sense of what is sure to be revealed before long. It is only a matter of time and corruption must set in and it must bring with it its daughter putridity and by-and-by, the whole must be so noxious that if you had kept it above ground so long, you would vehemently cry with Abraham, "Bury my dead out of my sight!" for the natural and inevitable result of death is corruption.

So it is with us all. Some are manifestly corrupt, ah, how soon! while yet they are youths we see them plunging into infamous vice. They are corrupt in the tongue with lying words and lascivious speaking, corrupt in the eye with wanton glances, corrupt certainly at heart, and then corrupt thoroughly in life. There are many about us, in the streets every day, the stink of whose corruption compels us to put them out of society, for we are very decent, even those who are dead themselves are very scrupulous not to associate with those who are too far gone in corruption. The dead bury their dead and roll the stone and put away the debauched and dissolute. We do not ask the rotten sinners into our households, because they might corrupt us too fast and we flatter ourselves that we are so much superior, whereas they are only a stage or two ahead in a race which all unregenerate men are running. This corruption, though not developed in all to the same extent visibly, will be plain enough at the last in another world. When God finds us dead, He will cast us out where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.

What will be the development of an unregenerate character in hell I cannot tell, but I am certain it will be something which my imagination dares not now attempt to

depict, for all the restraints of this life which have kept men decent and moral will be gone, when they come into the next world of sin, and as heaven is to be the perfection of the saint's holiness, so hell will be the perfection of the sinner's loathsomeness and there will he discover and others will discover, what sin is when it cometh to its worst. "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death," and this, dear hearer, do we solemnly remind you will be your portion forever and ever, unless God be pleased to quicken you. Unless you be made to live together with Christ you will be in this world dead, perhaps in this world corrupt, but certainly so in the next world, where all the dreadful influences of sin will be developed and discovered to the very full and you shall be cast away from the presence of God and the glory of His power. There can be no death in heaven, neither can corruption inherit incorruption and if you have not been renewed in the spirit of your mind, within those pearly gates you can never have your portion, and where the light of heaven shines in perpetual noonday, your lot can never be cast. Weigh these thoughts, I pray you, if they are not according to this book reject them, but as they most certainly are, refuse them at your peril, but rather let them take possession of your careful spirit and lead you to seek and find eternal life in Christ Jesus the Lord.

II. We now change the subject for something more pleasant and observe A MIRACLE or dead men made alive.

The great object of the Gospel of Christ is to create men anew in Christ Jesus. It aims at resurrection and accomplishes it. The Gospel did not come into this world merely to restrain the passions or educate the principles of men, but to infuse into them a new life which, as fallen men, they did not possess. I saw yesterday what seemed to me a picture of those preachers whose sole end and aim is the moralizing of their hearers, but who have not learned the need of supernatural life. Not very far from the shore were a dozen or more boats at sea dragging for two dead bodies. They were using their lines and grappling irons, and what with hard rowing and industrious sailing, were doing their best most commendably to fish up the lost ones from the pitiless sea. I do not know if they were successful, but if so, what further could they do with them but decently to commit them to their mother earth? The process of education and everything else, apart from the Holy Spirit, is a dragging for dead men, to lay them out decently, side by side, in the order and decency of death, but nothing more can man do for man. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has a far other and higher task. It does not deny the value of the moralist's efforts or decry the results of education, but it asks what more can you do and the response is, "Nothing." There it bids the bearers of the bier stand away and make room for Jesus, at whose voice the dead arise. The preacher of the Gospel cannot be satisfied with what is done in drawing men out of the sea of outward sin, he longs to see the lost life restored. He desires to have breathed into them a new and superior life to what they have possessed before. Go your way, education, do your best, you are useful in your sphere. Go your way, teacher of morality, do your best, you too are useful in your own manner, but if it comes to what man really needs for eternity, you all put together are of little worth—the Gospel and the Gospel alone answers to men's requirements. Man must be regenerated, quickened, made anew, have fresh breath from heaven breathed into him or the work of saving him is not begun. The text tells us that God has done this for His people, for those who trust in Him. Let us observe the dry bones as they stir and stand before the Lord and observing, let us praise the Lord, that

according to His great love wherewith He loved us, He hath quickened us together with Christ.

In this idea of quickening, there is a mystery. What is that invisible something which quickens a man? Who can unveil the secret? Who can track life to its hidden fountain? Brother, you are a living child of God. what made you live? You know that it was by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the language of the text, you trace it to God, you believe your new life to be of divine implantation. You are a believer in the supernatural, you believe that God has visited you as He has not visited other men and has breathed into you life. You believe rightly, but you cannot explain it. We know not of the wind, whence it cometh or whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit. He that should sit down deliberately and attempt to explain regeneration and the source of it, might sit there till he grew into a marble statue before he would accomplish the task. The Holy Spirit enters into us and we who were dead before to spiritual things, begin to live by His power and indwelling. He is the great worker, but how the Holy Spirit works is a secret that must be reserved for God Himself. We need not wish to understand the mode, it is enough for us if we partake of the result.

It is a great mystery then, but while it is a mystery it is a great reality. We know and do testify and we have a right to be believed, for we trust we have not forfeited our characters. We know and do testify that we are now possessors of a life which we knew nothing of some years ago, that we have come to exist in a new world, and that the appearance of all things outside of us is totally changed from what it used to be. "Old things have passed away, behold all things are become new." I bear witness that I am this day the subject of sorrows which were no sorrows to me before I knew the Lord and that I am uplifted with joys which I should have laughed at the very thought of if anyone had whispered the name of them in my ears before the life divine had quickened me. This is the witness of hundreds of us and although others disbelieve us, they have no right to deny our consciousness because they have not partaken of the like. If they have never tried it, what should they know about it? If there should be an assembly of blind men and one of them should have His eyes opened and begin to talk of what he saw, I can imagine the blind ones all saying, "What a fool that man is! There are no such things." "Here I have lived in this world seventy years," says one, "and I never saw that thing which he calls a color and I do not believe in his absurd nonsense about scarlet and violet and black and white. It is all foolery together." Another wiseacre declares, "I have been up and down the world and all over it for forty years and I declare I never had the remotest conception of blue or green, nor had my father before me. He was a right good soul and always stood up for the grand old darkness. 'Give me,' said he, 'a good stick and a sensible dog and all your nonsensical notions about stars and suns and moons, I leave to fools who like them.'"

The blind man has not come into the world of light and color and the unregenerate man has not come into that world of spirit and hence neither of them is capable of judging correctly. I sat one day, at a public dinner, opposite a gentleman of the gourmand species, who seemed a man of vast erudition as to wines and spirits and all the viands of the table. He judged and criticized at such a rate that I thought he ought to have been employed by our provision merchants as taster in general. He had finely developed lips and he smacked them frequently. His palate was in a true critical condition. He was also as proficient in the quantity as in the

quality and disposed of meats and drinks in a most wholesale manner. His retreating forehead, empurpled nose and protruding lips, made him, while eating at least, more like an animal than a man. At last, hearing a little conversation around him upon religious matters, he opened his small eyes and his great mouth, and delivered himself of this sage utterance, "I have lived sixty years in this world and I never felt or believed in anything spiritual in all my life." The speech was a needless diversion of his energies from the roast duck. We did not need him to tell us that. I, for one, was quite clear about it before he spoke. If the cat under the table had suddenly jumped on a chair and said the same thing, I should have attached as much importance to the utterance of the one as to the declaration of the other and so, by one sin in one man and another in another man, they betray their spiritual death. Until a man has received the divine life, his remarks thereon, even if he be an archbishop, go for nothing. He knows nothing about it according to his own testimony, then why should he go on to try to beat down with sneers and sarcasms those who solemnly avow that they have such a life and that this life has become real to them, so real that the mental life is made to sink into a subordinate condition compared with the spiritual life which reigns within the soul?

This life brings with it the exercise of renewed faculties. The man who begins to live unto God has powers now which he never had before. The power really to pray, the power heartily to praise, the power actually to commune with God, the power to see God, to talk with God, the power to receive tidings from the invisible world and the power to send messages up through the veil which hides the unseen up to the very throne of God. Now, the man instead of saying, "Is there a God?" feels that there is not a place where God is not, sees God in everything, hears Him in the wind, discerns Him in every creature that surrounds him. Now, the man instead of dreading God and betaking himself to some outward form, ceremony or other outward way of pushing God further off, puts away His ceremonies, casts away the beggarly elements which once might have pleased him and draws near to his God in spirit and speaks with Him. "Father," saith he and God owns the kindred. I wish we all possessed this life and I pray if we have it not, that God may send it to us, for if we have it not, the testimony of the Word is that we are dead when most we seem to be alive.

I shall not, however, keep you longer upon this quickening, except to say that you may easily image to yourself the inward experience of a man who receives new life from the dead. You may conceive it by the following picture. Suppose a man to have been dead and to have been buried like others in some great necropolis, some city of the dead, in the catacombs. An angel visits him and by mercy's touch, he lives. Now, can you conceive that man's first emotion when he begins to breathe? There he is in the coffin—he feels stifled, pent up. He had been there twenty years, but he never felt inconvenienced until now. He was easy enough, in his narrow cell, if ease can be where life is not. The moment he lives, he feels a horrible sense of suffocation, life will not endure to be so hideously compressed and he begins to struggle for release. He lifts with all his might that dreadful coffin lid! What a relief when the decaying plank yields to his pressure!

So the ungodly man is content enough in his sin, his Sabbath-breaking, his covetousness, his worldliness, but the moment God quickens him, his sin is as a sepulcher to the living. He feels unutterably wretched. He is not in a congenial position and he struggles to escape. Often at the first effort, the great black lid of

blasphemy flies off, never to be replaced. Satan thought it was screwed down fast enough and so it was for a dead man, but life makes short work of it and many other iniquities follow. But to return to our resurrection in the vault, the man gasps a minute and feels refreshed with such air as the catacomb affords him, but soon he has a sense of clammy damp about him and feels faint, and ready to expire. So the renewed man at first feels little but his inability, and groans after power. He cries, "I want to repent. I want to believe in Jesus. I want to be saved." Poor wretch! he never felt that before—of course he did not—he was dead, now he is alive, and hence he longs for the tokens, signs, fruits, and refreshments of life. Do you not see our poor friend who has newly risen? He has slipped down from that niche in the wall, where they laid him, and finding himself in a dark vault, he rubs his eyes to know whether he really is alive or whether it is all a dream, it is such a new thing, and as by the little glimmering of light that comes in, he detects hundreds of others lying in the last sleep and he says to himself, "Great God! what a horrible place for a living man to be in! Can I be myself alive?" He begins to wander about, searching for a door, by which he may escape. He loathes those winding-sheets in which they wrapped him. He begins stripping them off. They are damp and mildewed. They do not suit a living man. Anon, he cries out, perhaps there is some passer-by who may hear him and he may be delivered from his confinement.

So a man, who has been renewed by grace, when he partly discovers where he is, cries out, "This is no place for me." That giddy ballroom—why, it was well enough for one who knew no better. That ale-bench was suitable for an unregenerate soul—but what can an heir of heaven do in such places? Lord, deliver me. Give me light and liberty. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may live and praise Thy name. The man pines for liberty and if, at last, he stumbles to the door of the vault and reaches the open air, methinks he drinks deep draughts of the blessed oxygen! How glad he is to look upon the green fields and the fresh flowers. You do not imagine that he will wish to return to the vaults again. He will utterly forsake those gloomy abodes. He shudders at the remembrance of the past and would not for all the world undergo again what he has once passed through. He is tenderly affected at every remembrance of the past and is especially fearful lest there should be others like himself newly-quickened, who may need a brother's hand to set them at liberty. He loathes the place where once he slept so quietly. So the converted man dreads the thought of going back to the joys which once so thoroughly fascinated him. "No," saith he, "they are no joys to me. They were joys well enough for my old state of existence, but now, having entered into a new life, a new world, they are more joys to me than the spade and shroud are joys to a living man and I can only think of them with grief and of my deliverance with gratitude.

III. I must pass on very briefly to the third point. The text indicates a SYMPATHY. "He hath quickened us together with Christ." What does that mean? It means that the life which lives in a saved man is the same life which dwells in Christ. To put it simply—when Elisha had been buried for some years, we read that they threw a man who was dead into the tomb where the bones of Elisha were and no sooner did the corpse touch the prophet's bones than it lived at once. Yonder is the cross of Christ and no sooner does the soul touch the crucified Savior than it lives at once, for the Father hath given to Him to have life in Himself and life to communicate to others. Whosoever trusts Christ has touched Him and by touching Him, he has received the virtue of eternal life. To trust in the Savior of the world is be quickened through Him.

We are quickened together with Christ in three senses. First, representatively. Christ represents us before the eternal throne. He is the second Adam to His people. So long as the first Adam lived, the race lived and so long as the second Adam lives the race represented by Him lives before God. Christ is accepted, believers are accepted. Christ is justified, the saints are justified. Christ lives and the saints enjoy a life which is hid with Christ in God.

Next we live by union with Christ. So long as the head is alive the members have life. Unless a member can be severed from the head and the body maimed, it must live so long as there is life in the head. So long as Jesus lives, every soul that is vitally united to Him and is a member of His body, lives according to our Lord's own word, "Because I live ye shall live also." Poor Martha was much surprised that Christ should raise her brother from the dead, but He said, as if to surprise her still more, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?" This is one of the things we are to believe, that when we have received the spiritual life, it is in union with the life of Christ and consequently can never die, because Christ lives, our life must abide in us forever.

Then we also live together with Christ as to likeness. We are quickened together with Christ, that is, in the same manner. Now Christ's quickening was in this wise. He was dead through the law, but the law has no more dominion over Him now that He lives again. So you, Christian, you are cursed by the old law of Sinai, but it has no power to curse you now, for you are risen in Christ. You are not under the law, its terrors and threatenings have nought to do with you. Of our Lord it is written, "In that He liveth," it is said, "He liveth unto God." Christ's life is a life unto God. Such is yours. You are not henceforth to live unto the flesh to mind the timings of it, but God who gave you life is to be the great object of your life, in Him you live and for Him you live. Moreover, it is said, "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him." In that same way, the Christian lives, he shall never go back to his spiritual death—having once received divine life, he shall never lose it. God plays not fast and loose with His chosen. He does not save today and damn tomorrow. He does not quicken us with the inward life and then leave us to perish. Grace is a living, incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth forever. "The water that I shall give him," saith Jesus, "shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." Glory be to God, then, you who live by faith in Christ live an immortal life, a life dedicated to God, a life of deliverance from the bondage of the law, rejoice in it and give your God all the praise!

IV. And this brings us to the last word, which was A SONG.

We have not time to sing it, we will just write the score before your eyes and ask you to sing it at your leisure, your hearts making melody to God. Brethren and sisters, if you have indeed been thus made alive as others are not, you have first of all, in the language of the text, to praise the great love of God, great beyond all precedent. It was love which made Him breathe into Adam the breath of life and make poor clay to walk and speak, but it is far greater love which makes Him now, after the fall has defiled us, renew us with a second and yet higher life. He might have made new creatures by millions out of nothing. He had but to speak and angels would have thronged the air or beings like ourselves, only pure and unfallen, would have been multiplied by myriads upon the greensward. If He had left us to sink to hell as fallen angels had done before us, who could have impugned His justice? But His

great love would not let Him leave His elect to perish. He loved His people and therefore He would cause them to be born again. His great love wherewith He loved us, defied death and hell and sin. Dwell on the theme, you who have partaken of this love! He loved us, the most unworthy, who had no right to such love. There was nothing in us to love and yet He loved us, loved us when we were dead. Here His great love seems to swell and rise to mountainous dimensions. Love to miserable sinners, love to loathsome sinners, love to the dead and to the corrupt. Oh, heights and depths of sovereign grace, where are the notes which can sufficiently sound forth your praise? Sing, O ye redeemed, of His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins.

And cease not ye to praise God, as ye think of the riches of His mercy, for we are told that He is rich in mercy, rich in His nature as to mercy, rich in His covenant as to treasured mercy, rich in the person of His dear Son as to purchased mercy, rich in providential mercy, but richest of all in the mercy which saves the soul. Friends, explore the mines of Jehovah's wealth if you can. Take the key and open the granaries of your God and see the stores of love, which He has laid up for you. Strike your sweetest notes to the praise of God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He hath loved us.

And let the last note and the highest and the loudest of your song be that with which the text concludes, "By grace are ye saved." O never stammer there, brethren and sisters, whatever you do, hold or do not hold, never be slow to say this, "If saved at all, I am saved by grace, grace in contradistinction to human merit, for I have no merit, grace in contradistinction to my own free will, for my own free will would have led me further and further from God. Preventing grace brought me near to him." Do bless and magnify the grace of God and as you owe all to it cry, "Perish each thought of pride," consecrate yourself entirely to the God to whom you owe everything. Desire to help to spread the savor of that grace which has brought such good things to you and vow in the name of the quickening Spirit, that He who has made you live by faith shall, from this day till you enter into heaven, have the best of your thoughts and your words and your actions, for you are not your own, you have been quickened from the dead, and you must live in newness of life. The Lord bless you, dear friends, if you have never spiritually lived, may He give you grace to believe in Jesus this morning and then you are alive from the dead, and if you are alive already, may He quicken you yet more and more by His eternal Spirit till He brings you to the land of the living on the other side of the Jordan. Amen.

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Free Grace

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**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 9, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS**

“Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.”—Ezekiel 36:32

THERE are two sins of man that are bred in the bone and that continually come out in the flesh. One is self-dependence and the other is self-exaltation. It is very hard, even for the best of men, to keep themselves from the first error. The holiest of Christians and those who understand best the Gospel of Christ, find in themselves a constant inclination to look to the power of the creature, instead of looking to the power of God and the power of God alone. Over and over again, Holy Scripture has to remind us of that which we never ought to forget, that salvation is God’s work from first to last and is not of man, neither by man. But so it is, this old error—that we are to save ourselves or that we are to do something in the matter of salvation—always rises up and we find ourselves continually tempted by it to step aside from the simplicity of our faith in the power of the Lord our God. Why, even Abraham himself was not free from the great error of relying upon his own strength. God had promised to him that He would give him a son—Isaac, the child of promise. Abraham believed it, but at last, weary with waiting, he adopted the carnal expedient of taking to himself Hagar to wife and he fancied that Ishmael would most certainly be the fulfillment of God’s promise, but instead of Ishmael’s helping to fulfill the promise, he brought sorrow unto Abraham’s heart, for God would not have it that Ishmael should dwell with Isaac. “Cast out,” said the Scripture, “the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman.”

Now we, in the matter of salvation, are apt to think that God is tarrying long in the fulfillment of His promise and we set to work ourselves to do something and what do we do? Sink ourselves deeper in the mire and pile up for ourselves a store of future troubles and trials. Do we not read that it grieved Abraham’s heart to send Ishmael away? Ah! and many a Christian has been grieved by those works of nature which he accomplished with the design of helping the God of grace. Oh, beloved, we shall find ourselves very frequently attempting the foolish task of assisting Omnipotence and teaching the Omniscient One. Instead of looking to grace alone to sanctify us, we find ourselves adopting philosophic rules and principles which we think will affect the divine work. We shall but mar it, we shall bring grief into our own spirits. But if, instead thereof, we in every work look up to the God of our salvation for help and strength and grace and succor, then our work will proceed to our own joy and comfort and to God’s glory. That error, then, I say is in our bone and will always dwell with us and hence it is that the words of the text are put as an antidote against that error. It is distinctly stated in our text that salvation is of God. “Not for your sakes do I this.” He says nothing about what we have done or can do. All the preceding and all the succeeding verses speak of what God does. “I will take you from among the heathen.” “I will sprinkle clean water upon you.” “I will give you a new heart.” “I will put my Spirit within you.” It is all of God. Therefore, again recall to our recollection this doctrine and give up all dependence upon our own strength and power.

The other error to which man is very prone, is that of relying upon his own merit. Though there is no righteousness in any man, yet in every man there is a proneness to truth in some fancied merit. Strange that it should be so, but the most reprobate characters have yet some virtue as they imagine, upon which they rely. You will find the most abandoned drunkard pride himself that he is not a swearer. You will find the blaspheming drunkard pride himself that at least he is honest. You will find men with no other virtue in the world, exalt what they imagine to be a virtue—the fact that they do not profess to have any and they think themselves to be extremely excellent,

because they have honesty or rather impudence enough to confess that they are utterly vile. Somehow the human mind clings to human merit, it always will hold to it and when you take away everything upon which you think it could rely, in less than a moment it fashions some other ground for confidence out of itself. Human nature with regard to its own merit is like the spider. It bears its support in its own bowels and it seems as if it would keep spinning on to all eternity. You may brush down one web, but it soon forms another. You may take the thread from one place and you will find it clinging to your finger, and when you seek to brush it down with one hand, you find it clinging to the other. It is hard to get rid of, it is ever ready to spin its web and bind itself to some false ground of trust. It is against all human merit that I am this morning going to speak and I feel that I shall offend a great many people here. I am about to preach a doctrine that is gall and vinegar to flesh and blood, one that will make righteous moralists gnash their teeth, and make others go away and declare that I am an Antinomian and perhaps scarcely fit to live. However, that consequence is one which I shall not greatly deplore, if connected with it there should be in other hearts a yielding to this glorious truth, and a giving up to the power and grace of God, who will never save us unless we are prepared to let Him have all the glory.

First, I shall endeavor to expound at large the doctrine contained in this text. In the next place I shall endeavor to show its force and truthfulness, and then in the third place I shall seek God's Holy Spirit to apply the useful, practical lessons which are to be drawn from it.

