

Spurgeon on Ephesians

[PREVIOUS](#)

[NEXT](#)

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Ephesians 1:6 “ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED.”

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“Accepted in the Beloved.” — Ephesians 1:6.

I shall not attempt to do more than simply bring out the truth, and leave it with you. Fine words and gaudy sentences, with such a text as this, would be a vain attempt to “paint the lily and gild refined gold.” Let this bell ring, and there is a depth of silver sweetness in it which will make the sanctified ear and heart glad with the fullness of joy. “Accepted in the Beloved.”

“The Beloved.” We all know to whom this refers. Our Lord is the Beloved of God. God is love, and Christ is God. He is one with the Eternal Father, and we can never tell — it were impossible for us to guess — what love there is between the Father and the Son, in their essential Deity. Jesus is the Beloved of angels. It is their joy to sing praise unto “him who was, and is, and is to come.” He is the Beloved of all the white-robed band, who have washed those robes in his blood, and who sing, “Unto him that has loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, to him be glory. He is the Beloved of his saints, who are still wayfaring and warfaring here below. To him their highest affections gather. He is dearer to them than all besides, “the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.”

“The Beloved.” Not only beloved, but “the Beloved.”

This is a name for all the saints — “beloved”; for as John the Divine often writes in his epistles, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God.” All the family are beloved; but Christ the Elder Brother is “the Beloved.” He is especially beloved, the choicest, the Chief, who in this hath the preeminence. How many times did God testify concerning him that he was “the Beloved,” when he said, “This is my Beloved Son.” These waters of baptism remind us of the scene on Jordan’s banks, when the Holy Spirit bore witness that he was the Beloved Son of God. In after life, even in the depths of his humiliation, the Father testified that this was the Beloved Son. To us, the saints, he is our Beloved Spouse. We sing of him, as the song hath it, even “the song of songs which is Solomon’s,” “My Beloved is mine, and I am his.” We delight to think of him under that title, under which the Church of God of old addressed him. He is Beloved in all his offices to us, Beloved in all his characters, Beloved in the manger, Beloved in the shame and spitting, Beloved on the tree, Beloved on the throne. We cannot think of him without our heart beginning to beat high and fast.

“He hath engrossed my warmest love,

No earthly charms my soul can move;

I have a mansion in his heart,

Nor death nor hell can make us part.”

Of all the titles that are given to Christ, there may be some that excel in splendor, and others in sublimity; but surely this is among the chief for sweetness and expressiveness. It hath the finger which toucheth our heart strings. “The Beloved.”

But now to the text. And the first thing I think I see in the text is that “the Beloved” is accepted of God; the second thing I see is that the saints are “in the Beloved”; and the third thing, that the saints are “accepted in the Beloved.” It is clear in the text that it the Beloved “is

I. Accepted Of God.

It will delight you if you try in meditation to get a hold of this thought, of how infinitely acceptable Christ must be to God the Father. All other forms of acceptance must have their limit and boundary; but the acceptability of the Son of God to the First Person of the Blessed Trinity must be altogether beyond either bottom or shore.

"The Beloved" must be acceptable to God in his own person. Is he not God himself, and how should it be that one Person in the Indivisible Unity should be otherwise than acceptable to the other? He is also man, but he is man born after a wondrous birth. "The Son of the Highest." The Holy Ghost, overshadowed the Virgin Mother. In his Godhead and in his manhood, united as Mediator, he stands supreme in his Person. As Saul was head and shoulders above all the rest of the men of Israel, so hath the Lord "anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows." Who can be likened to him in Person? Beauty! where canst thou draw, if thy fancy shall take all its range, anything that shall be comparable to him? Designer of all things, the Most High God, "Wonderful, the Counsellor the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." What acceptance must there be in such a one as he is to the Most High God! You know that sometimes in the sending of ambassadors, it is well to calculate whether the person chosen to be an ambassador will be adoptable to the foreign court. Now if he be a man of mean origin, a man ill-esteemed at home, it will be an insult to send him as a plenipotentiary to another country; but if he be a man eminent and distinguished, admirable and admired, a man of high standing with his own Court, then he is the very person to represent the sovereignty of his country at another Court. See, then, what kind of representative we have to send up to the Father's Courts in heaven — one who, while he is "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh," is nevertheless "God over all, blessed for ever." My soul, what better ambassador couldst thou have? To whom couldst thou entrust thy concerns one half so well as to one so inconceivably excellent, so superlatively blessed? He is, then, acceptable in his Person.

And then, secondly, to God he is equally acceptable in his character. God is perfectly pure; he cannot bear the slightest trace of sin; and Jesus is "holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners." God cannot look upon sin, as it is abhorrent to his nature, but he call look upon Christ, for "in him was no sin." "The prince of this world cometh," saith he, "but hath nothing in me. "God is love," and to be acceptable with God in character one must be full of love. Now Jesus is such. Was there ever one who had such pity on the ignorant, and such "compassion on those that are out of the way"? Was there ever such a tender heart elsewhere as that which glowed in the Master's bosom and gleamed from his loving eyes? He was a mass of love. He was love performing and love suffering. Love made him live as he did, and love made him die as he did; and love still pervades his nature, he, now that he lives on high, still loving the sons of men. Since God is love, then, and Christ is full of love, his character is suitable to God. You shall not find anything in Christ Jesus that doth not consort with the God-like and the divine. See him where you will he is humble, and meek, and lowly; but he is still august and sublime. Even when he puts on the garb of the peasant, "woven from the top throughout," that garment shrouds the Deity, and befits him better than the purple robe befits C3/4sar on the throne. If he distributes alms, or saith, "I thirst"; if he is the tempest tossed on the sea of Galilee, if he rebukes the waves, if he feels himself willing to die where man's suffering and weakness is most apparent, yet there is it most consistent with the character of God, for the Centurion, who stood beholding, said, "Certainly this was the Son of God." There is something congruous in the nature of Christ to the character of God; and hence his character is always acceptable to the Most High.

Then, my brethren, God loveth that which is incorruptible. Now our Savior was often tried, but he was never corrupted; tempted and bribed with the offer of a kingdom, and again, threatened with all the wrath of men; but he never started aside for a single moment from the straight line of integrity. His whole life was so pure, that, although God "chargeth his angels with folly, and the heavens are not pure in his sight," yet in Jesus be sees no folly and no imperfection, and he, even suffering as Savior is pure, infinitely pure and incorruptible in the sight of God. So, beloved, the character of Christ is altogether acceptable to God, as well as his Person.

We may go a step further, and say that the motive of Christ, as well as his outward character, must have been infinitely acceptable to God. The motive of Jesus Christ, in coming here below, was altogether unselfish. "Though he was rich," and had nothing to gain, "yet for our sakes he became poor, that we" (not himself) "through his poverty might be made rich." It can be truly said of him, "He saved others; himself he could not save." "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death." He emptied himself out for us, and all out of pure love to those who had no love to him — out of disinterested affection to those whose best return is but a feeble thanks, for what can such poor worms as we ever render at our very best for "love so amazing, so divine"? Well does Dr. Watts say in one of our best hymns: —

“Words are but air, and tongues but clay,

But thy compassion, is divine.”

O Savior! thou couldst have no motive to move thee but that which is pure, and high, and lofty. Cleansed from everything like self, Jesus came, that he might honor the justice of God. He would have man saved, but in such a way as not to derogate from the justice of the Most High. He would have no spots upon God's law, no slur upon the divine character; and there, as he kneels amidst the olives of Gethesmane, or there as he staggers beneath the Cross, or there as he gives his hands to the nails, and his feet to the cruel iron, he is vindicating the eternal justice and severity of God by his labors, and by his griefs, and by his sacrifice of himself to death. He must, then, moved by a motive so high as this, have been infinitely acceptable to heaven.

He was, then, acceptable in his person, acceptable in his character, acceptable in his inner motive from which that outward character sprang, and he was also acceptable in all his work which he did on Earth. Cast your eye along that work for a minute. In the first part of his life that work was active, in the second part, and also in the first, there was a passive work being carried on. There was an active work of obedience to the Father's will. And what obedience it was! Never for a moment asking to be excused from a command, or to have a release from the sacred sacrifice; always it was work with all his heart, till he could say, “The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.”

“Such was thy truth and such thy zeal,

Such deference for thy Father's will.

Such love and meetness so divine

I would transcribe and make them mine.”

The whole life of is the paragon of perfection, the mirror in which every virtue is reflected. He could not be otherwise than acceptable to God in the active righteousness of his life. And when we come to his passive righteousness, what shall I say of that? Track him, my brethren, to the garden, and hear him say, “Not as I will, but as thou wilt.” Watch him before Pilate, when he obeys God by keeping silence, and “like a sheep before her shearers, he openeth not his mouth.” Follow him then, and behold him on the tree, and note how careful he is that the Scriptures may be fulfilled — how still, with whole-hearted consecration, he never starts back for a moment from the paying of the great ransom price which was to deliver his people from eternal bondage. There cannot be any doubt in your minds, but that the blessed advocate and surety of our souls must be accepted before the Lord, in the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of an acceptance that we can scarcely understand, when we see him giving up all the floods of his life, pouring them out like water before the Lord. In person, in character, in motive, in work, Jesus Christ is infinitely accepted.

Now that he was so accepted is not only clearly to be seen by these reflections, but the fact is proved by this, that the Father raised him from the dead. He saw no corruption, but he must have remained in the tomb, or the work had not been finished. He was “justified in the Spirit by the resurrection from the dead.” His acceptance of God was proved when God brought him from the dead. So, too, his ascending. His ascending up on high and leading captivity captive proves that he was accepted; his admission into heaven proves that he was accepted; his sitting at the right hand of the Father proves that he has finished the work; and his present reigning over all the world in his mediatorial government is the reward of his sufferings, and his Second Advent, for which we look with devout anticipation, is to be a yet fuller declaration that he is “the Beloved” of God, and infinitely acceptable in the Father's sight.

Thus much, a few stirrings, as it were, of the surface of this great sea, touching, as a swallow does, the waves. I have given you but these few hints. Think them over. And now, and very briefly: —

II. All Believers Are In Christ “Accepted In The Beloved.”

They are “in the Beloved,” then, or in Christ. How are believers in Christ? They are in Christ as their representative. Just as the whole human race was in the loins of Adam, so the whole elect people were in the loins of Christ. It is said by the apostle, “Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Melchisedec met him.” So were all of us in the loins of Jesus Christ — always there in him; for is it not written, “He shall see his seed”? And we are his seed. We spring in our new life from him. He is the corn of wheat which was cast into the ground to die, that it

might not abide alone, and now it bringeth forth much fruit. We are in Christ, as the branch is in the vine, as the stone is in the building.

We are in Christ, as the members are in the head. He represents us. When we talk of counting heads, we mean counting the whole body; so Christ, the head, represents all the members, and he stands for us. We were in Christ, beloved, according to the words of the Holy Ghost — we were in Christ in our election, “according as he hath chosen us in him.” There is a personal election of every child of God, but that personal election is connected with Christ.

“Christ be my first elect, he said,

Then chose our souls in Christ our head.”

We were in Christ in the suretyship engagements of the eternal covenant. What Christ spoke before the world was, he spoke as for us. His prescient eye foresaw our existence, foreknow our ruin. He espoused us unto himself then, and stood, in the Council Chambers of Eternity, the Surety and Sponsor of his people’s souls.

We are in Christ, according to Scripture, by judicial dealing; that is to say, God deals with Christ as if he were dealing with us. “Awake, O sword”; against whom? Against the sinning sheep? No, “against the Shepherd, against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord.” “For the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.” “All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all.” In him in the choice, in him in the covenant, and then in him in God’s dealings with Christ as a judge.

So now, further, blessed be his name, we are in him by a vital reunion. There is a living unity between Christ and his people, as between the husband and the wife, as between the branch and the stem. We are one with him by vital union. Have you realised this, believer? Do you seek to live as one that is one with Jesus? Do you try to act as one that has learned his unity to the heavenly One, to the Second Adam? It is so. If thou hast believed, thou art one with him.

And we are one with him by a fixed decree of God that never shall be broken. “Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” Who shall tear one limb from the saved body of Jesus? Who shall cut away one truly quickened branch from that celestial vine? He preserves those that are in him. He covers us with his feathers, and under his wings do we trust; his truth is our shield and buckler. You may divide, and you must divide, the dearest bonds of earth, but you shall never cut the knot that was tied in old eternity, which bound Christ to his people. “I in them, and they in me, that they may be perfect in one.” There shall never come a time when he will be ashamed to call them brethren, and never to one of them whom the Father hath given him shall there come a time when they shall refuse to call him Master and Lord. We are “in” him, then.

