

# Spurgeon on Numbers

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### **The Book of Numbers** **Sermons, Notes and Exposition** **by C H Spurgeon** **Updated 1/6/2014**

## **Numbers 11:1** **Against Murmuring**

**Sermon Notes**  
**C H Spurgeon**

**And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. — Numbers 11:1**

Rehearse the historical fact. Observe how the mischief began in the outskirts among the mixed multitude, and how the fire of the Lord burned in the uttermost parts of the camp. The great danger of the church lies in her camp-followers or hangers-on: they infect the true Israel. Hence the need of guarding the entrance of the church, and keeping up discipline within it. Grumbling, discontent, ungrateful complaining — these are grievous offences against our gracious God.

We shall consider the subject in a series of observations.

### **I. A DISSATISFIED SPIRIT CAUSES DISPLEASURE TO THE LORD.**

1. This we might infer from our own feelings, when dependents, children, servants, or receivers of alms are always grumbling. We grow weary of them, and angry with them.
2. In the case of men towards God it is much worse for them to murmur, since they deserve no good at his hands, but the very reverse. "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins" (Lam. 3:39; Ps. 103:10 - [Spurgeon note](#))?
3. In that case also it is a reflection upon the Lord's goodness, wisdom, truth, and power. See the complaint in verses 4-6.
4. The evil lusting which attends the complaining proves its injurious character. We are ready for anything when we quarrel with God (1 Cor. 10:5-12).
5. God thinks so ill of it that his wrath burns, and chastisement is not long withheld. See verse 33 of this chapter, and other parts of Scripture.

### **II. A DISSATISFIED SPIRIT FANCIES IT WOULD FIND PLEASURE IN THINGS DENIED IT.**

Israel had manna, but sighed for fish, cucumbers, melons, onions, etc. But to set an imaginary value upon that which we have not:

1. Is foolish, childish, pettish.
2. Is injurious to ourselves, for it prevents our enjoying what we already have. It leads men to slander angels' food and call it "this light bread" It led Haman to think nothing of his prosperity because a single person refused him reverence (Esther 5:13).
3. Is slanderous towards God, and ungrateful to him.
4. Leads to rebellion, falsehood, envy, and all manner of sins.

### III. A DISSATISFIED SPIRIT FINDS NO PLEASURE FOR ITSELF EVEN WHEN ITS WISH IS FULFILLED.

The Israelites had flesh in superabundance in answer to their foolish prayers, but:

1. It was attended with leanness of soul (Ps. 106:15 - [Spurgeon note](#)).
2. It brought satiety;—"until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you" (verse 20).
3. It caused death. He "slew the fattest of them" (Ps. 78:31 - [Spurgeon note](#)).
4. It thus led to mourning on all sides. Kibroth Hattaavah, or, "the graves of lust" was the name of this station (verse 34).

### IV. A DISSATISFIED SPIRIT SHOWS THAT THE MIND NEEDS REGULATING.

Grace would put our desires in order, and keep our thoughts and affections in their proper places, thus:

1. Content with such things as we have (Hebrews 13:5 [note]).
2. Towards other things moderate in desire. "Give me neither poverty nor riches" (Proverbs 30:8).
3. Concerning earthly things which may be lacking, fully resigned. "Not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39).
4. First, and most eagerly, desiring God. "My soul thirsteth for God" etc., (Ps. 42:2 [Spurgeon's note](#)).
5. Next, coveting earnestly the best gifts (1 Cor. 12:31).
6. Following ever in love the more excellent way (1 Cor. 12:31 )

#### Helpful Notes

I have read of Caesar, that, having prepared a great feast for his nobles and friends, it fell out that the day appointed was so extremely foul that nothing could be done to the honor of their meeting; whereupon he was so displeased and enraged, that he commanded all them that had bows to shoot up their arrows at Jupiter, their chief god, as in defiance of him for that rainy weather; which, when they did, their arrows fell short of heaven, and fell upon their own heads, so that many of them were very sorely wounded. So all our mutterings and murmurings, which are so many arrows shot at God himself, will return upon our own pates, or hearts; they reach not him, but they will hit us; they hurt not him, but they will wound us therefore, it is better to be mute than to murmur; it is dangerous to contend with one who is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29 note).—Thomas Brooks

God hath much ado with us. Either we lack health, or quietness, or children, or wealth, or company, or ourselves in all these. It is a wonder the Israelites found not fault with the want of sauce to their quails, or with their old clothes, or their solitary way. Nature is moderate in her desires; but conceit is insatiable.— Bp. Hall