I. I shall endeavor to EXPOUND THIS TEXT. "Not for your sakes do I this saith the Lord God." The motive for the salvation of the human race is to be found in the breast of God and not in the character or condition of man. Two races have revolted against God—the one angelic, the other human. When a part of this angelic race revolted against the Most High, justice speedily overtook them. They were swept from their starry seats in heaven and henceforth they have been reserved in darkness unto the great day of the wrath of God. No mercy was ever presented to them, no sacrifice ever offered for them, but they were without hope and mercy, forever consigned to the pit of eternal torment. The human race, far inferior in order of intelligence, sinned as atrociously, at any rate, if the sins of manhood that we have heard of be put together and rightly weighed, I can scarcely understand how even the sins of devils could be much blacker than the sin of mankind. However, the God who in His infinite justice passed over angels and suffered them forever to expiate their offenses in the fires of hell, was pleased to look down on man. Here was election on a grand scale, the election of manhood and the reprobation of fallen angelhood. What was the reason for it? The reason was in God's mind, an inscrutable reason which we do not know and which if we knew probably we could not understand. Had you and I been put upon the choice of which should have been spared, I do think it probable we should have chosen that fallen angels should have been saved. Are they not the brightest? Have they not the greatest mental strength? If they had been redeemed, would it not have glorified God more, as we judge, than the salvation of worms like ourselves? Those bright beings—Lucifer, son of the morning and those stars that walked in his train—if they had been washed in His redeeming blood, if they had been saved by sovereign mercy, what a song would they have lifted up to the Most High and everlasting God! But God, who doeth as He wills with His own and giveth no account of His matters, but who deals with His creatures as the potter deals with his clay, took not upon Him the nature of angels, but took upon Him the seed of Abraham and chose men to be the vessels of His mercy. This fact we know, but

where is its reason? certainly not in man. "Not for your sakes do I this. O house of Israel, be ashamed and be confounded for your own ways."

Here, very few men object. We notice that if we talk about the election of men and the non-election of fallen angels, there is not a cavil for a moment. Every man approves of Calvinism till he feels that he is the loser by it, but when it begins to touch his own bone and his own flesh then he kicks against it. Come, then, we must go further. The only reason why one man is saved and not another, lies not, in any sense, in the man saved, but in God's bosom. The reason why this day the Gospel is preached to you and not the heathen far away, is not because, as a race, we are superior to the heathen, it is not because we deserve more at God's hands. His choice of Britain, in the election of outward privilege, is not caused by the excellency of the British nation, but entirely because of His own mercy and His own love. There is not reason in us why we should have the Gospel preached to us more than any other nation. Today, some of us have received the Gospel and have been changed by it and have become the heirs of light and immortality, whereas others are left still to be the heirs of wrath. But there is no reason in us why we should have been taken and others left.

***"There was nothing in us to merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight.
'Twas 'Even so, Father!' we ever must sing,
Because it seem'd good in Thy sight."***

And now, let us review this doctrine at length. We are taught in Holy Scripture that, long before this world was made, God foreknew and foresaw all the creatures He intended to fashion and there and then, foreseeing that the human race would fall into sin and deserve His anger, determined, in His own sovereign mind, that an immense portion of the human race should be His children and should be brought to heaven. As to the rest, He left them to their own deserts, to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind, to scatter crime and inherit punishment. Now, in the great decree of election, the only reason why God selected the vessels of mercy must have been because He would do it. There was nothing in any one of them which caused God to choose them. We all were alike, all lost, all ruined by the fall, all without the slightest claim upon His mercy, all, in fact, deserving His utmost vengeance. His choice of any one and His choice of all His people are causeless, so far as anything in them was concerned. It was the effect of His sovereign will and of nothing which they did, could do, or even would do, for thus saith the text. "Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel!"

As for the fruit of our election, in due time Christ came into this world and purchased with His blood all those whom the Father hath chosen. Now come ye to the cross of Christ, bring this doctrine with you, and remember that the only reason why Christ gave up His life to be a ransom for His sheep was because He loved His people, but there was nothing in His people that made Him die for them. I was thinking as I came here this morning, if any man should imagine that the love of God to us was caused by anything in us, it would be as if a man should look into a well to find the springs of the ocean or dig into an anthill to find an Alp. The love of God is so immense, so boundless and so infinite that you cannot conceive for a moment that it could have been caused by anything in us. The little good that is in us—the no good that is in us—for there is none, could not have caused the boundless, bottomless,

shoreless, summitless love which God manifests to His people. Stand at the foot of the cross, ye merit-mongers, ye that delight in your own works and answer this question. Do you think that the Lord of life and glory could have been brought down from heaven, could have been fashioned like a man, and have been led to die through any merit of yours? Shall these sacred veins be opened with any lancet less sharp than His own infinite love? Do you conceive that your poor merits, such as they are, could be so efficacious as to nail the Redeemer to the tree and make Him bend His shoulders beneath the enormous load of the world's guilt? You cannot imagine it. The consequence is so great, compared with what you suppose to be the case, that your logic fails in a moment. You may conceive that a coral insect rears a rock by its multitude and by its many years of working, but you cannot conceive that all the accumulated merits of manhood, if there were such things, could have brought the Eternal from the throne of His majesty and bowed Him to the death of the cross. That is a thing as clearly impossible to any thoughtful mind as impossibility can be. No, from the cross comes the cry, "Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel."

After Christ's death, there comes, in the next place, the work of the Holy Spirit. Those whom the Father hath chosen and whom the Son has redeemed, in due time the Holy Spirit calls "out of darkness into marvelous light." Now, the calling of the Holy Spirit is without any regard to any merit in us. If this day the Holy Spirit shall call out of this congregation a hundred men and bring them out of their estate of sin into a state of righteousness, you shall bring these hundred men and let them march in review and if you could read their hearts, you would be compelled to say, "I see no reason why the Spirit of God should have operated upon these. I see nothing whatever that could have merited such grace as this—nothing that could have caused the operations and motions of the Spirit to work in these men." For, look ye here. By nature, men are said to be dead in sin. If the Holy Spirit quickens, it cannot be because of any power in the dead men or any merit in them, for they are dead, corrupt, and rotten in the grave of their sin. If then, the Holy Spirit says, "Come forth and live," it is not because of anything in the dry bones, it must be for some reason in His own mind, but not in us. Therefore, know ye this, men and brethren, that we all stand upon a level. We have none of us anything that can recommend us to God and if the Spirit shall choose to operate in our hearts unto salvation, He must be moved to do it by His own supreme love, for He cannot be moved to do it by any good will, good desire, or good deed that dwells in us by nature.

To go a little further. This truth, which holds good so far, holds good all the way. God's people, after they are called by grace, are preserved in Christ Jesus. They are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." They are not suffered to sin away their eternal inheritance, but as temptations arise they have strength given with which to encounter them, and as sin blackens them, they are washed afresh and again cleansed. But mark, the reason why God keeps His people is the same as that which made them His people—His own free sovereign grace. If, my brother, you have been delivered in the hour of temptation, pause and remember that you were not delivered for your own sake. There was nothing in you that deserved the deliverance. If you have been fed and supplied in your hour of need, it is not because you have been a faithful servant of God, nor because you have been a prayerful Christian, it is simply and only because of God's mercy. He is not moved to anything He does for you by anything that you do for Him. His motive for blessing you lies wholly and entirely in the depths of His own bosom. Blessed be God, His people shall be kept.

***“Nor death, nor hell shall e’er remove
His favorites from His breast,
In the dear bosom of His love
They must forever rest.”***

But why? Because they are holy? Because they are sanctified? Because they serve God with good works? No, but because He in His sovereign grace has loved them, does love them, and will love them, even to the end.

And to conclude my exposition of this text. This shall hold good in heaven itself. The day is coming when every blood-bought, blood-washed child of God shall walk the golden streets arrayed in white. Our hands shall soon bear the palm, our ears shall be delighted with celestial melodies, and our eyes filled with the transporting visions of God’s glory. But mark, the only reason why God shall bring us to heaven shall be His own love and not because we deserved it. We must fight the fight, but we do not win the victory because we fight it. We must labor, but the wage at the days’ end shall be a wage of grace and not a debt. We must honor God here, looking for the recompense of the reward, but that recompense will not be given on a legal ground, because we merited it, but given to us entirely because God had loved us, for no reason that was in us. When you and I and each of us shall enter heaven, our song shall be, “Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name be all the glory,” and that shall be true, it shall not be a mere exaggeration of gratitude. It shall be true, we shall be compelled to sing it, because we could not sing anything else. We shall feel that we did nothing and that we were nothing, but that God did it all—that we had nothing in us to be the motive of His doing it, but that His motive lay in Himself, therefore unto Him shall be every particle of the honor forever and ever.

Now, this, I take it, is the meaning of the text, distasteful it is to the great majority, even of professing Christians in this age. It is a doctrine that requires a great deal of salt or else few people will receive it. It is very unsavory to them. However, there it stands. “Let God be true and every man a liar.” His truth we must preach and this we must proclaim. Salvation is “not of men, neither by man, not of the will of the flesh, nor of blood,” nor of birth, but of the sovereign will of God and God alone.

II. And now, in the second place, I have to ILLUSTRATE AND ENFORCE THIS TEXT.

Consider a moment, man’s character. It will humble us and it will tend to confirm this truth in our minds. Let me take an illustration. I will consider man as a criminal. He certainly is such in the sight of God and I shall not slander him. Suppose now that some great criminal is at last overtaken in his sin and shut up in Newgate. He has committed high treason, murder, rebellion, and every possible iniquity. He has broken all the laws of the realm—every one of them. The public cry is everywhere, “This man must die. The laws cannot be maintained unless he shall be made an example of their rigor. He who beareth not the sword in vain must this time let the sword taste blood. The man must die, he richly deserves it.” You look through his character. You cannot see one solitary redeeming trait. He is an old offender. He has so long persevered in his iniquity that you are compelled to say, “The case is hopeless with this man. His crimes have such aggravation we cannot make an apology for him, even should we try. Not Jesuitical cunning itself could devise any pretense of excuse

or any hope of a plea for this abandoned wretch, let him die!" Now, if her Majesty the Queen, having in her hands the sovereign power of life and death, chooses that this man shall not die, but that he shall be spared, do you not see as plain as daylight, that the only reason that can move her to spare that man, must be her own love, her own compassion? For, as I have supposed already that there is nothing in that man's character that can be a plea for mercy, but that, contrariwise, his whole character cries aloud for vengeance against his sin.

Whether we like it or not, this is just the truth concerning ourselves. This is just our character and position before God. Ah! my hearer, you may turn upon your heel, disgusted and offended, but there are some here who feel it to be solemnly true in their own experience, and they will therefore drink in the doctrine, for it is the only way whereby they can be saved. My hearer, your conscience perhaps is telling you this morning that you have sinned so heinously that there is not an inlet for a solitary ray of hope in your character. You have added to your sins this great one, that you have rebelled against the Most High wantonly and wickedly. If you have not committed all the sins in the calendar of crime, it has been because providence has stayed your hand. Your heart has been black enough for it all. You feel that the vileness of your imagination and desires has achieved the consummation of human guilt and further you could not go. Your sins have prevailed against you and have gone over your head.

Now, man, the only ground upon which God can save you is His own love. He cannot save you because you deserve it, for you do not deserve it, because there is no excuse that might be made for your sin. No, you are without any excuse and you feel it. Oh! bless His dear name, that He has devised this way, whereby He can save you upon the basis of His own sovereign love and unbounded grace, without anything in you.

I want you to go back to Newgate again to this criminal. We suppose now that this criminal is visited by her Majesty in person. She goes to him and she says to him, "Rebel, traitor, murderer, I have in my heart compassion for you, you deserve it not, but I am come this day to you, to tell you that if you repent you shall have mercy at my hands." Suppose this man, springing up, should curse her—curse this angel of mercy to her face, spit upon her, and utter blasphemies and imprecate curses upon her head. She retires, she is gone, but so great is her compassion, that the next day she sends a messenger and days and weeks and months and years, she continually sends messengers and these go to him and they say, "If you will repent of your transgressions you shall have mercy, not because you deserve it, but because her Majesty is compassionate and out of her gracious soul she desires your salvation. Will you repent?" Suppose this man should curse at the messenger, stop his ears against the message, spit upon him, tell him he does not care for him at all. Or to suppose a better case—suppose he turns upon his seat and says, "I don't care whether I am hanged or not, I'll take my chance along with other people, I shall take no notice of you." And suppose more than that, rising from his seat, he indulges again in all the crimes for which he has already been condemned and plunges headlong afresh into the very sins which have brought his neck under the rope of the gallows.

Now, if her Majesty would spare such a man as that, on what terms can she do it? You say, "Why, she cannot, unless she does it out of love, she cannot because of any merit in him, because such a beast as that ought to die." And now what are you

and I by nature but like this? And my unconverted hearer, what is this but a picture of you? Has not God Himself visited your conscience? and has He not said to you, "Sinner! come now, let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool." And what have you done? Stopped your ear against the voice of conscience—cursed and swore at God, blasphemed His holy name, despised His Word, and railed against His ministers. And this day, again, with tears in his eyes, a servant of God is come to you and his message is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, as I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live." And what will you do? Why, if left to yourselves you will laugh at the message—despise it. It will glance off from you like an arrow from a man that is girt about with mail and you will go away to despise God again, as you have done before. Do you not see, then, that if God ever shall save you, it cannot be for your sakes, but must be from His own infinite love. It cannot be from any other reason, since you have rejected Christ, despised His Gospel, trodden underfoot the blood of Jesus, and have refused to be saved. If He saves you, it must be free grace and free grace alone.

But now picture a little more about this criminal at Newgate. Not content with having added sin to sin and having rejected mercy for himself, this wretch industriously employs himself in going round to all the cells where others are confined and hardening their hearts also against the mercy of the Queen. He can scarce see a person but he begins to taint him with the blasphemy of his own heart. He utters injurious things against the majesty that spares him and endeavors to make others as vile as himself. Now, what does justice say? If this man ought not to die on his own account, yet he ought to die for the sake of others and if he be spared, is it not as plain as a pike-staff that he cannot be spared because of any reason in him? It must be because of the unconquerable compassion of the Sovereign. And now look you here. Is not this the case of some here present? Not only do you sin yourselves, but lead others into sin? I know this was one of my plagues and torments, when first God brought me to Himself, that I have led others into temptation.

Are there not men here that have taught others to swear? Are there not fathers here that have helped to destroy their own children's souls? Are there not some of you that are like the deadly Upas tree? You stretch out your branches and from every leaf there drops poison upon those who come beneath its deadly range. Are there not some here who have seduced the virtuous, that have misled those who were seemingly pious, and that are perhaps so hardened that they even glory in it? Not content with being damned yourselves, you are seeking to lead others to the pit also. Thinking it not enough yourselves to be at enmity with God, you want to imitate Satan by dragging others with you. O my hearer, is not this thy case? Does not thy heart confess it? And does not the tear flow down thy cheek? Remember, then, this must be true. If God shall save thee, it must be because He will do it. It cannot be because there is anything good in thee, for thou deservedst now to die, and if He spare thee it must be sovereign love and sovereign grace.

I will just use one other illustration and then, I think I shall have made the text clear enough. There is not so much difference between black and a darker shade of black as there is between pure white and black. Everyone can see that. Then there is not so much difference between man and the devil as there is between God and man. God is perfection, we are black with sin. The devil is only a darker shade of black and great as may be the difference between our sin and the sin of Satan, yet it

is not so great as the difference between the perfection of God and the imperfection of man. Now, imagine for a minute that somewhere in Africa there should be a tribe of devils living, that you and I had it in our power to save these devils from some threatened wrath which must overtake them. If you or I should go there and die to save those devils, what could be our motive? From what we know of the character of a devil, the only motive that could make us do that must be love. There could not be any other. It must be simply because we had such big hearts that we could even embrace fiends within them.

Well, now, there is not so much difference between man and the devil as between God and man. If, then, the only motive that could make men save a devil must be man's love, does it not follow with irresistible force, that the only motive that could lead God to save men must be God's own love. At any rate, if that reason be not cogent the fact is indisputable—"Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel." God sees us, abandoned, evil, wicked, and deserving His wrath, if He saves us, it is His boundless, fathomless love that leads Him to do it—nothing whatever in us.

III. And now, having thus preached this doctrine and enforced it, I come to a very solemn PRACTICAL APPLICATION. And here may God the Holy Spirit help me labor with your hearts!

First, since this doctrine is true, how humble a Christian man ought to be. If thou be saved, thou hast had nought to do with it, God has done it. If thou be saved, thou hast not deserved it. It is mercy undeserved which thou hast received. I have sometimes been delighted when I have seen the gratitude of abandoned characters to any who have assisted them. I remember visiting a house of refuge. There was a poor girl there who had fallen into sin long and when she found herself kindly addressed and recognized by society, and saw a Christian minister longing after her soul's good, it broke her heart. What should a man of God care about her? she was so vile. How could it be that a Christian should speak to her?

Ah! but how much more should that feeling rise in our hearts? My God! I have rebelled against Thee and yet Thou hast loved me, unworthy me! How can it be? I cannot lift myself up with pride, I must bow down before Thee in speechless gratitude. Remember, my dear brethren, that not only is the mercy which you and I have received undeserved, but it was unasked. It is true you prayed, but not till free grace made you pray. You would have been, to this day, hardened in heart, without God and without Christ, had not free grace saved you. Can you be proud then?—proud of mercy which, if I may use the term, has been forced upon you?—proud of grace which has been given you against your will, until your will was changed by sovereign grace?

And think again. All the mercy you have, you once refused, Christ sups with you, be not proud of His company. Remember, there was a day when He knocked and you refused—when He came to the door and said, "My head is wet with dew and my locks with the drops of the night, open to Me, My beloved," and you barred it in His face and would not let Him enter. Be not proud, then, of what thou hast, when thou rememberest that thou didst once reject Him. Does God embrace thee in His arms of love? Remember, once thou liftedst up thine hand of rebellion against Him. Is thy name written in His book? Ah! there was a time when, if it had been in thy power, thou wouldst have erased the sacred lines that contained thine own salvation. Can

we, dare we, lift up our wicked head with pride, when all these things should make us hang our heads down in the deepest humility? That is one lesson. Let us learn another.

This doctrine is true and therefore it should be a subject of the greatest gratitude. When meditating upon this text yesterday, the effect it had upon me was one of transport and joy. Oh! I thought, upon what other condition could I have been saved? And I looked back upon my past estate. I saw myself piously trained and educated, but revolting against all that. I saw a mother's tears shed over me in vain and a father's admonition lost upon me, and yet I found myself saved by grace and I could only say, "Lord, I bless Thee that it is by grace, for if it had been by merit, I had never been saved. If Thou hadst waited till there was something good in me, Thou wouldst have waited till I sank into the hopeless perdition of hell, for good in man there never would have been, unless Thou hadst first put it there." And then I thought immediately, "Oh! how I could go and preach that to the poor sinner!" Ah! let me try if I cannot. O sinner! you say you dare not come to Christ because you have nothing to recommend you. He does not want anything to recommend you, He will not save you, if you have anything to recommend you, for His says, "Not for you sake do I this." Go to Christ with earrings in your ears and jewels upon you, wash your face and array yourself with gold and silver and go before Him and say, "Lord, save me, I have washed myself and clothed myself, save me!" "Get you gone! Not for your sakes will I do this." Go to Him again and say, "Lord, I have put a rope about my neck and sackcloth about my loins, see how repentant I am, see how I feel my need, now save me!" "No," saith He, "I would not save you on account of your flaunting robes and now I will not save you because of your rags. I will save you for nothing about you. If I do save you, it will be from something in my heart, not from anything you feel. Get ye gone!" But if today you go to Christ and say, "Lord Jesus, there is no reason in the world why I should be saved—there is one in heaven, Lord, I cannot urge any plea. I deserve to be lost. I have no excuse to make for all my sins, no apology to offer, Lord. I deserve it and there is nothing in me why I should be saved, for if Thou wouldst save me I should make but a poor Christian, after all. I fear that my future works will be no honor to Thee—I wish they could be, but Thy grace must make them good, else they will still be bad. But Lord, though I have nothing to bring and nothing to say for myself, I do say this. I have heard that Thou hast come into the world to save sinners—O Lord, save me!

'I the chief of sinners am.'

"I confess I do not feel this as I ought. I do not mourn it as I ought. I have no repentance to recommend me. Nay, Lord, I have no faith to recommend me either, for I do not believe Thy promise as I ought, but oh! I cling to this text. Lord, Thou hast said Thou wilt not do it for my sake. I thank Thee Thou hast said that. Thou couldst not do it for my sake, for I have no reason why Thou shouldst. Lord, I claim Thy gracious promise. 'Be merciful to me, a sinner.'"

Ah! you good people, this doctrine does not suit some of you, it is too humbling, is it not? You that have kept your churches regularly and been to meetings so piously, you that never broke the Sabbath or never swore an oath or did anything wrong, this does not suit you. You say it will do very well to preach to harlots and drunkards and swearers, but it will not suit such good people as we are. Ah! well, this is your text—"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." You are "whole"—

you are, you “need not a physician, but they that are sick.” Go your way. Christ came not to save such as you are. You think you can save yourselves. Do it and perish in the doing of it. But I feel that the same Gospel that suits a harlot suits me and that that free grace which saved Saul of Tarsus must save me, else I am never saved.

Come, let us all go together. We are all guilty—some more, some less, but all hopelessly guilty. Let us go together to the footstool of His mercy and though we dare not look up, let us lie there in the dust and sigh out again, “Lord have mercy upon us for whom Jesus died.”

***“Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.”***

Sinner, come now, come now, I beseech thee, I entreat thee, come now. O Spirit of the living God, draw them now! Let these feeble weak words be the means of drawing souls to Christ. Will you reject my Master again? Will you go out of this house hardened once more? You may never again have such feelings as those which are aroused in your soul. Come, now, receive His mercy, now bend your willing necks to His yoke, and then I know you shall go away to taste His faithful love and at last to sing in heaven the song of the redeemed—“Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, unto Him be glory forever. Amen.”

