

Spurgeon on 2 Chronicles

2 Chronicles

Sermons, Exposition and Devotionals

by C H Spurgeon

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2 Chronicles 2:11 A King Sent in Love

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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“Then Hiram the king of Tyre answered in writing, which he sent to Solomon, Because the LORD hath loved his people, he hath made thee king over them.”-2 Chronicles 2:11.

I Think that you must have been struck with the deeply religious tone of the communications which passed between Solomon and Hiram. I am inclined to think that Hiram must have been a proselyte to the faith of Israel. At any rate, the despatches between these two neighboring kings contain very gracious references to Jehovah and his dealings with his ancient people. Not that I recommend that the despatches which are sent now between kings should be of a similar character, for that would be a piece of beggarly hypocrisy. What has God to do with the most of them; and what has he to do with the transactions of modern times, in which the invasion of countries by the more powerful is perpetually being justified by the laws of politics which seem to be the very reverse of the laws of God? Oh, that better times might come, when kings would rule in righteousness! One almost despairs of them; but, at any rate, there is a King coming who will rule in righteousness. Make no tarrying, O our God!

In the letter, which was written by Hiram, we note that he declares his belief that Solomon was of such a character that his reign was a special blessing from God to his people. That is the meaning of our text: “Because the Lord hath loved his people, he hath made thee king over them.” Such was the character of Solomon, in those early days before he began to decline from the splendor of his first estate, that even this heathen monarch could see that he was bound to be a blessing to the people. I wish that your life and mine, dear friends, might always have that about it which should make even the worldling say, “That young man is likely to be a blessing to his family; that woman is sure to be a blessing to her husband, and to her children.” I would to God that our character, were so transparent, so true, and pure, and good, that all who knew us might feel that we were a blessing to those among whom we dwell.

I want you to notice, also, that Hiram here distinctly recognizes that every blessing comes from God. If Solomon is a blessing to his subjects, Hiram attributes that to the fact of God having placed him where he was. Now, if one, who had been a heathen, could thus trace a blessing back to God as its source, what heathen must those be who never do anything of the sort, but trace it to what they call “good luck”, or to “chance”, or to anything rather than to God! O beloved, whenever there is aught of good, aught of excellence, aught of happiness, that comes to our door, let us praise and bless the God who gave it. We are all too apt to complain of him when we suffer, and ready enough to attribute our afflictions to him. Surely, then, when mercies come to us plentifully, we should magnify and glorify the name of the Lord our God from whom they come. We should say of every mercy, in somewhat similar fashion to that of Hiram when he wrote to Solomon, “Because the Lord hath loved his people, therefore hath he done this and that for them.”

I purpose, however, to take our text right away from Solomon; for, true as it was in his case, it is more emphatically true in reference to our King. It is still true, as was said in Thessalonica in Paul's day, “There is another King, one Jesus;” and many here present, I am thankful to know, are his loyal subjects. King of kings is he to us, and our soul loves to worship and adore him. Well, now, God has been pleased to make Christ our King, so my text shall run thus: “Because the Lord hath loved his people, he hath made Jesus to be King over them.”

I. That shall be our first division, The Love Of God Has Made Jesus To Be Our King.

If we believe that, does it not prove that we do not regard the dominion of Jesus Christ as any burden whatsoever? It is a proof that, in our esteem, his yoke is easy, and his burden is light. Those who look on from the outside say, "We would rather be perfectly free,- free thinkers and free livers;" and when they hear any one of us say, with the psalmist, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds;" they feel that they do not want to share any such servitude with us. But we are living and truthful witnesses to the fact that we do not look upon the rule of Christ over us as any hardship. On the contrary, we take delight in it; we trace it to the love of God, not to his anger; not even to his justice, or to any necessity that may constrain him, but to his infinite love, and to his gracious thought that he could not do any better thing for us than to give us Jesus Christ to be our King; and we devoutly thank and bless the Lord, this day, that he hath set him over us, to rule us, and to have dominion over our spirit, soul, and body, henceforth and for ever.

But, beloved, there was an urgent necessity that we should have Jesus as our King. We are such poor creatures that we cannot live without some form of rule and government. Men have tried to live in anarchy, but their experiment has proved to be a disastrous failure. Think of the French Revolution, at the end of the eighteenth century, and see what awful abominations resulted from it. A den of tigers, all let loose upon one another, would be peacefulness itself compared with a mass of men living without any law or order. We are such creatures that we need to be under authority of some kind. God has frequently compared us to sheep; but what can sheep do without a shepherd? I do not know that there has ever been a discovery made of really wild sheep anywhere. There are certain wild animals that are somewhat like sheep; but sheep like those with which we are familiar,-what shiftless, hopeless, helpless, defenceless creatures they would be without a shepherd! They would soon die out altogether if it were not for man. The rule, and leadership, and the kingly shepherdry of man are good for sheep; and Christ's rule is absolutely necessary for his sheep. We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture, if we have believed in him; and we as much need Jesus, our Shepherd-King, as the sheep need their shepherd. If you demur to that figure, let us think of ourselves under a higher aspect. As many of us as have been born again are the children of God. Now, a family without rule,-I venture to say very boldly, is not a happy family. Children, who are always allowed to do just as they like, will very soon be exceedingly unhappy. A father's gentle sway over the various members of the household, which is, I take it, the first type of kingship, is absolutely necessary for their good; for disorder soon breeds unhappiness, envy, strife, malice, and all kinds of evil. Every house needs to have a "house-band" to keep it together. Every family needs to have someone as its head; every thinking person feels that it must be so; and, therefore, how thankful we ought to be that our glorious God, seeing that his own brightness unveiled might have been too much for our feebleness, hath given us his Son, "whom he hath appointed Heir of all things," and made him to be the firstborn among many brethren, that he might sweetly rule the whole household! Because the Lord loved his people, therefore he gave Jesus to be King over them.

Further, this fact tends greatly to our happiness. It is not merely a matter of necessity; but, over and above that, it makes us exceedingly happy to have such a King as Jesus is. Just suppose, for a moment, that we, the people of God, were left without any law or ruler. Well, my brethren, in such a case as that, we should not know what to do; we might wish to do what was right, but we should not know what right was. I am sure we must all desire to be guided by God, for we feel unable to guide ourselves, and we dare not trust the best earthly guide. So it is a mercy that we have a King to whom we can refer all difficult cases, and who will guide us with his eye. Why, even if I were conscious of having done right, yet, if I had no Ruler and Law-giver, whose infallible Word would assure me that I had done so, I should always be in a fidget about it. I should be anxious to know whether I had made a wise choice, or not,-whether I might not, after all, have put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. When a man is his own ruler, he has all the responsibility of what he does; but when we implicitly obey Christ's command, we are not responsible for the result of our actions; that rests with him who gave us the command. If, in doing right, we meet with trouble,-if we have to suffer persecution,-if the reward of virtue does not reach us in the present, yet we have the comfort; that we did what Jesus told us to do. We did what our King commanded, so the responsibility of it must rest with him. This is ever a sweet feeling, and much to the ease of such poor minds as ours are.

"Well," says one, "I like to be my own master." Yes, and that involves two things; first, you have a very bad master; and, next, your master has a fool for his servant. But he who takes the Lord Jesus Christ as his Master will be rightly and wisely guided, and hence arises the comfort of such a relationship.

But, to my mind, the bliss of being under the dominion of Christ lies in the character of Christ. As I must have a master, let me have the Christ of Bethlehem,-the Christ of Nazareth,-the Christ of Calvary,-the Christ of heaven. If I must submit my mind and will to another,-and surely I must do so, or else I must submit it to the imperious domination of my own lusts and passions, which is the worst slavery in the whole world,-if I must have a king, let it be Jesus Christ, whose head was once crowned with thorns.

For, my brethren, in him we have all the wisdom of Solomon, and infinitely more. He will rule and guide us wisely. To err, is human; yet he never makes any mistakes, his rule and guidance are infallible.

There is also, united with this wisdom, unlimited power; for, where Christ rules, he is able to protect. He can put forth the might of

omnipotence; his decrees and proclamations shall never be wasted words. All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth. Though he sometimes leaves his subjects to suffer in this world, (they must have tribulation, for they have to carry the cross after him,) yet he could deliver them in a moment if he pleased; for there is nobody, above or below the sky, who can successfully withstand the almighty power of the Christ of God. Happy are the people who have so wise and strong a King as he is.

But, then, with this wisdom and strength, he is also so gentle. Was there ever such a gentleman, and such a gentleman, as he was? Who would not gladly serve him who suffered the little children to Come unto him, and would not let his disciples forbid them to come? Who would not willingly serve him who sat upon the well at Sychar to talk with the poor sinful woman till he had won her soul, and made her into a zealous and successful home missionary? Who would not freely serve him to whom publicans and sinners drew near, that he might woo them, with tenderest love, to forsake their sins? He is truly and divinely royal; but he is also, as the children are taught to say,-

“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,”

so affable, generous, humane, benevolent, gracious, Godlike,-that, to be enlisted beneath his banner is to serve One who is indeed a Standard-Bearer among ten thousand; yea, he is altogether lovely. We are not ashamed to be the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. There have been some kings and princes whom a man might well be ashamed to serve; to have anything to do with such loathsome creatures as some despots are, would make a stain upon anyone's character; but, to come beneath the blessed servitude of Christ, is to be honored indeed. The meanest scullion in his royal kitchen hath more real glory than all the peers of the realm put together if they have not entered the service of our gracious King.

Further, this blessed King not only commends himself to us by his character, but also by his relationship to us. Surely it was because the Lord loved his people that he made him to be King over them who is their Brother, for Jesus is our Brother. He was in all things made like unto his brethren; and, while upon the earth, he was tempted in all points like as we are; but- “Now, though he reigns exalted high,”-he is still our Brother, and he is not ashamed, even in heaven, to call his people his “brethren.”

**“Though now ascended up on high,
He bends on earth a brother's eye;
Partaker of the human name,
He knows the frailty of our frame.”**

**“Our fellow sufferer yet retains
A fellow feeling of our pains,
And still remembers in the skies,
His tears, and agonies, and cries.”**

He also comes, if possible, nearer than that, for he is our Husband,-married to every believing heart, united with us in a conjugal union which never can be broken by divorce. Christ is the heavenly Bridegroom, and each believing soul is his bride, as the whole Church of the redeemed is the bride, the Lamb's wife. I may say, to each believer, in the words of the forty-fifth Psalm, “So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.” He not only reigns over us, but he loves us with such love that he even died for us; what other monarch ever did that for his subjects? You have seen the portraits of kings holding the globe and the scepter in their hands, and wearing a crown, perhaps adorned with a wreath in token of their victories; but when our King puts on his royal regalia, when he comes forth in his coronation robes, I will tell you what are the chief ensigns of his sovereignty, the tokens of his universal dominion. They are the wounds in his hands, and in his feet, and in his side. He deserves to be our King, and we delight to say to him,-

**“Thou hast redeem'd our souls with blood
Hast set the prisoners free:
Hast made us kings and priests to God,
And we shall reign with thee.”**

Truly, none who really know our Lord Jesus Christ can refuse to rejoice that the Father hath so loved his people as to set the Savior, who did redeem them, to be King over them henceforth and for ever.

I think I have said enough upon that point, so I will now turn to another side of the subject. Just to refresh your memories, I remind you that the first division was, that the love of God has made Jesus our King.

II. Now we will shake the kaleidoscope, and then we shall see the same truth presented to us under another aspect;-It Is The Love Of God Which Has Made Us To Be The Subjects Of King Jesus.

There is love in the selection of the King who has been chosen for us, and there is love also in the choice of his subjects. It was certainly divine love which made a choice of Israel to be the subjects of Solomon, because, if God meant to make a great king, and a wise king, with wide dominions and vast influence, it was a very singular thing that he should choose the land of Israel to be the country over which Solomon should rule in such glory. Palestine was a poor, miserable, little country, a very small district to be the center of so much splendor. And the people were not very numerous, and they were very poor. Only a little while before, they had been downtrodden by the Philistines. David, Solomon's father, had only just rescued them by the skin of their teeth from being slaves to the Philistines; and, before that, they had been perpetually harried by all the neighboring nations, so that they never had any settled peace; yet it was this little paltry nation that God chose to be ruled over by Solomon, to give it a name, and make it a leading nation on the face of the earth.