Murmuring is a quarreling with God, and inveighing against him. "They spake against God" (Num. 21:5). The murmurer saith interpretatively that God hath not dealt well with him, and that he hath deserved better from him. The murmurer chargeth God with folly. This is the language, or rather blasphemy, of a murmuring spirit — God might have been a wiser and a better God. The murmurer is a mutineer. The Israelites are called in the same text "murmurers" and "rebels" (Num. 17:10); and is not rebellion as the sin of witchcraft? (1 Sam. 15:23). Thou that art a murmurer art in the account of God as a witch, a sorcerer, as one that deals with the devil. This is a sin of the first magnitude. Murmuring often ends in cursing: Micah's mother fell to cursing when the talents of silver were taken away (see note Judges 17:2). So doth the murmurer when a part of his estate is taken away. Our murmuring is the devil's music; this is that sin which God cannot bear: "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me?" (Num. 14:27). It is a sin which whets the sword against a people; it is a land-destroying sin: "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer" (1 Cor. 10:10). — Thomas Watson

Losing our temper with God is a more common thing in the spiritual life than many suppose.— F. W. Faber

Life is a field of nettles to some men. Their fretful, worrying tempers are always pricking out through the tender skin of their uneasiness. Why, if they were set down in Paradise, carrying their bad mind with them, they would fret at the good angels, and the climate, and the colors even of the roses.— Dr. Bushnell

I dare no more fret than curse or swear.— John Wesley

A child was crying in passion, and I heard its mother say, "If you cry for nothing, I will soon give you something to cry for" From the sound of her hand, I gathered the moral that those who cry about nothing are making a rod for their own backs, and will probably be made to smart under it.

**See related resource** - See notes on doing all things without grumbling or disputing **Philippians 2:14** and notes on giving thanks in everything **1Thessalonians 5:18**

## Numbers 27:5

### Women's Rights -- A Parable

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

**“And Moses brought their cause before the LORD.” — Numbers 17:5**

BY the help of God the Holy Spirit, I want to use this incident, which forms a kind of episode in the rehearsal of the history of Israel's forty years' wanderings in the wilderness, for a twofold purpose. First, let me indicate its general teaching, and, secondly, let me take it as a ground of appeal to certain special classes.

#### I. First, I will try to indicate Its General Teaching.

I would ask your attention, and exhibit for your imitation, the faith which these five young women, the daughters of Zelophehad, possessed with regard to the promised inheritance. You must remember that the children of Israel were still in the wilderness. They had not seen the promised land, but God had made a covenant with them that they should possess it. He had declared that he would bring them into a land which flowed with milk and honey, and there plant them; and that that land should belong to them and to their descendants by a covenant of salt for ever (See [Trumbull's Covenant of Salt](#)). Now, these women believed in this heritage. They were not like Esau, who thought so little of the inheritance which was his birthright that he sold it to his brother Jacob for a mess of pottage; but they believed it to be really worth having. They regarded it, though they had never beheld it, as being something exceedingly substantial, and so looking upon it, they were afraid lest they should be left out when the land was divided; and though they had never seen it, yet, being persuaded that it was somewhere, and that the children of Israel would have it in due time, their anxiety was lest they, having no brothers, should be forgotten in the distribution, and so should lose their rights. They were anxious about an inheritance which they had never seen with their eyes, and therein I hold them up to the imitation of this present assembly. There is an inheritance that is far better than the land of Canaan. Oh, that we all believed in it, and longed for it! It is an inheritance, however, which mortal eye hath not seen, and the sounds whereof mortal ear hath not heard. It is a city whose streets are gold, but none of us have ever trodden them. Never hath traveler to that country come back to tell us of its glories. There the music never ceases; no discord ever mingles in it, it is sublime, but no member of the heavenly choir has ever come to write out for us the celestial score, or to —

**“Teach us some melodious sonnet  
Sung by flaming tongues above.”**

It is not a matter of sight; it must be to each one of us a matter of faith. By faith we know that there is another and a better land. By faith we understand that our disembodied souls shall mount to be with Christ, and that, after a while, our bodies also shall rise to join our spirits, that body and soul may together be glorified for ever in the presence of our gracious Redeemer. We have never seen this land, however; but there are some of us who as firmly believe in it as if we had seen it, and are as certain of it and as fully persuaded as though these ears of ours had listened to its songs of joy, and these feet of ours had trodden its streets of gold.