Now this is a great mystery. The apostle always speaks of it as such. But it is one of the most blessed mysteries in the whole compass of revelation. Dear friend, never forget that God does not deal with you as an individual; he deals with you as in Christ. If you stood as an individual, you must perish, for you will be sure to fall; you are so weak and frail and apt to sin, that, with the best resolutions and intentions, you would be sure to turn aside, and therefore the blessed Father has put you in a safer place; he has put you in Christ. And now your interests are Christ’s interests. As I have often told you, you cannot drown a man’s foot unless you can drown his head; and if our head is in heaven, we are safe. And he, our Head, is there. When your vessel tosses in the storm, you may hear a voice that saith, “Fear not, the barque is safe; thou carries Jesus and all his fortune.” Christ is one with his people; they must sink or swim together. Hath he not himself said it, “Because I live, ye shall live also”? The saint, then, is “in” him. Now we come to the full text, and that is, that: —

III. The Saints Are “Accepted In The Beloved.”

Their persons are accepted. You know there are some persons that are not acceptable to you. You would sooner live in heaven with them for ever than you would like to live a quarter of an hour with them on earth. There, are some people of that kind to whom we take a very natural objection, and I suppose it is not possible, although we would treat them always with kindness and so on, that we should ever desire them as companions. They are not acceptable to us. And now it does seem very wonderful that we, who have not any personal recommendation, but very much in us that might render us obnoxious to God, are nevertheless acceptable in our persons, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Yes, you with no talents, you with no wealth, no position, no great friends — you who can

do so little when you do your best; you, though the garment you wear is not of the finest, but of the very lowliest material, are acceptable to God. God looketh not according to the outward appearance, but he looketh to the heart; and whenever he sees a simple trust in Jesus, which is a token of our being in Jesus, our person is acceptable to him; because, you see, he does not look at us as we are, but he looks at us through Christ. He looks through the wounds of Jesus upon us poor sinners, as a verse of one of our hymns runs: —

**“He in them the sinner sees,
Looks through Jesus’ wounds on me.”**

If one of you were away now in India, and after you had been living there for years, you saw a person very poor and ragged, who nevertheless said, “I used to be a servant to your mother,” why, it would bring such recollections of that country homestead and of the dear old times when you were one of the happy family, that I am sure your heart would be touched; and though there might be no reason whatever in the person why you should relieve him, yet because of his connection with that dear name of mother, perhaps in heaven, you would put your hand into your purse at once. Now God sees such a connection between us and Christ, that he esteems us for Christ’s sake. “My Son loved that man,” saith he; “my Son died for that woman; my Son on the tree laid down his life for that poor, humble, penitent one; I love him for my Son’s sake.” Now will you try and just get a hold, if you can, by faith of that sweet thought, that your person, you, you yourself, are accepted before God in the Beloved this night; and although you cannot accept yourself, but find much to complain of, yet still, if you are in Jesus, you are:-

**“So near, so very near to God,
You cannot nearer be,
For in the Person of His Son You are as near as he.**

**“So dear, so very dear to God,
You cannot dearer be;
The love wherewith he loves his Son,
Such is his love to thee.”
“Such is his love to me,” you may say.**

Now, because the person is accepted, the next thing is our prayers and praises are “accepted in the Beloved.” We kneel down sometimes now to pray, and we cannot pray. Those that use a book and bring God dead prayers can always be alike, but that which comes from the heart varies, and there are times with living prayers when the most you can do is to groan. A sigh, a sob, is the most you can get out. But a mother would sooner hear her own child sob than another child sing. There is a music about that dear child’s voice that moves her heart and touches her spirit. And so the inward meanings of a broken heart are music in the ears of the Infinite Jehovah, and he accepteth the sincere prayers of his people, let them be as broken as they may. And as for our praise, well, we do not always sing our praises — we feel them, we talk them, and when we do sing them our voices are not, perhaps, so sweet as we should desire. Never mind. Our Lord does not judge our hymns by the same tests as gentlemen of musical tastes would do. He hears the ring of the heart, and if that is right, there may be a false note or two, perhaps, in the voice, but if the right note is in the heart, the praises are accepted, and the prayers are “accepted in the Beloved,” for our prayers do not come up before God as they are. It is with us, as it is with some poor men. They want to get up a petition. They come, perhaps, to us. They want us to petition to some great man for some help. “Well, write our your petition.” They bring it. “Oh!” we say, “it will never do to send that; here is this word spelt wrong, that sentence is ungrammatical. You have not addressed him at all in the right style. Come, I will take it, and I will make a fair copy of it for you, and send that with my name appended. It may have some weight.” So does Christ do with us. He takes our poor blotted and blurred prayers, and he just re-writes them, and then he presents them to his Father’s throne. He takes the incense we bring, and puts it into his own golden censor; he puts in the coals of fire, and then, as he swings that censor to and fro in his own priesthood before the throne of God, your prayers and mine, your praises and mine, smoke like sweet perfume before the presence of the Most High, “accepted in the Beloved.”

And, brethren and sisters, just so is it with all the work we do for Christ and all the gifts we bring. It happens on Sunday perhaps sometimes when the bread is bought and the supply got in for the family, that you have very little to give possibly. “Well, there is a penny for the orphanage.” You must give God something, you think. You would

give him more if you could. You only wish you had tens of thousands of pounds you could give. Well, it is very little, and nobody knows who gives it, still, it is “accepted in the Beloved.” If it is given for his sake, I tell you that every penny is “accepted in the Beloved.” Does not the Lord say so? The two mites that make a farthing, which were the widow’s living, were so accepted that he could not help speaking about them, and publishing to all the world in this Book the Bible, to be handed down throughout all time, as long as there shall be a Bible in the Christian Church. The other night you talked with a little child, or you gave away a tract. You tried to do something to lead someone to Christ. Well, that was all “accepted in the Beloved.” You did it with a single eye to God’s glory: you thought you did it very badly, and that there was much imperfection mingled with it; but Christ washed it all, and when it was all fair and clean, he presented it and it was accepted.

And here is a mercy (I will add only one other word to this line of thought) — the whole life of the Christian, so far as it is the outgrowth of the life within, is “accepted in the Beloved.” That morning you awoke, when the heart rose up in prayer for keeping during the day, that bended knee at the bedside, when the soul commits itself to the Father of Spirits; that family gathering, when the prayer is offered that the household may be kept during the day; that blessing at the eating of bread; that thankful heart to God, when the morning’s meal is finished; those ejaculations during the business of the day; that word put in for Christ, when the conversation ran the other way; that thankful return home at night; that evening prayer; that lifting up of the soul to God in thankfulness to carry you through another day — all that, the humblest part of it, was all “accepted in the Beloved.” Brethren, it is very, very delightful to think that if I preach a sermon for Christ it is accepted, but I want you to think that, if you housewives are about the house, doing your business there for your husband and children, you are just as much accepted there as I am when I am preaching. That prayer-meeting was very acceptable. Yes, and I know how acceptable it was when you sat up that night with a sick man. It was done for Jesus’ sake. The man who addresses thousands is accepted, but he that sits down and talks, even to a little child, is just as much accepted, and accepted in the same way too, for it is only “in the Beloved” that either the big or the little can be at all. The bullock was offered, and God accepted it; the kid was offered, and God accepted that; and the reason was because they were both put upon the same altar, and both burnt with the same fire. Christ is the altar, and Christ the fire; and so our sacrifices are accepted in the Beloved.” I think these words were the favourite words of that dear man of God, Mr. Harrington Evans, “Accepted in the Beloved.” He used often to repeat them in his sermons; and, if I remember rightly, when he was dying, and his deacons wanted a message to be given to the church, to let them know what was the state of mind of their pastor at the time of death, he said, “Go and tell them I am accepted in the Beloved.” Oh! dear hearer, can you say this? There is more eloquence in these words than in all the eloquence of Demosthenes, or in all the glowing periods of Caesar. To say, “I am accepted in the Beloved,” is better than to be able to say, “I am the owner of the Indies, or the possessor of the world.”

“Accepted in the Beloved.” Remember, there is many a religious person who is not “accepted in the Beloved,” for the moralists, the religionists that like not Christ, are not accepted. They pray, and they read the Scriptures, and they attend their place of worship; they are baptized; they come to the altar; but it is all nothing if they do not come to Christ. All these things are nothing to any of them if they are not in Christ. We hold that we should baptize none but those who profess their belief in Christ, but it seems to us that, apart from a saving faith in Christ, it is a mere mockery, and if given to children, or even to an unconverted person, is more likely to make them think there is efficacy in the sacrament than to do them any kind of good. Thus we would have you touch nothing at the Lord’s table until you have first come to Jesus. Then the baptism and then the Lord’s table will be profitable helps to you in remembering Christ, and you will be accepted in them “in the Beloved.” But you must get “in” him first, for baptism is nothing, and the Lord’s Supper nothing, without Christ. First, you must get the substance, and then the shadow will follow. And these things are only shadow; they only set forth the substance; and if any come to the shadow to-night who have not got the substance, they have no business to come, and on their heads will be the guilt. But we must first be in him. Whether you be open sinner or outwardly moral, recollect you are not accepted otherwise, for it is not your conduct, not your outward life, that will do, apart from Christ. It is union to Christ, and faith brings us that; a simple trust in Jesus, and we are “in” Jesus and “accepted in” Jesus; but without that we are “without Christ, without hope, and alien from the commonwealth of Israel.”

The Lord bless this simple meditation to his people, and his shall be the praise for ever. Amen.

Ephesians 1:7 Great Forgiveness For Great Sin

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“In whom we have redemption through the blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” — Ephesians 1:7.

You scarcely need me to say that Paul is here writing concerning the Lord Jesus Christ; indeed, Christ was his constant theme, both in preaching and writing. I have heard of ministers who can preach a sermon without mentioning the name of Jesus from beginning to end. If you ever hear such a sermon as that, mind that you never hear another from that man. If a baker once made me a loaf of bread without any flour in it, I would take good care that he should never do so again; and I say the same of the man who can preach Christless gospel. Let those go and hear him who do not value their immortal souls; but, dear friends, your soul and mine are too precious to be placed at the mercy of such a preacher. Paul's harp had only one string, but he brought such music out of it as never came from any other. He found such infinite variety in Christ that he never exhausted his theme; with him, it was Christ first, Christ last, Christ midst, Christ everywhere; so he could never have his pen in his hand without writing something in praise of his glorious Lord and Savior.

Paul had good reasons for doing this, for Christ had met him on his way to Damascus, stopped him in his persecuting career, renewed his heart, and given him a bias ever afterwards towards his new Master. Never did Paul forget that spot, on the road to Damascus, I will warrant you that he could have found it to his dying day, that spot where he fell to the ground, and heard the voice from heaven saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” He was a different man ever afterwards. That one event had turned the whole current of his life, so that, henceforth, for him to live was Christ. Previously, he had breathed out threatenings and slaughter against all who bore the name of Christ. Now, he breathes out Christ and his gospel, and has nothing else for which he cares to live, and is willing even to die. “But,” says someone, “do you not think that Paul carried this idea a little too far? A man of one idea rides his hobby to death, and he does not see the other things that are around him.” Ah, sir! but Paul did see all around him that was worth seeing. For him, everything above, below, within, without, around, had Christ in it, just as, on a bright summer's day, everything has sunshine in it; and, like the apostle, we can never exaggerate when we rightly speak of Jesus, “for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,” and in him is stored up all manner of riches and treasures for poor sinful creatures like ourselves.

I am going to magnify Christ, as his gracious Spirit shall help me, by speaking of the pardon of sin which freely comes to us through the redemption which he obtained for us by the shedding of his precious blood. I shall have two divisions; first, the sins, spoken of in our text, are great sins; and, secondly, the forgiveness, spoken of in our text, is also great: “according to the riches of his grace.”

I. First, then, The Sins Mentioned Here Are Great.

Because we preach the greatness of God's mercy, some wicked minds think that sin is but a little thing. But, sirs it is not so; and if any of you are living in it, hearken to me while I try to show you how great it is.

For, first, see what sin has done for us all. Our first parents lived in a garden of delights; and, if they had not sinned, we should have been heirs to a happy life, free from sickness, sorrow, and death. But; sin entered the garden of Eden, and withered every leaf, and blighted every flower; and, soon, Adam was driven out to till the ground that brought forth thorns and thistles in abundance. As for the woman, she and her daughters were condemned to bring forth children in pain and sorrow. Now look at the result of sin all over the world; the poverty that springs from drunkenness, the disease that comes of debauchery, the pangs of conscience that follow all evil-doing; and when you have gazed at the misery now existing on this earth, think of the many graveyards and cemeteries, with their myriads of tombs. The very dust, which flies down our streets, was much of it once alive, as part of the body of one of our forefathers. This earth is, indeed, a huge charnel-house. What was it that slew all these people, and dug all these graves? It was sin, for “sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” It is no small thing that has wrought all this mischief among mankind.

If any of you doubt the greatness of sin, let me remind you of what has happened to those who have died in it. This Bible, which is the revelation of God, tells us that sinners, who die impenitent, are driven from the presence of God into the outer darkness where there will be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever. I cannot adequately depict that dread abode of lost souls; but there are already myriads there, without light, or hope, or joy,

or comfort, waiting for the day of judgment, when their bodies shall rise, and body and soul shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; and then will come upon them "the terror of the Lord." If I had to describe the woes of the lost, the language I should have to use would be exceedingly strong, but where should I have to look for it? I should not go to Milton and the other poets, but I should have to gather similes most terrible from the lips of the gentle and loving Christ, for it is he who has told us most about these things. Because he loved men so dearly, he faithfully warned them of the wrath to come; and one proof that sin is no trifle is that the wrath to come is so terrible.

If any still doubt whether sin is a great thing, I ask them to remember that it must be great, because it takes such great grace to pardon it. Our text teaches us that the forgiveness of sin is according to the riches of God's grace; as if, in order to get rid of sin the infinite wealth of his great heart of love must be freely spent. God, who delighteth in mercy, had to lay out a mint of grace before sin could be pardoned; therefore, sin is no small thing.