Well, now, beloved, what are we who have been chosen to be God's people? What are we that ever Christ should rule over us? Surely, if he wanted to exercise dominion, he might have chosen the kings, and queens, and lords, and dukes, and the fine folk of earth; but you know how it is written, "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 nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence," Not even to the wise and prudent hath he revealed the truths of his kingdom; but he has revealed them unto babes. "Even so, Father," said Christ, "for so it seemed good in thy sight." Surely it was because the Lord loved us that ever he put us under the dominion of Christ, that he might rule over us!

More than that, these people of Israel began with Solomon by a rebellion. You know how, all through the reign of David, they were continually kicking against his rule. He had saved them from the Philistines, yet, at one time, they set up Absalom in opposition to him; and, at another time, another pretender would come forth, and they would follow him, for they seemed to wish to get rid of their best friend and deliverer. Even when David was nigh unto death, and Adonijah proclaimed himself king, Joab and Abiathar, and many of the people followed him, so that Solomon's reign began with rebellion, yet he was set up as king over these traitorous and disloyal people; and what a mercy it is for us, who used to be rebels against our King, that the Lord Jesus Christ ever admitted us under the sway of his scepter! I need not go into the details of what we used to be; it will bring tears to the eyes of some of us if we only think of what we once were. Lord, what a rebellious wretch was I! Many here had to fight against conscience, to fight that was against everything good in order to remain as they were; yet they did remain as they were until the Lord so loved them that he subdued them by his grace, and brought them to his feet. With love almighty he came to them, broke down all their opposition, and made them willing in the day of his power. I am sure that, if any of you are rejoicing in being Christ's subjects, you will ascribe it to the love of God, and not to your own will, or to your own goodness, that ever you came to bow at Jesu's feet, for no man ever cometh there of himself. They are drawn by grace divine, and then they run; but never doth a soul crouch at the feet of Jesus, crying for mercy, and taking him to be its King, except by an act of almighty grace which leads the sinner to that happy and blessed decision. So let us give all the praise to God if we belong to the kingdom of Jesus, for it is love, amazing love that has put us under such gracious sovereignty as that.

Now, brethren, are we happy indeed; for it is with us as it was with Israel. For, after Solomon was once settled on the throne, there was no more rebellion. In his God-given wisdom, he so ruled the nation that all was quiet and peaceable. After he had once climbed up into the saddle, he could not be thrown out of it again; and after King Jesus once gets into the throne of our heart, stubborn wills and rebellious passions must lie still; for Jesus knows how to rule. What wonderful order Solomon set up! What remarkable peace the people enjoyed! What extraordinary prosperity they had! For "the king made silver and gold at Jerusalem as plenteous as stones."

And, beloved, Christ has made us to be so rich, so happy, so contented, so blessed, that we have no wish to escape from his dominion, but rather does each one of us cry, "O Jesus, subdue me more completely! Drive out all my old enemies! Root out my sins! Hunt them down like traitors, and hang them up to die; and do thou alone rule and reign over me absolutely. In the entire kingdom of my nature, over my whole spirit, soul, and body, be thou the supreme and only Lord, and let no rebellion be so much as thought of." But it must be the love of God that will effect this; we cannot do it of ourselves. It is the grace of God-the mighty love of God in Christ Jesus-that will subdue our spirit to the dominion of Christ; and in so far as he has already done it, let us praise and bless him; and, in any respect in which the gracious work is not yet fully accomplished, let us cry to him to complete it.

III. I conclude my discourse with the third point, which is simply another view of the same truth,-Our Love To God Now Makes The Reign Of Christ Over Us To Be Very Blessed Indeed.

Since we have been taught to love the Lord Jesus Christ, it has become a great delight to us to be under his dominion.

First, brethren, the courts of Christ are our home. In this house of prayer, the Lord has often revealed himself to us. Some of us feel that, when we get into our places here, and join in holy worship, it is the best spot beneath the sun. I know that it is so by the way in which you strive to get here on Monday evenings and Thursday nights. Many of you are glad then, as well as on the Sabbath day, to

steal away for a little while out of the world, and even, perhaps, out of the worry of the household; and because our Lord Jesus Christ here manifests himself to you, this place becomes to you the very palace of the great King, and you hove to be here. There are some hearers, who must have a very grand place of worship, and a very soft seat in it, and very eloquent preaching, and even then they soon drop off to sleep; but a true child of God, who loves his Savior with all his heart, says, "I can stand anywhere; I do not mind being squeezed up in a corner so long as I can hear about Jesus.

"Sweeter sounds than music knows

Charm me in Immanuel's name."

That is right, man! Keep on playing that tune! Praise the name of Jesus; let that be the theme of all your music! Ring again, and again, and again, those sweet silvery bells that sound out-"Free grace and dying love."

You may hold me by the ears, and by the heart, too, as long as you play such music as that. Even though there be no eloquence in the speaker, and he only talks straight on, and tells out what he knows of Jesus in his own heart, I will sit, or I will stand, anywhere, if I may but hear the strains of that blessed melody; and I know that many of you say the same. I can tell that you do by the look on your faces, and I also know how I feel myself when, now and then, it is my privilege to listen to a sermon full of Christ. That is what causes tears of joy to flow, and makes me feel, "I know that I am the Lord's, for I do rejoice in the music of his charming name." Yes, he is such a King to us that his courts are the place of our highest delight, and we are never happier than when we are among even the meanest of those who gather within his palace gate; yea, often do we feel that we would rather be doorkeepers in the house of our God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

We also realize that it is God's love that made Jesus to be our King, for his service has come to be our best recreation. I heard a young man say, in a railway carriage, "I do not like the English mode of spending Sunday. I think Sunday ought to be devoted to recreation; everybody needs recreation." An old gentleman, who sat opposite to the one who made this remark, spared me the trouble of replying to him by saying, "I think, my dear sir, it is very likely that you need recreation, too." "Yes," answered the young man, "I certainly do." "Ah! " said the other, "but perhaps you do not quite understand the word I used,-re-creation; that is, being created anew, so as to be made a new creature in Christ Jesus. If you were created again, the recreation that you would then desire would be of a different kind from that which you are now advocating." That was quite true; but even using the word "recreation" in the ordinary meaning of the term, we have found the service of God to be really a recreation to us. When you, my brother, get a little spare time, I know that you feel it a pleasure to spend it in some form of service for Christ. Someone might say to you, ' Well, I should think that you had had enough work with that quill-driving, or standing behind the counter, or toiling in that factory; and that, when you get an hour to spare, you would go to bed, or take your ease in some form or other." "No, I do not," you reply; "I go and gather my class together, or call on my scholars in their homes, and try to find out whether they have really given their hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ." "Well," says the enquirer, "do you mean to say that you get recreation out of such work as that?" "Yes," you reply, "I do;" and he says, "Then, you must be an odd fish!" Well, perhaps we are odd fish; but that is one of our highest sources of recreation. We find the service of Christ to be so blessed to us that we take our rest in it; and if, sometimes, we get wearied in it, we can truly say that we do not get wearied of it. Our whole soul delights in it, and we are resolved that we will serve our Savior as long as we have life and breath. More than that, it has now become such a joy to us to serve our King that his revenue has become our riches. Solomon's subjects were very heavily taxed, yet their very taxes were a proof of their prosperity. They worked at a high pressure in order to produce wealth. They were a poor people to begin with, but they grew rich under the plan, which Solomon adopted. It was an expensive plan; but, then, if they paid much in the way of taxation, it was because they had so much the more coming in year by year. Silver and gold had become so plentiful that it was not at all a hardship that thin people should help to pay for the efficient maintenance of the king's postal service, and all the other arrangements by which they were themselves enriched. Now, our King has a great revenue, with which we have nothing to do except to draw from it all that we need. Unbounded riches of grace are stored up in Christ Jesus, and he gives us liberty to take all that we require. As to anything that we present to him, what little we can give we count it our highest riches to offer to him; and, whenever we do give anything to the Lord, we find that he multiplies whatever we have left in our basket and store. But, if he did not do so, we should still delight to lay at his dear feet anything that we can, and we do not want him to give it back to us. It is a delight and joy to us to have an opportunity of doing anything in his blessed service; it is no task to us, it is never irksome. Some of us-I do not know whether each one of us-can sing, with Dr. Watts,-

"All that I am, and all I have,

Shall be for ever thine,

Whatever my duty bids me give,

My cheerful hands resign.

"Yet if I might make some reserve,

**And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I should give him all."**

So, brethren, I hope it has come to this with many of us, that Christ's cross is our crown. We have fallen in love with it, and we gladly bear it for his sake. The very hardships that we endure, in connection with Christ's kingdom, have become a joy to us; while, as for his glory, that is now our honor; and, as for himself, he is our heaven.

Thus have I spoken, all too feebly, concerning the King given to us by God in love. If there are any here who are not under the rule of Christ, I wish that they would, at any rate, give heed to my testimony that the service of Christ is the best service in the whole world; there is no other that is worthy to be compared with it for a single moment. If you resolve to serve yourself, or to serve the world, or to serve pleasure, or to serve the devil, you will rue the day, you may depend upon it. There is one remarkable thing about the service of Christ, which ought to have great weight with impartial observers. Many, who have lived to serve the world, have repented of their folly on their deathbeds; but there never yet was heard of even one instance of a Christian saying, when he was dying, "I am sorry that I have served Christ." There never has been, since the foundation of Christ's kingdom, one of his subjects who, when he was dying, said, "I am sorry that I did so much for Christ, that I was so earnest in his service, or so generous to his cause." No, there never has been such a case, and there never will be one. I always say that it is the sign of a man having a good master when he tries to introduce his sons into the service of his employer. A man is not likely to complain of his master when he comes to him, and says, "I should be much obliged to you, sir, if you would take my two sons into your service." It looks as if he had a good master when he talks like that. Well, that is my own case; it is my intense delight to see my two sons actively engaged in the service of my Master. He has been a good Master to me. I often wonder that he has not turned me off; yet I should have wondered still more if he had done so, because he has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." He has borne with my ill manners, and put up with many imperfections in my service, all this while wonder that he is not tired of me, yet I have his own word for it that he will not turn me adrift, for he has said, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." I must love him; I must praise him; and I wish that everyone else would enter the service of my blessed Lord and Master. If you would only give him a trial, (by God's grace, may you be led to do so!) you would never repent of it. Ask any man, who loves the Lord Jesus Christ, whether he has ever regretted having done so; you will never find one who will say that he has.

Well, then, if we can all speak so well for our King, we think that common reason, if it were really reasonable, would lead men to say, "Can we not enter into this service, too?" I pray that God's grace may enable many of you to say this. Will you not seek to become his servant this very hour? The way into his service is by yourself becoming nothing, and letting him be your All-in-all. Any soldier can tell you how he gets into his sovereigns service'. What does he give in order that he may become a soldier? Give? Why, he gives nothing at all; he takes a shilling from the recruiting officer, and that seals the act. That is the way to become' a Christian; take the Lord Jesus Christ as your own. He gives you himself; so trust him and take him, for thus you become his soldier, enlisted for ever. He will teach you your drill, he will show you how to behave yourself aright in his service, and he will give you a rich reward at the end of it. So may he bless each one of you, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

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2 Chronicles 12:14 Rehoboam the Unready

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"And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord."—2 Chronicles 12:14.