There was this feature, too, about the faith of these five women they knew that the inheritance was only to be won by encountering great difficulties. The spies who came back from the land had said that the men who dwelt in it were giants. They said, “We were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.” There was many a man, in the camp of Israel, I have no doubt, who said, “Well, I would sell my share cheaply enough; for though the land be there, we can never win it; they have cities walled up to heaven, and they have chariots of iron; we can never win the land.” But these women believed that, although they could not fight, God could; and though they had never put their fingers to a more terrible instrument than a needle, yet did they believe that the same right arm which got to itself the victory when they went with Miriam, dancing to the timbrel's jubilant sound, would get the victory again, and bring God's people in, and drive the Canaanites out, even though they had walled cities and chariots of iron.

So these women had strong faith. I would to God that you had the same, all of you, dear friends; but I know that some of you, who do believe that there is a land which floweth with milk and honey, are half afraid that you shall never reach it. You are vexed with

many doubts because of your own weakness, which, indeed, should not, merely make you doubt, but should make you utterly despair if the gaining of the goodly land depended upon your own fighting for it, and winning it; but, inasmuch as “the gift of God is eternal life,” and God himself will give it to us, and inasmuch as Jesus has gone up on high to prepare a place for us, and has promised that he will come again, and receive us unto himself that where he is there, we may be also, I would to God that our doubts and fears were banished, and that we said within ourselves, “We are well able to go up and attack the land, for the Lord, even the Lord of hosts, is with us; Jehovah-nissi is our banner; the Lord our righteousness is our helper, and we shall surely enter into the place of the beloved people of God, and shall join the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven.”

I commend the faith of these women to you because, believing in the land, and believing that it would be won, they were not to be put about by the ill report of some who said that it was not a good land. There were ten out of the twelve who spied out the land who said, “It is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof.” They brought back an evil report. But, whoever may have been perverted by these falsehoods, these five women were not. Others said, “Why, the land is full of pestilence and hornets, and those who live in it now are dying,” forgetting that God was making them die in order to bring in the children of Israel in their stead; and so they said, “who cares to have a portion there? Give us the leeks, and the garlic, and the onions of Egypt, and let us sit again by the flesh-pots that we had at Rameses; but as for going on to this Canaan, we will never do it.” But these five women, who knew that, if there were troubles in the household, they would be sure to have their share of them; that if the bread ran short, they would be the most likely to feel the straitness of it; and that if it were a land of sickness, they would have to be the nurses, yet coveted to have their share in it, for they did not believe the ill report. They said, “No; God hath said it is a good land, a land of hills and valleys, a land of brooks and rivers, a land of oil olive and honey, a land out of whose hills we may dig iron, and brass; and we will not believe what thee spies say; it is a good land, and we will go in and ask for our share, of it.” So I commend their faith in this respect.

I know that some of you are occasionally met by sneering skeptics, and they say to you, “There is no such place as heaven; we have never seen it; are yet such fools as to believe in it? Are you going on a pilgrimage over hedge and ditch, helter-skelter, to a country that you know nothing of? Are you going to trust that old-fashioned Book, and take God’s Word, and nothing but his Word, and believe it? “Oh, I hope there are many of us — would that all of us were in that happy position! — who can say, “It is even so.” Stand back, Mr. Atheist, and stop us not, for we are well persuaded that ours is no wild-goose chase. Stand back, Sir Ironical Skeptic; laugh if thou wilt. Thou wilt laugh on the other side of thy face one of these days, and we shall have the laugh of thee at that time. At any rate, if there be no heaven, we shall be as well off as thou wilt be, but if there be a hell, where, O where, wilt thou be, and what will thy portion be? So we go on our own way confident and sure, nothing doubting; believing as surely as we believe in our own existence, that —

**“Jesus, the Judge will come  
To take his people up To their eternal home;” —**

and believing that one hour with him will be worth all the trials of the road; worth enduring ten thousand deaths, if we could endure them, in order to win it; and that, moreover, by God’s grace we shall win it.

**“We shall behold his face,  
We shall his name adore,  
And sing the wonders of his grace  
Henceforth for evermore.”**

So I hold up these daughters of Zelophehad to your commendation and imitation on account of their faith.

But there was another point. Feeling certain concerning the land, we must next commend them for their anxiety to possess a portion in it. Why did they think so much about it? I heard someone say, the other day, speaking of certain young people, “I do not like to see young women religious; they ought to be full of fun and mirth, and not have their minds filled with such profound thoughts.” Now, I will be bound to say that this kind of philosophy was accredited in the camp of Israel, and that there were a great many young women there who said, “Oh, there is time enough to think about the good land when we get there! Let us be polishing up our mirrors; let us be seeing to our dresses; let us understand how to put our fingers upon the timbrel when the time comes for it; but as far as prosing about portion among those Hivite and Hittites, what is the good of it? We will not bother ourselves about that.” But such was the strength of the faith of the five women that it led them to feel a deep anxiety for a share in the inheritance. They were not such simpletons as to live only for the present. They had outgrown their babyhood; they were not satisfied to live merely for the day. They knew that, in due time, the tribes would cross the Jordan, and would be in the promised land, so they began, as it were, like good housewives, to think about where their portion would be, and to reflect that, were they left out when the muster-roll was read, and should no portion be appointed for Tirzah, and no portion for Milcah, and no place for any of the five sisters, they would be like beggars and outcasts in the midst of the land. The thought of all others having their plot of ground, and their family having none, made them anxious about it. O dear friends, how anxious you and I ought to be to make our calling and election sure,