But if you would really know how great a thing sin is, remember what it cost Christ to be its Forgiver. Go to Gethsemane, and see what it cost Christ to bear it there. The sin that covered him with a bloody sweat was no trifle. Then follow him to Pilate's hall, and hear the cruel thoughts falling on his blessed shoulders; for it is with those stripes that you are healed, and it must be a dire disease that needs such sharp medicine. See the soldiers take him away, and nail him to the cross; there he hangs, twixt heaven and earth, to die for guilty sinners, amid untold anguish which no human eye could see, and no mortal mind could understand. Yet there could never have been any forgiveness for sin if there had not been all these pangs on the part of the sinner's Substitute. Surely, sin must be a great thing to need such a great sacrifice to put it away.

While I am recalling these familiar truths, I hope somebody is saying, "Ah, sir, I know that my sins are great!" You need not go into particulars; for, if nobody else's sin is great, mine is. Let us all look over the records of this year, and see whether it is not so with us. Get out your pocket-book. Ah! you do not put down such things there; you try to forget them. I have been told that, in Naples, there used to be a pit for every day in the year, and each day they took the dead out of the city, and flung them into the pit for that day; so there were three hundred and sixty-five of these pits, which were opened year after year. In a similar style, you have buried your sins in these three hundred and sixty-five days. Let us roll one of the big stones away, and look down. No, no; we could not bear to do so, for even one day's sin has such filthiness about it that we cry, if we are in our right senses, "Bury my dead out of my sight." Think what your sins have been. Think of the idle words you have spoken, for every one of which you will have to give account. Think of the evil thoughts you have had, angry thoughts, proud thoughts, lustful thoughts, they are all sins, oh, what a terrible heap they make! Would any man here like to shoot out his sins on this platform? I never can understand how a so-called "priest" can ask people to confess their sins to him. I would not make my ear into a common sewer for all the wealth in the world. What foulness there must be on the soul of him who has heard what others have done, and who knows what sin he has himself committed! Sin, when we see what it really is, whether in ourselves or in others, horrifies us.

But there is one thing I want you to remember, if there has been nothing done, or said, or thought by you, of which you can convict yourself, yet, if you are not now loving God, if for another year you have been God's enemy, if for another year you have refused Christ, and have lived without prayer, and without repentance, and without seeking to be right with God, if for another year you have been indifferent to the claims of the Most High, and careless of his commands, if you have done nothing else but forget God, that one sin would be enough to cast you into hell for ever. Remember David's words, "he wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

II. Now I turn to the much more joyful side of my subject, which is, that The Forgiveness Of Sin Is Also A Great Thing.

Is there such a thing as forgiveness of sin? When Martin Luther was in great trouble because of his sin, he obtained much consolation from the remark of a brother-monk, who, observing him so cast down, said to him, "Martin, canst thou say the Credo?" Martin, of course, answered, "Yes." "Then, dost thou not remember," said the monk, "that in the Credo it is written, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins'?" "Light seemed to break in upon Luther's darkness by that simple question, as I pray that it may break upon yours while I speak upon that blessed article of a true Christian's creed.

First, you may judge the greatness of the forgiveness by the greatness of the sin which God forgives in a single moment. I do not know your age, my dear friend; say, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty years, possibly, even ninety; but, if thou now believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, this very instant the whole mass of thy sin will disappear

for ever. I have heard of one, who had lent much money to a debtor, and who had received from him many bonds; and when he found the debtor sinking into hopeless bankruptcy, he sent for him, and, after showing him the bonds, the amount of which he was unable to meet, even to the extent of a penny in the pound, the generous creditor said, "There is only one way in which we can settle all this debt;" and, gathering up all the bonds in his hand, he cast them into the fire. "Now," said he, "I wish you a happy new year. Go your way, for you are out of debt to me." That was a noble thing for anyone to do, and I feel sure that the bond for a thousand pounds would burn as fast as a bond for fifty pounds. So the Lord takes all the bonds of our sin throughout our whole lifetime, and puts them into the blaze of his infinite mercy, and they all disappear; so that, if our sin be searched for, it cannot be found.

Next, measure the greatness of the forgiveness by the guilt of the sin forgiven. I always feel that I must speak guardedly upon this point, but I will be as bold as I may. Sinner, if you trust in Christ, he will forgive you the blackest sin into which you have ever fallen. If (God grant that it may not be true!) the crime of murder should be on your conscience, if adultery and fornication should have blackened your very soul, if all the sins that men have ever committed, enormous and stupendous in their aggravation, should be rightly charged to your account, yet, remember that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all our sin," and "he that believeth in him is justified from all things," however black they may be. I like the way Luther talks upon this subject, though he is sometimes rather too bold. He says, "Jesus Christ is not a sham saviour for sham sinners, but he is a real Savior who offers a real atonement for real sin, for gross crimes, for shameless offenses, for transgressions of every sort and every size." And a far greater One than Luther has said, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." I have set the door of mercy open widely, have I not? There is no one here who will dare to say, "Mr. Spurgeon said that I was too guilty to be forgiven." I have said nothing of the kind. However great your guilt, though your sins, like the great mountains, tower above the clouds, the floods of divine mercy can roll over the tops of the highest mountains of iniquity, and drown them all. God give you grace to believe this, and to prove it true this very hour!

In the third place, the greatness of God's forgiveness may be judged by the freeness of it. When a poor sinner comes to Christ for pardon, Christ does not ask him to pay anything for it, or to do anything, or to be anything, or to feel anything, but he freely forgives him. I know what you think." I shall have to go through a certain penance of heart, at any rate, if not of body. I shall have to weep so much, or pray so much, or do so much, or feel so much. "That is not what the gospel says; that is only your fancy. The gospel is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. "Trust Jesus Christ, and the free pardon of sin is at once given "without money and without price."

Another thing that indicates its greatness is its immediateness. God will forgive you at once, as soon as you trust Christ. There was a daughter, well beloved by her father, who, in an evil hour, left her home and came to London. Here, having no friends, she soon fell a prey to wicked men, and became an utter wreck. A city missionary met with her, and spoke faithfully to her about her sin, and the Holy Spirit brought her to the Savior's feet. The missionary asked for her father's name and address, and at last she told him; but she said, "It is no use for you to write to him. I have brought such dishonor on my family, that I am quite certain he would not reply to any letter." They wrote to the father, and stated the cases and the letter that came back bore on the envelope, in large text hand, the word "Immediate." Inside, he wrote, "I have prayed every day that I might find my child, and am rejoiced to hear of her. Let her come home at once. I have freely forgiven her, and I long to clasp her to my bosom." Now, soul, if thou seekest mercy, this is just what the Lord will do with thee. He will send thee mercy marked "Immediate," and thou shalt have it at once. I recollect how I found mercy, in a moment, as I was told to look to Jesus, and I should be forgiven. I did look, and, swift as a lightning flash, I received the pardon of sin in which I have rejoiced to this very hour; why should it not be the same with you, the blackest and worst sinner here, the most unfeeling and the least likely to repent? Lord, grant it, and thou shalt have the praise!

Again, the greatness of God's forgiveness may be measured by the completeness of it. When a man trusts Christ, and is forgiven, his sin is so entirely gone that it is as though it had never been. Your children bring home their copy-books without any blots in them; but if you look carefully, you can see where blots have been erased; but when the Lord Jesus Christ blots out the sins of his people, he leaves no marks of erasure, and the forgiven sinners are as much accepted before God as if they had never sinned.

Perhaps someone says, "You are putting the matter very strongly." I know I am, but not more strongly than the Word of God does. The prophet Micah, speaking to the Lord, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says, "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Not into the shallows, where they might be dredged up again; but into the great deeps, as in the middle of the Atlantic. Then Isaiah says to the Lord, "Thou hast cast all my sins

behind thy back." Can you tell me where God's back is? God's face is everywhere; then where is his back, and where are his people's sins? Why, nowhere at all! Daniel says that the work of the Messiah is to finish the transgression, and it is finished for all who believe in him. Daniel also says that he is to make an end of sins; then there is an end of them for all who trust in him. Then there is that glorious passage which cannot be quoted too often: "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none." What! all my sins gone? Yes, they are all gone if thou believest in Jesus, for he cast them into his tomb where they are buried for ever. This is enough to make you dance, like David did before the ark; for, when God once pardons a man, he never condemns him again. It is not God's way to play fast and loose with people. If I am in Christ Jesus, the verdict of "No condemnation" must always be mine, for who can condemn the one for whom Christ has died! No one, for "whom he justified, them he also glorified." If you have trusted your soul upon the atonement made by the blood of Christ, you are absolved, and you may go your way in peace, knowing that neither death nor hell shall ever divide you from Christ. You are his, and you shall be his for ever and ever.

"Well," saith one, "that is a great thing; how is it to be obtained?" It is to be had for nothing, simply for the asking, simply by trusting Christ. If that be done, all is done, and all these blessings are yours, and yours for evermore.

Now I close by showing you how really God forgives sin. I am sure he does, for I have proved it in my own case, and I have heard of many more like myself. I have known the Lord to take a man full of sin, and renew him, and in a moment to make him feel, and feel it truly, too, "God loves me;" and he has cried, "Abbe, Father;" and he has begun to pray, and has had answers to prayer, and God has manifested his infinite grace to him in a thousand ways. By-and-by, that man has been trusted by God with some service for him, as Paul and others were put in trust with the gospel, and as some of us also are. With some of us, the Lord has been very familiar and very kind, and has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.

Now I have done when I have just said that, as these things are true, then nobody ought to despair. Come, sister, smooth those wrinkles out of your forehead. You have been saying, "I shall never be saved;" but you must not talk like that, for Christ's forgiveness of sin is "according to the riches of his grace." And, brother, are you in trouble because you have sinned against God. As he is so ready to forgive, you ought to be sorry that you have grieved such a gracious God. As he is so ready to forgive, let us be ready to be forgiven; let us not leave this house, though the midnight hour is about to strike, until we have received this great redemption, this great forgiveness for great sin.

Perhaps someone says, "When I get home, I will ask God's forgiveness." Do not wait until you get home. Suppose that I had done some wrong to any one of you, and that I sat next to you, I do not think that I should wait until we entered the new year before asking you to forgive me. Do so with God; say to him, "Since thou art so ready to forgive, I ask to be forgiven, I trust that I shall be forgiven, through Jesus Christ thy Son." It is a grand thing to begin the new year with a new heart and a new spirit. That would set all the bells of your soul ringing. The question is, Will you believe on the Son of God? In the name of Jesus Christ, who died upon the cross, I demand your faith in him. He is no impostor; he is no pretender, he is worthy of your heart's trust, so believe in him. I pray the Holy Spirit to work this faith in you, that you may be saved, and saved now, and receive at once the forgiveness of all your sins.

Thus have I preached the gospel to you; if you reject it, it is at your peril. I draw a ring round you as the Roman ambassador drew one round the Eastern monarch, and said to him, "Step out of that ring, and it will mean war with Rome." So I draw a ring round the seat where you are sitting, and say to you, in the name of God, "You must not rise up from that seat until you have peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ, or else have taken upon yourself the responsibility of remaining an enemy of God, for I can say no more to you till the judgment-day breaketh, and I have to give account for preaching this sermon, and you have to give account for hearing it. I can say no more than this; there is pardon to be obtained by believing; Jesus Christ is fully worthy of your confidence; trust him now, and you shall receive full and free forgiveness. The Lord help you to do so, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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Ephesians 1:12-13 Trust

NO. 1978

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 21ST, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,**

“That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom you also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.” — Ephesians 1:12, 13.

IT appears from the preceding verse that the predestinating purpose of God deals not only with salvation as a whole, but with the details of it: it includes faith as well as salvation, which comes of faith. “Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.” The trust is appointed as well as the justification: the means as well as the end. We are not ordained to be saved apart from faith, but those who are predestinated to eternal life are ordained to receive it through faith in Christ Jesus. What God hath joined together let no man put asunder.

Beloved friends, I would have you notice in this verse the remarkable object which is set before us as the grand design of predestinating grace. Observe the singular expression of the apostle — “That we should be to the praise of his glory.” Observe that he does not say, that we should sing to the praise of our glorious God, though we will do that; nor that we should suffer to his praise, though we would not refuse to do that; nor that we should work to his praise, though by grace we will do that; but “that we should be to the praise of his glory.” The very being of a believer is to the praise and glory of God. It is written, “Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God;” but this is still more comprehensive, you are to be to his glory, your very existence is to praise him. Your being, which is now turned into well-being, is to glorify the God of grace. When in the quiet of the garden I have looked upon the lilies standing erect in their marvellous beauty, and I have realized our Master’s words, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these, shall I have said to myself, “What do these to the glory of God?” Quickly my heart has answered, “They exist to show forth the glory of their Creator:” by merely standing where they are, they yield praise to the Lord: their very being is worship. Even those flowers which are born to blush unseen of men do not bloom in vain, they do not waste their sweetness, though they pour it on the desert air, for God is in the lone places, and beholds with joy his own handiwork. God is glorified by the being of that which he makes, and especially by the being of that which he has a second time created by the power of his grace, according to his purpose through faith. Is it not enough result of being if we are to his praise?

Beloved, see the importance of that trust-which is so constant an item in the purpose of God when he causes us to be to the praise of his glory. Unless we have trusted in Christ we are not living to the praise of God; but when we have come by faith into the place wherein we ought to stand, then is our very being unto the praise of his glory. In Christ our very existence glorifies God, and it is faith which consciously places us in Christ. Concerning that trust or if you will — for the original bears that translation — that hope, which is so essential to the fulfillment of the purpose of God — concerning that trust I am about to speak this morning. May the praise of his glory be promoted by what I am enabled to say!