You have probably noticed that, as a general rule, the sacred historians, at the end of each king's reign, sum up the character of the monarch, and describe him as either doing evil in the sight of the Lord or doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord. They give a summary of his whole life in one or other of these sentences; and there will come a day when there will be a summary of your life, and mine; and when it is given, it will run on this wise, "He did evil in the sight of the Lord," or else on this blessed fashion, "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." There is no other course beside these two; these, characters comprehend all of us,

and the summary given in our case, as it was in the case of Rehoboam, will be given with great accuracy. It will be infallible, and it will be irreversible.

This man Rehoboam was not half as bad as some other kings; still, the inspired historian was compelled to say, **“He did evil.”** He was not such an obstinate and outrageous sinner as some were. He was not an Ahab; he, was not even a Manasseh, he did not live as that king did in his evil time; yet **“he did evil.”** That is the summary of his whole career. There were, some good points about him, as I shall try to show you presently; he did good some-times still, when it is all added up, this is the total of it, **“He did evil,”** and the reason why he: did evil is given.

One reason, I should think was, that he had a bad mother; observe how it is written, just before the summary of his life, “His mother’s name was Naamah an Ammonitess,”—one, of Solomon’s numerous wives,—one whom he favored most of all; but she was an idolatrous woman, “an Ammonitess.”

And there is little wonder that, when the father was no better than he should have been, and when the mother was exceedingly bad, the summary of the son’s life should be, **“He did evil.”**

This makes marriage a most important step, though it is often taken without a single serious thought. See how a woman’s life projects itself, and either casts a ray of brightness over her children’s characters, or a cloud of shame over their entire being. What some of us owe to our mothers, we shall never be able to tell. If we had to write down the choicest mercies that God has bestowed upon us, we should have to mention first, the mother who prayed for us, and taught us to trust in Jesus, by the Holy Spirit’s blessing upon the sweet way in which she spoke to us about the Savior. But a mother, trained in the school of Satan, and who has become a mistress in the art of sin, is a terrible, source of evil to her children. May God have mercy upon any of you mothers who have sons growing up to follow the evil example which you are setting them! Mothers, by the love you bear your children,—and there is no stronger love, I think, on earth,—if you will not think of your own soul’s best interests, I do pray you, for your children’s sake, consider your ways, and seek the Lord with the purpose in your heart that your children may, if possible, live in the presence of God.

But the Scripture does not give this as the reason why Rehoboam did evil. It does not say that he did evil because, he had a bad mother, nor because his father had not walked with God as he ought to have done.

No; the reason was, “because he, prepared not his heart to seek the Lord.” The Hebrew proverb was, “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge; but the Lord said to his ancient people, through the prophet Ezekiel, “Ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” God will judge each one according to his own deeds; and if you should, unhappily, have been ‘born of the most ungodly parents who ever lived, there is no reason why God’s grace should not begin to work in your family with you. If all your training has been adverse to godliness; the sovereign grace, that takes one of a city, and two of a family, and brings them to Zion, may select you as its object. I know several brethren here, who have each one, said to me with great, sorrow,

“I am the only one out of my family, so far as, I can judge, that knows the Lord. Looking back, I can trace no pedigree of saints; and looking around me, neither brother, nor sister, nor uncle, nor cousin, seems to have any fear of God.”

Ah, my dear friend! if you have been so distinguished by the grace of God, you ought to love Him much, and praise Him much; and as you will be sure to be watched, and pecked at, like a speckled bird, mind how you live. May your light so shine before men that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father Who is in heaven. No; though Rehoboam walks in an evil way, it is not set down to the examples of his father and mother; but it is written,

“He did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord.”

What does this expression mean? I am going to try to find out because I feel sure that the same reason is operating upon a good many other people. It does not say that Rehoboam did evil because he was of a vicious temperament, or because he had strong passions, or because he was a downright thoroughly bad fellow. No, he was not quite that; but he did evil because of something which he did not do.

**“Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do;”—**

and as Rehoboam “prepared not his heart to seek the Lord,” Satan found him evil to do, and he did it.

I. So I judge that this expression means, first, that He Did Not Begin Life With Seeking The Lord.

His father Solomon did; when he found himself lifted up to the throne of Israel while he was yet a young man, Solomon spread his

case before the Lord, and asked for wisdom; and, in consequence, taking it as a whole, his reign was a grand one, and his kingdom attained to a high state of prosperity. He was faithful to the worship of Jehovah, in the main, though there was a sad turning aside to idols, and he acted wisely in most of his ways, so that the wisdom of Solomon became proverbial. That result was due to the fact that God gave to him

“wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore.”

He asked of God wisdom, and God gave it to him; but this foolish son of his asked not for wisdom. The scepter was there, so he grasped it; there was an empty throne, so he sat down upon it. I daresay he fancied it was a very fine thing to be king over Israel, and his thoughts did not go much beyond the mere external pomp and splendor of royalty. He did not intend any ill, and he was not very determined upon doing that which was right; and probably he never thought of commencing his career by asking the blessing of God upon it.

I hope no one, whom I am addressing, would really resolve to lead a bad life; but, mind you, it may happen to you, as it did to Rehoboam, that the summary of your life will be,

“He did evil, because he, prepared not his heart, to seek the Lord.”

So much in life depends upon how we begin that I could wish that no boy ever left his home to go to school,—that no boy ever left school to go to a clerkship, or to serve his apprenticeship to a business,—without stopping a while, and praying the Lord to guide him in every step so that he might act wisely. And I might add that it would be well if older men would do the same; and, in beginning anything fresh, prepare their hearts to seek the Lord.

This young man Rehoboam felt that he needed some kind of guidance, yet he did not seek the Lord, but he called together a number of counsellors. Now, it is quite right to seek counsel of men who are wiser than we ourselves are; but he who trusts to earthly counsellors, instead of to God, is guilty of great provocation against him who is full of wisdom, and who ought to be the Guide of our youth and of our whole lives. Calling his father's wise counsellors together, at the beginning of his reign, Rehoboam submitted the people's grievances to them; but, like the fool that he was, he rejected their counsel, and followed the foolish advice of the younger men like himself, the fops about the court, the swells, the gilded youths of the period, and so committed a gross act of folly.

It usually happens that, when men will not ask counsel of God, if they go to other sources for guidance, they generally accept the very worst, form of advice. When men trust in men, it is strange how often they trust in the worst and not in the best of men.

Yet I know not that it is strange, for that same infatuation, which leads a man to reject his God, almost necessarily leads him to despise those upon whom God has bestowed any measure of light and wisdom. So this young prince asked counsel of others, who were as foolish as he himself was, and the result of following their advice was that ten tribes out of the twelve were rent away from him, and formed into an independent kingdom. What a different life there might have been, not only for himself, but for those who were dependent upon him, if he had but humbly waited upon God for guidance, and had given the people a gentle reply to their very reasonable demands, and had ruled them, not with a rod of iron, but with gentleness and kindness! There might have been two Solomons succeeding each other; which, perhaps, is too much to expect among kings and princes, for Solomons are rather scarce in that direction. However, so it was, because he did not begin by seeking the Lord, he made a fool of himself, and a failure of his life.

Perhaps some of you young people say,

“Well, we are not going to give our hearts to God, yet we shall not be fools.”

Ah, but you are fools already, or else you would not talk like that; and the probability is that, before long, in the plenitude of your self-sufficient wisdom, you will take, a step, which seems plain enough to you, but which will lead you into a world of sorrow, and to no end of trouble.

Blessed is that young man who says, “My Father, thou shalt be the Guide of my youth,”—who gets God on board the vessel of his life at the stall, with his hand on the rudder, to steer the vessel through a safe and prosperous voyage till he reaches the Fair Havens, and casts anchor in the Port of Peace.

This, then, was the folly of Rehoboam, that he did not begin life by seeking God, and therefore he began it foolishly.

II. But our text means more than that; it means, next, that Rehoboam Showed No Heart In Doing What Was Right.

He did what was right at the first but he had no heart in doing it. The prophet came to him when he had mustered his forces, and forbade him to go to war with the followers of Jeroboam, and he disbanded all his troops. That was, truly, a most worthy thing to do; and you and I, looking on at the scene, would have said, "That is a noble young prince; if he obeys the voice of a prophet, like that, surely he fears God." But he did not.

He did right, because, from the training his father had given him, he had a high esteem for prophets of God. He had seen his father entertain prophets with great honor, and he did not like to despise them. There is many a young man, nowadays, who has great regard for God's ministers, though he is not himself a Christian. He recollects the times when they used to be at his father's house, when they slept in the, prophet's chamber. He remembers many happy evenings he had, as a boy, when they were guests at his home, and he could not bring his mind to despise them, and to make a jest of what they say. Nay, to some extent, he gives heed to what they have to say, and he tries to shape his moral character according to their teaching, yet he does not yield himself to Christ, so nothing comes of it all.

If it had been a prophet of Baal who had come to him, I am afraid that Rehoboam would have done just what he told him to do, and there are many young men now, who appear to be excellent, simply because they are in good hands" but if they had been under the influence of evil men, they would have been as bad as could be, for they have no individuality, they have no heart in doing the right thing, It is well to come to the, house of God my dear friends, but I like to see people come because they want to come. I observe some people, even on the Sabbath, walking along to their place of worship, with their books under their arm in a most solemn manner, and. all the while looking as if they were going to be flogged; and when they come out, they look just as if they had passed through that experience, I like to see people go tripping to God's house with sacred joy, as if it was the merriest place in all the world. When I come into the Tabernacle, I often repeat those lines by Dr. Watts,—

**"Peace be within this sacred place,
And joy a constant guest!
With holy gifts, and heavenly grace,
Be her attendants blest!**

**"My soul shall pray for Zion still,
While life or breath remains;
There my best friends, my kindred, dwell,
There God my Savior reigns."**

It is well to worship the Lord heartily, with a zest, with holy fervor, to do it because you like to do it, and take a delight in it. It is one thing to be right in appearance, and another thing to be right in your soul. "But," says one, "I thought it was best to do right when you do not like to do it; I thought there was something very meritorious: if a person was religious though he could not endure it." No; that is hypocrisy, and nothing else. When a person puts on the garb of religion, all the while, feeling that he would gladly take it off if he could,—pretending to be a Christian, when, if he could have his own way, he would have a Continental Sabbath, he is nothing but a hypocrite. When he does get his own way, he manages to have his Continental Sabbath, and he just amuses himself all that he possibly can on God's holy day. No matter what the; foreigners do, he is among them in the very thick of it, and he thinks they haven't very blessed kind of Sunday. When he is at home, he does not do such naughty things;—oh, no, certainly not! And this hypocrisy is what you think is virtue?

Because you do not like true godliness, you think it must be good for you to pretend to imitate it; but that will never do. The psalmist rightly says, "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them." He is the man who runs in the way of God's commandments with intense delight; but this Rehoboam did not do so. When he was doing right, he did it because he felt some respect for the prophet, but that was all.

It was soon evident that his heart was not right towards God, for he imitated his father Solomon in his faults. His father's great fault was the multiplication of wives, and into this evil Rehoboam fell. And, moreover, all the strength of Rehoboam's heart and soul went in what was a very proper direction in itself; namely, in the building of cities, and the storing of them with provisions, and fencing and garrisoning the towns; yet that direction was a very bad one because it took him away from God. I like to see a young man, whatever he does, throw his whole soul into it; but not so act that he throws his soul away from God by it. There was some force in what the first of the Rothschilds is reported to have said, when he had been making money. Someone said to him, "You are bringing up your sons to make money, I suppose?" He answered, "Of course I am, what should they do else?" "But, still," said the other, "I am sure that you must wish them to look to something higher, and something better." "No," he replied, "I do nothing of the kind. If a man wants to make money, he must give his heart and his soul to it; and that is what these young men have to do, and they must not have their minds distracted from the one pursuit they have in life, namely, to make money, or else, they will never succeed at; it." I have no doubt there is much truth in that remark, which applies also to higher things. There is such a little real force in man, at his best, that he, must put all of it into one thing if he is to have success in it. So this Rehoboam put his whole soul into one thing; and,

therefore, “he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord;” but prepared his heart to seek after other things.