and how solemnly should that question of the Countess of Huntingdon come home to our hearts, —

**“But can I bear the piercing thought —  
What if my name should be left out,  
When thou for them shalt call?”**

Suppose I should have no portion in the skies! O ye foundations of chrysolite and all manner of precious stones, ye gates of pearl, ye walls of jasper, must I never own you? O troops of angels, and armies of the blood-bought, must I never wave the palm or wear the crown in your midst? Must the word that salutes me be that awful sentence, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire”? Is there no place for me, no room for me in the inheritance of the saints? I do beseech you, never be satisfied till you can answer this question in the affirmative, and say, “Yes, I have a place in Jesus’ heart; I have been washed in Jesus’ blood; and therefore I shall be with Jesus where he is in his glory when the fitting time cometh.” Oh, I would have you who are not sure about this, be as anxious as these women were! Let it press upon your hearts, let it even take the color from your cheek, sooner than that you should have an empty and frivolous gaiety and mirth, which will entice you down to the pit. Oh, do make sure work for eternity! Whatever else you trifle with, do seek to have an anchor that will hold you fast in the last great storm. Do seek to be affianced unto Christ. Be sure that you are founded upon the Rock of ages, where alone we can safely build for eternity.

These women were taken up with prudent anxious thoughts about their own part in the land of promise, and they were right in desiring to have a portion there when they recollected that the land had been given by covenant to their fathers. They might well wish to have a part in a thing good enough to be a covenant blessing. The land had been promised over and over again by divine authority; they might well wish to have a share in that which God’s own lips had promised. It was a land to bring them into which God had smitten the firstborn of Egypt, and saved his people by the sprinkling of blood; they might well desire a land which cost so great a price to bring them to it. Besides, it was a goodly land; it was the most princely of all lands, peerless amongst all the territories of earth. Its products were most rich. The grapes of Eshcol, what could equal them? Its pomegranates, its olives, its rivers, the land that, flowed with milk and honey, there was nothing like it in all the world besides. These women might well say, “Let us have a portion there!”

And, my dear hearers, the heaven of which we have to tell you is a land so good that it was spoken of in the covenant before the world was. It has been promised to the people of God ten thousand times. Jesus Christ has shed his precious blood that he might open the gates of it, and bring us in. And it is such a land that, if you had but seen it, if you could but know what it is, you would pine away in stopping here; for it’s very dust is gold, its meanest joys are richer than the transports of earth, and the poorest in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he who is the mightiest prince in the kingdoms of this world. Oh, that your mouths were set a-longing after the feasts of paradise! Oh that ye pined to be where Jesus is; and then, surely, you would be anxious to know whether you had a portion there.

I hold these women up as an example, because they believed in the unseen inheritance, and they were anxious to get their portion in it.

But I must commend then yet again for the way in which they set about the business. I do not find that they went complaining from tent to tent that they were afraid that they had no portion. Many doubters do that, they tell their doubts and fears to others, and they get no further. But these five women went straight away to Moses. He was at their head, he was their mediator; and then it is said that “Moses brought their cause before the Lord.” You see, these women did not try to get what they wanted by force. They did not say, “We will take care to get our share of the land when we get there.” They did not suppose that they had any merit which they might plead, and so get it; but they went straight away to Moses, and Moses took their cause, and laid it before the Lord. Dost thou want a portion in heaven, sinner? Go straight away to Jesus, and Jesus will take thy cause, and lay it before the Lord. It is a very sorry one as it stands by itself; but he has such a sweet way of so mixing himself up with thee, and thyself with him, that his cause and thy cause will be one cause, and the Father will give him good success, and give thee good success too. Oh, that someone here would breathe the prayer, if he has never prayed before, “Savior, wilt thou see that I have a portion in the skies? Precious Savior, take my poor heart, and wash it in thy precious blood, and change it by thy Holy Spirit, and make me ready to dwell where perfect saints are! Oh, do thou undertake my cause for me, thou blessed Advocate, and plead it before thy Father’s face! “That is the way to have the business of salvation effectually done. Put it out of your own hands into the hands of the Prophet like unto Moses, and you will surely speed.