I. Our first point will be That Trust In Christ Is The Constant Mark Of The Saved.

“That we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ, in whom ye also trusted.” I care not whether you read it “trusted” or “hoped,” the idea will still be the same. Trust in Christ, or hope in Christ, is the distinguishing token of God’s people.

It was the mark of the apostles. It was necessary to an apostle that he should have seen the Lord, for he was to bear personal witness to that which he had seen with his eyes, and looked upon and handled; but this alone was not sufficient, for many saw the Lord and remained in unbelief, enemies of the cross of Christ. These could not have been apostles, since they did not trust in Jesus. The apostles were those who, with an inner as well as an outer eye, had seen the Lord, and had trusted themselves wholly to him as their Leader, Master, Teacher, and Savior. There were no apostles worthy to be called apostles who did not trust in Christ. Truly Judas bore the name, but his Lord said of him, “One of you is a devil.” He who is sent of Christ as his witness first trusts in Christ.

This was also the mark of the first converts, the chosen from among the Jews. These had the honor to be the elder born — these who first trusted in Christ. Some of them had the advantage of having trusted in him before his actual advent, for they were looking for the hope of Israel, and earnestly expecting the coming of the Messiah. Before our Lord appeared at the waters of Jordan, and was pointed out by John the Baptist as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” there were hearts that believed in him, and eyes that looked for him. Still, whether they were Jewish believers, looking for his advent, or not, this was the mark of their being truly saved — that they trusted in Jesus, when he was revealed as the Anointed of the Lord. The best instructed Jew could not

find eternal salvation apart from his putting his trust in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Now, dear friends, this was the mark of those who were first saved by the great Redeemer, and I want you to notice how the Holy Spirit sets them in a class by themselves. He makes a distinction between those who first trusted and those who trusted afterwards, because it is a noteworthy honor to have been among the first that trust Christ. It is a privilege to be led by Jesus, to trust him first in order of time by beginning in your earliest youth. Happy are those who enter the Lord's vineyard amid the dews of the morning, for these redeem years of time from the bitter servitude of sin, and turn them to blessed account in the delightful service of the Lord Jesus. Such are usually distinguished in the church: early piety makes eminent piety, early consecration often leads to abounding usefulness. The Lord evidently delights to be found in a high degree of those who seek him early. They come to him first, and he remembers the kindness of their youth, and the promptitude with which they obeyed his call. It is also a great privilege to be called first out of a family or a neighborhood. Peradventure some of you live where there are none who believe in Christ; may the Lord grant you this high favor to be the leader of your household and your district as a believer! May the shower of grace fall first on you, and then bless all those who are round about you! Possibly in your family you do not know of one who has passed from death to life — may you be the firstfruits out of spiritual death! I have often observed that where God begins with a family he goes on with a family. He makes one or two to be the firstfruits, and then he considers the lump as also holy, and goes on to bless the rest of the household. Even in nations I scarcely remember a nation or people that has ever received Christ which has been quite left without his blessing throughout after centuries: the fire which the first live coals had kindled has never absolutely been quenched. Therefore, I admire the grey fathers of the past, the pioneers of the army of the Lord. Paul mentions with respect those who were in Christ before him, and so should we honor those who led the way for us by first trusting in Christ. I greatly esteem in my own mind those first believers who were not borne in by the throng of others, but went forward alone. I compare them to the first navigators upon an untried sea; the men who first sailed out of sight of shore, greatly venturing. To be first in perceiving that Jesus of Nazareth was the Anointed of the Lord was no mean thing, for none of the princes of this world had any idea of that great fact. These were in truth the "men of light and leading," the foremost minds of their age, peasants and fishermen though they were. These were the first swallows heralding a glorious summer-tide. These were the first song-birds waking the morning to behold the newly-risen sun. It is a patent of nobility to be numbered with these. I would put a holy ambition into the hearts of those who are young, and others who belong to ungodly families, suggesting to them that they should be among their households those "who first trust in Christ." In the history of your tribe you will have an honored place as the first who brought salvation to your house. But, whether you are first or last, if you are saved at all it will be through trust in Christ. Come young, come old, you will still be saved alone by trust in Christ. Come as the leader of your family, or come as the last left out in the cold, you will still have to come by a simple trust and reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the one sole way of salvation.

Now, as this was the mark of the elder born, the text goes on to tell us that it was the mark of the younger born: in "whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation."

The Ephesians did not see the Christ, they never listened to the melodious tones of his voice, nor looked into his beloved countenance but they were converted by hearing the report of him. They were brought into salvation afterwards, but still it came to the same thing: they received like precious faith with those who in former days had obtained eternal life. Those to whom I now speak trusted in Christ after they had heard the word of truth. Note the expression. It is the word of the truth — the most important and vital of all truths. Nothing but truth can truly renew the heart. Falsehood works to evil: only truth works towards righteousness. We heard the word of the God of truth, and it came to us as the word of God: it came with the force of truth, carrying conviction with it, and it came as the word of God, exercising a divine power over our nature, and hence it was that we came to trust in Christ. My unconverted hearer, if you desire to have faith in Christ, listen to the truth, and to the truth only. Shut your ears to error, and hold yourselves only ready to hear the glorious gospel of the blessed God. "Faith cometh by hearing," but that hearing must be the hearing of the word of God. It is by the hearing of the word of truth that men come to trust in Christ, but trust in Christ they must, or they will perish. He is the sole Rock on which we must rest: the one Foundation laid for us to build upon.

The apostle also says to these Ephesians, "Ye heard the gospel of your salvation." O delightful word! The gospel, the glad tidings! The glad tidings of salvation! Yea, more, the glad tidings of your salvation! The gospel brings to us a personal deliverance. We heard Christ preached, and we saw that he had salvation for us. Another man's Savior brings us little joy, but salvation for ourselves is good news indeed. Joyful was the day when my heart said, "Blessed be God, I need salvation, and it is joyful tidings to me that there is an atoning sacrifice by which my sin is put away! I can be reconciled to God through the death of his Son, and in Christ Jesus I can be accepted and

beloved of the Lord." By such reflections we were led to a simple and hearty trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. That trust is the broad arrow of the King, set upon all his royal possessions. Where that trust is found, that soul is God's possession; where it is wanting, that soul still lies in the arms of the wicked one. This trust, of which some make so little, is, nevertheless, the distinguishing and the discriminating mark by which we must discern between him that feareth God and him that feareth him not.

Note, before I leave this portion of the subject, that trust in Christ is of the same nature in all believers. It is not the same in degree, nor in constancy, nor in energy; but yet it is the same faith. "Ye received like precious faith," said Peter. Paul's faith and your faith are the same faith if your faith be true faith. The faith of Abraham and the faith of a little child who has newly believed in Jesus are the same faith. A diamond is a diamond whatever its size may be, and so little faith and great faith are of the same essence. Whether it be a grain of mustard seed or a mountain-moving faith, it is still faith of the operation of God, faith in the same object, and faith working to the same end. Hence John, speaking to his converts, prays, "That you may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." If thou art a believer, thou hast a right to the same fellowship with God as the apostle had, thou hast the same perfect cleansing by the precious blood, thou hast the same adoption, the same regeneration, thou standest in the same place of love and acceptance, thou shalt be blessed with the same blessings on earth, and thou shalt enter into the same joy at the right hand of God. See, then, dear friends, that trust in Christ is the invariable and the infallible mark of the saved ones.

II. Secondly, This Trust Is No Empty Notion.

The trust in Christ which saves the soul is no idle sentiment, but a strong, vital, active principle, having a diving and conquering power within it. It is of the operation of the Spirit of God, and hence it is a living and incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever.

True trust in Christ is an entire reliance upon him. This day, if you trust Christ, you rest the whole weight and stress of your soul's affairs upon him. Looking at your sin and your sinfulness, looking at the past, the present, and the future, looking at death and at judgment, you deliberately believe that Christ is equal to every emergency, and you just cast yourself entirely and without reserve upon him to save you, and to keep you saved for ever. No other trust is worth a pin except this. It must be an absolute severance from all reliance upon your past merit, or upon your present resolutions, or upon your future expectations of what you shall be or shall do. You must have done with all other trust if Christ is your confidence. Your motto must be, "Jesus only." In this life-boat you must swim to glory, but all other you must cast away. Another reliance would be as a weight about your loins to sink you in the sea of despair. O my hearer, hast thou such a simple, unadulterated trust as this?

A saving trust leads us to accept Christ in all his offices. He is to us not only Priest to put away our sin, but Prophet to remove our ignorance, and King to subdue our rebellions. If as Priest he purges the conscience, as Prophet he must direct the intellect, and as King he must rule the life. We must yield our will to Christ's will, that henceforth every thought may be brought into captivity to his holy sway. There is no whole-hearted trust in Christ unless Christ is taken as a whole. You cannot have half a Christ and be saved, for half Christ is no Christ. You must take him as he is revealed in Scripture, Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Savior of men, very God of very God, the faithful and true Witness, your Guide, your Lord, your Husband, your everything. Do you trust him so? If not, you have not trusted him at all. This is the trust which brings salvation with it — an entire reliance upon an entire Savior so far as you know him.

This trust includes obedience to him: we have not trusted him at all unless we are prepared to accept his commands as the rule of our lives. The ship is on fire; the bales of cotton are pouring forth a black, horrible smoke; passengers and crew are in extreme danger, but a capable captain is in command, and he says to those around him, "If you will behave yourselves, I think I shall be able to effect the escape of you all." Now, if they trust in the captain they will do precisely as he orders. No sailor or engineer will refuse to work the pumps, or to prepare the boats, neither will any passenger disobey rule. In proportion to their confidence in their leader will be the alacrity with which they obey him at once. They believe his orders to be wise, and so they keep to them. Neither their fear, nor their rashness, will lead them to rush to and fro contrary to his bidding if they have a firm trust in him. When the boats are lowered, and are brought one by one to the ship's side, those who are to fill them wait till their turns come, in firm reliance upon the captain's impartiality and prudence, they will get into the boats or they will wait on board, for they consider that his orders are dictated by a better judgment than their own. So far as each man and each woman firmly believes in the superior officer, discipline will be maintained. Do you not see

this?

Obedience is the necessary outcome of true and real faith, and there is no trust where there is no obedience. Some of you fancy that you are to trust Christ, and then do what you like. You believe a lie, for such is not the teaching of God's word. The faith which saves is a faith which obeys. Learn this from the sermon of last Sabbath morning. Jesus becomes the Physician of the blind man, and puts clay upon his eyes; and then he bids him go and wash in the pool of Siloam, and he shall see. If he had refused to go and wash, he would not have received sight. Do not tell me you have trusted for sight; you cannot have done so, unless you go and wash in the appointed pool. We must follow Christ's directions, if we would receive Christ's promises. Trust in Christ implies a yielding up of all that we have and all that we are into Christ's hands. We must be to him as the wax to the seal, or the clay to the potter. There must be an unreserved submission to his supremacy. O thou seeking sinner, wilt thou submit to this? Art thou full of self-will and pride? Then these must be taken from thee. If thou dost heartily accept the Lord Jesus as thy Lord and King, thou hast the faith which saves; but if not, what faith hast thou that is worth the having?

Trust in Christ leads to an open following of him. Trust is not lame, but it walks in the footsteps of him it relies upon. If the Lord's way be the way of the cross, thou wilt nevertheless follow it, because thou wilt know it to be the right way, since he leads therein. He that is ashamed to confess Christ has good reason to fear that he is not trusting him. How can I be trusting him of whom I am ashamed? If I am not on his side in the great battle of life, how can I say that he is my confidence? He declares that he that is not with him is against him. How can I trust him, and yet be against him? If I refuse to have my name recorded on the muster-roll of his army below, how dare I hope that it is written in the Lamb's book of life above? If I refuse to accept Jesus as my Captain, how can I claim him as my Savior? A hearty trust in Christ involves an honest confession of him. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." "He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh confession of him, shall be saved." Thus the matter is put in Scripture. Wilt thou come out, then? Wilt thou come out on his side? If thou wilt, then thou hast saving trust. If thou wilt truly, and fully, and wholly decide for Christ, and live for Christ, then thou hast the trust which is the mark of his elect.

This trust will lead a man to labor to suffer for Christ as need occurs. The true truster considers it to be real gain to lose for Jesus. He reckons that toil unrewarded of men is the best rewarded form of labor when it is accepted of the Lord. It is enough wage to be permitted to serve the Lord Christ. This is faith: this which counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, this which hath respect unto a future recompense when the Lord shall come in his kingdom, but looks not for honor among men or any other form of reward here below. True trust cleaves to Christ when the many turn aside, for it knows that he has the living word, and none upon earth beside. My hearer, if thou hast a real trust in Christ, thou wilt follow his teachings though all the world should run madly after new opinions; thou wilt stand by his truth though thou be called a fool for thy steadfastness; and thou wilt not be ashamed though no one should keep thee in countenance. If thou be trusting in Christ, thou wilt spend thy life for him, and reckon it to be the best way of using thing existence. God grant us to have more and more of this trust!

That trust which lives on men's lips and never affects their hearts is a deadly delusion. He that saith, "I believe," and then never lives according to that belief, is a deceiver, and will find himself deceived if he looks for salvation in such a faith. That presumptuous trust which indulges in sin and boasts of forgiveness in Christ, is in itself an aggravation of a sinful life, and will involve its possessor in increased condemnation. Hang up on the gibbet of infamy that evil confidence which is in league with unholiness. The conceit of safety while we love sin is a mockery of God's salvation, the base counterfeit of the coin of heaven. God alone gives the faith which works by love and purifies the soul, all other faith is spurious and ruinous.