“But,” someone asks, “may not a man be attentive to business?” He ought to be; he should be diligent in business, but ever with this higher motive outreaching everything else, that he may win Christ, and be found in him, that his life may bring glory to the God who made him, and to the Christ who redeemed him with his precious blood. But, oh, young man, if you do not prepare your heart to seek the Lord, if what you do, that is good, is done in a happy-go-lucky style, if you are good because you happen to be in a good connection, and you keep right because Christian people round about you keep you right, and you would not like to. grieve your father, and vex your friend, then there is nothing in it at all. You will go to the bad one of these days, when you get into other circumstances, and meet with new temptations. A man ought not to live depending upon somebody else’s backbone; he should have one of his own; and if he has no one of these days he will be crushed. If you profess to be, a Christian, throw your whole soul into it, and say, “Let others do as they will, as for me, I will serve the Lord, and not feel it a bondage, but take, a delight, in it, and I will serve him with all my heart.”

**“Dare to be a Daniel,
Dare to stand alone,
Dare to have a purpose firm,
Dare to make it known.”**

III. There is a third point about Rehoboam, contained in the words of our text, “He did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord;” that is, He Was Not Fixed And Persevering In His Religion. The original bears that sense.

He began well, and in the first three years of his reign, the nation worshipped God. I do not suppose that he really did so himself; but, still, he was on that side. He was one of the evangelical party; he was one of the God-fearing party, and therefore he prospered. His apparent reverence for God brought the Levites to live in his dominions, and brought others of the best people of Israel to come there, and to strengthen his hands. Thus he prospered; and you might have thought that, as his religion brought him prosperity, he, would stick to it. Not he; there was no “stick to it” in him.

As soon as ever he prospered, he began to grow proud. He was a fine fellow, he had splendid kingdom, a very attractive dominion; did not the good people all come there? So growing proud, he began to forsake the Lord; and the people, following his evil example, worshipped in groves instead of coming to the temple at Jerusalem. Worse than that, they set up graven images and idolatrous pillars, and their heart went aside from God, and they practiced the most accursed sin that ever stained and defiled the face of the earth. You know the sin for which God sent the judgment of fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah; and there were some of these people who thus sinned, making an act of worship out of the most bestial crime. Yet Rehoboam did not trouble himself about that. When the people feared God, he was willing then they should do so; and now, if they followed Ashtaroath, they might do as they liked. He was, after all, but a young ruler, who thought that the principal business of a king was to enjoy himself; so he let things go just as they could. He was king; but, still,—well, if God was good, it was proper for good people to reverence him; but if other people did not, he did not trouble his head much about that matter, it sat very lightly upon him.

In consequence of this, God brought up Shishak from Egypt, with multitudes of chariots and horsemen, and an innumerable host of people. Then were the Jews in a state of great alarm; and Rehoboam, who went to be moulded any way,—for he had a sort of india-rubber heart,—humbled himself, and the princes of Israel humbled themselves; God knew that these other people were sincere in humbling themselves, so he allowed their sincerity to season the whole bulk, and he therefore accepted the humiliation of king and people, and delivered them.

You see how readily Rehoboam went, first towards God, then towards idols, and then back again, towards God; he was always ready to shift and change, he wrought no great reforms in the land; we do not read that, he held a great passover, as Hezekiah did, or that the high places were taken away; but, as soon as Shishak was gone, he felt perfectly content. There was not anything real and permanent in his religion; it did not hold him. He held it sometimes, but it never held him. O dear friends, is not this Rehoboam a specimen of a great many people who are living now? They get into a warm-hearted meeting, and they feel the power of it; they meet a friend, and he takes them into different society altogether, where there are merry songs and plentiful jokes, and they feel the power of that. They hold with the hare, and they run with the hounds. They are “everything by starts, and nothing long;” and the result is that they do evil; for, when a man is not fixed in his resolve, to do good, when he does not take his stand, in the name of God, with a life and death determination, it is not doubtful which way he will go.

IV. The last point involved in this, description of Rehoboam is this, He Had No Care About Serving God.

He did not care whether he served the Lord or not; and as to serving him in a right spirit, that never entered into his head. He never “prepared his heart.” If he went to a service,—well, he was there, but that was, all. Some people, who have come here to-night,

never thought of breathing a prayer before they came, nor after they entered the building. They would even venture, if we allowed them, to partake of the communion at the Lord's table without self-examination and without prayer; they do everything without any preparation of the heart.

But look you, sirs, if there is no care about making the heart go right, it must go wrong, because the natural tendency of our mind is toward evil. If you leave your heart to follow its own natural impulse, it is impossible that it should seek the Lord. It is only when it is prepared to seek the Lord that it ever seeks him, and that preparation of the heart is from God; so that, if we do not ask the Lord to prepare our hearts to seek him, we shall never seek his face at all.

And look ye yet again, all the current in which we are found runs the wrong way; so that, if there is no preparation of the heart, we know which way it will go. Company will draw it, not towards right, but towards wrong; and the set of the age—the general current of the period—is not towards God, but away from him. If you put a barge in the middle, of the river, I know which way it will go; it will go with the tide. It is only by adjusting the rudder, and by wise steering, and hard rowing, that it could be made to go against it. So, if your heart is not prepared to seek the Lord, it will not seek him, it is sure to go in the other direction.

What is preparing the heart to seek the Lord? I should say that it is something like this. First, to feel my need of God. What can I, a creature, do without my Creator? What can I do without a Father in heaven? I have offended him, I have sinned against him, I have gone far away from him; but I want, him to forgive me, and to save me. We must be conscious of this need; may the Spirit of God prepare us to seek the Lord by giving us a deep sense of our desperate need of God's mercy!

The next thing is, to cry unto God for help: "Lord, save me! God be merciful to me a sinner! Renew my heart, change my nature, subdue my stubborn will, and make me thy child!" Prayer prepares the heart to seek the Lord, and you will never seek him if you do not pray to him. In fact, prayer is an essential exercise in seeking the Lord.

Then, further, if we would be prepared to seek the Lord, there must be a submission of ourselves to his guidance,—a coming to him, and saying, "Here I am, Lord; make, me what I ought to be. I agree to thy commandments; I delight in them, help me to run in them. I yield my proud selfhood, and lay down at thy feet my prejudices and my wilfulness, and ask thee now to guide me in the right way."

There must also be the acceptance of God's plan of salvation. He who would live the right kind of life must come to God, and say, "My God, thou surest them that believe; help me to believe. Thou givest eternal life to as many as believe in Jesus Christ, thy Son. Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." This is the true way of preparing the heart to seek the Lord.

And even when that faith is given, the right preparation is to serve God always with thoughtfulness and care;—not to go blundering on anyhow, hit or miss, as some do. It is a terribly sad thing to pretend to serve God without thought, without watchfulness, without care, for God is not such an one that we may rush into his presence whenever we like, without premeditation, solemnity, or reverence. If you were to go to visit a king, you must be prepared to enter the royal presence under court regulations, and behave yourself in a seemly manner;—and much more is this necessary when we seek the Lord. Every holy duty ought to be thought over carefully. Every prayer, every almsgiving, every attempt to serve God, should be done with due consideration, and with holy anxiety to do it in the right manner, at the right time, and in the right spirit.

Now, because Rehoboam did not act thus, and did not, indeed, care to trouble his brain about such things as this, "he did evil." And if any man here says, "Well. I do not trouble about religion; I believe I shall be all right. I cannot be always sitting down, and pulling a long face, and reading the Bible, and trying to find out how I am to live. I just take the, first chance that comes, and do the best I can." if you talk like that, you will do evil as surely as you are a man, for he who devotes not his whole soul to fighting the battle of life will certainly lose it. To go to heaven is not such an easy matter that every fool may do it before breakfast. It is a thing which, as it needed the blood of the Son of God to pave the way, and needed the eternal Spirit himself to give us life to run in that way, is a matter of serious import and of solemn moment; and the whole heart, and soul, and strength must be set upon the attainment of eternal life, or we shall not secure it. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." So, may God the Holy Ghost help you to think seriously about divine things; or else you will do evil because you prepared not your heart to seek the Lord.

Now I want just two or three minutes more in order to make an application of my subject; and, first, dear friends, is it not possible—I want to whisper this round among the members of this church,—is it not quite possible that there, may be some nominal professors who come under the description in the text? Their conduct appears to be admirable, and hitherto probably has been so; but; they have never prepared their heart to seek the Lord. I fear that, in all our churches, there are people who are called Christians simply because they were brought up among Christians. They need to be brought down, to be converted, regenerated, born again, for they have only been born after the flesh.

There was an Ishmael in the household of Abraham, so we need not wonder if there are such people in all our churches. They have never prepared their hearts to seek the Lord; it has not been heart-work with them. Perhaps conscience sometimes says to them, "Is

it not a pity that you ever joined the church?" Now I know who will take this question home, and fret over it; it is you good creatures for whom I do not mean it; but those to whom it specially applies will say, "Oh, he cannot mean me!" There are, alas! many such people; and they are hardly likely to be converted now, because they entered the church before they were converted; and, consequently, whatever is said, they think, "He cannot mean me." But, my dear friend, we do mean the very person who says, "He cannot mean me;" and we do not mean some of those who take home those searching questions, and are troubled by them. Whenever anybody says to me, "Oh, I am afraid I am a hypocrite!" I do not think he really is one. I never knew one, who was really a hypocrite, who was afraid he was one; those who are so truly usually have no such fear. Still, it will be well for each of us to ask these, questions, "Is my heart prepared to seek the Lord? Is my heart in my religion? Do I try to serve God with all my heart? Do I make it a matter of serious thought, or is my religion all upon the outside?" If it be so, the probability is that, one of these, days, there will come a sudden temptation to you, and, over you will go. I have known ministers, deacons, and elders,—grey old men,—fall into sins which one would have thought only silly boys would fall into and we can only think, when we see such men apostatize, that they never prepared their heart to seek the, Lord. Their religion was only skin-deep; it was not that true Christianity which has its root in the soul by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit.

Now another question. Are there any young men here, who are very hopeful and promising characters, who like religious gatherings, and attend to everything that is of good repute, and yet have not sought and found the Lord? Shall I tell you what troubled me before I gave my heart to Christ? It was something which had great influence upon me in bringing me to decision. There was a boy at school, who was some few years older than I was; and he was a very excellent lad. My father (you know that fathers speak thus sometimes) used to tell me he wished I was half as good as that boy was; he was a kind of pattern lad. Well, he grew up, and came to London to a drapery establishment. He wrote home most delightful letters to his mother, telling her that he was going to hear such-and-such a minister on Sunday morning, and such another one on Sunday evening; and I used to hear what a good lad he was. All of a sudden he came home; he could not be kept in the establishment, there was money missing, and he was suspected of stealing it. He had not been to those places of worship at all; he had spent his Sundays—well, Satan knew where; he had been as bad as bad could be all the while he was there. My father never mentioned him to me any more, but I distinctly recollect feeling just this, "Well, if So-and-so, whom I thought and believed, and who seemed to be such a good lad, to whom I used to look: up, has turned out such a downright scamp, may not I do the same?" It seemed to me that, if I did not begin in a better way than he did, by really getting a new heart and a right spirit, I might come morally to the same sort of smash as he did. And I may further tell you that, among the things that led me to Christ, was the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints. I heard that he would keep the, feet of his saints, and I said to myself, "Then, if I give myself to him, he will ensure the preservation of my character, and he will keep me to the end." And the only bargain! ever made with him, when I gave myself up to him, was that he would ever have me in his holy keeping. O young men, I can recommend that plan to you! I earnestly entreat you not to commence life even with the best moral resolutions. Go straight away to the Lord Jesus, and ask him to grant you grace that you may give yourself up wholly to him. You cannot keep yourself, hut he can keep you, and he will keep you even unto the end, for he hath said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