**Now, observe the success of these women.**

The Lord accepted their plea, for he said unto Moses, “The daughters of Zelophehad speak right.” Yes; and when thou criest to him, and when his dear Son takes thy prayer to him, God will say, “That sinner speaks right.” Beat, on thy breast, and cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” and he will say, “That soul speaks right.” Young woman, imitate these five sisters now. May God the Holy Spirit bring you to imitate them by humbly offering your plea through the Mediator, Jesus Christ, and God will say, “Ah, she speaks right, I have heard her; I have accepted her.” And then God said that these sisters should have their portion just the same as the

men had, that they should have their share of land just as if they had inherited it as sons, and so will God say to every seeking sinner. Whatever may be, the disability under which you labor, whatever bar there may have seemed to be to your claim, you shall inherit amongst the children, you shall take your part and your lot amongst the chosen people of God. Christ has set your cause before his Father, and it shall be unto you, poor sinner, according to your desire, and you shall have a part amongst the Lord's people.

I wish I had power to press this matter more immediately home upon you. Many of us who are now present are saved. It is a great satisfaction to remember how large a proportion of my congregation has come to Christ; but, ah, there are many, many here who are — well, what are they? They do not know that they have any inheritance. They cannot read their title clear to mansions in the skies; and, what is worse, they are unconcerned about it. If they were troubled about it, we should have hope concerning them; but no, they go their way, and, like Pliable, having got out of the Slough of Despond, they turn round, and say to Christians, “You may have the brave country all to yourselves for all we care.” They are so fond of present pleasure, so easily enticed by the wily whispers of the arch-enemy, so soon overcome by their own passions, that they find it too hard to be Christians; to love Christ is a thing too difficult for them. Ah! may God meet with you, and make you wiser! Poor souls, you will perish, some of you will perish while you are looking on at this world's bubbles and baubles! You will perish; you will go down to hell with this earth's joys in your mouths, and they will not sweeten those mouths when the pangs of hell get hold upon you! Your life is short; your candle flickers in its socket. You must soon go the way of all flesh. We never meet one week after another without some death occurring between. Out of this vast number, surely it is all but impossible that we should ever all meet here again. Perhaps, before this day week, some of us will have passed the curtain, have learned the great secret, and have entered the invisible world. Whose portion will it, be? If it be thine, dear hearer, wilt thou mount to worlds of joy, or shall —

**“Devils plunge thee down to hell  
In infinite despair?”**

God make that a matter of concern with us first, and then may we come to Jesus, and receive the sprinkling of precious blood, and thus may he make it a matter of confidence with us that we are saved through him, and shall be partakers with them that are sanctified!

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## **II. Secondly, I am going to use the whole incident as a Ground Of Appeal To Certain Special Classes.**

Does it not strike you that, there is here a special lesson for our unconverted sisters? Here are five daughters, I suppose young women, certainly unmarried women, and these five were unanimous in seeking to have a portion where God had promised it to his people. Have I any young women here who have not acted like that? I am afraid I have! Blessed be God for the many who come in among us who become solemnly impressed, and give their young days to Jesus; but there are some, there may be some here, of another mind. The temptations of this wicked Metropolis, the pleasures of this perilous city, lead them away from the right path, and prevent them from giving a fair hearing to God's Word. Well, but you are here, my sister, and may I, as a brother, put this question to you? Do you not desire a portion in the skies? Have you no wish for glory? Have you no longing for the everlasting crown? Can you sell Christ for a few hours of mirth? Will you give him up for a giddy song or an idle companion? Those are not your friends who would lead you from the paths of righteousness. Count them not dear, but loathe them, if they would entice you from Christ. But, as you will certainly die, and will as certainly live for ever in endless woe or in boundless bliss, do see to your souls. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” and all other needful things shall be added to you. You have come fresh from the country, young woman, and, leaving your mother's care, it is very likely that you have begun to absent yourself from the means of grace, but I charge you not to do so. On the contrary, let this bind you to your mother's God, and may you feel that, whereas you may have hitherto neglected God's house, and profaned God's day, yet henceforth, like the daughters of Zelophehad, you will seek to have a portion in the promised land.