***“O thou great eternal Jesus,
High and mighty Prince of Peace,
How Thy wonders shine resplendent,
In the wonders of Thy grace.***

***Thy rich Gospel scorns conditions,
Breathes salvation free as air,
Only breathes triumphant mercy,
Baffling guilt and all despair.***

***“O the grandeur of the Gospel,
How it sounds the cleansing blood,
Shows the bowels of a Savior,
Shows the tender heart of God.***

***Only treats of love eternal,
Swells the all-abounding grace,
Nothing knows but life and pardon,
Full redemption, endless peace.”***

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Distinguishing Grace

No. 262

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AT THE NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK**

“For who maketh thee to differ from another?”—1 Corinthians 4:7

OR as it is in the Greek, “For who distinguisheth thee?” “Who giveth thee distinguishing and discriminating mercy?” “Who maketh thee to differ from another?” Pride is the inherent sin of man and yet it is of all sins the most foolish. A thousand arguments might be used to show its absurdity, but none of these would be sufficient to quench its vitality. Alive it is in the heart and there it will be till we die to this world and rise again without spot or blemish. Yet many are the arrows which may be shot at the heart of our boasting. Take for instance the argument of creation, how strongly that thrusts at our pride. There is a vessel upon the potter’s wheel, would it not be preposterous for that clay which the potter fashioneth to boast itself and say, “How well am I fashioned! how beautifully am I proportioned, I deserve much praise!” Why, O lump of clay, whatever thou art, the potter made thee, however elegant thy proportions, however matchless thy symmetry. The glory is due to Him that made thee, not to thyself. Thou art but the work of His hands. And so let us speak unto ourselves. We are the thing formed, shall we say of ourselves that we deserve honor because God hath formed us excellently and wondrously? No, the fact of our creation should extinguish the sparks of our pride. What are we, after all, but as grasshoppers in His sight, as drops of the bucket, as lumps of animated dust, we are but the infants of a day when we are most old. We are but the insects of an hour when we are most strong. We are but the wild ass’s colt when we are most wise. We are but as folly and vanity when we are most excellent—let that tend to humble us. But surely if these prevail not to clip the pinions of our high soaring pride, the Christian man may at least bind its wings with arguments derived from the distinguishing love and peculiar mercies of God. “Who maketh thee to differ from another?” This question should be like a dagger put to the throat of our boasting, “and what trust thou that thou didst not receive.” It would be like a sword thrust through the heart of our self-exaltation and pride.

We shall now for a moment or two endeavor to put down our pride by observing wherein God hath distinguished us and made us to differ, and then by noticing that all this cometh of Him and should be a reason for humiliation and not for boasting.

1. Many of us differ from others in God’s providential dealings towards us. Let us think a moment how many there are of God’s precious and dearly beloved children, who at this moment are in the depths of poverty. They are not walking about in sheepskins and goatskins, persecuted, afflicted, and tormented, but still they are hungry and no man gives them to eat, they are thirsty and no man furnishes them with drink, their fires are wasted in poverty and their years in distress. Some there are of God’s children who were once in affluence, but have been suddenly plunged into the lowest depths of penury. They knew what it was to be respected among the sons of men, but now they are among the dogs of the flock and no man careth for them. There are some of us who are here present who have all that heart can wish. God hath given us food and raiment, the lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage. Let us gratefully ask, “Who maketh us to differ?” “Let us

recollect that all we have is the gift of His providence. Not to you, O my hands, do I sacrifice because ye have toiled for bread. Not to you, O ye brains, will I offer incense, because ye have thought for my daily livelihood. Not to you, O my lips, will I offer my adulation, because ye have been the means of furnishing me with words. No, unto God, who giveth power to get and to have and to enjoy, unto Him be all the praise for what He hath done for us. Never let our songs cease, for His goodness is an ever-flowing stream. Perhaps none of us can ever know, until the great day shall reveal it, how much some of God's servants are tried. To this day, they have "perils by land and perils by sea and perils by false brethren." To this hour they are pinched by want, they are deserted by friends, they know what despondency means, and all the ill which dejection and disappointment can bring to them. They have dived into the lowest depths of the sea of trouble and have walked for many a league over the hot sand of the desert of affliction. And if God hath delivered us from these things and hath made our path more pleasant and hath led us beside the still waters and into the green pastures—if He hath distinguished us by the common gifts of His providence above many others of His children who are far better and far more holy than we, what shall we say? It is owing only to His grace towards us and we will not exalt ourselves above our fellows, we will not be high-minded, but condescend to men of low estate. We will not lift our necks with the proud, but we will bow down our brows with the humble. Every man shall be called our brother, not merely those who are arrayed in goodly raiment, but those who are clothed in the habiliments of toil, they shall be confessed to be our kindred, sprung from the same stock, for what have we that we have not received and what maketh us to differ from another? I wish that some of the stiff-necked gentry of our churches would at times recollect this. Their condition is smooth as oil and as soft as young down, but their hearts are as high as poplars and their manners as stiff as hedge-stakes. There have been many who would do well if they would learn that they have nothing beyond what God has given them. And the more God has given them, the more they are in debt. Why should a man boast because He is deeper in debt than another? Do the debtors in the Queen's Bench say to one another, "You are only a hundred pounds in debt and I a thousand, therefore I am a greater gentleman than you?" I think not. But nevertheless, if they did so, they would be as wise as men who boast beyond their fellow-creatures because they happen to have more of rank, wealth, honor and position, in this world. "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?"

But the best way for you to feel this part of the discourse is to go tomorrow into the hospital and walk along the wards and see how poor men's bodies suffer and then go into the operating-room and see what flesh and blood may have to endure. Then when you have done, go round the neighborhood to see the sick who have lain for ten or twelve or fifteen years upon the same bed, and after that go and visit some of God's poverty-stricken children who just exist in this world and it is but a bare existence, maintained on bread and butter, and a little tea, and but too little of even such things as those. Go and see their poor, miserable, unfurnished rooms, their cellars and their attics, and that will be a better sermon to you than anything I can utter. You will come home and say, "Oh my God, I bless Thee for Thy kindness towards me. These temporal mercies which I once thought so little of, I must heartily blest Thee for. I must thank Thee for what Thou hast given to me and I will ascribe it all to Thy love, for Thou makest me to differ. I have nothing that I have not received."

2. But this is not the most important point for us to observe. We are now going to look at, not matters of providence, but the things of God's grace. Here it is that we who are now assembled as a church have most reason to bless God and to say, "Who maketh us to differ from others?" Take, my dear friends, in your mind's eye the cases of the careless, the hardened and the thoughtless, of even this present congregation. Side-by-side with you, my brother, there may sit a man, a woman, who is dead in trespasses and sins. To such the music of the Gospel is like singing to a dead ear and the dropping of the Word is as dew upon a rock. There are many in this congregation whose position in society and whose moral character are extremely excellent and yet before God their state is awful. They attend the house of God as regularly as we do. They sing as we sing, sit as we sit, and come and go as we do, and yet are they without God and without hope in the world—strangers from the commonwealth of Israel and aliens from the covenant of promise. Yet what maketh us to differ? Why is it that I this day am not sitting down a callous hearer, hardened under the Gospel? Why am I not at this very hour hearing the Word with my outward ear but rejecting it in my inward heart? Why is it that I have not been suffered to reject the invitation of Christ to despise His grace—to go on, Sunday after Sunday, hearing the Word and yet being like the deaf adder to it. Oh, have I made myself to differ, God forbid that such a proud, blaspheming thought should defile our hearts. No, beloved,

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

The only reason, my brother, why thou art at this time an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ, a partaker of sweet fellowship with Jesus, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, is because HE hath made thee to differ. Thou wast an heir of wrath, even as others, born in sin and shapen in iniquity. Therefore must thou give all the glory to His holy name and cry, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name be all the praise." Even this one thought when fully masticated and digested might feed up our gratitude and make us humbly bow before the footstool of God's throne with joyful thanksgiving.

3. Will you please, however, to think of other cases? Who maketh thee to differ from others of this assembly who are more hardened than those to whom we have alluded? There are some men and women of whose salvation, if it were to be wrought by man, we must indeed utterly despair, for their hearts are harder than the most stubborn steel. The hammer of the Word makes no impression on such souls. The thunders of the law roll over their heads, but they can sleep in the midst of the tumult—the lightnings of Sinai flash against their hearts, but even those mighty flames seem as if they recoiled from the attack, Do you not know such? they are your own children, your husband, your wife, some of your own family and as you look upon them, though you have longed, prayed, and wept, and sighed for their souls, you are compelled to say in your heart, "I half fear that I shall never see them converted." You say with sorrow, "Oh, if they are saved it will be a wonder of divine grace indeed. Surely they will never yield their souls to God. They seem as callous as if their conscience were seared with a hot iron. They appear to have the stamp of condemnation upon their brow, as if they were marked and sealed and had the earnest of the pit upon their hearts before they came there. Ay, but stop, "Who

maketh thee to differ?" Why am I not at this day among the most hardened of men? How is it that my heart is melted so that I can weep at the recollection of the Redeemer's suffering? Why is it that my conscience is tender and that I am led to self-examination by a searching sermon? How is it that I know how to pray and to groan before God on account of sin? What has brought the water from these eyes, but the selfsame power which brought the water from the rock? And what hath put life into my heart but the self-same Omnipotence which scattered manna in a hungry desert? Our hearts had still been like the wild beasts of the forest, if it had not been for divine grace. Oh! I beseech you, my dear friend, every time you see a hardened sinner, just say within yourself, "There is the picture of what I should have been, what I must have been, if all-subduing, all-conquering love had not melted and sanctified my heart." Take these two cases then and you have, heaven knows, reason enough to sing to the praise of sovereign grace.

4. But now another, the lowest class of sinners do not mingle with our congregations, but are to be seen in our back streets and lanes and sometimes in our highways. How frightful is the sin of drunkenness, which degrades a man into a beast, which sinks Him lower than the brutes themselves! How shameful is the iniquity of blasphemy, which without any object or any chance of profit brings a curse upon its own head! How awful are the ways of the lascivious wretch who ruins both body and soul at once and not content with his own destruction ruins others with him.

Cases that come under our observation in the daily newspapers, and that assail us in our daily observation and hearing are too vile to be told. How often is our blood chilled with the sound of an imprecation and how frequently our heart is made to palpitate with the daring impieties of the blasphemous. Now let us stop, "Who maketh thee to differ?" Let us recollect that if we live very near to Christ, we should have lived quite as near to hell if it had not been for saving grace. Some of you here present are special witnesses of this grace, for you have yourself experienced redemption from these iniquities. Look back some four years with some of you and recollect how different were your surroundings then to what they are now. Mayhap four years ago you were in the tap-room singing the song of the drunkard as readily as any, but a little while ago you cursed that Savior whom now you love. Only a few months have flitted over your head since you ran with the multitude to do evil, but now, "Who maketh thee to differ?" "Who hath brought this miracle of grace. Who has led you to the stool of the penitent and the table of communion, who hath done it? Beloved, you are not slow to answer, for the verdict of your heart is undivided, you do not give the glory in part to man and in part to God. No, you cry loudly in your hearts, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Ye are washed, ye are sanctified and ye have been washed in the Redeemer's blood and sanctified with the Spirit. Ye have been made to differ and ye will confess it, ye have been made to differ by distinguishing grace and distinguishing grace alone. And what upholds the rest of us from being what these my reclaimed brethren once were and what they will become again unless saving grace keeps them? What preserves the preacher this day from being a lecturer to infidels, dishonoring the grace of God which now He glories to magnify? What prevents the deacon from being an assistant in the courts of Satan? What forbids those who open the doors at the house of our God and who serve Him on the Sabbath-day, from being door-keepers in the tents of the sons of Belial? Why nothing, they had been

there unless grace had prevented them. Grace hath done it and nothing else. When we pass a prostitute in the street, we say, "O poor creature! I can pity you. I have not a harsh word for you, for I had been as you are had not God preserved me." And when you see the reeling drunkard, be not too hasty to condemn. Recollect you had been as a beast before God unless the Lord had kept you and when ye hear the oath and shudder at it, imagine not that you are superior in yourself to the man who curses God, for perhaps you once cursed Him too and certainly you would have done had not the Holy Spirit sanctified you and implanted in you a hatred of that which the wicked so greedily follow. Have you seen a man hanged for murder? Have you seen another transported for the most infamous of crimes? If you hear of one who sins against society so foully that mankind excommunicate him, pause and say, "Oh! but I should have gone as low as that, I should have been as black as he, unless restraining grace had kept me back in my unregeneracy and unless constraining grace had pushed me forward in the heavenly race, ever since I have known the will of Jesus."

5. And now we will pause again and think over another evil which stares us in the face in connection with every church. There are most melancholy cases of backsliding in so large a church as this. We are compelled often to discover the character of men and women who once seemed fair for heaven, but who manifested that they never had the root of the matter in them. Oh! well did the poet say-

***"When any turn from Zion's way,
Alas! what numbers do!"***

No trial is greater to the true minister than the apostacy of His flock. All the rage of men is quite unable to bring tears to our eyes, but this has done it. Alas! when those whom I have loved have turned aside from the way of God, when those who have sat with us at the same table and have joined with us in church communion, have gone out from us and have brought dishonor upon the church and upon the name of Christ, there has been woe in my inmost spirit. Sometimes there are cases as glaring as they are painful and as vile as they are grievous. Some of those, who were once in the midst of God's sanctuary, have become drunkards and whoremongers—and God in heaven only knows what. They have sinned against everything that is seemly, as well as everything that is holy. At the recollection of these, our eyes are filled with tears. "Oh that our head were waters and our eyes fountains of tears, that we might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of our people." No mischief-makers are so powerful as deserters. None cause so much agony as those who have nestled beneath our wings and then have flown away to feed with carrion vultures on the putrid carcasses of lust and sin.

But now let us pause. How is it that the minister has not forsaken His profession and gone back like a dog to His vomit and like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire? How is it that the deacons of this church have not turned aside unto crooked ways and denied the faith and become worse than infidels? How is it that so many members of this church have been kept so that the wicked one toucheth them not? O beloved! I can say for myself, I am a continual miracle of divine grace. If thou leave me, Lord, for a moment, I am utterly undone.

***"Leave, O leave me not alone!
Still support and comfort me."***

Let Abraham be deserted by His God, he equivocates and denies his wife. Let Noah be deserted, He becomes a drunkard and is naked to his shame. Let Lot be left awhile and filled with wine, he revels in incestuous embraces and the fruit of his body becomes a testimony to his disgrace. Nay, let David, the man after God's own heart, be left and Uriah's wife shall soon show the world that the man after God's own heart hath still an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. Oh! well doth the poet put it—

***“Methinks I hear the Savior say,
Wilt thou forsake Me too?”***

And now let our conscience answer—

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

Oh, be not rashly self-confident, Christian man. Be as confident as you can in your God, but be distrustful of yourself. Ye may yet become all that is vile and vicious, unless sovereign grace prevent and keep you to the end. But remember if you have been preserved, the crown of your keeping belongs to the Shepherd of Israel and ye know who that is. For He hath said, “I the Lord do keep it. I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” “Ye know who is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before His presence with exceeding great joy.” Then give all glory to the King immortal, invisible, the only wise God your Savior, who has kept you thus.

6. Allow me one more contrast, once again let your gratitude go with m. Since you and I have joined the church, how many who were once our companions have been damned whilst we have been saved, how many who were no worse than we were by nature have sunk into the lowest pit of hell. Conceive their unutterable torments, imagine their inconceivable woes, depict before the eye of your fancy their indescribable agonies. Descend in spirit for a moment to the gates of fire, enter into the abode of despair where justice reigns supreme on her iron throne, pass by the dreary cell of those who are everlastingly damned. Behold the twisting of that worm that never dies and the bleeding hearts that are crushed within its coils. Look ye at that flame unquenchable and behold the souls that are sweltering there in torments to us unknown and look if ye can look, but ye cannot look, for your eyes would be stricken with blindness if ye could see their torments. Your hair should be blanched with but a moment of that horrible exhibition. Ah! while you stand then and think on that region of death, despair, and damnation, recollect that you would have been there if it had not been for sovereign grace. You have a harp prepared for you in heaven, a crown laid up for you when you have finished your course. You have a mansion, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Oh, why is it you are not already a fiend, who is it that has given you a good hope through grace that you shall never come into that place of torment. Oh! tell it the wide world over. Tell it in time and in eternity, free grace hath done it. Free grace hath done it from the first to the last. I was a brand in the fire, but He plucked me from the burning, quenched me in His blood and now He declares I shall be with Him forever in heaven. But oh!

pause brethren and think that some of your former pot-companions, some of the companions of your revere and debaucheries are now in hell and you are not there and by the grace of God never will be there. Oh! why this, why this? Blessed be the Lord my God from this time forth and forever. Praise ye His name. Grace has done it. Grace has done it all.

No, I never shall wear the chain, I ne'er shall be stretched upon that rack, nor feel that fire—

***“But I shall see His face,
And never, never sin,
But from the rivers of His grace
Drink endless pleasures in.”***

But I most confidently proclaim that the reason why I shall escape and shall be glorified, is not to be found in me, but in Him. He hath made me to differ. I have nothing but what I have received.

Now what shall we say to these things. If God has made you to differ, the first prayer we should now utter should be, “Lord, humble us. Take away pride out of us. O God forgive us, that such beasts as we are should ever be proud.” We might have been with our father the devil at this very hour, if it had not been for divine love. And if we are now in the house of our Father which is in heaven shall we be proud? Avaunt thou monster! Go and dwell with the Pharisee. Pride agreeth well enough with the man who has in His own esteem been always virtuous. Go thou away and live with Him who has had good works from the first day until now, but away from me.

“I the chief of sinners am,”

and saved by sovereign grace, shall I be proud? It is not fit that thou shouldst live in my heart, thou monster! Begone! Begone! Find a fitter habitation than my soul. Should I be proud after such mercy, after such ill-deserving, but such God-receiving. Begone, pride! Begone!

Another lesson, if God alone hath made us to differ, why may He not make others to differ too? “After the Lord saved me,” said one, “I never despaired of anybody,” and let us each say so too. If you were brought in, why not another? Will you ever give up praying for anybody now that you are saved? I once heard one say concerning His child, “I think I must give her up, I can scarcely think she ever will be converted.” Why you have been pardoned yourself and if the Lord can do that, He can do anything. I am sure if the Lord has brought me to His feet, there does not remain in the world a case that can ever equal mine, if He has brought me to receive His free grace, His sovereign love, His precious blood, and hath made me to love Him, then there can be nothing too hard for Him. O Lord, if Thou hast melted this metal heart and dissolved this stony soul, Thou canst break anything. If Thou hast broken the northern iron and the steel, then what remains beyond Thy power? Go back then, Christian, armed with this fact, that God who hath made thee to differ can make anybody to differ. There can be no case beyond His strength, if He brought you in, He can bring all in. If He doth but stretch out His hand, no man need despair. Therefore, “In the morning sow thy seed and in the evening withhold not thine hand,

for thou knowest not whither shall prosper, either this or that or whether they both shall be alike good.”

Again, who hath made me to differ? Hath my Lord done it?—then let me serve Him more than others. There was a question asked once by our Savior, “What do ye more than others?” That question might well be put to each child of God here present. My dear friends, we must not be content with doing as much as other people do. In fact, we must never be contented with our doings at all, but always be trying to do more for Him who hath done so much for us. Should I give my body to be burned, my flesh piecemeal to the knife, my nerves to the rack, and my heart to the spear, yet should I not give Him all that He deserveth. No, if I should pass through the horrors of martyrdom, it were but a poor tribute to love so amazing, so divine. What are you doing my friends, what are you doing my brothers and sisters for Christ? But I will not name you, I censure myself if I censure you, but I will confess my own iniquities and leave you to confess yours. I do try to serve my Master, but I do not serve Him as I would. Each act that I perform is marred, either by want of prayer for a blessing upon it, by want of faith in my Lord, or by pride in looking back upon it. I find too continually a tendency to serve myself instead of serving Christ, a constant longing rather to get through the work than to do it acceptably. And oh! when I think upon all, I must say I am an unprofitable servant. Have mercy, O gracious Lord, on my good works as well as on my bad ones, for my good works are but bad in the best and cannot be acceptable in themselves. I am certain some of you have a little more need to say that than I have. Let us cease boasting any more. I know there are some here who are not serving Christ, some members in this church are doing nothing. You have not thought of doing anything for Christ, have you? You pay your regular subscriptions, you do what you are told to do, but do you give to Christ secretly? Do you devote your substance unto Him when no one knows it? Do you spend your time for Him? Have you chosen a sphere and have you said, “This is my work and by the grace of God I will do it.” Oh! ye cannot tell how much there is to do and how few there are to do it. I would I could have a church all alive, all active, so that there never could be a want but those who have would be ready to supply and never a work but those who are qualified would be ready to fulfil. Never fear but we should find too many rather than too few to aid its accomplishment. Oh that we had the good spirit of the ancient church, the spirit to propagate our Christianity everywhere. There needs to be in many of the suburbs of London fresh Gospel churches springing up. I can point to many places in my own vicinity, seven or eight, nine or ten in a row, where there is a chapel needed. In each place there are believers living who do not think about uniting to establish a fresh cause, but as long as their peculiar wants are satisfied, by journeying a long way off perhaps, they forget the hundreds and thousands who are pressing around them. Oh! there is much to be done and very little time to do it in. A very few weeks and those of us who have been loved more than others, those of us who have thought we could wash Christ’s feet with our tears and wipe them with the hair of our heads, will have no more opportunities for spreading the name and fame of our glorious Redeemer. Let us give of our substance to His cause, give of our time to His service, and have our hearts in His love and so shall we be blessed, for in returning Christ’s love we shall feel that His love is shed abroad more fully in our hearts and more fully in our understandings.

May the Holy Spirit add His blessing upon these broken words—they have been broken because they have broken my heart and therefore I could not help their coming out in a broken way. God accept them and dear brothers and sisters, may He

bless them to you by helping you to love Him more, who is my hope, my joy, my consolation and my all.

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Salvation Altogether by Grace

No. 703

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 29, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON**

“Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”—2 Timothy 1:9

IF we would influence thoughtful persons it must be by solid arguments. Shallow minds may be wrought upon by mere warmth of emotion and force of excitement, but the more valuable part of the community must be dealt with in quite another manner. When the apostle Paul was desirous to influence his son in the faith, Timothy, who was a diligent and earnest student and a man of gifts as well as of grace, he did not attempt to affect him by mere appeals to his feelings, but felt that the most effectual way to act upon him was to remind him of solid doctrinal truth which he knew him to have believed. This is a lesson for the ministry at large. Certain earnest preachers are incessantly exciting the people and but seldom if ever instructing them, they carry much fire and very little light. God forbid that we should say a word against appealing to the feelings, this is most needful in its place, but then there is a due proportion to be observed in it. A religion, which is based upon, sustained, and maintained simply by excitement will necessarily be very flimsy and unsubstantial, and will yield very speedily to the crush of opposition or to the crumbling hand of time.