Lastly, do I address anyone,—old or young, it is no matter, who, like Rehoboam, has not sought the Lord, and like Rehoboam has got into a world of trouble through it? Have you lost the ten tribes? Has Shishak come against you? You did wrong, you know you did, for you forsook your God; and now, after that, do you still refuse to seek him? For, mark you, Rehoboam did not prepare his heart; to seek the Lord even after he had been attacked by the king of Egypt. Chastisements are lost upon some people; there is someone of Rehoboam's sort here to-night; it is the first time he has been out since his serious illness. Blessed be God that you did not die then, my friend. You know what the angels heard you say when you were lying on your bed. "Please God, if I am ever raised up from this illness, I will seek the Lord." That is partly the reason why you are here, and I am very glad to see you; but you must not think that coming here will save you. It is no use seeking the Tabernacle; you must seek the Lord. Oh, do not, I pray you, let this warning be neglected, nor let the vow that Was registered in heaven be forgotten; but do seek the Savior with all your heart! And you, my friend, over yonder, were in a shipwreck; there were many lives lost, and you had been a swearing fellow, but you said, "Please God I get ashore, I will turn over a new leaf." Well I do not think the new leaf is much improvement on the old one. That was not what you meant, was it? It was that you would become a better man if you were saved from the jaws of hell. You were saved from the watery grave, yet you have not prepared your heart to seek the Lord. O my dear friend, God does not send Shishak many times, you know! After he has sent him once, and there is no softening of the heart, or girding up of the loins to seek him, he will send another messenger, and it will be written of you, as it was of Rehoboam, "He slept with his fathers, and his son reigned in his stead." But where was Rehoboam? He never sought the Lord; so, perhaps, when he had passed out of this world, where he had shilly-shallied and vacillated, where he had been pliable and plastic to every influence,—when he passed into the next world, there was realized by him the terror of that dreadful curse, "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." Then was fulfilled to him that other terrible prophecy, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." Think of God's laughing and mocking at a soul that has passed into

eternity without him; it is a most dreadful thing, whatever it may mean, and it will be fulfilled in you,—you hopeful people, you plausible people, you undecided people, unless you prepare your heart to seek the Lord. It may be that some of you are standing, at this moment, on the very verge of everlasting life; and if the devil can keep you there he will be perfectly satisfied, for you will perish if: you remain there. Do not satisfy him, I implore you. O mighty grace, come upon them now, and make them each one say, “I will stand here no longer; I will cross the line; I will give myself up once for all to Jesus.” That is right, young man, cross the river, burn the bridges, sink your boats, and say,—

**“Tis done, the great transaction’s done,
I am my Lord’s, and he is mine;
He drew me, and I follow’d on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine?
The Lord make it so, for Christ’s sake! Amen.**

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2 Chronicles 20:4. The Singing Army

NO. 2923

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“And Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord.” -2 Chronicles 20:4.

Jerusalem was startled by sudden news. There had for a great while been quiet preparations made in the distant countries beyond Jordan. Upon its mountains Edom had them getting ready: the workshops of Petra had been ringing with the hammer; the enemies of Israel had been beating their pruning hooks into spears and swords, and they were now coming down in hordes. There were three great nations, and these were assisted by the odds and ends of all the nations round about, so that a great company eager for plunder was drawn up in battle. They had heard about the riches of the temple at Jerusalem; they knew that the people of Judea had for years been flourishing, and they were now coming to kill and to destroy and to sack and to plunder. They were like the grasshoppers or the locusts for multitude.

What were the people of God to do? How were these poor Judeans to defend themselves? Their immediate resort was to their God. They do not appear to have looked up their armor and their swords with any particular anxiety. The fact was the case was so altogether hopeless as far as they were concerned, that it was no use looking to anything beneath the skies, and as they were driven from all manifest earthly resorts they were compelled to lift up their eyes to God; and their godly king Jehoshaphat aided them in so doing. A general fast was proclaimed, and the preparation to meet the hosts of Moab, Ammon and Edom was prayer. No doubt if the Ammonites had heard of it they would have laughed, Edom would have scoffed at it, and Moab would have cursed those that made supplication.

“What! do they suppose that their prayers can defeat us?” would have been the sneer of their adversaries. Yet this was Israel’s artillery: this was their eighty-one ton gun: when it was ready it would throw one bolt, and only one, and that would crush three nations at once. God’s people resorted only to the arm invisible — the arm omnipotent—and they did well and wisely.

Now, if the Lord shall teach us to imitate them, and by his grace enable us in doing it, we shall have learnt a great lesson. The preacher needs to learn it as much as anybody, and he prays that each one of you may be also scholars in the school of faith, and become very proficient in the divine art of prayer and praise.

I. First, then, How They Asked Help? They asked their help, as you know, by a general fast and prayer, but I mean, what was the style of that prayer in which they approached sin, Lord.

And the reply is, first, they asked help, expressing their confidence.

“O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?”

If we begin by doubting, our prayer will limp. Faith is the tendon of Achilles, and if that be cut it is not possible for us to wrestle with God, but as long as we have that strong sinew, that mighty tendon unhurt, we can prevail with God in prayer. It is a rule of the kingdom, though God often goes beyond it, "According to thy faith be it done unto thee." I have known him give us a hundred times as much as our faith, but, brethren, I have never known him give us less. That could not possibly be. This is his minimum rule, I may say,

"According to thy faith be it unto thee."

When, therefore, in time of trouble you ask help of God, ask it believing that he is able to give it; ask it expecting that he will bestow it. Do not grieve the Spirit of God by unworthy doubts and mistrusts; these things will be like fiery arrows in your own soul and drink up the very life of your strength. However hard the struggle; and difficult the trial, if thou seekest the Lord, seek him in the confidence he deserves.

Then they sought God, pleading his past acts. This is a fashion of prayer which has been very common among the saints, and it has proved to be very potent. "Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?" Remember what God has done for you, and then say, as a sweet refrain,

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

When you are praying, recollect what he was yesterday if you cannot see that he is comfortable towards you today. If there be no present manifestations of divine favor, recall the former days — the days of old — the years of the right hand of the Most High. He has been gracious unto you; can you tell how gracious? He has abounded towards you in lovingkindness, and tenderness, and faithfulness; he has never been a wilderness or a land of drought unto you. Well, then, if in six troubles he has delivered thee, wilt thou not trust, him for seven? If you get to sixty troubles, cannot you trust him for sixty-one? You have been carried, some of you, I see, till grey hairs are on your head. How long do you expect to live? Do you think you have got an odd ten years left? Well, do you think that the Lord who has blest you seventy years will not keep you the other ten. We say that we ought always to trust a man until he deceives us. We reckon a man honest, till we find him otherwise. Let it be so with God, I beseech you. Since we have found him good, faithful, true, kind, tender, let us not think hardly of him now that we have come into strains, but let us come to him thus, and say,

"Art not thou our God? Didst not thou bring us up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay? Didst thou not bring us up out of the Egypt of our sin? Surely thou hast not brought us into the wilderness to destroy us? Wilt thou leave us now? True, we are unworthy, but so we always were, and if thou didst want a reason for leaving us thou hast had ten thousand reasons long ago. Lord, do not be wroth very sore with the servants, and caste us not away."

That is the style of pleading which prevails. Imitate these men of old, who asked help by recalling the past.

Proceeding a little farther in their prayer, we see that they pleaded the promise of God, which promise was made at the time when Solomon dedicated the temple. "That if, when evil cometh upon us, we cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help." He that getteth the promise of God and graspeth God with the promise-he does, and must prevail. I have known sometimes a man unable to grasp anything; the object has slipped away, his hand has been slippery too, and I have seen him as he has taken up some sand in his hand, and then he has them able, to get a grip. I like to plunge my hand into the promises, and then I find myself able to grasp with a grip of determination the mighty faithfulness of God. An omnipotent plea with God is:

"Do as thou hast said."

You know how a man nails you when he brings your very words before you. "There," says he, "that is what you said you would do. Of your own free will you pledged yourself to do this." Why then you cannot get away from it, for it is the way with the saints that if they swear to their own hurt they change not; they must be true to the words they speak even if it, be to their own damage. Of the saints' Master it is always true. Hath he said and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken and shall he not make it good? Here then is a mighty instrument to be used in prayer,

"Lord, thou hast said this or that, thou hast said it, now do as thou hast, said.

Thou hast said,

'Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.'

Thou hast said,

'He shall deliver thee in six troubles, and in seven there shall no evil touch thee.'

Thou hast said,

'Surely in blessing I will bless thee.'

Thou hast said,

'The Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.'

Thou hast said,

'Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be.'

Lord, there is thy promise for it."

With such a plea you must prevail with a faithful God.

Again, as these people asked for help they confessed they own unhappy condition. There is a great power in that. One of the strongest pleas with generosity is the urgency of poverty, and one of the most prevailing arguments to be used in prayer with God is a truthful statement of our condition — a confession of our sad estate. So they said to the Lord these words,

"O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee."

They had no might, and they had no plan.

"We have no might, neither know we what to do."

Sometimes even if you cannot do the thing, it is a little comfort to know how it might be done if you had the power, but these perplexed people neither could do it, nor knew how to do it. They were nonplussed. A little nation like Judah, surrounded by these powerful enemies, truly had no might. Their weakness and ignorance were great pleas: the logic was divine.

"Neither know we what to do: therefore our eyes are unto thee."

It was as if they had said,

"If we could do it ourselves, well, thou mightest very well say, 'Go and do it. What did I give you the strength for, but that you could use the strength in doing it?' But when we have got no strength, neither know we what to do, we come and just lay the case down at thy feet and say, 'There it is; our eyes are upon thee.'"

Perhaps you think that is not praying. I tell you it is the most powerful form of prayer, just to set your case before God, just to lay bare all your sorrow and all your needs, and then say,

"Lord, there it is."

You know a man must not beg in the streets of London; the police will not have it, and I daresay that is a very wise regulation. But what does the needy man do? Have not you seen him? He is dressed like a countryman, and looks halfstarved, and his knees can be seen through an old pair of corduroys as he stoops. He does not beg, not he: he only sits down at the corner of the road. He knows quite well that the very sight of his condition is enough. There are one or two persons about the streets of London whose faces are a fortune to them; pale, and thin, and woebegone, they appeal more eloquently than words. I was going to say that there is a man who comes to the Tabernacle, who is just of the same sort. I could point him out, but I do not see him now; but he does come here, and the very way in which he shivers, the remarkable manner in which he looks ill, though he is not ill, takes in people who are continually being duped by his appearance. All the world knows that it is the look of the thing, the very appearance and show of sorrow, that prevails with people more than any words that are used. Now, when you cannot pray in words, go and lay bare your sorrow before God: just go and show your soul. Tell God what it is that burdens and distresses you, and you will prevail with the bounteous heart of our God, who is not moved by eloquence of words, and oratory of tongue, but is swift to answer the true oratory, the true eloquence, of real distress, and who is as wise to detect sham misery as to succor real sorrow.

I wonder whether I recall to some of you any particular times of trial. To myself I do. If I do not to you, at any rate, there is one common affliction which has overwhelmed us all, that is the great affliction of sin. When sin, with its multitudinous host of offenses, becomes manifest to us under conviction, and we do not know how to meet one single sin or to answer one of a thousand of the charges that might be brought against us; when we feel that we have no might whatever, and perhaps we realize that through sin we have brought ourselves into such peculiar circumstances that we do not know how to get out of it, though we feel that we must get; out somehow: when we go to the right that seems blocked up, and the left seems equally closed to us: to go back we dare not: to go forward we cannot—then how wonderfully God clears the way! In what a marvellous manner we find our enemies all dead that we thought were going to kill us! and as for those that were going to rob us, we are enriched by them. Instead of taking us for a spoil, there they fall and their spoil becomes our right and we take it home with us rejoicing. Oh, what wonders God can do! He loves us to state the difficulty we are in, on purpose that when he gets us out of it we may remember that we were in such a condition. It was a

real disaster and a time of real trial, and yet the Lord redeemed us from it.

What did they do after asking help, after pleading the promise and confessing their condition? Why, they expressed their confidence in God. They said,

“Our eyes are upon thee.”