The subject bears another way. Has it not a voice, and a loud voice too, to the children of godly parents? I like these young women saying that their father did not die; with Korah, but that he only died the ordinary death which fell upon others because of the sin of the wilderness; and also their saying, “Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath, no son?” It is a good thing to see this respect to parents, this desire to keep up the honor of the family. I was thinking whether there may not be some here, some children of godly parents, who would feel it a sad thing if they should bring disgrace upon the family name. Is it so, that though your father has been for many years a Christian, he has not one to succeed him? O young man, have you no ambition to stand in his place, no wish to let his name be perpetuated in the Church of God? Well, if the sons have no such ambition or if there be none, let the daughters say to one another, “Our father never disgraced his profession, he did not die in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the Lord, but he served the Lord faithfully, and we will not let his name be blotted out from Israel; we will join ourselves to the people of God, and the family shall be represented still.” But, oh, how I desire that the brothers and sisters would come together, and what a delightful thing it would be to see the whole family! In that household

there were only five girls, but they all had their heritage. O father, would you not be happy if it should be so with your children? Mother, would you not be ready to say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy Word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation," if you could see all your children brought in? And why not, my brethren, why not? We will give God no rest until it is so; we will plead with him until they are all saved. And, young people, why not? The Lord's mercy is not straitened. The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, and your father's God, we trust, will be your God. Oh, that you would follow in the footsteps of your parents so far as they followed Christ! These daughters of Zelophehad seem to me to turn preachers, and I stand here to speak for them, and all five of them say to you, "We gained our inheritance by seeking for it through a mediator. Young women, brothers and sisters, you shall gain it, too, by seeking it through a Savior."

**And does not this text also speak to another class — to orphans?** These good girls had lost their parents, or otherwise the question would not have arisen. Father and mother had passed away, and therefore they had to go to Moses for themselves. When the parents could not come to Moses for them, they came for themselves. Think of the skies a moment, some of you. Perhaps you were this morning in a very different place, but think of the skies a minute. No, I do not mean the meteoric stones; I do not mean the stars, nor yon bright moon; but I want you to think of your mother, who is yonder. Do you remember when she gave you the last kiss, and bade you farewell, and said, "Follow me, my children, follow me to the skies?" Think of a father who is there, his voice, doubtless, helping to swell the everlasting hallelujah. Does he not beckon you from the battlements of heaven, and cry, "Children of my loins, follow me, as I followed Christ"? Some of us have an honored grandsire there, an honored grandmother there. Many of you have little infants there, young angels whom God lent you for a little time, and then took them to heaven to show you the way, to lure you to go upwards too. You have all some dear friends there with whom you walked to God's house in company. They have gone, but I charge you, by the living God, to follow them. Break not your households in twain. Let no solemn rifts and rents come into the family; but, as they have gone to their rest, God grant unto you by the same road to come and rest eternally too. Jesus Christ is ready to receive sinners; he is ready to receive you, and if you trust him, the joy and bliss which now your friends partake of shall be yours also.

Daughters of godly parents, children of those who have gone before to eternal glory, I entreat you look to Jesus; go and present your suit to him now. It shall surely prosper. If the question was once doubtful, it has now become "a statute of judgment." The Lord has commanded it. May God bless these counsels and exhortations to you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

## Numbers 32:23

### The Great Sin of Doing Nothing

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**"But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out." — Numbers 32:23.**

THERE are many dear friends engaged in business who can only reach the Tabernacle in time for the middle of the service, and therefore they lose the reading of the Scriptures and the exposition, which make up a whole with the sermon. This is a great loss to them, but as it is not their fault we must not let them suffer for it, so far as we can remedy the evil. With this design let me explain to them that, according to the chapter which we have read and expounded, the Israelites had conquered the country possessed by Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites; and the tribes of Reuben and Gad, having great quantities of cattle, thought that so rich a pasture-country would be eminently suitable for them and for their flocks. They were no bad judges, for the country was specially fitted for sheep-farming. They therefore asked of Moses that they might have that country to be theirs. But Moses objected. Did they mean to sit still and enjoy that country, and then leave the rest of the tribes to cross the Jordan, and to fight for their possessions? If so, he declared that it was a very evil course to take — that they were selfish in seeking their own ease, and that they would be discouraging God's people, and doing all sorts of mischief: He therefore proposed to them that, if they were to have that conquered country for their own, they should at least cross the river with their brethren, and fight and continue fighting until the land on the other side of Jordan had been cleared of its old inhabitants, and the whole of Israel could take the whole of the country, and each tribe could possess its portion. He put it to them as a matter of honor, and as a matter of right, that they ought to help in conquering the rest of the land. Why should they receive their lot without fighting, and leave the other tribes to bear the toil and danger of war? Had not God bidden them all to go up and drive out the condemned Canaanites? How could they evade their duty without great sin? He would have them take their full share in the war, and on that condition they might have the rich meadows of Bashan, but not else. This was clearly just and equitable, and commended itself to those concerned. They at once agreed to the proposal, and Moses, to enforce the agreement, told them in the words of the text that, if they did not keep their covenant, and give all due aid to their brethren, then they would sin against God; and they might be sure that their sin would find them out.