True trust rejoices in the hope which Christ inspires. It looks for his coming and his glory, his reign and his heaven. It is full of hope; that living, lively, life-giving hope which sustains the heart. This trust hath a window of hope through which light comes into the heart in the darkest hours. It lives and triumphs in the future through trusting the promise of Christ Jesus.

If we have such trust as this we shall constantly meet with something whereon to exercise it. God never leaves true trust without work to do. It is not a presentation sword to be worn only on high days and holidays, neither is it like the old armor in the Tower of London, hung up to be looked at; no, true trust is for every-day wear and use, and between here and heaven it will be tested in every conceivable way. That sword will snap if it be not a true Jerusalem blade, and that armor will be pierced if it be not of proof, able to endure the battleaxe of fierce temptation. In a thousand fields our trust will be tried ere we shall be able to sheathe the sword and enjoy the

triumph. It is in this way that trust in Christ is made by our God to work to the praise of the glory of his grace. Trust in Christ brings to God greater glory than anything else we can produce. "What shall we do," said one, "that we may work the work of God?" meaning thereby a godlike work, a work so great as to bear a heavenly name. Jesus answered, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." Dear friend over yonder, you cannot build a row of almshouses to the glory of God; but you can trust Christ with all your heart to the glory of God. You cannot stand up and deliver an eloquent oration to God's praise, but you can by divine grace pursue a life of faith, and thus praise him. You cannot be a hero in fight, and turn to flight the armies of the alien, but by trust in Jesus, exercised in prevailing prayer, you can win great victories to the praise of his glory. Walk humbly with your God, in patience possess your souls, and with an unstaggering faith embrace the promises, and you shall be found in that cloud of witnesses who are ennobled of God Most High. The Lord grant us, then, to have this trust, which is more than mere notion or sentiment — a divine principle created by the Holy Spirit.

III. Thirdly, This Trust In Christ Is His Due.

There came to me the other day a young man who wished to speak with me about his soul troubles, and he began thus, "Dear sir, I cannot trust Christ." To which I answered, "Have you found out something fresh in his character? Has he ceased to be trustworthy? Pray let me know all about it, for it is a serious matter to me; I have trusted him with everything I have for time and for eternity, and if he is not fit to be trusted I am in a terrible case." He looked at me, and he said, "I will not say that again, sir, I see I have made a mistake. Truly the Lord Jesus is in every way trustworthy." "Well, then," I said, "Why cannot you trust him?" I left him with that unanswerable question. A man is certainly able to trust one whom he regards as trustworthy. My young friend saw that at once, and asked me further: "But may I trust Christ to save me? Am I permitted to trust my soul with him?" I said to him, "Is not this the command of the gospel: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved? And are you not warned that if you do not believe in him you will be damned? How can we doubt that we are permitted to do that which is commanded us of the Lord? I am to preach the gospel to every creature, and this is the gospel: — 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!'" He said, "So, then, if I trust Christ he will save me?" and I replied, "Certainly he will, he is the Savior of all them that put their trust in him. He says, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' It is written, 'He that believeth on him hath everlasting life:' he that trusts in Jesus is saved." He thanked me, and saying that he had found out the secret, he went on his way rejoicing. I told him the gospel; he received it; and he entered into rest. I hope I may be equally successful with my hearers at this time. May the Holy Spirit work with me in this case also! I have been talking about faith, and I trust I have not darkened counsel by words without knowledge. It is simplicity itself, but we are exceedingly apt to becloud it. To trust Christ is to find salvation. He that sincerely relies upon Jesus is saved. Now, concerning this trust, I say that this is our Lord's due.

Observe, first, that we are bound to trust him from his very name. His name is "Christ," that is, the "Anointed." God has sent him, God has commissioned him, God has equipped him, he is the anointed of God: dare I distrust him? An ambassador from heaven, with the divine warrant at his back, known to speak in the name of the Lord God, how dare I say I have no confidence in him? By the glorious name of Christ I claim for him that you who seek salvation should trust him implicitly, and trust him at once.

Remember, next, his glorious person. He who is set forth as the object of saving trust is none other than the Son of God. In his Godhead and in his humanity, yea, in his undivided person, he claims your trust. Canst thou not trust him that made heaven and earth, without whom was not anything made that was made? Can his power fail thee? Can his wisdom mislead thee? Can his mind change toward thee? Can he be unfaithful? The Son of the Highest, canst thou not trust him? Away with the impertinence of mistrust! Canst thou doubt the Holy and the True? Darest thou doubt the Lamb of God? Be not so foolhardy as thus to defy the incarnate Son of God, and treat him as though he could deceive thee.

Next, trust him, because of his matchless character. Hast thou ever heard of such another as the Christ of God? Among the sons, no one is like to him.

"All hail, Emmanuel, all divine,

In thee thy Father's glories shine

Thou brightest, sweetest, fairest one

That eyes have seen or angels known."

He is all goodness, the fullness of love, and the pattern of tenderness. He is always true, and always faithful. By that blessed character which he bears, which I am sure you would not for a moment question — a character which even infidels have been forced to admire — I pray you trust him! Let it not be a question with you: “How can I trust him?” Say rather: “How can I distrust him?” What reason can you have for doubt? What excuse for mistrust?

Remember next, his work, and especially his death. Here is immovable ground for my claim that you should trust him. Jesus loved men so as to die for them, how can we doubt his love? I do not know how it is with you, but I lose the power to doubt when I realize Christ crucified. That crown of thorns hedges my mind around, and shuts out mistrust. His five wounds kill my suspicions and my fears. A crucified Savior is the life of faith, and the death of unbelief. Canst thou stand and view the flowing of the Savior’s precious blood upon the tree of doom, and not trust Him? What more can he do to prove his sincerity than to die for us? His life is the mirror of love, but in his death the sun shineth on it with a blaze of glory so that we cannot steadily look into its brightness. Behold how he loved us! Oh, believe thou in the crucified Christ, for this is no more than his right and due!

Besides, he lives, and he has gone up into the glory with the same purpose of grace upon his heart. When men change their places, they often change their minds; but he that loved us when he was despised and rejected, loves us now that he is highly exalted. He is not like the chief butler, who forgot in the palace the promise which he made in the prison. The love of Calvary is with the Lamb in the midst of the throne. On earth he bleeds, in heaven he pleads. Ye sinners, come and trust the ever-living Christ, for he makes intercession for transgressors! I stand here this morning, and I say to all of you in this house that I claim your confidence in the Lord Jesus. I do not humbly ask for it as a beggar asks an alms: I demand for the Christ of God that you put your trust in him. God has set him forth to be a propitiation for sin, that through faith in his blood every one that believeth in him should be saved. I demand your trust in the name of God. Christ deserves it at your hands, and you cannot refuse it without doing him a gross injustice. I beseech you do not make God a liar; yet, according to the apostle John, “He that believeth not hath made him a liar, because he believeth not in the Son of God.” If Christ were here this morning, standing on this platform, and you saw his pierced hands, and the wound in his side, you would be ready to fall down and worship him: you can worship him better still by trusting him in his absence. “Blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed.” Trust is among the sublimest forms of adoration. A childlike, tearful, broken-hearted, sincere trust in Christ is a hallelujah unto his name. If thou wouldst crown him, thou needst not go far for a coronet: thy trust is the best diadem thou canst bring him. Trust thou him, then, at this moment, and thus bow at his feet with cherubim and seraphim. But again I say, do not insult him by saying that thou canst not trust him. I should think it hard if any one of my acquaintance said to me, “Sir, I cannot trust you.” It would be a cruel cut. I should enquire of him, “What have I done to merit this? When have I been untrue?” It would be too unkind a stab if it came from one whom I had aimed to benefit. Do not crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

O my hearers, I have chosen an old theme this morning, and I have been studiously simple in my style, for my heart longs to bring you to trust in Jesus! I have no desire to be thought a fine preacher. I want to save your souls. This trust is the vital point; do not slight it. Oh that you would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! If you believe in your heart that God hath raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. This is the way of salvation, and it is very plain. God help you to run in it! Lay aside pride and self-confidence, and trust wholly in Jesus, and this will be better than all tears, and despairs, and resolves, and efforts. Fall back into the arms of redeeming love. Lean your whole weight on Jesus. Take your soul to Christ as you take your money to your banker, and leave it in his hands. He will keep it until that day when, at his appearing, you shall appear with him in glory.

IV. I close by noticing, in the fourth place, what I have already insisted upon, that This Trust Is In Every Case The Instrument Of Salvation.

Trust is selected by God as the instrument of salvation, and it is not selected arbitrarily, but with great wisdom and prudence. When a man trusts Christ, by his trust he is brought into mental and spiritual contact with Christ; and there is a more hopeful influence about that contact than in anything which a man will resolve to do or even perform in his own strength. It is a grand thing for a man to be elevated above self-confidence, and brought to rely upon such an one as the Son of God. Thus he is made to feel that he must look to such a one greater and better than himself; and he is brought to own that he is a feeble and dependent creature. I think I see in this consideration an adaptation in faith to be the means chosen of God in the matter of salvation.

Moreover, faith is no doubt selected by God to be the means of salvation, because it never robs God of his glory. If you and I are to be saved, we shall be saved by God and by his grace alone. Now if the appointed way of salvation leaves something for us to do in order that we may be saved by God, we shall in all probability attribute our salvation to that something, and forget the Lord. If we are bidden to trust, there will be no temptation in that direction; for we cannot rely upon our trust, since its very essence lies in depending upon Christ alone. Trust ascribes salvation to him who saves. Faith never seeks honor for herself: she is a self-denying grace. Christ saith, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace;" and by this saying he crowns faith, and he does so because faith crowns him.

Trust, again, is selected as the instrument of salvation because it has wonderful power over the heart of God. Marvellous is the influence of trust. I have aforetime illustrated this to you by the power which faith has over us, mortal men. I will venture to tell you an old story, which you have heard from me before. I cannot recollect anything better, and you must bear with a repetition. I once lived where my neighbour's garden was only divided from me by a very imperfect hedge. He kept a dog, and his dog was a shockingly bad gardener, and did not improve my beds. So one evening, while I walking alone, I saw this dog doing mischief, and being a long way off I threw a stick at him, with some earnest advice as to his going home. This dog, instead of going home, picked up my stick and came to me with it in his mouth, wagging his tail. He dropped the stick at my feet, and looked up to me most kindly. What could I do but pat him and call him a good dog, and regret that I had ever spoken roughly to him? Why, it brings tears into my eyes as I talk about it! The dog mastered me by his trust in me. The illustration is to the point. If thou wilt trust God as that dog trusted me, thou wilt overcome. God will be held by thy trust in such a way that he could not smite thee, but must accept thee for Jesus' sake. If thou dost trust him, thou hast the key of his heart, the key of his house, the key of his heaven. If thou canst trust thy God in Jesus Christ, thou hast become a son of God. I see a philosophy in the choice of faith: do not you?

But then faith operates also to salvation by the effect it has on the character. When I doubt God, then I follow my own judgment and do what I please, but when I trust him wholly, and know him to be my Father and my Friend, then I yield my will to him naturally, not as a matter of constraint, but with great joy. And is it not a wonderful thing, that this simple trust turns the whole current of our life, and changes the entire color and complexion of our thought? Wisely is it ordained to be the instrument of salvation, since it touches the mainspring of our being, and makes that which was erratic and rebellious become orderly and obedient?

Moreover, brethren, trust saves us, because it grasps the promises of God, and pleads them. It says to God, "Thou hast promised this, therefore I pray thee do as thou hast said." The God of truth cannot lie; and, therefore, he must keep his word. Trust pleads the sacrifice of Jesus, and says — "Lord, the blood of thy Son was shed for the remission of sins, therefore, I pray thee let my sins be remitted. Thou hast said that thou hast laid on him the iniquity of us all, I pray thee let me be unburdened of my load, because thou hast laid it on him." Trust must save, for it has all the promises of the covenant at its back, and the Christ of the covenant at its side, exhibiting his own precious blood. How can trust but save the soul when God declares it shall do so?

In our most honest hours we are driven to faith for our comfort. If in our prosperity our eyes wander to other confidences, in our distress they come back to Christ and his cross. When the head is aching, and the heart is throbbing, and the death-sweat lies on the brow, none of us dare look to works, or feelings, or sacraments; but we cry —

"Hold thou thy cross before my failing eyes."

The wounds of Jesus are the ultimate hope of the forlorn. When the soul is about to quit the body, the most eminent preacher, the most earnest worker, the most devout thinker, asks that he may see Jesus, and be washed in his blood and covered with his righteousness. I dare not trust all the heaped-up merits of all the saints, but I dare trust the Lord Jesus Christ. Sinner as I am, I am assured of salvation through the sinner's saviour. If I had as many souls in this one body as there are souls in this house of prayer I dare trust them all with Christ. If all the sins ever committed by all the men that ever lived since time began were all heaped upon my one guilty head I dare trust Jesus Christ to cleanse me from them all. O come, dear hearts, and trust my Lord! He cannot fail you. According to your faith be it unto you. You shall be able to live graciously, and to die calmly, if your trust settles itself upon Jesus, the Christ, the anointed of the Lord. Ere yet the harvest is past and the summer is ended trust Christ, and live. O Holy Spirit, by thy secret workings upon the heart, lead all these thousands to trust in the Lord Jesus! Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Ephesians 1.