What did they mean by that? They meant,

“Lord, if help does come, it must come from thee. We are looking to thee for it. It cannot come from anywhere else, so we look to thee. But we believe it will come, men will not look for that which they know will not come. We feel sure it will come, but we do not know how, so we are looking; we do not know when, but we are looking. We do not know what thou wouldst have us to do, but as the servant looks to her mistress, so are we looking to thee, Lord. Lord, we are looking.”

It is a grand posture that. Do you not know that is the way you are saved — by looking unto Jesus? And that is the way you have got to be saved, all the way between here and heaven. Whatever trouble comes, looking is to save you. Looking, often waiting, looking like the weary watcher from the tower when he wants to see the grey tints of the coming morning, when the night is long and he is weary, but still looking.

“Our eyes are upon thee.”

They are full of tears, but still they are upon thee; they are getting hazy, too, with sleep, but still they are upon thee—such eyes as we have got. We do look to these. I have sometimes blessed the Lord that he has not said,

“See Jesus—see me and be saved.”

What he has said is, “Look.” Sometimes if you cannot see you have done your part if you have looked — looked into the darkness. Lord, that cross of thine, it would give me such joy if I could see it, I cannot quite see it, it looms very indistinctly on my gaze, but I do look. It is looking, you know, that saves, for as we look the eyes get stronger, and we are enlightened. And so in this case they looked, and they found deliverance. God help us, brothers and sisters, to do the same.

That is how they asked help.

II. Now, secondly, How They Received Help.

Their help came to them, first, by a message from God. They received a fresh assurance of God's goodness. A new prophet was raised up, and he spoke with new words. “Be not afraid, not dismayed,” he said,

“by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours but God's.”

Now, in our case, we shall not have a new promise, that would not be possible.

**“What more can he say than to you he hath said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled.”**

But you will have that promise sweetly laid home to your soul, and the Spirit of God will bear witness with that promise, and so strengthen and comfort you, that you will get deliverance even before deliverance comes, because it often happens that to be saved from the fear of the trouble is the main business. To be quieted, and calmed, and assured, is really to be saved from the sting of trial; the trial itself is nothing if it does not bring a sting to your soul. If your heart is not troubled, then there is not much trouble in anything else. All the poverty and all the pain in the world would prevail nothing if the evil of it did not enter into the soul and vex it. So, in this emergency, God began to answer his people by quieting them.

“Be not afraid nor dismayed, for the battle is not yours but God's: the Lord will be with you.”

As that gracious promise calmed their fears so that they were able without fear to face the impending attack; then they received distinct direction what to do on the morrow, which was to be the day of the assault: that direction was,

“Go out to meet the foe.”

How often has God given his people deliverance by quieting them as to their course of action. Already the step they have taken has delivered them before they know it. The Israelites, by then marching out, to meet the foe, and marching out with songs and hosannas, as we shall see, were doing the best possible thing to rout their foes. As we have already said, there is no doubt that their enemies were unable to comprehend such a defense as this: they must have supposed that there was some treachery or ambush

intended, and so they began to slay each other, and Israel had nothing to do but to keep on singing.

Then came the real providence: they received actual deliverance. When the people of Judah came to their foes they found there were no foes. There they lay all stark and dead; none of the men of might could raise their hands against those whom God had favored. After this fashion will God deliver you, brethren; in answer to prayer he will be your defense. Therefore, sing unto his name. Did not he deliver you thus when you went out to meet the great army of your sins? You saw that Christ had put them away, and your heart danced within you as you said,

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, for he has slain our sins and they can curse us no more.”

So has it been with a great many troubles that have appeared to you to be overwhelming: when you have come to them, lo, they have disappeared. They have been cleared out of your way as you have advanced, and you have had nothing to do but to sing and praise the name of the Lord.

III. And now, thirdly, and this is the main point, let us note How They Acted After They Had Prayed And Heard God's Voice. They asked for help, and they had it: how did they then behave?

Well first, as soon as ever they had an assurance that God would deliver them, they worshipped. That is one of the intentions of trial — to revive in us the spirit of devotion and communion with God. And mercy, when it comes on the back of a great trouble, leads us sweetly to prayer. I warrant you there had not been such a piece of worship in all Jerusalem as there was that day, when, after that young son of the Levites had stood and delivered the word of the Lord, the king bowed his head and all the people bowed their heads and did homage to the God of Israel. You could have heard the sound even of the wind among the trees at the time, for they were as hushed and as quiet as you were just now. Oh, when you know the Lord means to deliver you, bow your head and just give him the quiet, deep, solemn worship of your spirit. I do not suppose we shall ever fall into Quakers' worship in our public assemblies, though an occasional experience of it would do you a world of good: to sit still before the Lord, and to adore, and to adore, and to adore again and again, and still again, braces the spirit and clears the soul for the understanding of eternal realities. They worshipped, but why did they do it? They were not delivered. No, but they were sure they were going to be delivered. Their enemies were not dead. No, they were all alive, but they were sure they would be dead, so they had worship, and their devotion rose from trustful and grateful hearts. May we get into a worshipping frame of mind, and be kept in it. Then God will appear for our help.

As soon as ever the worship had closed, or rather ere it had quite closed, they began to praise. As we read just now, up went the loud voices of the trained singers under the leadership of the chief musician, and they praised the name of the Lord. They sang, as we do, —

**“For his mercies shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.”**

That is the way you should deal with God. Before the deliverance comes, praise him. Praise Him for what is coming; adore Him for what he is going to do. No song is so sweet, methinks, in the ear of God as the song of a man who blesses him for “grace he has not tasted yet” — for what he has not got, but what he is sure will come.

The praise of gratitude for the past is sweet, but that praise is sweeter which adores God for the future in full confidence that it shall be well.

Therefore, take down your harps from the willows, O ye people, and praise ye the name of the Lord, though still the fig tree does not blossom and still the cattle die in the stall, and still the sheep perish from the folds; though there should be to you no income to meet your want, and you should be brought almost to necessity's door, still bless the Lord whose mighty providence cannot fail, and shall not fail, so long as there is one of his children to be provided for. Your song while you are still in distress will be sweet music to the ear of God.

After they had worshipped and sung, the next thing these people did was, to act: they went forth marching. If there were unbelievers in Jerusalem, I know what they said. They stood at the gates and they said,

“Well, this is foolishness. These Moabites and Ammonites are come to kill you, and they will do it, but you might as well wait till they get at you. You are just going to deliver yourselves up.”

That would be the idea of unbelief, and that is also what it sometimes seems to our little faith when we go and commit ourselves to God.

“What! are you going on your knees to confess your guilt before God and own that you deserve to be lost? Are

you going to withdraw every excuse and apology, every trust of your own, and give yourself up, as it were, to destruction?"

Yes, that is exactly what to do, and it is the highest wisdom to do it; we are going out of the city marching away according to orders, and if, as you say, we are to give ourselves up, so we will. Perhaps, in your case, you are going to do an action of which everybody else says,

"Well, now, that will be very foolish. You should be crafty. You should show a little cunning."

"No," say you, "I cannot do other than I am bidden, I must do the right."

Probably that will turn out to be the very best thing in the world to have done. The nearest way between any two points is by a straight line, the straight way will always be better than the crooked way. In the long run it is always so. Go right out, then, in the name of God: meet your difficulties calmly and fairly. Do not have any plans or tricks, but just commit yourselves unto God; that is the way by which you may in confidence expect to find deliverance. These people of old went out of the city.

But now, notice again, that as they went out, they went out singing. They sang before they left the city, and sang as they left the city, and when the adversary came in sight they began to sing again. The trumpet sounded and the harps rang out their notes, and the minstrels again shouted for joy, and this was the song, —

**"For his mercies shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure."**

It must have had a grand significance when they sang that passage,

"To him which smote great kings: for his mercy endureth for ever: and slew famous kings: for his mercy endureth for ever: Sihon king of Amorites: for his mercy endureth for ever: and Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy endureth for ever."

Why, every singer as he sang those lines, which look to us like a mere repetition, must have felt how applicable they were to their present condition when there was a Moabite and an Edomite and an Ammonite to be overthrown in the name of the mighty God whose mercy endureth for ever. So they kept on singing.

You will observe that, while they were singing, God had wrought the great deliverance for them. When the singing ceased, they prepared to gather up the spoil. What a different employment from what they expected! You can see them stripping the bodies, taking off the helmet of gold and the greaves of brass; the jewels from the ears and from about the necks of the princes; spoiling the dead of their Babylonish garments and their wedges of gold; heaping up the tents — the rich tents of the eastern nations — till they said one to another,

"We know not what to do."

But the difficulty was different from what might have befallen them at the first. Then they did not know what to do because of their weakness in the presence of their foes, but now the difficulty was because of the greatness of the spoil.

"We cannot carry it home," they would say to each other, "there is too much of it. It will take us days and days to stock away this wondrous booty."

Now, child of God, it shall be so with you as. I do not know how, but if you can only trust God and praise him and go straight ahead, you shall see such wondrous things that you shall be utterly astonished.

Then what will you do? Why, you will at once again begin praising the Lord, for so they did. They went back singing.

"They came back to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of the Lord."

When God has done great, things for you, and brought you through your present difficulty, you must be sure to repay him in the courts of his house with your loudest music and your most exultant notes, blessing again and again the name of the Lord.

After that they had rest. In the narrative it is added,

"So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about."

His enemies were afraid to come and touch him any more. After a very sharp storm it generally happens that there is long rest. So shall it be with all the Lord's people. You will get through this trouble, brother, and afterwards it will be smooth sailing for a very long time. I have known a child of God have a very cyclone; it has seemed as if he must be utterly destroyed, but after it was over there has not been a ripple of the calm of his life. People have envied him and wondered at his quietness; he had had all his storms at once, and when they were over he had come into smooth water that seemed never ruffled. Perhaps you will have the same

experience: only ask the great Pilot of the Galilean lake to steer you safely through your tempest, and then, when the storm shall cease at his bidding, you shall be glad because you be quiet; so will he bring you to your desired haven.

I have been desirous to speak these comfortable words to God's children, for well I know how they are tried, and I pray the Lord, the Comforter, to apply the word to their troubled hearts. But, I never can finish my discourse without having the very sad thought that there are always in our congregation some to whom these comfortable things do not belong. They are not believers. They have never trusted in Christ. If this be so with you — if this be so — ah, friend, you have to fight your own battles: you have to bear your own briars, you have to carry your own burdens, and when you came at the last great day before the judgment seat you will have to answer for your own sins, and to bear your own punishment. God have mercy upon you, and deliver you from such a condition as this. It is a bad condition to live in; it is a terrible condition to die in. May you be brought to receive Christ for your substitute and your surety, and glorify his name for ever and ever. Amen.

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2 Chronicles 11

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

Let us read, for our instruction, part of the story of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon.

2 Chronicles 11:1-4

So far, so good. There was some degree of the fear of God in the minds of men when, at the bidding of a single prophet, a king would disband his troops, and cease from war.

2 Chronicles 11:5-15

No wonder, therefore, that Rehoboam's kingdom was strengthened by the advent of these men, who were, doubtless, the best men in the whole country, men who feared the Lord, -men who knew the law, and who knew how to teach the people what they should do.

2 Chronicles 11:16

"Birds of a feather flock together," so those in Israel who feared the Lord went where their ministers had gone; this movement would bring about an emigration of some of the best of the population, to reside near to the sacred shrine where Jehovah was worshipped; and it must have tended still further to the strengthening of Rehoboam's little kingdom.

2 Chronicles 12

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

2 Chronicles 12:1

He was not able to endure the perils of prosperity. He forgot the Lord who had caused him to prosper; and, in the pride of his heart, he turned aside to idols.

2 Chronicles 12:2

That was not Shishak's reason for coming up against Jerusalem. He had heard of the riches of Solomon; and doubtless, he came for the sake of the spoil which the palace and the temple would yield to him. But God often overrules, for the accomplishment of his own purposes, the lower motives of men. "I girded thee," said he of Cyrus, "though thou hast not known me." So did he gird Shishak for the chastisement of Israel, though Shishak knew him not.