The preacher may touch the feelings by rousing appeals, as the harper touches the harp strings. He will be very foolish if he should neglect so ready and admirable an instrument, but still as he is dealing with reasonable creatures, he must not forget to enlighten the intellect and instruct the understanding. And how can he appeal to the understanding better than by presenting to it the truth which the Holy Ghost teacheth? Scriptural doctrine must furnish us with powerful motives to urge upon the minds of Christians. It seems to me that if we could by some unreasoning impulse move you to a certain course of action it might be well in its way, but it would be unsafe and untrustworthy, for you would be equally open to be moved in an opposite direction by other persons more skillful in such operations, but if God enables us by His Spirit to influence your minds by solid truth and substantial argument, you will then move with a constancy of power which nothing can turn aside. The feather flies in the wind, but it has no inherent power to move, and consequently when the gale is over it falls to the ground—such is the religion of excitement, but the eagle has life within itself and its wings bear it aloft and onward, whether the breeze favors it or

no—such is religion, when sustained by a conviction of the truth. The well-taught man in Christ Jesus stands firm where the uninstructed infant would fall or be carried away. “Be not carried about with every wind of doctrine,” says the apostle and those are least likely to be so carried who are well-established in the truth as it is in Jesus.

It is somewhat remarkable—at least it may seem so to persons who are not accustomed to think upon the subject—that the apostle, in order to excite Timothy to boldness, to keep him constant in the faith, reminds him of the great doctrine that the grace of God reigns in the salvation of men. He gives in this verse—this parenthetical verse as some call it, but which seems to me to be fully in the current of the passage—he gives in this verse a brief summary of the Gospel, showing the great prominence which it gives to the grace of God, with the design of maintaining Timothy in the boldness of his testimony for Christ. I do not doubt but that a far greater power for usefulness lies concealed within the doctrines of grace than some men have ever dreamed of. It has been usual to look upon doctrinal truth as being nothing more than unpractical theory and many have spoken of the precepts of God’s Word as being more practical and more useful, the day may yet come when in clearer light we shall perceive that sound doctrine is the very root and vital energy of practical holiness and that to teach the people the truth which God has revealed is the readiest and surest way of leading them to obedience and persevering holiness.

May the Holy Spirit assist us while we shall, first, consider the doctrine taught by the apostle in this text and secondly, the uses of that doctrine.

I. Very carefully let us CONSIDER THE DOCTRINE TAUGHT BY THE APOSTLE IN THIS TEXT.

Friends will remember that it is not our object to preach the doctrine which is most popular or most palatable, nor do we desire to set forth the views of any one person in the assembly. Our one aim is to give what we judge to be the meaning of the text. We shall probably deliver doctrine which many of you will not like, and if you should not like it, we shall not be at all surprised or even if you should be vexed and angry, we shall not be at all alarmed, because we never understood that we were commissioned to preach what would please our hearers, nor were expected by sensible, not to say gracious men, to shape our views to suit the notions of our audience. We count ourselves amenable to God and to the text and if we give the meaning of the text, we believe we shall give the mind of God and we shall be likely to have His favor, which will be sufficient for us, contradict us who may. However, let every candid mind be willing to receive the truth, if it be clearly in the inspired Word.

1. The apostle in stating his doctrine in the following words, “Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,” declares God to be the author of salvation—“Who hath saved us and called us.” The whole tenor of the verse is towards a strong affirmation of Jonah’s doctrine, “That salvation is of the Lord.” It would require very great twisting, involving more than ingenuity, it would need dishonesty, to make out salvation by man out of this text, but to find salvation altogether of God in it is to perceive the truth which lies upon the very surface. No need for profound inquiry, the wayfaring man though a fool shall not err therein, for the text says as plainly as words can say, “God hath saved us and called us with an holy calling.” The apostle, then, in order to bring forth the truth that

salvation is of grace declares that it is of God, that it springs directly and entirely from Him and from Him only. Is not this according to the teaching of the Holy Spirit in other places, where He affirms over and over again that the alpha and omega of our salvation must be found not in ourselves but in our God? Our apostle in saying that God hath saved us refers to all the persons of the divine Unity. The Father hath saved us. "God hath given to us eternal life." 1 John 5:2. "The Father Himself loveth you." It was He whose gracious mind first conceived the thought of redeeming His chosen from the ruin of the fall. It was His mind which first planned the way of salvation by substitution. It was from His generous heart that the thought first sprang that Christ should suffer as the covenant head of His people, as saith the apostle, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Ephesians 1:3-6. From the bowels of divine compassion came the gift of the only begotten Son. "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." The Father selected the persons who should receive an interest in the redemption of His Son, for these are described as "called according to His purpose." Rom 8:28. The plan of salvation in all its details sprang from the Father's wisdom and grace. The apostle did not, however, overlook the work of the Son. It is most certainly through the Son of God that we are saved, for is not His name Jesus, the Savior? Incarnate in the flesh, His holy life is the righteousness in which saints are arrayed, while His ignominious and painful death has filled the sacred bath of blood in which the sinner must be washed that he may be made clean. It is through the redemption, which is in Christ Jesus that the people of God become accepted in the Beloved. With one consent before the eternal throne they sing, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be glory," and they chant that hymn because He deserves the glory which they ascribe to Him. It is the Son of God who is the Savior of men and men are not the saviors of themselves.

Nor did the apostle, I am persuaded, forget that Third Person in the blessed Unity—the Holy Spirit. Who but the Holy Spirit first gives us power to understand the Gospel? for "the carnal mind understandeth not the things that be of God." Doth not the Holy Spirit influence our will, turning us from the obstinacy of our former rebellion to the obedience of the truth? Doth not the Holy Ghost renew us, creating us in Christ Jesus unto good works? Is it not by the Holy Spirit's breath that we live in the spiritual life? Is He not to us instructor, comforter, quickener, is He not everything, in fact, through His active operations upon our mind? The Father, then, in planning, the Son in redeeming, the Spirit in applying the redemption must be spoken of as the one God "who hath saved us."

Brethren, to say that we save ourselves is to utter a manifest absurdity. We are called in Scripture "a temple"—a holy temple in the Lord. But shall anyone assert that the stones of the edifice were their own architect? Shall it be said that the stones of the building in which we are now assembled cut themselves into their present shape and then spontaneously came together and piled this spacious edifice? Should anyone assert such a foolish thing, we should be disposed to doubt his sanity, much more may we suspect the spiritual sanity of any man who should venture to affirm

that the great temple of the church of God designed and erected itself. No, we believe that God the Father was the architect, sketched the plan, supplies the materials and will complete the work. Shall it also be said that those who are redeemed redeemed themselves? that slaves of Satan break their own fetters? Then why was a Redeemer needed at all? How should there be any need for Jesus to descend into the world to redeem those who could redeem themselves? Do you believe that the sheep of God, whom He has taken from between the jaws of the lion, could have rescued themselves? It were a strange thing if such were the case. Our Lord Jesus came not to do a work of supererogation, but if He came to save persons who might have saved themselves, He certainly came without a necessity for so doing. We cannot believe that Christ came to do what the sinners might have done themselves. No. "He hath trodden the wine press alone and of the people there was none with Him," and the redemption of His people shall give glory unto Himself only. Shall it be asserted that those who were once dead have spiritually quickened themselves? Can the dead make themselves alive? Who shall assert that Lazarus, rotting in the grave, came forth to life of himself? If it be so said and so believed, then, nay, not even then, will we believe that the dead in sin have ever quickened themselves. Those who are saved by God the Holy Spirit are created anew according to Scripture, but who ever dreamed of creation creating itself? God spake the world out of nothing, but nothing did not aid in the creation of the universe. Divine energy can do everything, but what can nothing do? Now if we have a new creation, there must have been a Creator and it is clear that not being then spiritually created, we could not have assisted in our own new creation, unless, indeed, death can assist life and non-existence aid in creation. The carnal mind does not assist the Spirit of God in new-creating a man, but altogether regeneration is the work of God the Holy Ghost and the work of renewal is from His unassisted power. Father, Son, and Spirit we then adore and putting these thoughts together, we would humbly prostrate ourselves at the foot of the throne of the august Majesty and acknowledge that if saved He alone hath saved us and unto Him be the glory.

2. We next remark that grace is in this verse rendered conspicuous when we see that God pursues a singular method, "Who hath saved us and called us." The peculiarity of the manner lies in three things. First, in the completeness of it. The apostle uses the perfect tense and says, "who hath saved us." Believers in Christ Jesus are saved. They are not looked upon as persons who are in a hopeful state and may ultimately be saved, but they are already saved. This is not according to the common talk of professors now-a-days, for many of them speak of being saved when they come to die, but it is according to the usage of Scripture to speak of us who are saved. Be it known this morning that every man and woman here is either saved at this present moment or lost, and that salvation is not a blessing to be enjoyed upon the dying bed and to be sung of in a future state above, but a matter to be obtained, received, promised, and enjoyed now. God hath saved His saints, mark, not partly saved them, but perfectly saved them. The Christian is perfectly saved in God's purpose. God has ordained him unto salvation and that purpose is complete. He is saved also as to the price which has been paid for him, for this is done not in part but in whole. The substitutionary work which Christ has offered is not a certain proportion of the work to be done, but "It is finished" was the cry of the Savior ere He died. The believer is also perfectly saved in his covenant head, for as we were utterly lost as soon as ever Adam fell, before we had committed any actual sin, so every man in Christ was saved in the second Adam when He finished His work. The Savior completed His work and in the sense in which Paul uses that expression, "He hath

saved us." This completeness is one peculiarity—we must mark another. I want you to notice the order as well as the completeness, "who hath saved us and called us." What! saved us before He called us? Yes, so the text says. But is a man saved before he is called by grace? Not in his own experience, not as far as the work of the Holy Spirit goes, but he is saved in God's purpose, in Christ's redemption, and in his relationship to his covenant Head and He is saved, moreover, in this respect, that the work of his salvation is done and he has only to receive it as a finished work. In the olden times of imprisonment for debt, it would have been quite correct for you to step into the cell of a debtor and say to him, I have freed you, if you had paid his debts and obtained an order for his discharge. Well, but he is still in prison. Yes, but you really liberated him as soon as you paid his debts. It is true he was still in prison, but he was not legally there and no sooner did he know that the debt was paid and that receipt was pleaded before proper authorities, than the man obtained his liberty. So the Lord Jesus Christ paid the debts of his people before they knew anything about it. Did He not pay them on the cross more than eighteen hundred years ago to the utmost penny? and is not this the reason why, as soon as He meets with us in a way of grace, He cries, "I have saved thee, lay hold on eternal life." We are, then, virtually, though not actually, saved before we are called. "He hath saved us and called us." There is yet a third peculiarity and that is in connection with the calling. God has called us with an holy calling. Those whom the Savior saved upon the tree are in due time effectually called by the power of God the Holy Spirit unto holiness, they leave their sins, they endeavor to be like Christ, they choose holiness, not out of any compulsion, but from the stress of a new nature, which leads them to rejoice in holiness, just as naturally as aforesaid they delighted in sin. Whereas their old nature loved everything that was evil, their new nature cannot sin because it is born of God, and it loveth everything that is good. Does not the apostle mention this result of our calling in order to meet those who say that God calls His people because He foresees their holiness? Not so, He calls them to that holiness, that holiness is not a cause but an effect, it is not the motive of His purpose, but the result of His purpose. He neither chose them nor called them because they were holy, but He called them that they might be holy, and holiness is the beauty produced by His workmanship in them. The excellences which we see in a believer are as much the work of God as the atonement itself. This second point brings out very sweetly the fullness of the grace of God. First, salvation must be of grace, because the Lord is the author of it and what motive but grace could move Him to save the guilty? In the next place, salvation must be of grace, because the Lord works in such a manner that our righteousness is forever excluded. Salvation is completed by God and therefore not of man, neither by man, salvation is wrought by God in an order which puts our holiness as a consequence and not as a cause and therefore merit is forever disowned.

3. When a speaker desires to strengthen his point and to make himself clear, he generally puts in a negative as to the other side. So the apostle adds a negative, "Not according to our works." The world's great preaching is, "Do as well as you can, live a moral life, and God will save you." The Gospel preaching is this, "Thou art a lost sinner and thou canst deserve nothing of God but His displeasure, if thou art to be saved, it must be by an act of sovereign grace. God must freely extend the silver scepter of His love to thee, for thou art a guilty wretch who deserves to be sent to the lowest hell. Thy best works are so full of sin that they can in no degree save thee, to the free mercy of God thou must owe all things." "Oh," saith one, "are good works of no use?" God's works are of use when a man is saved, they are the

evidences of his being saved, but good works do not save a man, good works do not influence the mind of God to save a man, for if so, salvation would be a matter of debt and not of grace. The Lord has declared over and over in His Word, "Not of works, lest any man should boast." "By the works of the law there shall no flesh living be justified." The apostle in the epistle to the Galatians is very strong indeed upon this point, indeed he thunders it out again and again and again. He denies that salvation is even so much as in part due to our works, for if it be by works then he declares it is not of grace, otherwise grace is no more grace and if it be of grace it is not of works, otherwise work is no more work. Paul assures us that the two principles of grace and merit can no more mix together than fire and water, that if man is to be saved by the mercy of God, it must be by the mercy of God and not by works, but if man is to be saved by works, it must be by works entirely and not by mercy mixed therewith, for mercy and work will not go together. Jesus saves, but He does all the work or none. He is Author and Finisher and works must not rob Him of His due. Sinner, you must either receive salvation freely from the hand of divine bounty or else you must earn it by your own unassisted merits, which last is utterly impossible. Oh that you would yield to the first! My brethren, this is the truth, which still needs to be preached. This is the truth, which shook all Europe from end to end when Luther first proclaimed it. Is not this the old thunderbolt which the great reformer hurled at Rome, "Justified freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus"? But why did God make salvation to be by faith? Scripture tells us, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." If it had been by works it must have been by debt, but since it is by faith, we can clearly see that there can be no merit in faith. It must be therefore by grace.

4. My text is even more explicit yet, for the eternal purpose is mentioned. The next thing the apostle says is this, "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose." Mark that word—"according to His own purpose." Oh how some people wriggle over that word, as if they were worms on a fisherman's hook! but there it stands and cannot be got rid of. God saves His people "according to His purpose," nay, "according to His own purpose." My brethren and sisters, do you not see how all the merit and the power of the creature are shut out here, when you are saved, not according to your purpose or merit, but "according to His own purpose"? I shall not dwell on this, it is not exactly the object of this morning's discourse to bring out in full the great mystery of electing love, but I will not for a moment keep back the truth. If any man be saved, it is not because he purposed to be saved, but because God purposed to save him. Have ye never read the Holy Spirit's testimony, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy"? The Savior said to His apostles what He in effect says also to us, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye might bring forth fruit." Some hold one and some another view concerning the freedom of the will, but our Savior's doctrine is, "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life." Ye will not come, your wills will never bring you, if ye do come, it is because grace inclined you. "No man can come unto Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." "Whosoever cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out," is a great and precious general text, but it is quite consistent with the rest of the same verse, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." Our text tells us that our salvation is "according to His own purpose." It is a strange thing that men should be so angry against the purpose of God. We ourselves have a purpose, we permit our fellow creatures to have some will of their own and especially in giving away their own goods, but my God is to be bound and fettered by men and not

permitted to do as He wills with His own. But be this known unto ye, O men that reply against God, that He giveth no account of His matters, but asks of you, "Can I not do as I will with Mine own?" He ruleth in heaven and in the armies of this lower world and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, "What doest Thou?"

5. But then the text, lest we should make any mistake, adds, "according to His own purpose and grace." The purpose is not founded on foreseen merit, but upon grace alone. It is grace, all grace, nothing but grace from first to last. Man stands shivering outside, a condemned criminal, and God sitting upon the throne, sends the herald to tell him that He is willing to receive sinners and to pardon them. The sinner replies, "Well, I am willing to be pardoned if I am permitted to do something in order to earn pardon. If I can stand before the King and claim that I have done something to win His favor, I am quite willing to come." But the herald replies, "No, if you are pardoned, you must understand it is entirely and wholly as an act of grace on God's part. He sees nothing good in you, He knows that there is nothing good in you, He is willing to take you just as you are, black and bad and wicked and undeserving, He is willing to give you graciously what He would not sell to you and what He knows you cannot earn of Him. Will you have it?" and naturally every man says, "No, I will not be saved in that style." Well, then, soul, remember that thou wilt never be saved at all, for God's way is salvation by grace. You will have to confess if ever you are saved, my dear hearer, that you never deserved one single blessing from the God of grace, you will have to give all the glory to His holy name if ever you get to heaven. And mark you, even in the matter of the acceptance of this offered mercy, you will never accept it unless He makes you willing. He does freely present it to every one of you and He honestly bids you come to Christ and live, but come you never will, I know, except the effectual grace which first provided mercy shall make you willing to accept that mercy. So the text tells us it is His own purpose and grace.

6. Again, in order to shut out everything like boasting, the whole is spoken of as a gift. Do notice that, lest (for we are such straying sheep in this matter)—lest we should still slip out of the field, it is added, "purpose and grace which He gave us"—not "which He sold us," "offered us," but "which He gave us." He must have a word here which shall be a death-blow to all merit—"which He gave us"—it was given and what can be freer than a gift and what more evidently of grace?

7. But the gift is bestowed through a medium, which glorifies Christ. It is written, "which was given us in Christ Jesus." We ask to have mercy from the well-head of grace, but we ask not even to make the bucket in which it is to be brought to us, Christ is to be the sacred vessel in which the grace of God is to be presented to our thirsty lips. Now where is boasting? Why surely there it sits at the foot of the cross and sings, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Is it not grace and grace alone?

8. Yet further, a period is mentioned and added—"before the world began." Those last words seem to me forever to lay prostrate all idea of anything of our own merits in saving ourselves, because it is here witnessed that God gave us grace "before the world began." Where were you then? What hand had you in it "before the world began?" Why, fly back if you can in imagination to the ancient years when those venerable mountains, that elder birth of nature, were not yet formed, when world and sun and moon and stars, were all in embryo in God's great mind, when the unnavigated sea of space had never been disturbed by wing of seraph and the awful

silence of eternity had never been startled by the song of cherubim—when God dwelt alone. If you can conceive that time before all time, that vast eternity—it was then He gave us grace in Christ Jesus. What, O soul, hadst thou to do with that? Where were thy merits then? Where wast thou thyself? O thou small dust of the balance, thou insect of a day, where wert thou? See how Jehovah reigned, dispensing mercy as He would and ordaining unto eternal life without taking counsel of man or angel, for neither man or angel then had an existence. That it might be all of grace He gave us grace before the world began.

I have honestly read out the doctrine of the text and nothing more. If such is not the meaning of the text, I do not know the meaning of it and I cannot therefore tell you what it is, but I believe that I have given the natural and grammatical teaching of the text. If you do not like the doctrine, why I cannot help it. I did not make the text and if I have to expound it I must expound it honestly as it is in my Master's Word and I pray you to receive what He says whatever you may do with what I say.

II. I shall want your patience while I try to SHOW THE USES OF THIS DOCTRINE.

The doctrine of grace has been put by in the lumber chamber. It is acknowledged to be true, for it is confessed in most creeds. It is in the Church of England articles, it is in the confessions of all sorts of Protestant Christians, except those who are avowedly Arminian, but how little is it ever preached! It is put among the relics of the past. It is considered to be a respectable sort of retired officer, who is not expected to see any more active service. Now I believe that it is not a superannuated officer in the Master's army, but that it is as full of force and vigor as ever. But what is the use of it? Why, first then, it is clear from the connection that it has a tendency to embolden the man who receives it. Paul tells Timothy not to be ashamed and he gives this as a motive—How can a man be ashamed when he believes that God has given him grace in Christ Jesus before the world was? Suppose the man to be very poor. "Oh," says he, "what matters it? Though I have but a little oil in the cruse and a little meal in the barrel, yet I have a lot and a portion in everlasting things. My name is not in Doomsday Book nor in Burke's Peerage, but it is in the book of God's election and was there before the world began." Such a man dares look the proudest of His fellows in the face. This was the doctrine on which the brave old Ironsides fed, the men who, when they rode to battle with the war-cry of, "The Lord of hosts!" made the cavaliers fly before them like chaff before the wind. No doctrine like it for putting a backbone into a man and making him feel that he is made for something better than to be trodden down like straw for the dunghill beneath a despot's heel. Sneer who will, the elect of God derive a nobility from the divine choice which no royal patent can outshine.

I would that free grace were more preached, because it gives men something to believe with confidence. The great mass of professing Christians know nothing of doctrine, their religion consists in going a certain number of times to a place of worship, but they have no care for truth one way or another. I speak without any prejudice in this matter, but I have talked with a large number of persons in the course of my very extensive pastorate, who have been for years members of other churches, and when I have asked them a few questions upon doctrinal matters, it did not seem to me that they were in error. They were perfectly willing to believe almost anything that any earnest man might teach them, but they did not know anything.

They had no minds of their own and no definite opinions. Our children, who have learned "The Westminster Assembly's Confession of Faith," know more about the doctrines of grace and the doctrine of the Bible than hundreds of grown-up people who attend a ministry, which very eloquently teaches nothing.

It was observed by a very excellent critic not long ago, that if you were to hear thirteen lectures on astronomy or geology, you might get a pretty good idea of what the science was and the theory of the person who gave the lectures. But that if you were to hear thirteen hundred sermons from some ministers, you would not know at all what they were preaching about or what their doctrinal sentiments were. It ought not to be so. Is not this the reason why Puseyism spreads so and all sorts of errors have such a foothold, because our people as a whole do not know what they believe? The doctrines of the Gospel, if well received, give to a man something which he knows and which he holds and which will become dear to him, for which he would be prepared to die if the fires of persecution were again kindled.

Better still is it that this doctrine not only gives the man something to hold, but it holds the man. Let a man once have burnt into him that salvation is of God and not of man, and that God's grace is to be glorified and not human merit, and you will never get that belief out of him. It is the rarest thing in all the world to hear of such a man ever apostatizing from his faith. Other doctrine is slippery ground, like the slope of a mountain composed of loose earth and rolling stones, down which the traveler may slide long before he can even get a transient foothold. But this is like a granite step upon the eternal pyramid of truth, get your feet on this and there is no fear of slipping, so far as doctrinal standing is concerned. If we would have our churches in England well-instructed and holding fast the truth, we must bring out the grand old verity of the eternal purpose of God in Christ Jesus before the world began. Oh may the Holy Spirit write it on our hearts!