Ephesians 2:3 What Christians Were and Are

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"And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." — Ephesians 2:3.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." — Romans 8:16, 17.

These two texts will furnish me with two familiar but most important themes, — what Christians were, and what they are. There are great and vital differences between what they once were and what they now are, and these are implied or indicated by the two expressions "the children of wrath" and "the children of God." There is so much instruction in each of our texts that we will proceed at once to consider them without any further introduction.

I. So, first, let us consider What Christians Were.

The apostle tells us that we "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." "By nature," mark you, not merely by practice, but "by nature the children of wrath." The expression is a Hebraism. When a person was doomed to die, he would be called by the Jews "the child of death." One who was very poor would be called by them "the child of poverty." So, because we were, by nature, under the wrath of God, we are called the children of wrath."

When the apostle says that we "were by nature the children of wrath," he means that we were born so. David expressed what is true of us all when he said, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Our first parent, Adam, sinned and fell as the representative of the whole human race. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men." If any object to this principle of representation, that does not affect its truth, and I would also remind them that, by this very principle of representation, a way was left open for our restoration. The angels did not sin representatively, they sinned personally and individually, and therefore there is no hope of their restoration, but they are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." But men sinned representatively, and this is a happy circumstance for us, "for as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." As we fell through one representative, it was consistent with the principles upon which God was governing mankind that, he should allow us to rise by another Representative. At first, we fell not by our own fault; so now, by grace, we rise not by our own merit. Death by sin came to us through Adam when we were born, so did life come to us through Christ Jesus. Thus our first text sets before us this terrible fact, — as true as it is terrible, and as terrible as it is true, — that we were by nature under the wrath of God from the very first. The whole race of mankind was regarded by God as descended from an attainted traitor, we were all born children of wrath.

This expression also implies that there was within us a nature which God could not look upon except with wrath. The way in which some cry up the excellence of human nature is all idle talk. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Our Lord Jesus Christ has told us that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Everything that is evil lurks within the heart of everyone that is born of a woman. Education may restrain it, imitation of a good example may have some power in holding the monster down; but the very best of us, apart from the grace of God, placed under certain circumstances which would cause the evil within us to be developed rather than restrained, would soon prove to a demonstration that our nature was evil, and only evil, and that continually. You may take a bag of gunpowder, and play with it if you care to do so, for it is quite harmless as long as you keep the fire from it; but put just one spark of fire to it, and then you will discover the force for evil that was latent in that innocent-looking powder. You may tame a tiger if you begin training it early enough, and you may treat it as if it was only a big cat; but let it once learn the taste of blood, and you will soon see the true tiger nature flashing from its eyes, and

seeking to destroy all that come within reach of its cruel claws. In a similar fashion to that, sin was originally latent within every one of us and whatever better qualities God may, by his grace, have planted there, it is still true: that we were by nature “the children of wrath, even as others.”

I need not say any more about the original sin of Adam, or about the sinfulness of our nature, for those of us who have been saved know that our practice was according to our nature. Who can deny that the fountain was defiled when he is compelled to confess that polluted streams flowed from it? Can you look back with complacency upon the days of your unregeneracy? I feel sure that you cannot think of the sins that you committed then without weeping over them, and especially sorrowing over that sin which so many forget, — the sin of not believing on the Son of God, the sin of so long rejecting the Savior, the sin of not yielding to the gentle calls of his grace, the sin of bolting and barring the door of your heart while he stood without, and cried, “Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.” But we would not rise, and let him in. What a horrible sin it was not to see the loveliness of Christ, and not to admire the infinitude of his love! Had we not been sinful by nature and by practice too, our opposition or our indifference would have been melted by the coming of Jesus, and we should at once have opened our hearts to receive him.

Not only were we “children of wrath” by descent, by nature, and by practice; but, had not God, in his long-suffering patience, spared us until we were converted, we should have had to endure the wrath of God for ever in that dark realm where not a single ray of hope or one cooling drop of consolation will mitigate the miseries of any child of wrath who hears the dread sentence, “Depart from me; I never knew you.” We cannot bear even to think of the doom of those who have died impenitent. I confess that my flesh creeps when I read those terrible words of the Lord Jesus concerning the worm that never dies, and the fire that never shall be quenched; and yet, instead of sitting in these seats at this moment, rejoicing in the good hope through grace, we might have been there; ay, and without any very great change in the order of God’s providence before our conversion, we might have been there. We were sick with the fever, and if only the disease had taken an unfavourable turn, we should have been there. We were shipwrecked; and if only the waves had washed us out to sea instead of washing us up upon a rock, we should have been there. Possibly, some of us have been in battle, and as “every bullet has its billet,” if one had found its billet in our brain or heart, we should have been there. Some of us have been in many accidents; if one of them had been fatal before we knew the Lord, we should have been there. All of us are in jeopardy every day and every hour; we are constantly being reminded of the frailty of human life; yet God spared us by his grace, and did not cut us off, as so many others were, while we were unrepentant and unregenerated. Had he done, so, we should indeed have been “the children of wrath” in the most terrible of all senses, for we should even now have been enduring the wrath of God on account of our sin. Children of God, as you realize the truth of what I have been saying to you, I trust that you will feel intensely grateful to the Lord who has so graciously interposed on your behalf, and delivered you from going down into the pit.

Notice also that Paul says that we “were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” God’s grace has made a great difference between his children and others, but there was no such difference originally; they were “the children of wrath, even as others,” that is, in the same sense as others were children of wrath. I know that God’s children have been from eternity the objects of his distinguishing love, for there never was a period when he did not love those whom he had chosen as his own; but regarding us as sinners, unforgiven sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, we “were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

We were also “the children of wrath, even as others” who remain unconverted. You have, perhaps, a daughter for whose conversion you have long prayed; you have brought her to hear the gospel since she was a child, but, up to the present moment, it has not touched her heart. Do not forget that you also were a child of wrath, even as she is. You have a friend who ridicules the gospel, even though he comes with you to listen to it. Yet you were an heir of wrath, even as he is; and if it had not been for the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, you also would have been only a hearer and not a doer of the Word; you would have been like so many others in this congregation, and you might have said, with Cowper, —

“I hear, but seem to hear in vain.

Insensible as steel.”

But you are not “insensible as steel” now; you do feel the power of the Word. It makes you tremble, but it also makes you rejoice, for you know that it is the Word of your Father in heaven who has loved you with an everlasting love, and who therefore with lovingkindness has drawn you to himself. While you remember all this with devout gratitude to him who has made you to differ from others, and also to differ from what you yourself

used to be, never forget that you were once a child of wrath, even as others still are.

Yes, beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, you “were by nature the children of wrath, even as others” who still revel in sin. As you pass along the street, you see such sights and hear such language that you are shocked and horrified that men and women can so grievously sin against the God who made them, and who still permits them to live; yet do not look down upon them with an affectation of superior holiness and say, “What shameful sinners those people are in comparison with us!” but rather say, “We, too, were by nature the children of wrath, even as others, still are.”

Yes, and to emphasize what I have previously said, “we were by nature the children of wrath, even as others” who pass away impenitent, and in due time must stand before the judgment bar of God. They will stand shivering before that great white throne whose spotless lustre will reveal to them, as in a wondrous mirror, the blackness of their lives and the guiltiness of their impenitence; and when the King sits down upon his throne, even though it will be the Lamb himself, who died for sinners, who will sit as their Judge, they will cry to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?” There is nothing so terrible to look upon as injured love. Fiercer than a lion leaping upon its prey is love when once it is incensed. Oil flows smoothly, but it burns furiously; and when the love of Jesus has been finally rejected, then the sight of him whose head was once crowned with thorns will be more terrifying than anything else to the eyes of those who have rejected him. They will wish they had never been born; and, indeed, it would have been better for them if they had never had an existence. Had it not been for the grace of God, their portion would also have been our portion; for, by nature, we were the children of wrath even as they were, and amidst that shivering, trembling crowd we must have taken our station. But, believing in Jesus, our place shall be at his right hand “when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.” We shall be amongst those to whom the King will then say, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Yet, by nature, we were “the children of wrath, even as others.”

II. Now I must turn from that sad, solemn knell — “children of wrath, even as others,” to the joyous peal that rings out from our second text, which tells us What Christians Are, what we now are if we have believed in Jesus: “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”

It is such a wonderful thing that those who were the children of wrath should now be the children of God that there are two witnesses to it, first, our own spirit says that we are the children of God and then the Holy Spirit comes, and says, “Ay, and I also divinely bear witness that you are the children of God.”

Now, beloved, do you realize that God has wrought this great miracle of mercy in you? Does your spirit bear witness that you are now a child of God? When you go out of this building, and look up at the stars, will you say to yourself, “My Father made them all? Will you feel that you must talk to your Father? And when you go to your bed to-night, should you lie sleepless, will you begin to think of your heavenly Father as naturally as a little child, when it lies awake in the dark, thinks of its mother, and calls to her? If you are a true believer, this is the case with you. The Spirit of adoption is given to you, by which you are enabled to cry, “Abba, Father.” Do you not also know what it is sometimes, when you are sitting down quietly by yourself, to think, “The God who made the heavens and the earth, and who upholds all things by the word of his Father, is my Father”? Then very likely a flood of tears will come as you stand silently before the Lord just as the lilies do, for at times there is no form of worship that seems possible to our joyous spirit except standing still, and letting the love of the heart silently breathe itself out before the Lord like the fragrance of flowers ascending in a gentle breeze. In such a frame of mind as that, your spirit may well bear witness that you are a child of God.

Then comes the Holy Spirit, the infallible Witness, and through the Word, and through his own mysterious influence upon our heart, he bears witness that we are the children of God. Two witnesses were required, under the law, to establish a charge that was made against any man; and, under the gospel, we have two witnesses to establish our claim to be the children of God, — first, the witness of our own spirit, and then the second and far greater witness, the Holy Spirit himself; and by the mouth of these two witnesses shall our claim be fully established. If our own spirit were our only witness, we might hesitate to receive its testimony for it is fallible and partial; but when the infallible and impartial Spirit of God confirms the unfaltering witness of our own heart and conscience, then may we have confidence toward God, and believe without hesitation that we are indeed the children of the Most High God. One of the points on which the Holy Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we

are the children of God is this: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." When we really love those who are God's children, it is strong presumptive evidence that we are ourselves members of his family; and when we truly love God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, when we have a compassionate love to the souls of men, and an intense love of holiness, and hatred of sin, and desire for God's glory, all these are the further witness to the Spirit with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Then, as there are two witnesses that we are the children of God, so are there two ways in which we become the children of God.

First, we are the children of God by adoption. When God asked himself the question, "How shall I put the children of wrath among my children?" he himself answered by saying, "I will do it by adopting them into my family." We were far off from God by wicked works," aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; yet, by the grace of God, we have been adopted into the divine family.

Now you know that a child may be adopted into a nobleman's family, and yet he will not really be one of the nobleman's kindred; so there is a second way in which we become the children of God, that is, by regeneration. We are born into the family of God as well as adopted into it, and thus we become "partakers of the divine nature." So Peter writes, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Adoption gives us the privileges of the children of God, regeneration gives us the nature of the children of God. Adoption admits us into the divine family, regeneration makes us akin to the Divine Father; it creates us anew in Christ Jesus, and puts into us a spark from the eternal Spirit himself, so that we ourselves become spiritual beings. Before regeneration, we are only body and soul; but when we are born again, born from above, we become body, soul, and spirit; being born of the Spirit, we understand spiritual things, and have spiritual perceptions which we never possessed before.

Becoming the children of God, we are entitled to all the privileges of childhood. It is the privilege of a child to enjoy its father's love, its father's care, its father's teaching, its father's protection, its father's provision, and last, but by no means least, its father's chastening. Whatever a child receives as its right from its father, we also receive from our Father who is in heaven. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give "to you who are his children every blessing that you can possibly need while you are here on earth, and heaven itself to crown it all?"

Then the apostle further says, "and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Now, in this country, it is not always true that, if children, then, heirs, because we have laws, (of which some may approve, though I fail to see the justice of them,) which make one son to be the heir just because he happens to be the firstborn. It is not so in God's family; it is "if children, then heirs;" that is to say, all the children in the divine family are God's heirs. The last one who ever will be born into the family of God will be as much an heir as the first who ever said, "My Father, who art in heaven." And the least of the children of God — Little-faith, Ready-to-halt, and Miss Much-afraid, are just as much the heirs of God as Faithful, Valiant-for-Truth, and Mr. Great-heart himself. "If children," that is all, "if children, then heirs." Are they true-born children of God? Have they the faith which is the characteristic mark of all who are in God's family? Are they truly converted? Have they been born again, born into the family of God? If so, then it follows of necessity that, "if children, then heirs." Does not this truth encourage poor Miss Despondency over there, and you, Mr. Fearing, and friend Littlefaith over yonder?" If children, then heirs." Not "if big children," nor "if firstborn children," nor "if strong children," but simply "if children, then heirs." If you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby you cry, "Abba, Father," you are an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ.