2 Chronicles 12:3, 4

How vain is man when he boasts in the strength of his fortifications! These fenced cities fell at once, like houses built of cards, before the power of the mighty king of Egypt, and the vast hordes that accompanied him. Rehoboam had spent his strength in making these defenses, but how soon they were proved to be worthless. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the

Lord is;” but “cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.”

2 Chronicles 12:5, 6

Now, that is the very essence of true humility, the acknowledgment that God is righteous in whatever punishment he brings upon us on account of our sin. It is a very short sentence, but there is a great fullness of meaning in it: “Jehovah is righteous.”

2 Chronicles 12:7, 8

That is a very instructive expression. I believe that, when God’s people go astray from him, he sometimes allows them to fall into great bondage, in order that they may realize the difference between his happy service and the servitude in which they may be held by any other lord. All masters, to whom we surrender our minds and hearts, will turn out to be tyrants, except the blessed Prince of peace. His yoke is easy, and his burden is light; but all other yokes gall the shoulders sooner or later; and God has sometimes made his wandering people feel this so bitterly that they have longed to get back again to the service of their God.

2 Chronicles 12:9

He did not plunder the people; he was contented with the loot of the temple and the palace. These were comparatively easy terms for the conquered nation, and one wonders how such a powerful king as Shishak should have been thus satisfied in those days; but God has the hearts of all men under his control, and even when he lets a powerful foe go forth against his people, he still restrains him when he pleases. What a mercy it is for us that, when God chastens us, there is an end to it! It is always in measure, he does not let loose the fullness and the fierceness of his wrath, as he will upon the castaways in eternity; but when he lays his rod upon us, he counts every stripe. Forty stripes save one was all that an Israelite might have to endure; and, surely, God often stops far short of that number when he deals with us. However, Shishak humiliated the king and his people by taking away the treasures of the temple and the palace; and, among the rest of his plunder, “he carried away the shields of gold, which Solomon had made.”

2 Chronicles 12:10-12

Or, rather, “things in Judah even went well.” There was comparative prosperity; they were not altogether prosperous, for they were not altogether right with God; but there was a sufficient proportion of godly men, the Puritanic party, the Evangelical party, was strong enough in the land, for God still to look upon it with favor, yet not unmixed with disapprobation; for the party that worshipped idols, the party composed of the superstitious, the party belonging to the world was still very strong.

2 Chronicles 12:13-15

Where are those books now? It is of no consequence whatever where they are. There are a great many other books that have perished because they were not inspired. They were books of genealogies, -valuable in their day; but if they had been of any use to us spiritually, they would have been preserved. Now, as other ancient books have evidently been lost, let us devoutly bless God that the inspired Books have been preserved to us. By what a continuous miracle of Providence, every inspired letter has been continued in existence, it would be hard to tell; but we ought constantly to praise the Lord that, out of the Book of this prophecy, not a line has been removed.

2 Chronicles 20

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

2 Chronicles 20:1-3.

An angry God is to be sought. Even though he smite us, we must turn to him. It is from the hand that wields the rod that we are to expect deliverance, if it ever come at all.

2 Chronicles 20:4.

The host of enemies were so enormous that they threatened to eat up all the land. The men of Judah could not keep them out. They would soak and storm and burn and destroy right and left. You see the great peril. What a heavy chastisement it must have been to the king to see his land thus in danger of being destroyed. But they had begun to pray.

2 Chronicles 20:5-12.

What a prayer it is! How argumentative! How it pleads his case as an advocate in a court of law, appealing to the mercy of God as logically as if it were to be argued out of the divine heart. Oh, how good it would be if we learnt to pray like this, — in this earnest,

importunate fashion! Say the Lord teach us to pray as he taught his disciples!

2 Chronicles 20:13.

It must have been a wonderful sight — the vast crowd — the pleading king — his voice heard afar, and the men and the women; but, to my mind, the most touching thing of all is the little children standing there, making their silent appeal to God that he would not let the babes be destroyed — that he would not suffer the young children to be slain by the cruel hosts that now threatened the land. Young children's prayers are powerful. Little ones, may God teach you how to pray.

2 Chronicles 20:14

Perhaps he had never delivered a prophecy before. This is his first sermon; but the Spirit of God was with him, and he could not hold his tongue.

2 Chronicles 20:15-17

Oh, how those words must have fallen on the weary ears of those who were in such trouble! And how glad those ears must have been to hear such a message of wondrous mercy, and so near at hand, too! "To morrow." Imminent danger brings eminent mercy, and when the lion is about to leap upon his prey, then comes the lion slayer and breaks his teeth, and delivers his lamb even from between his jaws. Glory be to God for such promises as he gives to his people in times of trouble, even such promises as he gave here.

2 Chronicles 20:18

What a sight! That is the kind of ritualism one likes — when the posture is suggested by the feelings — when the man feels that there is nothing else to do but to bow before the Lord. The king could not speak, he was too full of gratitude — too joyous at the thought that God had so appeared for him. And he felt that the only thing he could do was in silence to bow his head, and prostrate himself before God. Have not you sometimes felt so full of gratitude that you could not express yourself?

"A sacred silence checks our songs And praise sits silent on our tongues."

Now, while they were worshipping, and just as they had finished that silent adoration, the joy-strains were heard. They had taken breath.

2 Chronicles 20:19

Here, again, we seem to be carried by great waves of excitement and devotion. One moment we are sinking down in adoration, now all rising up to listen to the loud voice of God's priests and Levites.

But they have to wait for the morrow.

2 Chronicles 20:20, 21

So you can see them marching out of the city gate with the king at their head, and, as they go out, the army is marching with banners and with songs and hosannas. This is their style of going out to meet the foe.

2 Chronicles 20:22, 23.

There were three or four nations, and some jealousy or mistrust must have manifested itself, or some mistake had been made, and the motley host divided itself into self-destroying bands. The Israelites had nothing to do but to sing. Perhaps their very singing was the cause of that disruption among the bands. They could not make it out. They had seen the people rush to battle with discordant cries; but these were marching along as if they were coming to a wedding-feast, singing hymns and chants. That was a new style of fighting. So the Moabites and the Ammonites thought that there must be something wrong. "Surely there must be some confederates in the camp," they would say. They suspected each other, as bad men very soon do, and so they fell foul of one another and spared the Israelites all the trouble of killing them.

2 Chronicles 20:24-26

This is the Valley of Blessing: surely an appropriate name worthy of long remembrance.

2 Chronicles 20:27

Another march of hosannas. What a wonderful sight it must have been! We have read of the Battle of the Spurs; but here is the Battle of the Song — the battle of praise. How wondrously it was won! Jehoshaphat is now in the forefront of those who go back singing. He feels he must sing the loudest who has had such signal mercy after his sin.

2 Chronicles 20:27-30

Now, it is a long piece we have read, but I think it would not be complete if I did not read you the song which they sang. In all probability it was the 47th Psalm. You can almost hear them singing it as they marching back.

2 Chronicles 33

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

2 Chronicles 33:1, 2.

Another Lesson from Manasseh's Life." was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem: but did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord,

Yet who could have had a better father than Manasseh had? He was given to Hezekiah during those fifteen years which God graciously added to that good king's life. Manasseh was, therefore, doubtless carefully trained, and looked upon as being one who would maintain God's worship, and the honor of his father's name. But grace does not run in the blood; and the best of parents may have the worst of children. Thus Manasseh, though he was the son of Hezekiah, "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord," —

2 Chronicles 33:2.

It often happens that, when the sons of good men become bad, they are among the worst of men. They who pervert a good example generally run headlong to destruction.

2 Chronicles 33:3.

One form of idolatry was not enough for him; he must have all forms of it, even rearing altars to Baal, and making the stars also to be his gods.

2 Chronicles 33:4.

Manasseh was worse than an ordinary idolater, for he polluted the very place which was dedicated to the service of the only living and true God.

2 Chronicles 33:5, 6.

Perhaps he gave some of them actually to be burned in honor of his false gods; or if not some of his children were made to pass through the fire and were thus dedicated to the idol deities.

2 Chronicles 33:6.

You cannot imagine, I think, a worse character than this Manasseh was. He seems to have raked the foulest kennels of superstition to find all manner of abominations. Like false-hearted Saul, he had dealings with a familiar spirit, he had entered into a covenant with Satan himself, and made a league with hell, and yet, marvel of grace! this very Manasseh was saved, and is now singing the new song before the throne of God in glory.

2 Chronicles 33:7-9.

You see, dear friends, that he was not only a monster in iniquity himself, but he led a whole nation astray. Some people who, under the gracious rule of his father Hezekiah, had kept the Passover in so joyous a manner, now, under this false son of so good a father, turned aside.

2 Chronicles 33:10.

This was all that was necessary to fill up the measure of his guilt. He and his people were warned of God, but they would not hearken.

2 Chronicles 33:11.

Since words were not sufficient, and God intended to save him, he came to blows: "Wherefore" —

They very likely chastened him with thorns, for the kings of Babylon were very cruel; and it may be that, when his back was

lacerated by thorny scourges, he was put in prison with heavy fetters upon him.

2 Chronicles 33:12, 13.

There surely can be no person in this assembly who can say that he has sinned worse than Manasseh did. He seems to have gone as far as any human being could go; and yet, you see, when he humbled himself before the Lord, and lifted up his heart in supplication, God forgave his sin, and restored him to his former position in Jerusalem.

2 Chronicles 33:14.

This is not of very much importance, but what else did he do?

2 Chronicles 33:16.

When grace comes into any man's heart, there is sure to be a change in his action. Manasseh "took away the strange gods," —

Sins which were before so pleasing to him are now abominations in his sight, and he flings them over the city wall like unclean things. In the very valley of the son of Hinnom where he had dedicated his sons to idols he now consumes his idol gods as foul and offensive things, to be cast away with all the refuse of the city.

It was not possible for him to undo all the evil which he had wrought, as he soon found out.

2 Chronicles 33:17

The work of reformation is slow; you can lead men to sin as rapidly as you like, that is down-hill work; but to get them to toil with you up-hill toward the right is not so easy.

2 Chronicles 33:18, 19

So we must remember that all the deeds that we have done, both good and evil, are written in God's Book of Remembrance.

2 Chronicles 34 EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

2 CHRONICLES 34:14–33.

2 Chronicles 34:14, 15. And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiyah the priest found a book of the law of the LORD given by Moses. And Hilkiyah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD, And Hilkiyah delivered the book to Shaphan.

This was a very remarkable find. Of all the discoveries that they might have made, they could have discovered nothing that would work so much good to all the people as this "book of the law of the Lord given by Moses."

16–19. And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servant, they do it. And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen. Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes.

Such was his horror upon discovering how they had all sinned, and how many terrible judgments were to be inflicted upon them because of all that long time of sin, that he rent his clothes.

20, 21. And the king commanded Hilkiyah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying, Go, enquire of the LORD for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found:

Oh, that all who read God's Book now would do as young Josiah did! If there be any difficulty in a book, the short way to get to understand it is to enquire of the author; and, surely, never is there greater wisdom than having read any of the deep mysteries or solemn threatenings in this Volume and feeling ourselves staggered by them, we enquire of the Lord concerning them. I believe that there is many a puzzling passage in the Bible on purpose that we may be driven to enquire of the Lord about it. If the Book were all so easy of understanding that, at the first reading of it, we could comprehend all its meaning, we might, perhaps, keep away from

God; but he has purposely given us many dark sentences, and made the sense to be somewhat obscure in order that we may wait upon his enlightening Spirit and so obtain instruction, for the Spirit of God is more useful to us even than the Word itself is. Great as the blessing of the Book is, the blessing of the living Spirit is greater still, and anything is good that drives us to him. That which had influenced the mind of Josiah was the terror of the Book.