I remarked in reading the chapter that Moses spoke very wisely, very forcibly, very honestly; and the people were very pliant. They yielded to his persuasions, and the difficulty which threatened to divide the nation was readily got over. It is well to have a wise leader. It is well for him when he leads a reasonable people. Oh, that I may be able to-night to speak a word in season, and may your ears be ready to hear it! May the Lord bring as gracious an issue out of this service as he did out of the discourse of his servant Moses! To his Holy Spirit shall be all the praise.

We shall speak at this time, first, of what was this sin? Secondly, what would be the chief sin of that sin? "If ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord." This would be the peculiar atrocity of their sin, that it would be leveled at God himself. And then there is a third point: What would the consequence of such sin? "Be sure your sin will find you out." They would be guilty, and would not long go unpunished.

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### **I. First, then, What Was This Sin? What is this sin about which the Spirit of God says by Moses, "Be sure your sin will find you out?"**

A learned divine has delivered a sermon upon the sin of murder from this text, another upon theft, another upon falsehood. Now they are very good sermons, but they have nothing to do with this text, if it be read as Moses uttered it. If you take the text as it stands, there is nothing in it about murder, or theft, or anything of the kind. In fact, it is not about what men do, but it is about what men do not do. The iniquity of doing nothing is a sin which is not so often spoken of as it should be. A sin of omission is clearly aimed at in this warning, — "If ye will not do so, be sure your sin will find you out."

What, then, was this sin? Remember that it is the sin of God's own people. It is not the sin of Egyptians and Philistines, but the sin of God's chosen nation; and therefore this text is for you that belong to any of the tribes of Israel — you to whom God has given a portion among his beloved ones. It is to you, professed Christians and church members, that the text comes, "Be sure your sin will find you out." And what is that sin? Very sadly common it is among professed Christians, and needs to be dealt with: it is the sin which leads any to forget their share in the holy war which is to be carried out for God and for his church. A great many wrongs are tangled together in this crime, and we must try to separate them, and set them in order before your eyes.

First, it was the sin of idleness and of self-indulgence. "We have cattle: here is a land that yields much pasture: let us have this for our cattle, and we will build folds for our sheep with the abundant stones that lie about, and we will repair these cities of the Amorites, and we will dwell in them. They are nearly ready for us, and there shall our little ones dwell in comfort. We do not care about fighting: we have seen enough of it already in the wars with Sihon and Og. Reuben would rather abide by the sheepfolds. Gad has more delight in the bleating of the sheep and in the folding of the lambs in his bosom than in going forth to battle." Alas, the tribe of Reuben is not dead, and the tribe of Gad has not passed away! Many who are of the household of faith are equally indisposed to exertion, equally fond of ease. Hear them say, "Thank God we are safe! We have passed from death unto life. We have named the name of Christ; we are washed in his precious blood, and therefore we are secure." Then, with a strange inconsistency, they permit the evil of the flesh to crave carnal ease, and they cry, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Spiritual self-indulgence is a monstrous evil; yet we see it all around. On Sunday these loafers must be well fed. They look out for such sermons as will feed their souls. The thought does not occur to these people that there is something else to be done besides feeding. Soul-saving is pushed into the background. The crowds are perishing at their gates; the multitudes with their sins defile the air; the age is getting worse and worse, and man, by a process of evolution, is evolving a devil; and yet these people want pleasant things preached to them. They eat the fat and drink the sweet, and they crowd to the feast of fat things full of marrow, and of wines on the lees well refined — spiritual festivals are their delight: sermons, conferences, Bible-readings, and so forth, are sought after, but regular service in ordinary ways is neglected. Not a hand's turn will they do. They gird on no armor, they grasp no sword, they wield no sling, they throw no stone. No, they have gotten their possession; they know they have, and they sit down in carnal security, satisfied to do nothing. They neither work for life, nor from life: they are arrant sluggards, as lazy as they are long. Nowhere are they at home except where they can enjoy themselves, and take things easy. They love their beds, but the Lord's fields they will neither plough nor reap. This is the sin pointed out in the text — "If ye do not go forth to the battles of the Lord, and contend for the Lord God and for his people, ye do sin against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out." The sin of doing nothing is about the biggest of all sins, for it involves most of the others. The sin of sitting still while your brethren go forth to war breaks both tables of the law, and has in it a huge idolatry of self, which neither allows love to God or man. Horrible idleness! God save us from it!