There is another remarkable thing in the family of God; if we, who were by nature the children of wrath, become by grace, the children of God, we thereby become, all of us, the heirs of all that God has. Now, this can never happen in an earthly family. If the father were rich, and all his children were his heirs, one son would have one farm, and another son would have another farm, and each of the girls would have so many thousands of pounds for her dowry; but each one of them could not have all that there was, it would have to be divided between them; one would have what the others had not, and could not have anything that they had. But, in God's family, all the children are heirs of all that is his. My dear brother or sister in Christ, if you have a choice privilege that is yours because you are a Christian, I rejoice that you have it, but I have it too; and if I have a precious promise that belongs to me because I am one of the Lord's children, you may be thankful for it, for it belongs equally to you.

No child of God can keep Christ all to himself, for he is the portion of all his people. Some dear brethren, whom I know, would like to plant a very prickly hedge around their little gardens, so as to keep all their Christian privileges to themselves; but God's birds of paradise can fly over those hedges, and share in all the good things they are intended to enclose.

"If children, then heirs, heirs of God." You, my dear brother or sister, have Christ, and I have Christ. You have the Spirit, and I have the Spirit. You have the Father, and I have the Father. You have pardon, you have peace, you have the righteousness of Christ, you have union with Christ, you have security in life, you have safety in death, you have the assurance of a blessed resurrection and of eternal glory; but so have all those who have believed in Jesus. There is the same inheritance for all the children of God; not a part for one, and another part for another. The covenant is not, "Manasseh shall have this portion of the promised land, and Issachar that portion, and Zebulun that other portion;" but to every believer the Lord says, "Lift up now thine eyes to the North, and to the South, to the East, and to the West, for all this goodly heritage have I given to thee by a covenant of salt for ever."

There is another thing about this inheritance that makes it still more precious to us, and that is, that every one of the heirs shall certainly inherit it, and that is more than you can say about any earthly inheritance. If you know that somebody has made a will in your favor, do not reckon that the estate or money is really yours until you are actually in possession of it, for "there is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip. "The will may be cancelled, and the new one may leave you out, or there may be a flaw in it, so that the estate will get into Chancery, and remain there for the term of your natural life. Even if there is no doubt that you are the heir, there may be many who will dispute your right to the inheritance; but if you are really a child of God, not even the devil himself shall be able to rob you of your heavenly inheritance. Satan may deny that you are an heir of God, but your heavenly Father will say, "Yes, he is indeed my child, and heir to all I have. I remember his first tear of penitence, and I have preserved that in my bottle. I remember his first true prayer, his first look of faith, his first note of praise, they are all registered in my records that none can erase. I have his name here in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and it can never be blotted out. Yes, he is my child, and my heir; all that I have belongs to him. "There is a day coming when all Christ's sheep shall pass again under the hand of him that telleth: them; and in that day, not one of the whole redeemed flock shall be missing. As the long roll of God's ransomed family is called, it, shall be asked, "Is Little-faith here?" and he will answer to his name not at all in the trembling way in which he used to speak when he was upon earth. When it is asked, "Is Miss Much-afraid here?" she will reply, in jubilant tones, "Glory be to God, I am here!" No matter how weak and feeble you may be, if you are a child of God, you shall certainly be there, and the inheritance shall assuredly be yours.

I have not yet done with this expression, "heirs of God." Paul does not say that the children of God are heirs of heaven. Our inheritance is much bigger than that, for heaven has its bounds, but God has none. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but God never will; we are heirs, therefore, of unending bliss, for we are "heirs of God." There is no one here, there is no, one on earth, there is no man or angel in heaven who can tell the full meaning of this expression: "heirs of God." The words are simple enough for even a child to utter, but only God fully understands what they mean, and we shall go on learning throughout eternity all that is included in those three short syllables. To have God himself as our inheritance, to be able to say, "The Lord is my portion," is a thousand heavens in one. And all the children of God are the heirs of God; no one of them will ever have to say, "My portion will have to be stinted because my elder brother has taken such a large share," but every one shall have God to enjoy here on earth, and then to enjoy for ever in glory.

Finally the apostle says, "and joint-heirs with Christ." It always adds to our enjoyment of any pleasure if we have someone whom we greatly love to share it with us; then how much more shall we enjoy our heavenly inheritance because we are to occupy it with Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior, to whose incarnation, and life, and death, and resurrection, and intercession we are indebted for it all. Oh, who would not be a child of God, to have such bliss for ever, and to enjoy it in such blessed company? Yet is there anyone here who despises his inheritance? Is there anyone here like Esau, "who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright," and who, "afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears"? Is there someone here; who was once a professor of religion, who has gone back to the world, in the hope of getting a better living or a little praise, among men? Poor soul, poor soul, how I pity you! But, O child of God, have you been kept faithful even to this hour? Then let Naboth rather than Esau be your model. Ahab offered Naboth a better vineyard than his own, or the worth of it in money if he would sell it, but he would neither exchange nor sell his inheritance even though his refusal to do so cost him his life; and it would be better for us to die a thousand deaths than ever even to think of parting with our heavenly patrimony. Happily, if we are really the children of God, he who has, by his grace, made us his children, will keep us his children; and he will both keep

us for the inheritance, and keep the inheritance for us. There is, however, such a danger of being only children of God in name, and not in truth, that we shall all do well to give heed to the apostle's warning, "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Having put our hand to the plough, let us not even think of looking back; but may we be proved to be the living children of the living God by walking in his ways until we come into his blessed presence to go no more out for ever for his dear Son's sake! Amen.

Ephesians 2:4,5 His Great Love

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"Great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins." — Ephesians 2:4, 5.

You notice, in this chapter, the remarkable change of subject which commences at the 4th verse. Paul had been giving a very sad description of what even the saints are by nature, and of their conduct before conversion; and then, as if he was quite weary of writing upon that painful topic, he says, "But God" — and goes on to tell what God has done. What a relief it is to turn from ourselves, and from our fellow-men, to God! And I do not know when God, in his rich mercy, ever seems so lovely in our eyes as when we have just gazed upon our own abundant sins. The diamond shines all the more brilliantly when it has a suitable foil to set off its brightness; and man seems to act as a foil for the goodness and the mercy of God. Perhaps you remember that the psalmist, when he had said in his haste, "All men are liars," turned abruptly from that theme, and said, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" It is as if he had said; "I will not have anything more to do with man. I find him to be only like a broken cistern that can hold no water; but as for my God, he has never failed me, and he never will, so 'I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.'"

I want, at this time, just to intertwine these two subjects, — ourselves in our fall, and God in his grace, — ourselves in our sin, and God in his love: "His great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins." I shall not need so much to preach as just to refresh your memories, — to revive your recollections of the great tidings which the Lord, in his grace, hath done for you. I want you, who know the Lord, to remember what you were, and what God has done for you. Those two themes will bring out the greatness of his love, so they shall be our two objects for meditation; first, what we were; and, secondly, what God did for us.

I. First, then, What We Were. The text says that "we were dead in sins."

O believer, whatever life, of a spiritual kind, thou hast in thee today, was given to thee by God; it was not thine by nature. Before God looked upon thee in love and pity, and said unto thee "Live!" thou wast dead. That is to say, as far as spiritual things are concerned, thou wast insensible, — insensible alike to the bearers of divine wrath and to the melodies of divine love. Thou couldst even lie at the foot of Sinai, and not shake with fright, although Moses did exceedingly fear and quake, and thou couldst lie at the foot of the cross, and yet not be melted by the death-cries of Immanuel, although the earth did quake, and the rocks were rent and the graves were opened at that doleful sound. Do you not, remember, beloved, when you passed through such a time as that I do, — when utter callousness and coldness of heart reigned supreme within us, when the world — painted harlot, as she is, — could attract us, but we were insensible to the inexpressible beauties of him who is altogether lovely, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

And as we were insensible to spiritual things, being dead, so we were, at that time, without power to do anything. We were preached to, called, and bidden to come; but, as far as all goodness was concerned, we were like a corpse, unable to hear the sweetest music, or the crack of doom resounding overhead. Do you not remember, dear friends, when it was so with you? You thought then that you could do something good in your own strength, but it was a dreadful failure when you attempted it. Your resolutions, when you got as far as resolving, all fell to the ground, for you were, in the emphatic words of Paul, "without strength," Yea, you were insensible and powerless.

And, what is worse still, we were then without will or desire to come to God. We had no disposition to move towards the Lord, no aspirations after holiness, no longing after communion with our Creator. We loved the world, and were content to fill our treasury with its paltry self; this seemed to be the only portion for which we cared. If we could have become rich, and increased with goods we should have said, "Soul, take thine ease; there is nothing

more for thee to desire.”

That was our state by nature; we were dead. And did the Lord love us then, when there was nothing whatever in us to commend us to him, — nothing by which we could possibly rise into a condition that would be estimable in his sight? Did he love us then? Yes, he did; and there must have been surprising grace in that great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins.”

While we were dead as to spiritual things, there was, alas! a life in us of another kind. If you read the chapter from which our text is taken, you will find that the dead people are described as walking. They were walking corpse, — a strange commingling of metaphors, and yet most certainly true with regard to all ungodly men. They are dead to good men; but, as for the evil within theme, how full of life it is! The devil within shone and the flesh within them were active, though. And, as the corpse gives forth corruption, and fills the tomb with putridity, so did our sin continually give forth evil emanations which must have been most nauseous to God; yet, notwithstanding all this, “he loved us, even when we were dead in sins.”

Let me just mention some of the unlovely and unlovable things which God saw in us while we were in that dead state. One of the last was this; we were ungrateful. It is very difficult to continue to love ungrateful persons. If you seek to do them good, and yet you receive no thanks from them; — if you persevere in doing them good, and yet still, for all that, they are unkind to you; — it is not in flesh and blood to continue still to love them. Yet, my brethren and sisters in Christ, what ingratitude to God was in our hearts once! What favors the Lord bestowed upon us, — not merely daily bread and temporal blessings, but there were real spiritual gifts of his grace presented to us; yet we turned our backs upon them all, and, worse still, we turned our backs upon him who gave them to us. How sad it is that many people live, year after year, without ever recognizing the God who gives them so many mercies and blessings! Perhaps, now and then, there is a “thank God” just uttered in idleness or as a compliment; but there is no heart in it. The ingratitude of some of us was greater even than that of others, for we were born of godly parents, we were nurtured in the home of piety, we heard scarcely a sound in our infancy that was not mingled with the name of Jesus; and yet, as we grew up, these very things we regarded as restraints, and sometimes we wished that we could do as other people’s children did, and half regretted that we had godly friends who watched so carefully over our conduct. The Lord might have said to us, “I have done so much for you, yet you exhibit no gratitude, I will therefore leave you, and give these favors to others;” but, in his great mercy, he did not act like that although we were so ungrateful.

What is even worse, we were complaining and murmuring. Do you not remember, in your unconverted state, my friend, how scarcely anything seemed to please you? This thing happened quite contrary to your wishes, and that was not at all to your mind; and the other was not according to your notion of what should be. The prophet Jeremiah asked, “Wherefore doth a living man complain?” But we seemed to ask, “Why should we leave off complaining?” We murmured against the Lord notwithstanding the great mercies that he gave to us; we rebelled against him, and waxed worse and worse. It is a difficult thing for us to love a murmured. When you they to do a man good, and he only grumbles at what you do for him, you are very apt to say, “Very well, I will take my favors where they will be better appreciated.” But God did not act like that towards us; “his great love wherewith he loved us” was not to be turned away from us even by our murmurings and complainings.

And all that while, dear friends, we were trifling with spiritual things. Like those people mentioned in the parable who, when they were invited to the marriage feast, “made light of it,” so did we. We were warned to escape from hell, but it seemed too like an idle tale. We were bidden to seek after heaven, but we loved the things of this world too well to barter them for joys unseen and eternal. We were told that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” and it seemed to be a story that we had heard so often that we called it “a platitude.” We were adjured to lay hold on Christ, and to find eternal life in him; but we said, “Perhaps we will tomorrow,” proving that we did not care about it, but would make God wait at, our beck and call when it should be convenient for us. You know that, if a man is in an ill state of health and you, as a doctor, go to help him; but he merely laughs at his illness, and says that he does not care about it, you are very apt to say, “Then, why should I care? You are sick, and I am anxious to heal you; but you say that you do not care to be healed. Very well, then, I will go to some other patient who will entreat me to use my best skill on his behalf, and who will be, grateful to me when I have used it. “But the Lord did not act like that with us. Notwithstanding our trifling, he was in earnest; he meant to heal our soul-sickness, and he did heal it. Determined to save us, he would not heed the rebuff of our carelessness and callousness, but still persevered in manifesting toward us that “great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins.”

To make the deformity of our character still worse, — we were all the while proud, — as proud as Lucifer. We had not any righteousness of our own, yet we thought we had. We were far off from God by wicked works, yet we

stood before him, like the Pharisee in the temple, and thanked him that we were not as other men! We were quite content, though we had nothing to be content with. We were “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,” yet we said that we were “rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing.” As for shedding penitential tears, we left, that work to those who had sinned more deeply than we had, for we imagined that, we had kept all the commandments from our youth up. Thus we despised the Savior because we exalted ourselves. We thought little of Christ because we thought much of ourselves. And so, in our pride, we dared to strut before the eternal throne as if we were some great ones, though we were but worms of the dust. I think that it is one of the most difficult things in the world to love a proud man. You can love a man, even though he has a thousand faults, if he is not proud and boastful; but when he is very proud, human nature seems to stare back from him; yet God, in his “great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins,” loved us although we were proud, and loved us out of that sinful state.