21–28. For great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book. And Hilkiah, and they that the king had appointed went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college:) and they spake to her to that effect. And she answered them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me, Thus saith the LORD Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah: because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched. And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to enquire of the LORD, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard, because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me, I have even heard thee also, saith the LORD. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall shine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again.

When God selects an instrument for his own service, how well he tune it for the use to which it is to be put! Here is a woman, a married woman, and she is selected to be the Lord's prophetess to the king; but never has any man spoken more bravely than she did. Her opening words show a holy courage which is lifted above all fear of men: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me," for before God kings are only men; and though Huldah was only a subject of Josiah, see with what real dignity God's ordination had invested her. Josiah was not to succeed in the reformation of Israel. He was true and sincere, but the people were steeped in hypocrisy, and formality, and idolatry, and they did not go with the king in all his root and branch reforms. They still clung in their hearts to their idols, and therefore they must be destroyed, and the nation must be carried away captive. It was, however, a very singular promise that God gave to Josiah "I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace." Yet he was mortally wounded in battle, so how could that promise be fulfilled? You know how it could be. However we may die, — if sword or plague or fire consume the saints among the rest of mankind, their very deaths and graves are blest. There was no fighting about Josiah's grave; he was buried in peace. Pharaoh-Necho had smitten him, but he did not destroy the land; and Josiah was allowed to be buried amid the great lamentations of a people who only began fully to appreciate him when he was taken away from them.

29, 30. Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the LORD.

That was a grand Bible-reading, with a king for reader, and all his princes and all his people gathered to Listen to the Word of God. What could he have said better, had he been the greatest of orators? To read out of this blessed Book must surely be to the edification of the hearers.

DEVOTIONALS

C H SPURGEON

Morning and Evening

Faith's Checkbook

2 Chronicles 7:14 (Faith's Checkbook)

If, and a Triple Promise

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."—2 Chronicles 7:14

CALLED by the name of the Lord, we are nevertheless erring men and women. What a mercy it is that our God is ready to forgive! Whenever we sin let us hasten to the mercy seat of our God, seeking pardon.

We are to humble ourselves. Should we not be humbled by the fact that after receiving so much love, we yet transgress? O Lord, we

bow before thee in the dust and own our grievous ingratitude. Oh, the infamy of sin! Oh, the sevenfold infamy of it in persons so favored as we have been!

Next, we are to pray for mercy, for cleansing, for deliverance from the power of sin. O Lord, hear us even now, and shut not out our cry.

In this prayer we are to seek the Lord's face. He has left us because of our faults, and we must entreat Him to return. O Lord, look on us in thy Son Jesus, and smile upon thy servants.

With this must go our own turning from evil, God cannot turn to us unless we turn from sin.

Then comes the triple promise of hearing, pardon, and healing. Our Father, grant us these at once, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake.

2 Chronicles 15:7 (Morning and evening)

God Can Make You Strong (Faith's Checkbook)

"Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded."—2 Chronicles 15:7

GOD had done great things for King Asa and Judah, but yet they were a feeble folk. Their feet were very tottering in the ways of the Lord, and their hearts very hesitating, so that they had to be warned that the Lord would be with them while they were with Him, but that if they forsook Him He would leave them. They were also reminded of the sister kingdom, how ill it fared in its rebellion, and how the Lord was gracious to it when repentance was shown. The Lord's design was to confirm them in His way, and make them strong in righteousness. So ought it to be with us. God deserves to be served with all the energy of which we are capable.

If the service of God is worth anything, it is worth everything. We shall find our best reward in the Lord's work if we do it with determined diligence. Our labor is not in vain in the Lord, and we know it. Half-hearted work will bring no reward, but, when we throw our whole soul into the cause, we shall see prosperity. This text was sent to the author of these notes in a day of terrible storm, and it suggested to him to put on all steam, with the assurance of reaching port in safety with a glorious freight.

2 Chronicles 20:17 (Faith's Checkbook)

With Me Wherever I Am

"The Lord will be with you."—2 Chronicles 20:17

THIS was a great mercy for Jehoshaphat, for a great multitude had come out against him; and it will be a great mercy for me, for I have great need, and I have no might or wisdom. If the Lord be with me, it matters little who may desert me. If the Lord be with me, I shall conquer in the battle of life, and the greater my trials the more glorious will be my victory. How can I be sure that the Lord is with me?

For certain He is with me if I am with Him. If I trust in His faithfulness, believe His words, and obey His commands, He is assuredly with me. If I am on Satan's side, God is against me and cannot be otherwise; but if I live to honor God, I may be sure that He will honor me.

I am quite sure that God is with me if Jesus is my sole and only Saviour. If I have placed my soul in the hands of God's Only-begotten Son, then I may be sure that the Father will put forth all His power to preserve me, that His Son may not be dishonored.

Oh, for faith to take hold upon the short but sweet text for today! O Lord, fulfill this word to thy servant! Be with me in the house, in the street, in the field, in the shop, in company, and alone. Be thou also with all thy people.

2 Chronicles 25:9 The Lord's "Much More" (Faith's Checkbook)

"And Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? And the man of God answered, The Lord is able to give thee much more than this."—2 Chronicles 25:9

IF you have made a mistake, bear the loss of it; but do not act contrary to the will of the Lord. The Lord can give you much more than you are likely to lose; and if He does not, will you begin bargaining and haggling with God? The king of Judah had hired an army from idolatrous Israel, and he was commanded to send home the fighting men because the Lord was not with them. He was willing to send away the host, only he grudged paying the hundred talents for nothing. Oh, for shame! If the Lord will give the victory without the hirelings, surely it was a good bargain to pay their wages and to be rid of them.

Be willing to lose money for conscience' sake, for peace's sake, for Christ's sake. Rest assured that losses for the Lord are not

losses. Even in this life they are more than recompensed: in some cases the Lord prevents any loss from happening. As to our immortal life, what we lose for Jesus is invested in heaven. Fret not at apparent disaster but listen to the whisper, "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this."

2 Chronicles 25:9a (Morning and evening)

"And Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? And the man of God answered, The Lord is able to give thee much more than this." — 2 Chronicles 25:9

A very important question this seemed to be to the king of Judah, and possibly it is of even more weight with the tried and tempted O Christian. To lose money is at no times pleasant, and when principle involves it, the flesh is not always ready to make the sacrifice. "Why lose that which may be so usefully employed? May not the truth itself be bought too dear? What shall we do without it? Remember the children, and our small income!" All these things and a thousand more would tempt the Christian to put forth his hand to unrighteous gain, or stay himself from carrying out his conscientious convictions, when they involve serious loss. All men cannot view these matters in the light of faith; and even with the followers of Jesus, the doctrine of "we must live" has quite sufficient weight.

The Lord is able to give thee much more than this is a very satisfactory answer to the anxious question. Our Father holds the purse-strings, and what we lose for his sake he can repay a thousand-fold. It is ours to obey his will, and we may rest assured that he will provide for us. The Lord will be no man's debtor at the last. Saints know that a grain of heart's-ease is of more value than a ton of gold. He who wraps a threadbare coat about a good conscience has gained a spiritual wealth far more desirable than any he has lost. God's smile and a dungeon are enough for a true heart; his frown and a palace would be hell to a gracious spirit. Let the worst come to the worst, let all the talents go, we have not lost our treasure, for that is above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Meanwhile, even now, the Lord maketh the meek to inherit the earth, and no good thing doth he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

2 Chronicles 30:27 (Morning and evening)

"Their prayer came up to his holy dwelling place, even unto heaven." — 2 Chronicles 30:27

Prayer is the never-failing resort of the Christian in any case, in every plight. When you cannot use your sword you may take to the weapon of all-prayer. Your powder may be damp, your bow-string may be relaxed, but the weapon of all-prayer need never be out of order. Leviathan laughs at the javelin, but he trembles at prayer. Sword and spear need furbishing, but prayer never rusts, and when we think it most blunt it cuts the best. Prayer is an open door which none can shut. Devils may surround you on all sides, but the way upward is always open, and as long as that road is unobstructed, you will not fall into the enemy's hand. We can never be taken by blockade, escalade, mine, or storm, so long as heavenly succours can come down to us by Jacob's ladder to relieve us in the time of our necessities. Prayer is never out of season: in summer and in winter its merchandise is precious. Prayer gains audience with heaven in the dead of night, in the midst of business, in the heat of noonday, in the shades of evening. In every condition, whether of poverty, or sickness, or obscurity, or slander, or doubt, your covenant God will welcome your prayer and answer it from his holy place. Nor is prayer ever futile. True prayer is evermore true power. You may not always get what you ask, but you shall always have your real wants supplied. When God does not answer his children according to the letter, he does so according to the spirit. If thou askest for coarse meal, wilt thou be angered because he gives thee the finest flour? If thou seekest bodily health, shouldst thou complain if instead thereof he makes thy sickness turn to the healing of spiritual maladies? Is it not better to have the cross sanctified than removed? This evening, my soul, forget not to offer thy petition and request, for the Lord is ready to grant thee thy desires.

2 Chronicles 31:21 (Morning and evening)

"He did it with all his heart and prospered." — 2 Chronicles 31:21

This is no unusual occurrence; it is the general rule of the moral universe that those men prosper who do their work with all their hearts, while those are almost certain to fail who go to their labour leaving half their hearts behind them. God does not give harvests to idle men except harvests of thistles, nor is he pleased to send wealth to those who will not dig in the field to find its hid treasure. It is universally confessed that if a man would prosper, he must be diligent in business. It is the same in religion as it is in other things. If you would prosper in your work for Jesus, let it be heart work, and let it be done with all your heart. Put as much force, energy, heartiness, and earnestness into religion as ever you do into business, for it deserves far more. The Holy Spirit helps our infirmities, but he does not encourage our idleness; he loves active believers. Who are the most useful men in the Christian church? The men who do what they undertake for God with all their hearts. Who are the most successful Sabbath-school teachers? The most talented? No; the most zealous; the men whose hearts are on fire, those are the men who see their Lord riding forth prosperously in

the majesty of his salvation. Whole-heartedness shows itself in perseverance; there may be failure at first, but the earnest worker will say, "It is the Lord's work, and it must be done; my Lord has bidden me do it, and in his strength I will accomplish it." Christian, art thou thus "with all thine heart" serving thy Master? Remember the earnestness of Jesus! Think what heart-work was his! He could say, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." When he sweat great drops of blood, it was no light burden he had to carry upon those blessed shoulders; and when he poured out his heart, it was no weak effort he was making for the salvation of his people. Was Jesus in earnest, and are we lukewarm?

2 Chronicles 32:31 (Morning and evening)

"Howbeit, in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart." — 2 Chronicles 32:31

Hezekiah was growing so inwardly great, and priding himself so much upon the favour of God, that self-righteousness crept in, and through his carnal security, the grace of God was for a time, in its more active operations, withdrawn. Here is quite enough to account with the Babylonians; for if the grace of God should leave the best Christian, there is enough of sin in his heart to make him the worst of transgressors. If left to yourselves, you who are warmest for Christ would cool down like Laodicea into sickening lukewarmness: you who are sound in the faith would be white with the leprosy of false doctrine; you who now walk before the Lord in excellency and integrity would reel to and fro, and stagger with a drunkenness of evil passion. Like the moon, we borrow our light; bright as we are when grace shines on us, we are darkness itself when the Sun of Righteousness withdraws himself. Therefore let us cry to God never to leave us. "Lord, take not thy Holy Spirit from us! Withdraw not from us thine indwelling grace! Hast thou not said, 'I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day'? Lord, keep us everywhere. Keep us when in the valley, that we murmur not against thy humbling hand; keep us when on the mountain, that we wax not giddy through being lifted up; keep us in youth, when our passions are strong; keep us in old age, when becoming conceited of our wisdom, we may therefore prove greater fools than the young and giddy; keep us when we come to die, lest, at the very last, we should deny thee! Keep us living, keep us dying, keep us labouring, keep us suffering, keep us fighting, keep us resting, keep us everywhere, for everywhere we need thee, O our God!"