Moreover, my brethren, this doctrine overwhelms as with an avalanche all the claims of priest craft. Let it be told to men that they are saved by God and they say at once, "Then what is the good of the priest?" If they are told it is God's grace, then they say, "Then you do not want our money to buy masses and absolutions," and down goes the priest at once. Beloved, this is the battering ram that God uses with which to shake the gates of hell. How much more forcible than the pretty essays of many divines, which have no more power than bulrushes, no more light than smoking flax. What do you suppose people used to meet in woods for in persecuting times, meet by thousands outside the town of Antwerp and such-like places on the Continent, in jeopardy of their lives? Do you suppose they would ever have come together to hear that poor milk-and-water theology of this age or to receive the lukewarm milk and water of our modern anti-Calvinists? Not they, my brethren. They needed stronger meat and more savoury diet to attract them thus. Do you imagine that when it was death to listen to the preacher, that men under the shadows of night and amid the wings of tempest would then listen to philosophical essays or to mere moral precepts or to diluted, adulterated, soul-less, theological suppositions? No, there is no energy in that kind of thing to draw men together under fear of their lives.

But what did bring them together in the dead of night amidst the glare of lightning and the roll of thunder—what brought them together? Why, the doctrine of the grace of God, the doctrine of Jesus, and of His servants Paul and Augustine and Luther and Calvin, for there is something in that doctrine which touches the heart of the

Christian and gives him food such as his soul loveth, savoury meat, suitable to his heaven-born appetite. To hear this, men braved death and defied the sword. And if we are to see once again the scarlet hat plucked from the wearer's head and the shaven crowns with all the gaudy trumpery of Rome sent back to the place from whence they came—and heaven grant that they may take our Puseyite Established Church with them—it must be by declaring the doctrines of the grace of God. When these are declared and vindicated in every place, we shall yet again make these enemies of God and man to know that they cannot stand their ground for a moment, where men of God wield the sword of the Lord and of Gideon by preaching the doctrines of the grace of God.

Brethren, let the man receive these truths. Let them be written in his heart by the Holy Spirit and they will make him look up. He will say, "God has saved me!" and he will walk with a constant eye to God. He will not forget to see the hand of God in nature and in providence. He will, on the contrary, discern the Lord working in all places and will humbly adore Him. He will not give to laws of nature or schemes of state the glory due to the Most High, but will have respect unto the unseen Ruler. "What the Lord saith to me that will I do," is the believer's language. "What is His will that will I follow, what is His word, that will I believe, what is His promise, on that I will live." It is a blessed habit to teach a man to look up, look up to God in all things.

At the same time, this doctrine makes a man look down upon himself. "Ah," saith he, "I am nothing, there is nothing in me to merit esteem. I have no goodness of my own. If saved, I cannot praise myself. I cannot in any way ascribe to myself honor. God has done it, God has done it." Nothing makes the man so humble, but nothing makes him so glad, nothing lays him so low at the mercy seat, but nothing makes him so brave to look his fellow man in the face. It is a grand truth. Would God ye all knew its mighty power!

Lastly, this precious truth is full of comfort to the sinner and that is why I love it. As it has been preached by some, it has been exaggerated and made into a bugbear. Why, there are some who preach the doctrine of election as though it were a line of sharp pikes to keep a sinner from coming to Christ, as though it were a sharp, glittering halbert to be pushed into the breast of a coming sinner to keep Him from mercy. Now it is not so. Sinner, whoever you may be, wherever you may be, your greatest comfort should be to know that salvation is by grace. Why man, if it were by merit, what would become of you? Suppose that God saved men on account of their merits, where would you drunkards be? where would you swearers be? you who have been unclean and unchaste and you whose hearts have cursed God, and who even now do not love Him, where would you be? But when it is all of grace, why then all your past life, however black and filthy it may be, need not keep you from coming to Jesus. Christ receiveth sinners, God has elected sinners, He has elected some of the blackest of sinners—why not you? He receives every one that comes to Him. He will not cast you out. There have been some who have hated Him, insulted Him to His face, that have burned His servants alive and have persecuted Him in His members, but as soon as even they have cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner," He has given them mercy at once and He will give it to you if you be led to seek it. If I had to tell you that you were to work out your own salvation apart from His grace, it were a sad look-out for you, but when it comes to you thus—Black! there is washing for you! Dead! there is life for you! Naked! there is raiment for you! All undone and ruined! Here is a complete salvation for you! O soul, mayest thou have grace to lay

hold of it and then thou and I together will sing to the praise of the glory of divine grace.

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The Final Perseverance of the Saints

No. 1361

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 24, 1877,
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"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 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 uphill 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 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 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 tenth 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 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 forever." 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 forever, 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, 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 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 forever.” 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 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 jeweled 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, behold, 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 to God by Him,
Salvation He demands,
Points to their names upon His breast,
And spreads His wounded hands."***

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 eighth 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, 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 (54:10). "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. 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 eighth of Romans, the noblest of all language that was ever written by human pen? "Whom He 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, 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 forever, 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 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 forever 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, blusterous, but we must keep on, for the end is sure. The road is very rough and runs uphill 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 shield, that I shall come home a conqueror—then will I play the man and fight like a hero. This is one of the reasons why British troops have so often won the fight, because the drummer boys 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 two-penny-halfpenny 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 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, forever 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.

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The Doctrines of Grace do not Lead to Sin

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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL**

“For sin shall not have dominion over you. for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.”—Romans 6:14-15

LAST Sabbath morning I tried to show that the substance and essence of the true Gospel is the doctrine of God’s grace—that, in fact, if you take away the grace of God from the Gospel you have extracted from it its very life-blood and there is nothing left worth preaching, worth believing, or worth contending for. Grace is the soul of the Gospel, without it the Gospel is dead. Grace is the music of the Gospel, without it the Gospel is silent as to all comfort. I endeavored also to set forth the doctrine of grace in brief terms, teaching that God deals with sinful men upon the footing of pure mercy, finding them guilty and condemned, He gives free pardons, altogether irrespective of past character or of any good works which may be foreseen. Moved only by pity, He devises a plan for their rescue from sin and its consequences—a plan in which grace is the leading feature. Out of free favor He has provided, in the death of His dear Son, an atonement by means of which His mercy can be justly bestowed. He accepts all those who place their trust in this atonement, selecting faith as the way of salvation, that it may be all of grace. In this He acts from a motive found within Himself and not because of any reason found in the sinner’s conduct, past, present, or future. I tried to show that this grace of God flows towards the sinner from of old and begins its operations upon him when there is nothing good in him. It works in him that which is good and acceptable and continues so to work in him till the deed of grace is complete and the believer is received up into the glory for which

he is made meet. Grace commences to save and it perseveres till all is done. From first to last, from the "A" to the "Z" of the heavenly alphabet, everything in salvation is of grace and grace alone, all is of free favor, nothing of merit. "By grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

No sooner is this doctrine set forth in a clear light than men begin to cavil at it. It is the target for all carnal logic to shoot at. Unrenewed minds never did like it and they never will, it is so humbling to human pride, making so light of the nobility of human nature. That men are to be saved by divine charity, that they must as condemned criminals receive pardon by the exercise of the royal prerogative or else perish in their sins, is a teaching which they cannot endure. God alone is exalted in the sovereignty of His mercy and the sinner can do no better than meekly touch the silver scepter and accept undeserved favor just because God wills to give it. This is not pleasant to the great minds of our philosophers and the broad phylacteries of our moralists and therefore they turn aside and fight against the empire of grace. Straightway the unrenewed man seeks out artillery with which to fight against the Gospel of the grace of God and one of the biggest guns he has ever brought to the front is the declaration that the doctrine of the grace of God must lead to licentiousness. If great sinners are freely saved, then men will more readily become great sinners and if when God's grace regenerates a man it abides with him, then men will infer that they may live as they like and yet be saved. This is the constantly-repeated objection which I have heard till it wearies me with its vain and false noise. I am almost ashamed to have to refute so rotten an argument. They dare to assert that men will take license to be guilty because God is gracious and they do not hesitate to say that if men are not to be saved by their works, they will come to the conclusion that their conduct is a matter of indifference and that they may as well sin that grace may abound.

This morning, I want to talk a little about this notion, for in part it is a great mistake and in part it is a great lie. In part it is a mistake because it arises from misconception and in part it is a lie because men know better or might know better if they pleased.

I begin by admitting that the charge does appear somewhat probable. It does seem very likely that if we are to go up and down the country and say, "The very chief of sinners may be forgiven through believing in Jesus Christ, for God is displaying mercy to the very vilest of the vile," then sin will seem to be a cheap thing. If we are everywhere to cry, "Come, ye sinners, come and welcome and receive free and immediate pardon through the sovereign grace of God," it does seem probable that some may basely reply, "Let us sin without stint, for we can easily obtain forgiveness." But that which looks to be probable is not, therefore, certain. On the contrary, the improbable and the unexpected full often come to pass. In questions of moral influence, nothing is more deceptive than theory. The ways of the human mind are not to be laid down with a pencil and compasses, man is a singular being. Even that which is logical is not always inevitable, for men's minds are not governed by the rules of the schools. I believe that the inference which would lead men to sin because grace reigns, is not logical, but the very reverse and I venture to assert that, as a matter of fact, ungodly men do not as a rule plead the grace of God as an excuse for their sin. As a rule, they are too indifferent to care about reasons at all and if they do offer an excuse it is

usually more flimsy and superficial. There may be a few men of perverse minds who have used this argument, but there is no accounting for the freaks of the fallen understanding. I shrewdly suspect that in any cases in which such reasoning has been put forward it was a mere pretense and by no means a plea which satisfied the sinner's own conscience. If men do thus excuse themselves, it is generally in some veiled manner, for the most of them would be utterly ashamed to state the argument in plain terms. I question whether the devil himself would be found reasoning thus, "God is merciful, therefore let us be more sinful." It is so diabolical an inference, that I do not like to charge my fellow-men with it, though our moralist opposers do not hesitate thus to degrade them. Surely, no intelligent being can really persuade itself that the goodness of God is a reason for offending Him more than ever. Moral insanity produces strange reasonings, but it is my solemn conviction that very rarely do men practically consider the grace of God to be a motive for sin. That which seems so probable at the first blush, is not so when we come to consider it.

I have admitted that a few human beings have turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, but I trust no one will ever argue against any doctrine on account of the perverse use made of it by the baser sort. Cannot every truth be perverted? Is there a single doctrine of Scripture which graceless hands have not twisted into mischief? Is there not an almost infinite ingenuity in wicked men for making evil out of good? If we are to condemn a truth because of the misbehavior of individuals who profess to believe it, we should be found condemning our Lord Himself for what Judas did, and our holy faith would die at the hands of apostates and hypocrites. Let us act like rational men. We do not find fault with ropes because poor insane creatures have hanged themselves therewith, nor do we ask that the wares of Sheffield may be destroyed because edged tools are the murderer's instruments.

It may appear probable that the doctrine of free grace will be made into a license for sin, but a better acquaintance with the curious working of the human mind corrects the notion. Fallen as human nature is, it is still human and therefore does not take kindly to certain forms of evil—such, for instance, as inhuman ingratitude. It is hardly human to multiply injuries upon those who return us continued benefits. The case reminds me of the story of half-a-dozen boys who had severe fathers, accustomed to flog them within an inch of their lives. Another boy was with them who was tenderly beloved by his parents and known to do so. These young gentlemen met together to hold a council of war about robbing an orchard. They were all of them anxious to get about it except the favored youth, who did not enjoy the proposal. One of them cried out, "*You* need not be afraid, if our fathers catch us at this work, we shall be half-killed, but your father won't lay a hand upon *you*." The little boy answered, "And do you think because my father is kind to me, that therefore I will do wrong and grieve him? I will do nothing of the sort to my dear father. He is so good to me that I cannot vex him." It would appear that the argument of the many boys was not overpoweringly convincing to their companion. The opposite conclusion was quite as logical and evidently carried weight with it. If God is good to the undeserving, some men will go into sin, but there are others of a nobler order whom the goodness of God leadeth to repentance. They scorn the beast-like argument—that the more loving God is, the more rebellious we may be and they feel that against a God of goodness it is an evil thing to rebel.

By-the-way I cannot help observing that I have known persons object to the evil influence of the doctrines of grace who were by no means qualified by their own morality to be judges of the subject. Morals must be in a poor way when immoral persons become their guardians. The doctrine of justification by faith is frequently objected to as injurious to morals. A newspaper some time ago quoted a verse from one of our popular hymns—

***“Weary, working, plodding one,
Why toil you so?
Cease your doing, all was done
Long, long ago.
“Till to Jesus’ work you cling
By a simple faith,
‘Doing’ is a deadly thing,
‘Doing’ ends in death.”***

This is styled mischievous teaching. When I read the article, I felt a deep interest in this corrector of Luther and Paul, and I wondered how much he had drunk in order to elevate his mind to such a pitch of theological knowledge. I have found men pleading against the doctrines of grace on the ground that they did not promote morality, to whom I could have justly replied, “What has morality to do with you or you with it?” These sticklers for good works are not often the doers of them. Let legalists look to their own hands and tongues and leave the Gospel of grace and its advocates to answer for themselves.

Looking back in history, I see upon its pages a refutation of the oft-repeated calumny. Who dares to suggest that the men who believed in the grace of God have been sinners above other sinners? With all their faults, those who throw stones at them will be few if they first prove themselves to be their superiors in character. When have they been the patrons of vice or the defenders of injustice? Pitch upon the point in English history when this doctrine was very strong in the land, who were the men that held these doctrines most firmly? Men like Owen, Charnock, Manton, Howe, and I hesitate not to add Oliver Cromwell. What kind of men were these? Did they pander to the licentiousness of a court? Did they invent a Book of Sports for Sabbath diversion? Did they haunt ale-houses and places of revelry? Every historian will tell you, the greatest fault of these men in the eyes of their enemies was that they were too precise for the generation in which they lived, so that they called them Puritans and condemned them as holding a gloomy theology. Sirs, if there was iniquity in the land in that day, it was to be found with the theological party which preached up salvation by works. The gentlemen with their womanish locks and essenced hair, whose speech savored of profanity, were the advocates of salvation by works and all bedabbled with lust they pleaded for human merit, but the men who believed in grace alone were of another style. They were not in the chambers of rioting and wantonness. Where were they? They might be found on their knees crying to God for help in temptation and in persecuting times they might be found in prison, cheerfully suffering the loss of all things for the truth’s sake. The Puritans were the godliest men on the face of the earth. Are men so inconsistent as to nickname them for their purity and yet say that their doctrines lead to sin?

Nor is this a solitary instance—this instance of Puritanism, all history confirms the rule. And when it is said that these doctrines will create sin, I appeal to facts and

leave the oracle to answer as it may. If we are ever to see a pure and godly England, we must have a Gospelized England. If we are to put down drunkenness and the social evil, it must be by the proclamation of the grace of God. Men must be forgiven by grace, renewed by grace, transformed by grace, sanctified by grace, preserved by grace, and when that comes to pass, the golden age will dawn, but while they are merely taught their duty and left to do it of themselves in their own strength, it is labor in vain. You may flog a dead horse a long while before it will stir. You need to put life into it, for else all your flogging will fail. To teach men to walk who have no feet is poor work and such is instruction in morals before grace gives a heart to love holiness. The Gospel alone supplies men with motive and strength and therefore it is to the Gospel that we must look as the real reformer of men.

I shall fight this morning with the objection before us as I shall find strength. The doctrine of grace, the whole plan of salvation by grace, is most promotive of holiness. Wherever it comes it helps us to say, "God forbid," to the question, "Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?" This I would set out in the clear sunlight. I wish to call your attention to some six or seven points.

I. First, you will see that the Gospel of the grace of God promotes real holiness in men by remembering that **THE SALVATION WHICH IT BRINGS IS SALVATION FROM THE POWER OF SIN.** When we preach salvation to the vilest of men, some suppose we mean by that a mere deliverance from hell and an entrance into heaven. It includes all that and results in that, but that is not what we mean. What we mean by salvation is this—deliverance from the love of sin, rescue from the habit of sin, setting free from the desire to sin. Now listen. If it be so, that that boon of deliverance from sin is the gift of divine grace, in what way will that gift or the free distribution of it produce sin? I fail to see any such danger. On the contrary, I say to the man who proclaims a gracious promise of victory over sin, "Make all speed. Go up and down throughout the world and tell the vilest of mankind that God is willing by His grace to set them free from the love of sin and to make new creatures of them." Suppose the salvation we preach be this—you that have lived ungodly and wicked lives may enjoy your sins and yet escape the penalty—that would be mischievous indeed, but if it be this—you that live the most ungodly and wicked lives may yet, by believing in the Lord Jesus, be enabled to change those lives, so that you shall live unto God instead of serving sin and Satan—what harm can come to the most prudish morals? Why, I say spread such a Gospel and let it circulate through every part of our vast empire and let all men hear it, whether they rule in the House of Lords or suffer in the house of bondage. Tell them everywhere that God freely and of infinite grace is willing to renew men and make them new creatures in Christ Jesus. Can any evil consequences come of the freest proclamation of this news? The worse men are, the more gladly would we see them embracing this truth, for these are they who most need it. I say to every one of you, whoever you may be, whatever your past condition, God can renew you according to the power of His grace, so that you who are to Him like dead, dry bones, can be made to live by His Spirit. That renewal will be seen in holy thoughts and pure words and righteous acts to the glory of God. In great love, He is prepared to work all these things in all who believe. Why should any men be angry at such a statement? What possible harm can come of it? I defy the most cunning adversary to object, upon the ground of morals, to God's giving men new hearts and right spirits even as He pleases.

II. Secondly, let it not be forgotten as a matter of fact that THE PRINCIPLE OF LOVE HAS BEEN FOUND TO POSSESS VERY GREAT POWER OVER MEN.

In the infancy of history, nations dream that crime can be put down by severity and they rely upon fierce punishments, but experience corrects the error. Our forefathers dreaded forgery, which is a troublesome fraud and interferes with the confidence which should exist between man and man. To put it down, they made forgery a capital offense. Alas for the murders committed by that law! Yet the constant use of the gallows was never sufficient to stamp out the crime. Many offenses have been created and multiplied by the penalty which was meant to suppress them. Some offenses have almost ceased when the penalty against them has been lightened. It is a notable fact as to men, that if they are forbidden to do a thing they straightway pine to do it, though they had never thought of doing it before. Law commands obedience, but does not promote it, it often creates disobedience and an over-weighted penalty has been known to provoke an offense. Law fails, but love wins.

Love in any case makes sin infamous. If one should rob another, it would be sufficiently bad, but suppose a man robbed his friend, who had helped him often when he was in need, everyone would say that his crime was most disgraceful. Love brands sin on the forehead with a red-hot iron. If a man should kill an enemy, the offense would be grievous, but if he slew his father, to whom he owes his life or his mother, on whose breasts he was nursed in infancy, then all would cry out against the monster. In the light of love, sin is seen to be exceeding sinful.

Nor is this all. *Love has a great constraining power towards the highest form of virtue.* Deeds to which a man could not be compelled on the ground of law, men have cheerfully done because of love. Would our brave seamen man the lifeboat to obey an Act of Parliament? No, they would indignantly revolt against being forced to risk their lives, but they will do it freely to save their fellowmen. Remember that text of the apostle, "Scarcely for a righteous (or merely just) man will one die; yet peradventure," says he, "for a good (benevolent) man some would even dare to die." Goodness wins the heart and one is ready to die for the kind and generous. Look how men have thrown away their lives for great leaders. That was an immortal saying of the wounded French soldier. When searching for the bullet, the surgeon cut deeply and the patient cried out, "A little lower and you will touch the Emperor," meaning that the Emperor's name was written on his heart. In several notable instances, men have thrown themselves into the jaws of death to save a leader whom they loved. Duty holds the fort, but love casts its body in the way of the deadly bullet. Who would think of sacrificing his life on the ground of law? Love alone counts not life so dear as the service of the beloved. Love to Jesus creates a heroism of which law knows nothing. All the history of the church of Christ, when it has been true to its Lord, is a proof of this.

Kindness also, working by the law of love, has often changed the most unworthy and therein proved that it is not a factor of evil. We have often heard the story of the soldier who had been degraded to the ranks and flogged and imprisoned, and yet for all that he would get drunk and misbehave himself. The commanding officer said one day, "I have tried almost everything with this man and can do nothing with him. I will try one thing more." When he was brought in, the officer addressed him and said, "You seem incorrigible. We have tried everything with you. There seems

to be no hope of a change in your wicked conduct. I am determined to try, if another plan will have any effect. Though you deserve flogging and long imprisonment, I shall freely forgive you." The man was greatly moved by the unexpected and undeserved pardon and became a good soldier. The story wears truth on its brow. We all see that it would probably end so.

That anecdote is such good argument that I will give you another. A drunkard woke up one morning from his drunken sleep, with his clothes on him just as he had rolled down the night before. He saw his only child, his daughter Millie, getting his breakfast. Coming to his senses, he said to her, "Millie, why do you stay with me?" She answered, "Because you are my father and because I love you." He looked at himself and saw what a sottish, ragged, good-for-nothing creature he was and he answered her, "Millie, do you really love me?" The child cried, "Yes, father, I do and I will never leave you, because when mother died she said, 'Millie, stick to your father and always pray for him and one of these days he will give up drink and be a good father to you,' so I will never leave you." Is it wonderful when I add that, as the story has it, Millie's father cast away his drink and became a Christian man? It would have been more remarkable if he had not. Millie was trying free grace, was she not? According to our moralists, she should have said, "Father, you are a horrible wretch! I have stuck to you long enough. I must now leave you or else I shall be encouraging other fathers to get drunk." Under such proper dealing I fear Millie's father would have continued a drunkard till he drank himself into perdition. But the power of love made a better man of him. Do not these instances prove that undeserved love has a great influence for good?