If worse could be, there was something even worse! than pride in us, for we were deceptive as well as proud. “No,” says one, “surely you cannot truthfully lay that to our charge.” Well, I have to confess that it was so with myself. I remember that, when I was ill, I said that, if God would only spare my life, I would live differently in future; but my promise was not kept, though God did spare my life. Often, after a stirring sermon, I have sought a place where I could weep in secret, and I have said, “Now will I be decided for the Lord;” but it was not so. Oh, how many times have we broken the promises and vows we made unto the Lord! Child of God, before your conversion, how many vows and covenants you made; yet your goodness was like the morning cloud or the early dew, which soon passes away. Who can love one who is not to be trusted? Yet, God, in “his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins,” loved us while we so many times deceived him.

These things which I have mentioned, have appertained to all the children of God; but there are some of them whose sins have been even greater than these. I ask every converted man here just to look through his own biography. Some of you were, perhaps, converted while you were young, and so were kept from the grosser sins into which others fall; but there were some who were suffered to go into drunkenness, or into uncleanness and all manner of iniquity. God has forgiven you, my brother, and has washed all that evil away in the precious blood of Jesus; but you feel that you can never forgive yourself. I know that I am bringing some very unhappy memories before you, of which you say, “Would God that night had never been, or that day had never passed over my head! “The Lord grant that, as you look back upon those sins of yours, you may feel deeply humbled, and, at the same time, may be devoutly grateful to God for “his great love” wherewith he hath loved you!

There have been some, who seem as if they had gone to the utmost extremity of sin, — as if they dared and defied the Most High; and yet, notwithstanding their atrocious sins, free grace has won the day. There has seemed, in some cases, to be a stern struggle between sin and grace, as if sin said, “I will provoke God till grace shall leave him;” but grace has said, “Provoked as the Lord is, yet still will he stand to his purpose of mercy; he will not turn away from the decree of his love,” Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I ask you to think this subject over in your own private meditations. There are some things that it would not be right to mention in any ear but the ear of God; for it certainly was a horrible pit out of which he took us, and miry clay indeed out of which he drew us; so we may well praise “his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in sins.”

II. The second subject for our meditation is, What God Did For Us “even when we were dead in sins.”

Well, first of all, he remained faithful to his choice of us. He had chosen his people ere the earth was, and he did not choose them in the dark. He knew right well what their nature would be, and also the practice which would grow out of their nature; so that nothing that has happened has ever surprised the Lord concerning any one of his people. He was well aware beforehand of all their corruption and filthiness; so, when he saw them acting as I have described, he did not turn from his purpose to save them. Blessed be his name for this. It is one of the wonders of his grace, God proves the greatness of his love.

Then, next, as he did not repent of his choice, so neither did he repent of his redemption of his people. You will find it recorded in Scripture that “it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart;” but you never read that he repented of redemption. Nowhere in Scripture is there such a passage as this, “It grieved the Lord at his heart that he had given his Son to die for such unworthy ones.” No, my friends, he had bought us with a price beyond all calculation, even the hearts blood of his only-begotten Son; so that, although we went from sin to sin, and for a time resisted all the calls of the gospel, he did not turn from his purpose of love and mercy, nor make his atonement for us null and void.

Then, further, in his great love for us, God would not let us die till he had brought us to Christ. Possibly, we passed through many perils, and had many escapes. John Bunyan, you will remember, was to have stood as sentinel, one night, but another soldier took his place, and was shot. John Bunyan did not know, at the time, why the exchange was made, but God had ordained that he should not die till he had been brought to Christ. So foolhardy was he that, on one occasion, he plucked the sting out of a viper with his bare hand, yet he was unhurt, for God would not let him die while he was such a desperado. And what wonderful escapes from shipwreck, from murder, from fever, from accidents in a thousand forms, some men have had, simply because God will not let them perish, for he means that they shall yet be brought as sheep into his fold. I told you, some time ago, that I once talked with a gentleman who was in the famous charge at Balaclava; and I felt moved to say to him, "Surely God had some designs of love toward you, or he would not have spared you when so many were being taken away." Well, in whatever way our lives have been spared, we ascribe it to the great love wherewith God loved us even when we were dead in sins.

We see that great love also manifested in the way in which God restrained us from many sins. There have been times in our history when, if it had not been for a mysterious check that was put upon us, we should have sinned much worse even than we did. Something of that kind happened in the case of the well-known Colonel Gardiner. He had made an appointment for the commission of a very gross sin, but the Lord had chosen him unto eternal life, so that night, which he intended to spend in sin, became the time of his conversion to God; and you know what a devout and earnest Christian he became. The Lord knows the right time to say to anyone, "Thus far shalt thou go, but no farther." He makes men's minds and hearts, like the sea, to know his will, and to move or be still at his divine command. Cannot some of you, my brethren, recollect the way in which God thus restrained you from going to an excess of riot?

And, then, his great love was seen by the way in which he kept on calling us by his grace. Some of us can scarcely tell when we were first bidden to come to the Savior. A mother's tears and a father's prayers are, however, among the fondly-cherished memories of that early call. Do not some of you remember that loving Sabbath-school teacher, and the earnestness with which she pleaded with you; and that godly minister, and how he seemed to throw his whole soul into the work of entreating you to yield yourself to the Savior? Others of you cannot forget how, with good books, letters, entreaties, and persuasions from Christian friends, you have been followed, as if the Lord had hunted you out of your sins by all the agencies that could possibly be used, yet you dodged, and twisted, and doubled, this way and that way, trying to escape from your gracious Pursuer. You were like a bird that the fowler cannot take for a long while, or like a wandering sheep that the shepherd cannot find for many a day. But the good Shepherd never gave up the search, he meant to find you, and he did. He had determined to save you, and from that determination he would not be burned aside, do whatever you might. And, at last, there came the blessed day when he subdued you unto himself. The weapons of your rebellion fell from your hands, for Christ had conquered you; and how did he do it? By "his great love" — his omnipotent grace. You were dead in sins when his Spirit came to work them upon you; but the Spirit came, in the name of the risen Savior, with such almighty force of irresistible love that you were carried captive—a willing captive — at the chariot wheels of your Divine Conqueror. Shall we ever forget that blessed time? We sing "Happy day! Happy day!" and well we may, for that conquest is the chief and foremost token of "his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins."

I will not say more about this precious truth, but I will use the few minutes still at my disposal in making a practical application of my subject.

If, dear friends, the Lord loved us with such great love even when we were dead in sins, do you think that he will ever leave us to perish? Have you indulged the notion that, under your present trial, whatever it may be, you will be deserted by your God? My dear widowed sister, do you fear that the Lord will forsake you now that your husband is dead? My friend over there, — you who have had heavy losses in business, — do you not believe that the Lord will help you through? Did he love you when you were dead in sins, and is he going to desert you now? Do you think you will ever have to ask, with the psalmist, "Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" "If you do talk like that, then ask yourself why the Lord over began his work of love upon you if he did not mean to finish it, or if he meant, after all, to cast you off? Do you think, if that was his intention, he would ever have begun with you? He knew all that would happen to you, and all that you would do, so that nothing comes unexpectedly to him. Known unto the Lord, from the beginning, were all your trials and all your sins, so that, as he still loved you, in the foresight of all that was to happen to you, do you think that he will now, or ever, cast you away from him? You know that he will not.

Again, if he so loved you even when you were dead in sins, will he deny you anything that is for his own glory, and for your own and other's good? You have been praying, but you have feared that the mercy you asked would never come. Think for a moment, — he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for you centuries before you were born, will he not freely give to you all that you ought to ask of him now that you are alive unto him? George Herbert speaks of the dew that falls upon the grass, although the grass cannot call for the dew; but you do call upon God to give you his grace, so shall not his grace come copiously to you as the dew falling when God sends it? Doth he water the earth when its dumb mouth opens? Doth he provide food for the "dumb driven cattle?" Then, will he not attend to your cries and prayers when you call upon him in the name of his well-beloved Son? If he loved you when you were a man of corruption, will he not answer your supplications now that he has in you to be an heir of heaven, and formed you in the likeness of his Son? O, beloved, be of good comfort, and let no thought of despondency, or of unbelief, ever cross your mind!

Further, if the Lord loved you thus even when you were dead in sins, ought you not now to love him very much? Oh, the love of God! The apostle does not say that God pitied us, though that is true. He does not say that the Lord had compassion upon us, though that also is true; but Paul speaks of "his great love." I can perfectly understand God's pitying me; I can perfectly understand God's having compassion on me; but I cannot comprehend God's loving me; nor can you. Think what it means, — he loves you. Sweet above all other things is love; — a mother's love, a father's love, a husband's love, a wife's love; — but all these are only faint images of the love of God. You know how greatly you are cheered the earthly love of one who is dear to you; but Paul says that God loves you. He that made the heavens and the earth, before whom you are as an emmet, has set his heart's affection upon you. He loves you so much that he has made great sacrifices for you, he is daily blessing you, and he will not be in heaven without you. So dear, so strong is his love to you, and it was so even when you were dead in sins. Oh, then, will you not love him much in return for his "great love" to you? Is anything too hard for you to bear for his dear sake, or anything too difficult for you to do for him who loved you so? Dear Lord, we give ourselves to thee; 'tis all that we can do.

Another reflection for you, my Christian friend, is this. If God so loved you even when you were dead in sins, ought not you to love those who treat you badly? There are many people, in this world, who seem as if they could not do anything but ugly thing. They have not a generous spot in their nature; they are cross-grained, ever quarrelling, and he who would fain live peaceably with them sometimes finds it very hard work. I know some gentle spirits that are deeply wounded by the hard and cruel things that are said or done to them by their relatives or companions. Well, dear friends, if any of us are treated thus, let us love these cruel people, let us cover their unkindness over with our love; for, if God loved us even when we were dead in sins, — when he could not see anything in us to love, we also ought to love others for his sake. Even when we see a thousand faults in them, we must, say, "As God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, so do we forgive you," It is a grand thing to be able to bury in eternal forgetfulness every unkind word or act that has ever caused us pain. If any of you have any thought of anger in your heart against anyone, — if you have any feeling of resentment, — if you have any recollection of injuries, — if there is aught that vexes and grieves you, come and bury it all in the grave of Jesus; for if he loved you when you were dead in sins, it cannot be half so wonderful for you to love your poor fellow-sinner whatever ill-treatment you may have received at his hands.

My last word is to the unconverted, and it is a very sweet and precious word. Do you see, unconverted man, that you need never say, "I dare not come to God through Jesus Christ, because then is nothing good in me?" You need never say that, for Paul speaks of "his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins." Now, if all his people were loved by him when they were dead in sins, how can you think that God requires anything good in man as the cause or reason for his love? Of all the saints in heaven it may be said that God loved them because he would do it; for, by nature, there was nothing more in them for God to love than there was in the very devils in hell. And as to his saints on earth, if God loves them, — and he does, — it is simply because he will do it, for there was no goodness whatever in them by nature; God loves them in the infinite sovereignty of his great loving nature. Well, then, poor soul, why should not God love you? And since he bids you come to him, however empty you may be of everything that is good, come to him, and welcome. Let the text knock on the head, once for all, all ideas of doing anything to win the love of God; and if you feel yourself to be the very worst, and lowest, and meanest, of the human race, I rejoice that you feel that, for the Lord loves to look upon those who are self-emptied, and who have nothing good of their own to plead before him. These are the people who will value his love, and upon such people as these it is that he bestows his love. "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that, are sick." The hospital is for the man who is diseased, not for the one who is in health; and the Lord Jesus Christ has opened a Hospital for Incurables, — for those who cannot be cured by all the medicines of human morality and outward religion. Christ bids them come to him that he may make them whole.

I wish I had the power to speak of the love of God to the sinner in such a way that he would come to the Lord Jesus Christ, but I will try to put the brush very plainly and simply, and then I will close my discourse. My hearer, whatever thou mayest have been up to this moment, — if thou hast been a despiser of God, an infidel, a blasphemer, — if thou hast added sin to sin, if thou hast made thyself black as hell with enormous transgressions, — yet all this is no reason why God should not have chosen thee, and loved thee; and all this is no reason why he should not now forgive thee, and accept thee? Nay, he puts it thus in his Word: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Come, then, ye blackest of sinners, — ye who feel yourselves unfit to be found in a house of prayer, — ye who, like the publican in the temple, scarcely dare to lift up your eyes to heaven, — you condemned ones, who fear that there is no hope for you, — let me assure you that in you there is space for God’s mercy to be displayed, elbow-room for his grace to work. Come to Jesus just as you are; accept the atonement made by his own blood, and be saved here and now, for he waiteth to be gracious, and he hath said, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” I recollect the time, many years ago, when I would have given both my eyes to hear such truth as I have preached tonight. It would not have mattered to me who had told it to me. If it had been a man of stammering tongue and faulty grammar, if he had but said to me, “Salvation is of God’s grace, not of your merit; it is of God’s goodness, not of your holiness; you have nothing to do but to rest on what Christ has done, for God loves even thee who are dead in sins,” — if I had known that, I think I should have found peace with God long before I did. Does anyone say, “But I want to feel, and I want to do, and I want to find out this, and that, and the other?” You want nothing of the kind, sinner. Christ has done it all. To take any merit of your own to Christ, would be worse than carrying coals to Newcastle. Come just as you are, empty-handed sinner, bankrupt sinner, starving sinner, thou who art at the very gates of hell, for —

“There is life for a look at the Crucified One;

There is life at this moment for thee;

Then look, sinner, — look unto him, and be saved, —

Unto him who was nailed to the tree.”