Hear another story. In the old persecuting times, there lived in Cheapside one who feared God and attended the secret meetings of the saints and near him there dwelt a poor cobbler, whose wants were often relieved by the merchant, but the poor man was a cross-grained being and most ungratefully, from hope of reward, laid an information against his kind friend on the score of religion. This accusation would have brought the merchant to death by burning if he had not found a means of escape. Returning to his house, the injured man did not change his generous behavior to the malignant cobbler, but on the contrary, was more liberal than ever. The cobbler was, however, in an ill-mood and avoided the good man with all his might, running away at his approach. One day he was obliged to meet him face to face and the Christian man asked him gently, "Why do you shun me? I am not your enemy. I know all that you did to injure me, but I never had an angry thought against you. I have helped you and I am willing to do so as long as I live, only let us be friends." Do you marvel that they clasped hands? Would you wonder if ere long the poor man was found at the Lollards' meeting? All such anecdotes rest upon the assured fact that grace has a strange subduing power and leads men to goodness, drawing them with cords of love and bands of a man. The Lord knows that, bad as men are, the key of their hearts hangs on the nail of love. He knows that His almighty goodness, though often baffled, will triumph in the end. I believe my point is proved. To myself it is so. However, we must pass on.

III. There is no fear that the doctrine of the grace of God will lead men to sin, because ITS OPERATIONS ARE CONNECTED WITH A SPECIAL REVELATION OF THE EVIL OF SIN. Iniquity is made to be exceeding bitter before it is forgiven or when it is forgiven. When God begins to deal with a man with a view of blotting out his sins and making him His child, He usually causes him to see his evil ways in all

their heinousness. He makes him look on sin with fixed eyes, till he cries with David, "My sin is ever before me." In my own case, when under conviction of sin, no cheering object met my mental eye. My soul saw only darkness and a horrible tempest. It seemed as though a horrible spot were painted on my eyeballs. Guilt, like a grim chamberlain, drew the curtains of my bed, so that I rested not, but in my slumbers anticipated the wrath to come. I felt that I had offended God and that this was the most awful thing a human being could do. I was out of order with my Creator, out of order with the universe, I had damned myself forever, and I wondered that I did not immediately feel the gnawing of the undying worm. Even to this hour, a sight of sin causes the most dreadful emotions in my heart. Any man or woman here who has passed through that experience or anything like it, will henceforth feel a deep horror of sin. A burnt child dreads the fire. "No," says the sinner to his tempter, "you once deceived me and I so smarted in consequence, that I will not again be deluded. I have been delivered, like a brand from the burning and I cannot go back to the fire." By the operations of grace, we are made weary of sin, we loathe both it and its imaginary pleasures. We would utterly exterminate it from the soil of our nature. It is a thing accursed, even as Amalek was to Israel. If you, my friend, do not detest every sinful thing, I fear you are still in the gall of bitterness, for one of the sure fruits of the Spirit is a love of holiness and a loathing of every false way. A deep inward experience forbids the child of God to sin. He has known within himself its judgment and its condemnation, and henceforth it is a thing abhorrent to him. An enmity both fierce and endless exists between the chosen seed and the serpent brood of evil. Hence the fear that grace will be abused is abundantly safeguarded.

IV. Remember also that not only is the forgiven man thus set against sin by the process of conviction, but EVERY MAN WHO TASTES OF THE SAVING GRACE OF GOD IS MADE A NEW CREATURE IN CHRIST JESUS.

Now if the doctrine of grace in the hands of an ordinary man might be dangerous, yet it would cease to be so in the hands of one who is quickened by the Spirit and created anew in the image of God. The Holy Spirit comes upon the chosen one and transforms him. His ignorance is removed, his affections are changed, his understanding is enlightened, his will is subdued, his desires are refined, his life is changed—in fact, he is as one new-born, to whom all things have become new. This change is compared in Scripture to the resurrection from the dead, to a creation, and to a new birth. This takes place in every man who becomes a partaker of the free grace of God. "Ye must be born-again," said Christ to Nicodemus and gracious men are born-again. One said the other day, "If I believed that I was eternally saved, I should live in sin." Perhaps *you* would, but if you were renewed in heart you would not. "But" says one, "if I believed God loved me from before the foundation of the world and that therefore I should be saved, I would take a full swing of sin." Perhaps *you* and the devil would, but God's regenerate children are not of so base a nature. To them the abounding grace of the Father is a bond to righteousness which they never think of breaking. They feel the sweet constraints of sacred gratitude and desire to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. All beings live according to their nature and the regenerated man works out the holy instincts of his renewed mind. Crying after holiness, warring against sin, laboring to be pure in all things, the regenerate man puts forth all his strength towards that which is pure and perfect. A new heart makes all the difference. Given a new nature, and then all the propensities run in a different way, and the blessings of almighty love no longer involve peril, but suggest the loftiest aspirations.

V. One of the chief securities for the holiness of the pardoned is found in the way of CLEANSING THROUGH ATONEMENT. The blood of Jesus sanctifies as well as pardons. The sinner learns that his free pardon cost the life of his best Friend, that in order to his salvation the Son of God Himself agonized even to a bloody sweat and died forsaken of His God. This causes a sacred mourning for sin, as he looks upon the Lord whom he pierced. Love to Jesus burns within the pardoned sinner's breast, for the Lord is his Redeemer and therefore he feels a burning indignation against the murderous evil of sin. To him, all manner of evil is detestable, since it is stained with the Savior's heart's blood. As the penitent sinner hears the cry of, "Eli, sabachthani!" he is horrified to think that one so pure and good should be forsaken of heaven because of the sin which He bore in His people's stead. From the death of Jesus, the mind draws the conclusion that sin is exceedingly sinful in the sight of the Lord, for if eternal justice would not spare even the Well-beloved Jesus, when imputed sin was upon Him, how much less will it spare guilty men? It must be a thing unutterably full of poison which could make even the immaculate Jesus suffer so terribly. Nothing can be imagined which can have greater power over gracious minds than the vision of a crucified Savior denouncing sin by all His wounds and by every falling drop of blood. What! live in the sin which slew Jesus? Find pleasure in that which wrought His death? Trifle with that which laid His glory in the dust? Impossible! Thus you see that the gifts of free grace, when handed down by a pierced hand, are never likely to suggest self-indulgence in sin, but the very reverse.

VI. Sixthly, a man who becomes a partaker of divine grace, and receives the new nature, is ever afterwards A PARTAKER OF DAILY HELPS FROM GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT. God the Holy Ghost deigns to dwell in the bosom of every man whom God has saved by His grace. Is not that a wonderful means of sanctifying? By what process can men be better kept from sin than by having the Holy Spirit Himself to dwell as Vice-regent within their hearts? The Ever-blessed Spirit leads believers to be much in prayer and what a power for holiness is found in the child of grace speaking to the heavenly Father! The tempted man flies to his chamber, unbosoms his grief to God, looks to the flowing wounds of his Redeemer, and comes down strong to resist temptation. The divine word also, with its precepts and promises, is a never-failing source of sanctification. Were it not that we every day bathe in the sacred fountain of eternal strength we might soon be weak and irresolute, but fellowship with God renews us in our vigorous warfare with sin. How is it possible that the doctrines of grace should suggest sin to men who constantly draw near to God? The renewed man is also by God's Spirit frequently quickened in conscience, so that things which heretofore did not strike him as sinful are seen in a clearer light and are consequently condemned. I know that certain matters are sinful to me today which did not appear so ten years ago. My judgment has, I trust, been more and more cleared of the blindness of sin. The natural conscience is callous and hard, but the gracious conscience grows more and more tender till at last it becomes as sensitive as a raw wound. He who has most grace is most conscious of his need of more grace. The gracious are often afraid to put one foot before another for fear of doing wrong. Have you not felt this holy fear, this sacred caution? It is by this means that the Holy Spirit prevents your ever turning your Christian liberty into licentiousness or daring to make the grace of God an argument for folly.

Then, in addition to this, the good Spirit leads us into high and hallowed intercourse with God and I defy a man to live upon the mount with God and then come down to transgress like men of the world. If thou hast walked the palace floor of glory and seen the King in His beauty, till the light of His countenance has been thy heaven, thou canst not be content with the gloom and murkiness of the tents of wickedness. To lie, to deceive, to feign, as the men of the world do, will no longer beseem thee. Thou art of another race and thy conversation is above them. "Thy speech betrayeth thee." If thou dost indeed dwell with God, the perfume of the ivory palaces will be about thee and men will know that thou hast been in other haunts than theirs. If the child of God goes wrong in any degree, he loses to some extent the sweetness of his communion and only as he walks carefully with God does he enjoy full fellowship, so that this rising or falling in communion becomes a sort of parental discipline in the house of the Lord. We have no court with a judge, but we have home with its fatherhood, its smile and its rod. We lack not for order in the family of love, for our Father dealeth with us as with sons. Thus, in a thousand ways, all danger of our presuming upon the grace of God is effectually removed.

VII. THE ENTIRE ELEVATION OF THE MAN WHO IS MADE A PARTAKER OF THE GRACE OF GOD is also a special preservative against sin. I venture to say, though it may be controverted, that the man who believes the glorious doctrines of grace is usually a much higher style of man than the person who has no opinion upon the matter. What do most men think about? Bread-and-butter, house-rent, and clothes. But the men who consider the doctrines of the Gospel muse upon the everlasting covenant, predestination, immutable love, effectual calling, God in Christ Jesus, the work of the Spirit, justification, sanctification, adoption, and such like noble themes. Why, it is a refreshment merely to look over the catalogue of these grand truths! Others are as children playing with little sand-heaps on the seashore, but the believer in free grace walks among hills and mountains. The themes of thought around him tower upward, Alps on Alps, the man's mental stature rises with his surroundings and he becomes a thoughtful being, communing with sublimities. No small matter this, for a thing so apt to grovel as the average human intellect. So far as deliverance from mean vices and degrading lusts must in this way be promoted, I say, it is no small thing. Thoughtlessness is the prolific mother of iniquity. It is a hopeful sign when minds begin to roam among lofty truths. The man who has been taught of God to think will not so readily sin as the being whose mind is buried beneath his flesh. The man has now obtained a different view of himself from that which led him to trifle away his time with the idea that there was nothing better for him than to be merry while he could. He says, "I am one of God's chosen, ordained to be His son, His heir, joint-heir with Jesus Christ. I am set apart to be a king and priest unto God and as such I cannot be godless, nor live for the common objects of life." He rises in the object of his pursuit. He cannot henceforth live unto himself, for he is not his own, he is bought with a price. Now he dwells in the presence of God and life to him is real, earnest, and sublime. He cares not to scrape together gold with the muck-rake of the covetous, for he is immortal and must needs seek eternal gains. He feels that he is born for divine purposes and inquires, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" He feels that God has loved him that His love may flow forth to others. God's choice of any one man has a bearing upon all the rest. He elects a Joseph that a whole family, a whole nation, nay, the whole world, may be preserved alive when famine had broken the staff of bread. We are each one as a lamp kindled that we may shine in the dark and light up other lamps.

New hopes come crowding on the man who is saved by grace. His immortal spirit enjoys glimpses of the endless. As God has loved him in time, he believes that the like love will bless him in eternity. He knows that his Redeemer lives and that in the latter days he shall behold Him and therefore he has no fears for the future. Even while here below he begins to sing the songs of the angels, for his spirit spies from afar the dawn of the glory which is yet to be revealed. Thus with joyous heart and light footstep he goes forward to the unknown future as merrily as to a wedding-feast.

Is there a sinner here, a guilty sinner, one who has no merit, no claim to mercy whatever, is there one willing to be saved by God's free grace through believing in Jesus Christ? Then let me tell thee, sinner, there is not a word in God's book against thee, not a line or syllable, but everything is in thy favor. "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the chief. Jesus came into the world to save thee. Only do thou trust Him and rest in Him. I will tell thee what ought to fetch thee to Christ at once, it is the thought of His amazing love. A profligate son had been a great grief to his father, he had robbed him and disgraced him, and at last he ended by bringing his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. He was a horrible wretch of a son. No one could have been more graceless. However, he attended his father's funeral and he stayed to hear the will read. Perhaps it was the chief reason why he was there. He had fully made up his mind that his father would cut him off with a shilling and he meant to make it very unpleasant for the rest of the family. To his great astonishment, as the will was read it ran something like this. "As for my son Richard, though he has fearfully wasted my substance and though he has often grieved my heart, I would have him know that I consider him still to be my own dear child and therefore, in token of my undying love, I leave him the same share as the rest of his brothers." He left the room, he could not stand it, the surprising love of his father had mastered him. He came down to the executor the next morning and said, "You surely did not read correctly?" "Yes I did, there it stands." "Then," he said, "I feel ready to curse myself that I ever grieved my dear old father. Oh, that I could fetch him back again!" Love was born in that base heart by an unexpected display of love. May not your case be similar? Our Lord Jesus Christ is dead, but He has left it in His will that the chief of sinners are objects of His choicest mercy. Dying He prayed, "Father, forgive them." Risen, He pleads for transgressors. Sinners are ever on His mind. Their salvation is His great object. His blood is for them, His heart for them, His righteousness for them, His heaven for them. Come, O ye guilty ones and receive your legacy. Put out the hand of faith and grasp your portion. Trust Jesus with your souls and He will save you. God bless you. Amen.

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Providence

No. 187

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 11, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS**

“But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”—Matthew 10:30

DURING this week my mind has been much directed to the subject of Providence and you will not wonder when I relate a portion of one day’s story. I was engaged to preach last Wednesday at Halifax, where there was a heavy snow storm. Preparations had been made for a congregation of eight thousand persons and a huge wooden structure had been erected. I considered that owing to the severe weather, few persons could possibly assemble and I looked forward to the dreary task of addressing an insignificant handful of people in a vast place. However, when I arrived, I found from five thousand to eight thousand people gathered together to hear the Word and a more substantial looking place it has not been my lot to see.

It certainly was a huge uncomely building, but nevertheless, it seemed well-adapted to answer the purpose. We met together in the afternoon and worshipped God and again in the evening and we separated to our homes or rather, we were about to separate and all this while the kind providence of God was watching over us. Immediately in front of me there was a huge gallery, which looked an exceedingly massive structure, capable of holding two thousand persons. This, in the afternoon, was crowded and it seemed to stand as firm as a rock. Again in the evening, there it stood and neither moved nor shook.

But mark the provident hand of God. In the evening, when the people were about to retire and when there was scarcely more than a hundred persons there, a huge beam gave way and down came a portion of the flooring of the gallery with a fearful crash. Several persons were precipitated with the planks, but still the good hand of God watched over us, and only two persons were severely injured with broken legs, which it is trusted will be re-set without the necessity of amputation. Now, had this happened any earlier, not only must many more have been injured, but there are a thousand chances to one, as we say, that a panic must necessarily have ensued similar to that which we still remember and deplore as having occurred in this place. Had such a thing occurred and had I been the unhappy preacher on the occasion, I feel certain that I should never have been able to occupy the pulpit again. Such was the effect of the first calamity, that I marvel that I ever survived. No human tongue can possibly tell what I experienced. The Lord, however, graciously preserved us, the fewness of the people in the gallery prevented any such catastrophe, and thus a most fearful accident was averted.

But we have a more marvellous providence still to record. Overloaded by the immense weight of snow which fell upon it and beaten by a heavy wind, the entire building fell with an enormous crash three hours after life had left it, splitting the huge timbers into shivers and rendering very much of the material utterly useless for any future building. Now mark this—had the snow begun three hours earlier, the building must have fallen upon us and how few of us would have escaped we cannot guess. But mark another thing. All day long it thawed so fast, that the snow as it fell seemed to leave a mass, not of white snow, but of snow and water together. This ran through the roof upon us, to our considerable annoyance and I was almost ready to complain that we had hard dealing from God’s providence. But if it had been a frost instead a thaw, you can easily perceive that the place must have fallen several hours beforehand and then your minister and the greater part of his congregation would probably have been in the other world. Some there may be who deny providence altogether. I cannot conceive that there were any partakers of the scene who could

have done so. This I know, if I had been an unbeliever to this day in the doctrine of the supervision and wise care of God, I must have been a believer in it at this hour. Oh, magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together. He hath been very gracious unto us and remembered us for good.

Now, when we look abroad into the world we see, as we think, such abundant proofs that there is a God, that we are apt to treat a man who denies the existence of a God with very little respect or patience. We believe Him to be wilfully blind, for we see God's name so legible upon the very surface of creation, that we cannot have patience with Him if he dares to deny the existence of a Creator. And in the matter of salvation, we have each of us seen in our own salvation quell positive marks of the Lord's dealings with us that we are apt to be somewhat censorious and harsh towards any who propound a doctrine which would teach salvation apart from God. And I think we shall be very apt this morning to think hardly of the man, who, having seen and heard of such a providence as that which I have just related, could fail to see God's hand. It seems to me that the hand of God in providence is as clear as in creation and whilst I am sure that if saved at all I must be saved by God, I feel equally certain that every matter which concerns all of us in daily life, bears upon itself the evident trace of being the handiwork of Jehovah, our God.

We must if we would be true believers in God and would avoid all atheism, give unto Him the kingship in the three kingdoms of creation, grace, and providence. It is in the last, however, that I think we are the most apt to forget Him, we may easily see God in creation if we be at all enlightened and if saved, we cannot avoid confessing that salvation is of the Lord alone. The very way in which we are saved and the effect of grace in our hearts, always compels us to feel that God is just. But providence is such a chequered thing and you and I are so prone to misjudge God and to come to rash conclusions concerning His dealings with us, that perhaps this is the greatest stronghold of our natural atheism—a doubt of God's dealings with us in the arrangements of outward affairs. This morning I shall not be able to go deeply into the subject, but very heartily can I enter into it, after being so great a partaker of His wonder-working power.

From the text I shall draw one or two points. First of all, the text says, "The very hairs of our head are all numbered." From this I shall infer the *minuteness of providence*. Again, inasmuch as it is said of believers that the hairs of their head are all numbered, I shall infer the *kind consideration, the generous care, which God exercises over Christians*. And then, from the text and from our Saviour's reason for uttering these words, I shall draw a *practical conclusion of what should be the spirit and temper of the men who believe this truth*—that the very hairs of their head are all numbered.

I. First, then, our text very clearly teaches us THE MINUTENESS OF PROVIDENCE. Every man can see providence in great things, it is very seldom that you find any person denying that when an avalanche falls from the summit of the Alps, the hand, the terrible hand of God is there. There are very few men who do not feel that God is present in the whirlwind and in the storm. Most men will acknowledge that the earthquake, the hurricane, the devastation of war, and the ravages of pestilence come from the hand of God. We find most men very willing to confess that God is God of the hills, but they forget that He is also Lord of the valleys. They will grant that He deals with great masses, but not with individuals, with seas in the bulk,

but not with drops. Most men forget, however, that the fact which they believe of providence being in great things involves a providence in the little, for it were an inconsistent belief that the mass were in God's hand, whilst the atom was left to chance. It is indeed a belief that contradicts itself, we must believe all chance or else all God. We must have all ordained and arranged or else we must have everything left to the wild whirlwind of chance and accident. But I believe that it is in little things that we fail to see God, therefore, it is to the little things that I call your attention this morning.

I believe my text means literally what it says, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." God's wisdom and knowledge are so great that He even knows the number of the hairs upon our head. His providence descends to the minute particles of dust in the summer gale. He numbers the gnats in the sunshine and the fishes in the sea. While it certainly doth control the massive orbs that shine in heaven, it doth not blush to deal with the drop that trickleth from the eye.

Now, I shall want you to notice, how little circumstances of daily life, when we come to put them all together, evidently betray their origin. I will take a Scripture history and show how the little events must have been of God, as well as the great results. When Joseph was sent into Egypt by His brethren, in order to provide for them against a day of famine, we all agree with Joseph's declaration, "It was God that sent me hither." But now, if we notice each of the little ways through which this great result was brought to pass, we shall see God in each of them. One day Joseph's brethren are gone out with the sheep, Jacob wants to send to them. Why does he send Joseph? He was his darling son. He loved him better than all his brethren. Why does he send him away? He sends him, however. Then why should it have happened at that particular time, that Jacob should want to send at all? However, he did want to send and he did send Joseph. A mere accident you will say, but quite necessary as the basement of the structure. Joseph goes, his brethren are in want of pasture and therefore leave Shechem, where Joseph expected to find them, and journey on to Dothan. Why go to Dothan? Was not the whole land before them? However Joseph goes there. He arrives at Dothan just when they are thinking of him and his dreams and they put him into a pit. As they are about to eat bread, some Ishmaelites came by. Why did they come there at all? Why did they come at that particular time? Why were they going to Egypt? Why might they not have been going any other way? Why was it that the Ishmaelites wanted to buy slaves? Why might they not have been trading in some other commodity? However Joseph is sold, but he is not disposed of on the road to Egypt. He is taken to the land. Why is it that Potiphar is to buy him? Why is it that Potiphar has a wife at all? Why is it again that Potiphar's wife should be so full of lust? Why should Joseph get into prison? How is it that the baker and the butler should offend their master? All chance, as the world has it, but every link necessary to make the chain.

They do both offend their master. They are both put into prison. How is it that they both dream? How is it that Joseph interprets the dreams? How is it that the butler forgets him? Why, just because if he had recollected him, it would have spoiled it all. Why is it Pharaoh dreams? How can dreams be under the arrangement of God's providence? However, Pharaoh does dream, the butler then thinks of Joseph. Joseph is brought out of prison and taken before Pharaoh. But take away any of those simple circumstances, break any one of the links of the chain, and the whole of the design is scattered to the winds. You cannot get the machine to work, if any of

the minute cogs of the wheels are taken away, everything is disarranged. I think it seems very clear to any man who will dissect not only that, but any other history he likes to fix upon that there must be a God in the little accidents and dealings of daily life, as well as in the great results that tell upon the page of history and are recounted in our songs. God is to be seen in little things.

We will now notice in the minutiae of providence, how *punctual* providence always is. You will never wonder more at providence than when you consider how well God keeps time with Himself. To return to our history—How is it that the Ishmaelites should come by just at the time? How many thousand chances there were that their journey might have been taken just before! There certainly was no special train to call at that station at that particular time, so that Joseph's brethren might arrange to go and call him. No such thing. And yet if there had been all this arrangement, it could not have happened better. You know Reuben intended to fetch Joseph out of the pit half an hour later and "the child was not." God had these Ishmaelites ready. You do not know how He may have sped them on their journey or delayed them, so as to bring them on the spot punctually at the identical moment.

To give another instance, there was a poor woman whose son had been raised from the dead by Elisha. She, however, had left her country at the time of famine and had lost her estate. She wanted to get it back. God determined that she should have it. How was it to be done? The king sends for Gehazi, the servant of Elisha and he talks to him. He tells him one instance about a woman who had had a child raised from the dead. How strange! in comes the woman herself. My lord, this is the woman, she comes to obtain her suit. Her desire is granted, just because at the very moment the king's mind is interested concerning her. All chance, was it not? Nothing but chance? So fools say, but those who read Bibles and those who have judgment, say there is something more than chance in such a coalition of circumstances. It could not be a mere coincidence, as men sometimes say, there must be God here, for it is harder to think that there is not God than that there is. And whilst a belief in God may be said by some to involve a great stretch of faith, the putting Him out of such things as this, would involve an infinitely greater amount of credulity. No, there was God there.

There is another instance that I remember in the New Testament history. Paul goes into the temple and the Jews rush upon him in a moment to kill him. They drag him out of the temple and the doors are shut against him. They are just in the very act of killing him and what is to become of poor Paul's life. Five minutes longer and Paul will be dead, when up comes the chief captain and delivers him. How was it that the chief captain knew of it? Very probably some young man of the crowd who knew Paul and loved him, ran to tell him. But why was it that the chief captain was at home? How was it that the ruler was able to come on a moment's emergency? How was it that he did come at all? It was only just a Hebrew, a man that was good for nothing, being killed. How was it that he came and when he came the streets were full, there was a mob about Jerusalem? How did he come to the right street? How did he come at the exact nick of time? Say, "It is all chance." I laugh at you, it is providence. If there be anything in the world that is plain to any man that thinks, it is plain that God

***"Overrules all mortal things,
And manages our mean affairs."***

But mark, that the running of the youth and his arrival at the precise time and the coming of the chief governor at the precise time, just proved the punctuality of divine providence and if God has a design that a thing shall happen at twelve, if you have appointed it for eleven, it shall not happen till twelve and if He means it to be delayed till one, it is in vain that you propose any earlier or any later. God's punctuality in providence is always sure and very often apparent.

Nor is it only in the minutes of time that we get an idea of the minuteness of providence, but it is in the use of little things. A sparrow has turned the fate of an empire. You remember the old story of Mohammed flying from His pursuers. He enters a cave and a sparrow chirps at the entrance and flies away as the pursuers pass. "Oh," say they, "There is no fear that Mohammed is there, otherwise the bird would have gone a long while ago," and the imposter's life is saved by a sparrow. We think, perhaps, that God directs the motions of the leviathan and guides him in the sea, when he makes the deep to be hoary. Will we please to recollect that the guidance of a minnow in its tiny pool is as much in the hand of providence as the motion of the great serpent in the depths. You see the birds congregate in the autumn, ready for their flight across the purple sea. They fly hither and thither in strange confusion. The believer in providence holds that the wing of every bird has stamped upon it the place where it shall fly and fly with never each vagaries of its own wild will. It cannot diverge so much as the millionth part of an inch from its predestinated track. It may whirl about, above, beneath—east, west, north, south—wherever it pleases, still, it is all according to the providential hand of God. And although we see it not, it may be that if that swallow did not take the precise track which it does take, something a little greater might be affected thereby and again, something a little greater still might be affected, until at last a great thing would be involved in a little. Blessed is that man who seeth God in trifles! It is there that it is the hardest to see Him, but he who believes that God is there, may go from the little providence up to the God of providence. Rest assured, when the fish in the sea take their migration, they have a captain and a leader, as well as the stars, for He who marshals the stars in their courses and guides the planets in their march, is the master of the fly and wings the bat and guides the minnow and doth not despise the tiniest of His creatures. You say there is predestination to the path of the earth. You believe that in the shining of the sun there is the ordinance of God, there is as much His ordinance in the creeping of an insect or in the glimmering of a glow-worm in the darkness. In nothing is there chance, but in everything there is a God. All things live and move in Him and have their being, nor could they live or move otherwise, for God hath so ordained them.

I hear one say, "Well, sir, you seem to be a fatalist!" No, far from it. There is just this difference between fate and providence. Fate is blind, providence has eyes. Fate is blind, a thing that must be, it is just a bow shot from an arrow, that must fly onward, but hath no target. Not so, providence, providence is full of eyes. There is a design in everything and an end to be answered, all things are working together and working together for good. They are not done because they must be done, but they are done because there is some reason for it. It is not only that the thing is, because it must be, but the thing is, because it is right it should be. God hath not arbitrarily marked out the world's history. He had an eye to the great architecture of perfection, when He marked all the aisles of history and placed all the pillars of events in the building of time.

There is another thing that we have to recollect also, which will strike us perhaps more than the smallness of things. The minuteness of providence may be seen in the fact that even the thoughts of men are under God's hand. Now, thoughts are things which generally escape our attention, when we speak of providence. But how much may depend upon a thought! Oftentimes a monarch has had a thought which has cost a nation many a bloody battle. Sometimes a good man has had a thought, which has been the means of rescuing multitudes from hell and bearing thousands safely to heaven. Beyond a doubt, every imagination, every passing thought, every conception, that is only born to die, is under the hand of God. And in turning over the page of history, you will often be struck, when you see how great a thing has been brought about by an idle word. Depend upon it, then, that the will of man, the thought of man, the desire of man, that every purpose of man, is immediately under the hand of God.

Take an instance—Jesus Christ is to be born at Bethlehem, His mother is living at Nazareth. He will be born there to a dead certainty. No, not so. Caesar takes a whim into his head. All the world shall be taxed and he will have all of them go to their own city. What necessity for that? Stupid idea of Caesar's! If he had had a parliament, they would have voted against him. They would have said, "Why make all the people go to their own peculiar city to the census? Take the census where they live, that will be abundantly sufficient." "No," says he, "it is my will and Caesar cannot be opposed." Some think Caesar mad. God knows what He means to do with Caesar. Mary, great with child, must take a laborious journey to Bethlehem and there is her child born in a manger. We should not have had the prophecy fulfilled that Christ should be born at Bethlehem and our very faith in the Messiah might have been shaken, if it had not been for that whim of Caesar's. So that even the will of man, the tyranny, the despotism of the tyrant, is in the hand of God and He turneth it whithersoever He pleaseth, to work His own will.

Gathering up all our heads into one short statement, it is our firm belief that He who wings an angel guides a sparrow. We believe that He who supports the dignity of His throne amidst the splendors of heaven maintains it also in the depths of the dark sea. We believe that there is nothing above, beneath, around, which is not according to the determination of His own counsel and will, and while we are not fatalists, we do most truly and sternly hold the doctrine that God hath decreed all things whatsoever that come to pass and that He overruleth all these things for His own glory and good, so that with Martin Luther, we can say,

***"He everywhere hath sway,
And all things serve His might,
His every act pure blessing is,
His path unsullied light."***

II. The second point is, THE KIND CONSIDERATION OF GOD IN TAKING CARE OF HIS PEOPLE. In reading the text, I thought, "There is better care taken of me than I can take care of myself." You all take care of yourselves to some extent, but which of you ever took so much care of himself as to count the hairs of his head? But God will not only protect our limbs, but even the excrescence of hair is to be seen after. And how much this excels all the care of our tenderest friends! Look at the mother, how careful she is. If her child has a little cough, she notices it. The slightest

weakness is sure to be observed. She has watched all its motions anxiously, to see whether it walked right, whether all its limbs were bound and whether it had the use of all its powers in perfection, but she has never thought of numbering the hairs of her child's head and the absence of one or two of them would give her no great concern. But our God is more careful of us, even than a mother with her child—so careful that He numbers the hairs of our head. How safe are we, then, beneath the hand of God!

However, leaving the figure, let us again notice the kind, guardian care, which God exerts over His people in the way of providence. I have often been struck with the providence of God, in keeping His people alive before they were converted. How many are there here who would have been in hell at this hour, if some special providence had not kept them alive till the time of their conversion! I remember mentioning this in company and almost every person in the room had some half-miracle to tell, concerning his own deliverance before conversion. One gentleman, I remember, was a sporting man, who afterwards became an eminent Christian. He told me that a little time before his conversion he was shooting and his gun burst in four pieces, which stood upright in the earth as near as possible in the exact form of a square, having been driven nearly a foot into the ground, while he stood there unharmed and quite safe, having scarcely felt the shock.

I was noticing in Hervey's works, one day, a very pretty thought on this subject. He says, "Two persons who had been hunting together in the day, slept together the following night. One of them was renewing the pursuit in his dream and having run the whole circle of the chase, came at last to the fall of the stag, upon this, he cries out with a determined ardor, *I'll kill him, I'll kill him* and immediately feels for the knife which he carried in his pocket. His companion happening to awake and observing what passed, leaped from the bed. Being secure from danger and the moon shining in the room, he stood to view the event, when, to his inexpressible surprise, the infatuated sportsman gave several deadly stabs in the very place where a moment before the throat and the life of his friend lay. This I mention, as a proof, that nothing hinders us, even from being assassins of others or murderers of ourselves, amidst the mad sallies of sleep, only the preventing care of our heavenly Father.

How wonderful the providence of God with regard to Christian people in keeping them out of temptation. I have often noticed this fact and if believe you are able to confirm it, that there are times when if a temptation should come you would be overtaken by it, but the temptation does not come. And at other times when the temptation comes, you have supernatural strength to resist it. Yes! the best Christian in the world will tell you that such is still the strength of His lust, that there are moments when if the object were presented to him, he would certainly fall into the commission of a foul sin, but then the object is not there or there is no opportunity of committing the sin. At another time, when we are called to go through a burning fiery furnace of temptation, we have no desire towards the peculiar sin, in fact we feel an aversion to it or are even incapable of it. Strange it is, but many a man's character has been saved by providence. The best man that ever lived, little knows how much he owes for preservation to the providence as well as to the grace of God.

How marvelously too has providence arranged all our places. I cannot but recur to my own personal history, for, after all, we are obliged to speak more of what we know of ourselves as matters of fact than of others. I shall always regard the fact of my being here today as a remarkable instance of providence. I should not have

occupied this hall probably and been blessed of God in preaching to multitudes if it had not been for what I considered an untoward accident. I should have been at this time studying in College, instead of preaching here, but for a singular circumstance which happened. I had agreed to go to College. The tutor had come to see me and I went to see him at the house of a mutual friend. I was shown by the servant into one drawing-room in the house, he was shown into another. He sat and waited for me two hours. I sat and waited for him two hours. He could wait no longer and went away thinking I had not treated him well. I went away and thought that he had not treated me well. As I went away, this text came into my mind, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." So I wrote to say that I must positively decline. I was happy enough amongst my own country people and got on very well in preaching and I did not care to go to College. I have now had four years of labor. But speaking after the manner of men, those who have been saved during that time would not have been saved, by my instrumentality at any rate, if it had not been for the remarkable providence turning the whole tenour of my thoughts and putting things into a new track. You have often had strange accidents like that. When you have resolved to do a thing, you could not do it any how, it was quite impossible. God turned you another way and proved that providence is indeed the master of all human events.

And how good, too, has God been in providence to some of you, in providing your daily bread. It is remarkable how a little poverty makes a person believe in providence especially if He is helped through it. If a person has to live from hand to mouth, when day by day the manna falls, he begins to think there is a providence then. The gentleman who sows his broad acres, reaps his wheat, and puts it into his barn or takes his regular income, gets on so nicely that he can do without providence. He does not care a bit about it. The rents of his houses all come in and his money in the Three per Cents is quite safe—what does he want with providence? But the poor man who has to work at day-labor and sometimes runs very short, and just then happens to meet with somebody who gives him precisely what he wants, he exclaims, "Well, I know there is a providence—I cannot help believing it, these things could not have come by chance."

III. And now, in conclusion, brethren and sisters, if these things be so, if the hairs of our head are all numbered and if providence provides for His people all things necessary for this life and godliness, and arranges everything with infinite and unerring wisdom, what manner of persons ought we to be?

In the first place, we ought to be a bold race of people. What have we to fear? Another man looks up and if he sees a lightning-flash, he trembles at its mysterious power. We believe it has its predestined path. We may stand and contemplate it, although we would not presumptuously expose ourselves to it, yet can we confide in our God in the midst of the storm. We are out at sea, the waves are dashing against the ship, she reels to and fro, other men shake, because they think this is all chance, we, however, see an order in the waves and hear a music in the winds. It is for us to be peaceful and calm. To other men, the tempest is a fearful thing, we believe that the tempest is in the hand of God. Why should we shake? Why should we quiver? In all convulsions of the world, in all temporal distress and danger, it is for us to stand calm and collected, looking boldly on. Our confidence should be very much the same, in comparison with the man who is not a believer in providence, as the confidence of some learned surgeon, who, when he is going through an operation,

sees something very marvellous, but yet never shudders at it, while the ignorant peasant, who has never seen anything so wonderful, is alarmed and fearful and even thinks that evil spirits are at work. We are to say—let others say what they please—“I know God is here and I am His child and this is all working for my good, therefore will not I fear though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.”

Especially may I address this remark to timid people. There are some of you who are frightened at every little thing. Oh! if you could but believe that God manages all, why, you would not be screaming because your husband is not home when there is a little thunder and lightning or because there is a mouse in the parlor or because there is a great tree blown down in the garden. There is no necessity you should believe that your brother-in-law, who has gone to Australia, was wrecked, because there was a storm when he was at sea. There is no need for you to imagine that your son in the army was necessarily killed, because he happened to be before Lucknow or if you think the thing necessary, still, as a believer in God’s providence, you should just stand and say that God has done it and it is yours to resign all things into His hands.

And I may say to those of you also who have been bereaved—If you believe in providence you may grieve, but your grief must not be excessive. I remember at a funeral of a friend hearing a pretty parable which I have told before and will tell again. There was much weeping on account of the loss of a loved one and the minister put it thus. He said, “Suppose you are a gardener employed by another, it is not your garden, but you are called upon to tend it and you have your wages paid you. You have taken great care with a certain number of roses, you have trained them up and there they are, blooming in their beauty. You pride yourself upon them. You come one morning into the garden and you find that the best rose has been taken away. You are angry. You go to your fellow servants and charge them with having taken the rose. They will declare that they had nothing at all to do with it and one says, “I saw the master walking here this morning, I think he took it.” Is the gardener angry then? No, at once he says, “I am happy that my rose should be so fair as to attract the attention of the master. It is his own. He hath taken it, let him do what seemeth him good.”

It is even so with your friends. They wither not by chance, the grave is not filled by accident, men die according to God’s will. Your child is gone, but the Master took it, your husband is gone, your wife is buried—the Master took them. Thank Him that He let you have the pleasure of caring for them and tending them while they were here and thank Him that as He gave, He Himself has taken away. If others had done it, you would have had cause to be angry, but the Lord has done it. Can you, then, murmur? Will you not say-

***“Thee at all times will I bless,
Having Thee I all possess,
How can I bereaved be,
Since I cannot part with Thee.”***

And pardon me when I say, finally, that I think this doctrine, if fully believed, ought to keep us always in an equable frame of mind. One of the things we most want is to have our equilibrium always kept up. Sometimes we are elated. If I ever find myself elated I know what is coming. I know that I shall be depressed in a very few hours. If

the balance goes too much up, it is sure to come down again. The happiest state of mind is to be always on the equilibrium. If good things come, thank God for them, but do not set your heart upon them. If good things go, thank God that He has taken them Himself and still bless His name. Bear all. He who feels that everything cometh to pass according to God's will, hath a great main-stay to his soul. He need not be shaken to and fro by every wind that bloweth, for he is fast bound, so that he need not move. This is an anchor cast into the sea. While the other ships are drifting far away, He can ride calmly through.

Strive, dear friends, to believe this and maintain as the consequence of it, that continual calm and peace which renders life so happy. Do not get fearing ills that may come tomorrow, either they will not come or else they will bring good with them. If you have evils today, do not multiply them by fearing those of tomorrow. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Oh, I would to God that some of you who are full of carking care and anxiety, could be delivered from it by a belief in providence and when you once get into that quiet frame, which this doctrine engenders, you will be prepared for those higher exercises of communion and fellowship with Christ, to which distracting care is ever a fearful detriment, if not an entire preventive.

But as for you who fear not God, remember, the stones of the field are in league against you, the heavens cry to the earth, and the earth answered to the heavens, for vengeance upon you on account of your sins. For you there is nothing good everything is in rebellion against you. Oh that God might bring you into peace with Him and then you would be at rest with all beside. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you." The Lord bless you in this, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Providence—As Seen in the Book of Esther

No. 1201

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 1, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON**

*"Though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews
had rule over them that hated them."—Esther 9:1*

You are probably aware that some persons have denied the inspiration of the Book of Esther because the name of God does not occur in it. They might with equal justice deny the inspiration of a great number of chapters in the Bible and of a far greater number of verses. Although the name of God does not occur in the Book of Esther, the Lord Himself is there most conspicuously in every incident which it relates. I have seen portraits bearing the names of persons for whom they were intended and they certainly needed them, but we have all seen others which required no name, because they were such striking likenesses that the moment you looked upon them you knew them. In the Book

of Esther, as much as in any other part of the Word of God, and I had almost committed myself by saying—more than anywhere else, the hand of Providence is manifestly to be seen.

To condense the whole of the story of the Book of Esther into one sermon would be impossible and therefore I must rely upon your previous acquaintance with it. I must also ask your patience if there should be more of history in the sermon than is usual with me. All Scripture is given by inspiration and is profitable, whether it be history or doctrine. God never meant the Book of Esther to lie dumb and whatever it seemed good to Him to teach us by it, it ought to be our earnest endeavor to learn.

The Lord intended by the narrative of Esther's history to set before us a wonderful instance of His providence, that when we had viewed it with interest and pleasure, we might praise His name and then go on to acquire the habit of observing His hand in other histories and especially in our own lives. Well does Flavel say, that he who observes providence will never be long without a providence to observe. The man who can walk through the world and see no God, is said upon inspired authority to be a fool, but the wise man's eyes are in his head, he sees with an inner sight, and discovers God everywhere at work. It is his joy to perceive that the Lord is working according to His will in heaven and earth and in all deep places.

It has pleased God at different times in history to startle the heathen world into a conviction of His presence. He had a chosen people, to whom He committed the true light, and to these He revealed Himself continually. The rest of the world was left in darkness, but every now and then the divine glory flamed through the gloom, as the lightning pierces the blackness of tempest. Some by that sudden light were led to seek after God and found Him, others were rendered uneasy and without excuse, though they continued in their blind idolatry. The wonderful destruction of Pharaoh and his armies at the Red Sea was a burst of light, which startled the midnight of the world by giving proof to mankind that the Lord lived and could accomplish His purposes by suspending the laws of nature and working miracles. The marvellous drama enacted at Shushan, the capital of Persia, was intended to be another manifestation of the being and glory of God, working not as formerly, by a miracle, but in the usual methods of His providence and yet accomplishing all His designs. It has been well said that the Book of Esther is a record of wonders without a miracle and therefore, though equally revealing the glory of the Lord, it sets it forth in another fashion from that which is displayed in the overthrow of Pharaoh by miraculous power.

Let us come now to the story. There were two races, one of which God had blessed and promised to preserve and another of which He had said that He would utterly put out the remembrance of it from under heaven.

Israel was to be blessed and made a blessing, but of Amalek the Lord had sworn that "The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." These two peoples were therefore in deadly hostility, like the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, between whom the Lord Himself has put an enmity. Many years had rolled away, the chosen people were in great distress, and at this far off time there still existed upon the face of the earth some relics of the race of Amalek. Among them was one descended of the royal line of Agag, whose name was Haman, and he was in supreme power at the court of Ahasuerus, the Persian monarch. Now it was God's intent that a last conflict should take place between Israel and Amalek. The conflict which began with Joshua in the desert was to be finished by Mordecai in the king's

palace. This last struggle began with great disadvantage to God's people. Haman was prime minister of the far-extending empire of Persia, the favorite of a despotic monarch, who was pliant to his will.

Mordecai, a Jew in the employment of the king, sat in the king's gate and when he saw proud Haman go to and fro, he refused to pay to him the homage which others rendered obsequiously. He would not bow his head or bend his knee to him and this galled Haman exceedingly. It came into his mind that this Mordecai was of the seed of the Jews and with the remembrance came the high ambition to avenge the quarrel of his race. He thought it scorn to touch one man and resolved that in himself he would incarnate all the hate of generations and at one blow sweep the accursed Jews, as he thought them, from off the face of the earth. He went in to the king, with whom his word was power and told him that there was a singular people scattered up and down the Persian empire, different from all others and opposed to the king's laws and that it was not for the king's profit to suffer them. He asked that they might all be destroyed and he would pay into the king's treasury an enormous sum of money to compensate for any loss of revenue by their destruction. He intended that the spoil which would be taken from the Jews should tempt their neighbors to kill them and that the part allotted to himself should repay the amount which he advanced, thus he would make the Jews pay for their own murder. He had no sooner asked for this horrible grant than the monarch conceded it, taking his signet ring from off his finger, he bade him do with the Jews as seemed good to him. Thus the chosen seed are in the hands of the Agagite, who thirsts to annihilate them. Only one thing stands in the way, the Lord has said, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." We shall see what happens and learn from it.

I. First, we shall learn from the narrative that GOD PLACES HIS AGENTS IN FITTING PLACES FOR DOING HIS WORK. The Lord was not taken by surprise by this plot of Haman, he had foreseen it and forestalled it. It was needful, in order to match this cunning, malicious design of Haman, that someone of Jewish race should possess great influence with the king. How was this to be effected? Should a Jewess become Queen of Persia, the power she would possess would be useful in counteracting the enemy's design. This had been all arranged years before Haman had concocted in his wicked heart the scheme of murdering the Jews. Esther, whose sweet name signifies myrtle, had been elevated to the position of Queen of Persia by a singular course of events. It happened that Ahasuerus, at a certain drinking bout, was so far gone with wine as to forget all the proprieties of eastern life and send for his queen, Vashti, to exhibit herself to the people and the princes. No one dreamed in those days of disobeying the tyrant's word and therefore all stood aghast when Vashti, evidently a woman of right royal spirit, refused to degrade herself by being made a spectacle before that ribald rout of drinking princes and refused to come. For her courage Vashti was divorced and a new queen was sought for. We cannot commend Mordecai for putting his adopted daughter in competition for the monarch's choice, it was contrary to the law of God and dangerous to her soul in the highest degree. It would have been better for Esther to have been the wife of the poorest man of the house of Israel than to have gone into the den of the Persian despot. The Scripture does not excuse, much less commend, the wrong doing of Esther and Mordecai in thus acting, but simply tells us how divine wisdom brought good out of evil, even as the chemist distils healing drugs from poisonous plants. The high position of Esther, though gained contrary to the wisest of laws, was overruled for the best interests of her people. Esther in the king's house was the means of defeating the malicious adversary. But Esther alone would not suffice, she is shut up in the harem,

surrounded by her chamberlains and her maids of honor, but quite secluded from the outside world. A watchman needed outside the palace to guard the people of the Lord and to urge Esther to action when help is wanted. Mordecai, her cousin and foster-father obtained an office which placed him at the palace gate. Where could he be better posted? He is where much of the royal business will come under his eye and he is both quick, courageous, and unflinching. Never had Israel a better sentinel than Mordecai, the son of Kish, a Benjamite—a very different man from that other son of Kish, who had suffered Amalek to escape in former times. His relationship to the queen allowed him to communicate with her through Hatach, her chamberlain and when Haman's evil decree was published, it was not long before intelligence of it reached her ear and she felt the danger to which Mordecai and all her people were exposed. By singular providences did the Lord place those two most efficient instruments in their places. Mordecai would have been of little use without Esther and Esther could have rendered no aid had it not been for Mordecai. Meanwhile, there is a conspiracy hatched against the king, which Mordecai discovers and communicates to the highest authority and so puts the king under obligation to him, which was a needful part of the Lord's plan.

Now, brethren, whatever mischief may be brewing against the cause of God and truth and I dare say there is very much going on at this moment, for neither the devil, nor the Jesuits, nor the atheists are long quiet, this we are sure of, the Lord knows all about it and He has His Esther and His Mordecai ready at their posts to frustrate their designs. The Lord has His men well-placed and His ambushes hidden in their coverts, to surprise His foes. We need never be afraid but what the Lord has forestalled His enemies and provided against their mischief.

Every child of God is where God has placed him for some purpose and the practical use of this first point is to lead you to inquire for what practical purpose has God placed each one of you where you now are? You have been wishing for another position where you could do something for Jesus. Do not wish anything of the kind, but serve Him where you are. If you are sitting at the King's gate, there is something for you to do there and if you were on the queen's throne, there would be something for you to do there, do not ask either to be gatekeeper or queen, but whichever you are, serve God therein. Brother, are you rich? God has made you a steward, take care that you are a good steward. Brother, are you poor? God has thrown you into a position where you will be the better able to give a word of sympathy to poor saints. Are you doing your allotted work? Do you live in a godly family? God has a motive for placing you in so happy a position. Are you in an ungodly house? You are a lamp hung up in a dark place, mind you shine there. Esther did well, because she acted as an Esther should and Mordecai did well, because he acted as a Mordecai should. I like to think, as I look over you all—God has put each one of them in the right place, even as a good captain well arranges the different parts of his army and though we do not know his plan of battle, it will be seen during the conflict that he has placed each soldier where he should be. Our wisdom is not to desire another place, nor to judge those who are in another position, but each one being redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus, should consecrate himself fully to the Lord and say, "Lord, what would thou have me to do, for here I am and by Thy grace I am ready to do it." Forget not then the fact that God in His providence places His servants in positions where He can make use of them.

II. Secondly, the Lord not only arranges His servants, but He RESTRAINS HIS ENEMIES. I would call your attention particularly to the fact that Haman, having gained a decree for the destruction of all the Jews upon a certain day, was very anxious to have his cruel work done thoroughly and therefore, being very superstitious and believing in astrology, he bade his magicians cast lots that he might find a lucky day for his great undertaking.

The lots were cast for the various months, but not a single fortunate day could be found till hard by the close of the year and then the chosen day was the thirteenth of the twelfth month. On that day, the magicians told their dupe that the heavens would be propitious and the star of Haman would be in the ascendant. Truly the lot was cast into the lap, but the disposal of it was of the Lord. See ye not that there were eleven clear months left before the Jews would be put to death and that would give Mordecai and Esther time to turn round, and if anything could be done to reverse the cruel decree, they had space to do it in. Suppose that the lot had fallen on the second or third month, the swift dromedaries and camels and messengers would scarcely have been able to reach the extremity of the Persian dominions, certainly a second set of messengers to counteract the decree could not have done so and humanly speaking, the Jews must have been destroyed, but oh, in that secret council chamber where sit the sorcerers and the man who asks counsel at the hands of the infernal powers, the Lord Himself is present, frustrating the tokens of the liars and making diviners mad. Vain were their enchantments and the multitude of their sorceries, the astrologers, the star-gazers and the monthly prognosticators, were all fools together and led the superstitious Haman to destruction. "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel." Trust ye in the Lord ye righteous and in patience possess your souls. Leave your adversaries in the hands of God, for He can make them fall into the snare which they have privily laid for you.

Notice attentively that Haman selected a mode of destroying the Jews which was wonderfully overruled for their preservation. They were to be slain by any of the people among whom they lived who chose to do so and their plunder was to reward their slayers. Now, this was a very cunning device, for greed would naturally incite the baser sort of men to murder the thrifty Jews and no doubt there were debtors who would also be glad to see their creditors disposed of, but see the loophole for escape which this afforded! If the decree had enacted that the Jews should be slain by the soldiery of the Persian empire, it must have been done and it is not easy to see how they could have escaped, but the matter being left in private hands, the subsequent decree that they might defend themselves, was a sufficient counteraction of the first edict. Thus the Lord arranged that the wisdom of Haman should turn out to be folly after all.

In another point, also, we mark the restraining hand of God, namely, that Mordecai, though he had provoked Haman to the utmost, was not put to death at once. Haman "refrained himself." Why did he do so? Proud men are usually in a mighty tiff if they consider themselves insulted and are ready at once to take revenge, but Haman "refrained himself," until that day in which his anger burned furiously and he set up the gallows, he smothered his passion. I marvel at this, it shows how God makes the wrath of man to praise Him and the remainder He doth restrain. Mordecai must not die a violent death by Haman's hand. The enemies of the Church of God and of His people, can never do more than the Lord permits. They cannot go a hair's breadth beyond the divine license and when they are permitted to do their worst, there is always some weak point about all that they do, some extreme folly which renders their fury vain. The wicked carry about them the weapons of their own destruction and when they rage most against the Most High, the Lord of all brings out of it good for His people and glory to Himself. Judge not providence in little pieces. It is a grand mosaic and must be seen as a whole. Say not of any one hour, "This is dark,"—it may be so, but that darkness will minister to the light, even as the ebon gloom of midnight makes the stars appear the more effulgent. Trust ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. His wisdom will undermine the mines of cunning, His skill will overtop the climbings of craft, "He

taketh the wise in their own craftiness and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.”

III. Next we will notice that GOD IN HIS PROVIDENCE TRIES HIS PEOPLE. You must not suppose that those who are God’s servants will be screened from trial, that is no part of the design of providence. “If ye be without chastisement,” says the apostle, “then are ye bastards and not sons.” God’s intent is to educate His people by affliction and we must not therefore dream that an event is not providential because it is grievous, nay, ye may count it to be all the more so, for “The Lord trieth the righteous.” Observe that God tried Mordecai. He was a quiet old man, I have no doubt and it must have been a daily trial to him to stand erect or to sit in his place when that proud peer of the realm went strutting by. His fellow servants told him that the King has commanded all men to pay homage to Haman, but he held his own, not, however, without knowing what it might cost him to be so sternly independent. Haman was an Amalekite and the Jew would not bow before him. But what a trouble it must have been to the heart of Mordecai, when he saw the proclamation that all the Jews must die. The good man must have bitterly lamented his unhappy fate in being the innocent cause of the destruction of his nation. “Perhaps,” he thought within himself, “I have been too obstinate. Woe is me, my whole house and my whole people are to be slain because of what I have done.” He put on sackcloth and cast ashes on his head and was full of sorrow, a sorrow which we can hardly realize, for even if you know you have done right, yet if you bring down trouble and especially destruction, upon the heads of others, it cuts you to the quick. You could bear martyrdom for yourself, but it is sad to see others suffer through your firmness.

Esther also had to be tried. Amid the glitter of the Persian court she might have grown forgetful of her God. The sad news comes to her, “Your cousin and your nation are to be destroyed.” Sorrow and dread filled her heart. There was no hope for her people, unless she would go in unto the king—that despot from whom one angry look would be death, she must risk all and go unbidden into his presence and plead for her nation. Do you wonder that she trembled? Do you marvel that she asked the prayers of the faithful? Are you surprised to see both herself and her maids of honor fasting and lamenting before God? Do not think, my prosperous friend, that the Lord has given you a high place that you may escape the trials which belong to all His people. Yours is no position of ease, but one of the hottest parts of the battle. Neither the lowest and most quiet position, nor the most public and exposed condition will enable you to escape the “much tribulation” through which the church militant must fight its way to glory. Why should we wish it? Should not the gold be tested in the crucible? Should not the strong pillar sustain great weights? When the Menai bridge was first flung across the straits, the engineer did not stipulate that his tube should never be tried with great weights. On the contrary, I can imagine his saying, “Bring up your heaviest trains and load the bridge as much as ever you will, for it will bear every strain.” The Lord trieth the righteous because He has made them of metal which will endure the test and He knows that by the sustaining power of His Holy Spirit they will be held up and made more than conquerors, therefore is it a part of the operation of providence to try the saints. Let that comfort those of you who are in trouble at this time.

IV. But we must pass on to note, fourthly, that THE LORD’S WISDOM IS SEEN IN ARRANGING THE SMALLEST EVENTS SO AS TO PRODUCE GREAT RESULTS. We frequently hear persons say of a pleasant or a great event, “What a providence!” while they are silent as to anything which appears less important or has an unpleasant savor. But my brethren, the place of the gorse upon the heath is as fixed as the station of a king, and the dust which is raised by a chariot-wheel is as surely

steered by providence as the planet in its orbit. There is as much providence in the creeping of an aphid upon a rose leaf, in the marching of an army to ravage a continent. Everything, the most minute as well as the most magnificent, is ordered by the Lord who has prepared His throne in the heavens, whose kingdom ruleth over all. The history before us furnishes proof of this.

We have reached the point where Esther is to go in unto the king and plead for her people. Strengthened by prayer, but doubtless trembling still, Esther entered the inner court and the king's affection led him instantly to stretch out the golden scepter. Being told to ask what she pleases, she invites the king to come to a banquet and bring Haman with him. He comes and for the second time invites her to ask what she wills to the half of his kingdom. Why, when the king was in so kind a spirit, did not Esther speak? He was charmed with her beauty and his royal word was given to deny her nothing, why not speak out? But no, she merely asks that he and Haman will come to another banquet of wine tomorrow. O, daughter of Abraham, what an opportunity hast thou lost! Wherefore didst thou not plead for thy people? Their very existence hangs upon thy entreaty and the king has said, "What wilt thou?" and yet thou art backward! Was it timidity? It is possible. Did she think that Haman stood too high in the king's favor for her to prevail? It would be hard to say. Some of us are very unaccountable, but on that woman's unaccountable silence far more was hanging than appears at first sight. Doubtless she longed to bring out her secret, but the words came not. God was in it, it was not the right time to speak and therefore she was led to put off her disclosure. I dare say she regretted it and wondered when she should be able to come to the point, but the Lord knew best. After that banquet, Haman went out joyfully at the palace gate, but being mortified beyond measure by Mordecai's unbending posture, he called for his wife and his friends and told them that his riches and honors availed him nothing so long as Mordecai, the Jew, sat in the king's gate.

They might have told him, "You will destroy Mordecai and all his people in a few months and the man is already fretting himself over the decree. Let him live and be you content to watch his miseries and gloat over his despair!" But no, they counsel speedy revenge. Let Mordecai be hanged on a gibbet on the top of the house and let the gallows be set up at once and let Haman, early in the morning, ask for the Jew's life and let his insolence be punished. Go, call the workmen and let the gallows be set up at a great height that very night. It seemed a small matter that Haman should be so enraged just at that hour, but it was a very important item in the whole transaction, for had he not been so hasty he would not have gone so early in the morning to the palace and would not have been at hand when the king said, "Who is in the court?"

But what has happened? Why, that very night, when Haman was devising to hang up Mordecai, the king could not sleep. What caused the monarch's restlessness? Why happened it on that night of all others? Ahasuerus is master of one hundred and twenty and seven provinces, but not master of ten minutes' sleep. What shall he do? Shall he call for soothing instruments of music or beguile the hours with a tale that is told or with a merry ballad of the minstrel? No, he calls for a book. Who would have thought that this luxurious prince must listen to a reader at dead of night. "Bring a book!" "What book?" "A volume perfumed with roses, musical with songs, sweet as the notes of the nightingale?" "No, bring the chronicles of the empire." Dull reading, that! But there are one hundred and twenty-seven provinces—which volume shall the page bring from the recorder's shelves? He chose the record of Shushan the royal city. That is the center of the empire and its record is lengthy. In which section shall the reader make a beginning? He may begin where he pleases, but ere he closes the book, the story of the

discovery of a conspiracy by Mordecai has been read in the king's hearing. Was not this a singular accident? Singular if you like, but no accident. Out of ten thousand other records, the reader pitches upon that one of all others. The Jews tell us that he began at another place, but that the book closed and fell open at the chapter upon Mordecai. Be that as it may, this is certain, that the Lord knew where the record was and guided the reader to the right page. Speaking after the manner of men, there were a million chances against one that the king of Persia should, in the dead of the night, be reading the chronicle of his own kingdom and that he should light upon this particular part of it. But that was not all, the king is interested, he had desired to go to sleep, but that wish is gone and he is in haste to act. He says, "This man Mordecai has done me good service, has he been rewarded?" "No." Then cries the impulsive monarch, "He shall be rewarded at once. Who is in the court?" It was the most unlikely thing in the world for the luxurious Ahasuerus to be in haste to do justice, for he had done injustice thousands of times without remorse and chiefly on that day when he wantonly signed the death warrant of that very Mordecai and his people. For once, the king is intent on being just and at the door stands Haman—but you know the rest of the story and how he had to lead Mordecai in state through the streets. It seems a very small matter whether you or I shall sleep tonight or toss restlessly on our beds, but God will be in our rest or in our wakefulness, we know not what His purpose may be, but His hand will be in it, neither doth any man sleep or wake but according to the decree of the Lord.

Observe well how this matter prepared the way for the queen at the next banquet, for when she unfolded her sorrow and told of the threatened destruction of the Jews and pointed to that wicked Haman, the king must have been the more interested and ready to grant her request, from the fact that the man who had saved his life was a Jew and that he had already awarded the highest honors to a man in every way fitted to supersede his worthless favorite. All was well, the plotter was unmasked, the gibbet ready and he who ordered it was made to try his own arrangements.

V. Our next remark is **THE LORD IN HIS PROVIDENCE CALLS HIS OWN SERVANTS TO BE ACTIVE.** This business was done and well done, by divine providence, but those concerned had to pray about it. Mordecai and all the Jews outside in Shushan fasted and cried unto the Lord. Unbelievers inquire, "What difference could prayer make?" My brethren, prayer is an essential part of the providence of God, so essential, that you will always find that when God delivers His people, His people have been praying for that deliverance. They tell us that prayer does not affect the Most High and cannot altar His purposes. We never thought it did, but prayer is a part of the purpose and plan and a most effective wheel in the machinery of providence. The Lord sets His people praying and then He blesses them. Moreover, Mordecai was quite sure the Lord would deliver His people and he expressed that confidence, but he did not therefore sit still. He stirred up Esther and when she seemed a little slack, he put it very strongly, "If thou altogether boldest thy peace at this time, then enlargement and deliverance will arise from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed." Nerved by this message, Esther braced herself to the effort. She did not sit still and say, "The Lord will arrange this business, there is nothing for me to do," but she both pleaded with God and ventured her life and her all for her people's sake, and then acted very wisely and discreetly in her interviews with the king. So, my brethren, we rest confidently in providence, but we are not idle. We believe that God has an elect people and therefore do we preach in the hope that we may be the means, in the hands of His Spirit, of bringing this elect people to Christ. We believe that God has appointed for His people both holiness here and heaven hereafter, therefore do we strive against

sin and press forward to the rest which remaineth for the people of God. Faith in God's providence, instead of repressing our energies, excites us to diligence. We labor as if all depended upon us and then fall back upon the Lord with the calm faith which knows that all depends upon Him.

VI. Now must we close our historical review with the remark that in the end THE LORD ACHIEVES THE TOTAL DEFEAT OF HIS FOES AND THE SAFETY OF HIS PEOPLE. Never was a man so utterly defeated as Haman, never was a project so altogether turned aside. He was taken in his own trap and he and his sons were hanged up on the gibbet set up for Mordecai. As for the Jews, they were in this special danger, that they were to be destroyed on a certain day and though Esther pleaded with the king for their lives, he was not able to alter his decree? though willing to do so, for it was a rule of the constitution that the law of the Medes and Persians altered not. The king might determine what he pleased, but when he had once decreed it, he could not change it, the people feeling it better to submit to the worst established law than to be left utterly to every capricious whim of their master. How, what was to be done? The decree was given that the Jews might be slain and it could not be reversed. Here was the door of escape—another decree was issued giving the Jews permission to defend themselves and take the property of any who dared to attack them, thus one decree effectually neutralized the other. With great haste this mandate was sent all over the kingdom and on the appointed day, the Jews stood up for themselves and slew their foes. According to their tradition, nobody attempted to attack them except the Amalekites and consequently only Amalekites were slain and the race of Amalek was on that day swept from off the face of the earth. God thus gave to the Jews a high position in the empire and we are told that many became Jews or were proselytes to the God of Abraham, because they saw what God had done. As I commenced by saying that God sometimes darted flashes of light through the thick darkness, you will now see what a flash this must have been. All the people were perplexed when they found that the Hebrews might be put to death, but they must have been far more astonished when the decree came that they might defend themselves. All the world inquired, "Why is this?" and the answer was, "The living God, whom the Jews worship, has displayed His wisdom and rescued His people." All nations were compelled to feel that there was a God in Israel and thus the divine purpose was fully accomplished. His people were secured and His name was glorified to the world's end.

From the whole we learn the following lessons.

First, it is clear that *the divine will is accomplished and yet men are perfectly free agents*. Haman acted according to his own will, Ahasuerus did whatever he pleased, Mordecai behaved as his heart moved him, and so did Esther. We see no interference with them, no force or coercion, hence the entire sin and responsibility rest with each guilty one, yet, acting with perfect freedom, none of them acts otherwise than divine providence had foreseen. "I cannot understand it," says one. My dear friend, I am compelled to say the same—I do not understand it either. I have known many who think they comprehend all things, but I fancy they had a higher opinion of themselves than truth would endorse. Certain of my brethren deny free agency and so get out of the difficulty, others assert that there is no predestination and so cut the knot. As I do not wish to get out of the difficulty and have no wish to shut my eyes to any part of the truth, I believe both free agency and predestination to be facts. How they can be made to agree I do not know or care to know, I am satisfied to know anything which God chooses to reveal to me and equally content

not to know what He does not reveal. There it is, man is a free agent in what he does, responsible for his actions and verily guilty when he does wrong and he will be justly punished too, and if he be lost the blame will rest with himself alone. But yet there is One who ruleth over all, who, without complicity in their sin, makes even the actions of wicked men to subserve His holy and righteous purposes. Believe these two truths and you will see them in practical agreement in daily life, though you will not be able to devise a theory for harmonizing them on paper.

Next, we learn *what wonders can be wrought without miracles*. When God does a wonderful thing by suspending the laws of nature, men are greatly astonished and say, "This is the finger of God", but now-adays they say to us, "Where is your God? He never suspends His laws now!" Now, I see God in the history Pharaoh, but I must confess I see him quite as clearly in the history of Haman and I think I see him in even a grander light, for (I say it with reverence to His holy name) it is a somewhat rough method of accomplishing a purpose to stop the wheel of nature and reverse wise and admirable laws, certainly it reveals His power, but it does not so clearly display His immutability. When, however, the Lord allows everything to go on in the usual way and gives mind and thought, ambition and passion their full liberty and yet achieves His purpose, it is doubly wonderful. In the miracles of Pharaoh, we see the finger of God, but in the wonders of providence, without miracle, we see the hand of God. Today, whatever the event may be, whether it be the war between the Germans and the French or the march into Coomassie or the change of our own government, the attentive eye will as clearly see the Lord as if by miraculous power the hills had leaped from their places or the floods had stood upright as an heap. I am sure that God is in the world, ay and is at my own fireside and in my chamber, and manages my affairs and orders all things for me and for each one of His children. We want no miracles to convince us of His working, the wonders of His providence are as great marvels as miracles themselves.

Next we learn *how safe the Church of God is*. At one time, the people of God seemed to be altogether in Haman's power. Nero once said that he wished his enemies had but one neck that he might destroy them all at a blow, and Haman seemed to have realized just such power. Yet the chosen nation was delivered, the Jewish people lived on until the Messiah came, and does exist and will exist till they shall enjoy the bright future which is decreed for them. So is it with the Church of God today. The foes of truth can never put out the candle which God has lit, never crush the living seed which the Lord Jesus has sown in His own blood-bought people. Brethren, be ye not afraid, but stablish your hearts in God.

Again, we see that *the wicked will surely come to an ill end*. They may be very powerful, but God will bring them down. They may be very crafty and may plot and plan and may think that even God Himself is their accomplice, because everything goes as they desire, but they may be sure their sin will find them out. They may dig deep as hell, but God will undermine them and they may climb as high as the stars, but God will be above them to hurl them down. Wicked man, I charge you if you be wise, turn you from your career of opposition to the Most High, you cannot stand against Him, neither can you outwit Him. Cease, I beseech you, from this idle opposition and hear the voice of His Gospel which says, "Confess your sin and forsake it. Believe in Jesus, the Son of God, the great atoning sacrifice and even you shall yet be saved." If you do not so, upon your own head shall your iniquities fall.

Last of all, let each child of God rejoice that *we have a guardian so near the throne*. Every Jew in Shushan must have felt hope when he remembered that the queen was a Jewess. Today let us be glad that Jesus is exalted.

***“He is at the Father’s side,
The Man of love, the crucified.”***

How safe are all His people, for “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” There is One that lieth in the bosom of God who will plead for all those who put their trust in Him. Therefore be ye not dismayed, but let your souls rest in God and wait patiently for Him, for sooner shall heaven and earth pass away than those who trust the Lord shall perish. “They shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end.” Amen.

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