This sin may be viewed under another aspect, as selfishness and unbrotherliness. Gad and Reuben ask to have their inheritance at once, and to make themselves comfortable in Bashan, on this side Jordan. What about Judah, Levi, Simeon, Benjamin, and all the rest of the tribes? How are they to get their inheritance? They do not care, but it is evident that Bashan is suitable for themselves with their multitude of cattle. Some of them reply, "You see, they must look to themselves, as the proverb hath it, 'Every man for himself, and God for us all.'" Did I not hear some one in the company say, "Am I my brother's keeper?" I know that gentleman. I



heard his voice years ago. His name is Cain, and I have this to say to him: it is true that he is not his brother's keeper, but he is his brother's killer. Every man is either the keeper of his brother, or the destroyer of his brother. Soul-murder can be wrought without an act or even a will; it can be, and is constantly, accomplished by neglect. Yonder perishing heathen — does not the Lord enquire, "Who slew all these?" The millions of this city unevangelized — who is guilty of their blood? Are not idle Christians starving the multitude by refusing to hand out the bread of life? Is not this a grievous sin?

"But oh," says another, "they can conquer the land themselves. God is with them, and he can do his own work, and therefore I do not see that I need trouble myself about other people." That is selfishness; and selfishness is never worse than when it puts on the garb of religion. The boy at school, who selfishly feeds himself upon his luxuries, and gives nothing to his young companions, is generally their ridicule. He is the greedy boy whom all despise. A man with large stores, who, in time of famine, would feed himself but never think of the poor, is despised among men. But what shall I say of the man who, concerning the things of the soul — concerning heaven, and hell, and Christ, and eternity — is so selfish that, being saved himself, he cares not one jot for others? He is so unbrotherly that I am half afraid he is no brother. He is so inhuman that I can scarcely think a touch of the life of Christ can ever have quickened him. How is he a Christian who is not like Christ, but who just feels, "Well, I am all right; and if I look to myself other people must look to themselves. God will see to them all, no doubt! I have nothing to do with it?" Now unless we shake off that horrible selfishness, and feel that the very essence of our religion lies in love, and that one of the first-fruits of it is to make us care about the salvation of our fellow-men — unless, I say, we shake that off and go forth to fight the Lord's battles — then this text threatens us very solemnly, — "If ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out." O my brothers, hear ye this text, and let it operate with salutary influence to produce in you constant effort for the salvation of those around you!

But with this there was mingled ingratitude of a very dark order. These children of Gad and Reuben would appropriate to themselves lauds for which all the Israelites had labored. God had led them forth to battle, and they had conquered Sihon and Og, and now these men would take possession of what others have struggled for, but they are not to fight themselves. This is vile ingratitude; and I fear it is common among us at this very day. How come we to be Christians at all? Instrumentally, it is through those holy missionaries who won our fathers from the cruel worship of the Druids, and afterwards from the fierce dominion of Woden and Thor. We must also trace our gospel light to those stakes at Smithfield, where men of God counted not their lives dear to them, but willingly gave up all they had, and their lives also by a painful death, that they might keep truth alive in the land. Some of you came to be Christian men through the earnest labors of men who preached by the roadside, or by the loving entreaties of tender mothers who wept you to the Savior, or by the faithful ministry of some brother from the pulpit, or the equally faithful teaching of an earnest Sunday-school teacher. We owe under God much to past ages, and much to present laborers. There is no man among us but stands immensely indebted to the church of God. Though God be our Father, yet the church is our mother, and through her various agencies we have been born to God. Do we acknowledge all this debt, and are we not going to pay it? Are we to receive all, and then give out nothing at all? Are we to be like candles burning under bushels? Are we to waste our life by much receiving and little distributing? This will never do. This will not be life, but death. I do not charge this home upon anybody personally; but if this cap fits anybody, pray let him wear it. If any man must acknowledge his obligation to the church of God, and yet he is not repaying it, let him cover his face for very shame. Wilt thou not hand on the light thou hast received? Verily thou deservest to perish in darkness. Art thou fed, and wilt thou not break thy bread to the hungry, or pass a cup of cold water to the thirsty? What art thou at, strange ingrate! that thou shouldst simply be a stagnant reservoir into which streams of mercy fall never to run out of thee again, but to stand and putrefy in selfishness? Remember the Dead Sea, and tremble lest thou be like it, a pool accursed and cursing all around thee! O God, have mercy upon the great mass of thy professing people to whom this must be solemnly applied: that they do receive, but give to thee and to thy cause so little either of time, substance, talent, prayer, or anything else!

The text, when spiritually interpreted, says concerning our personal service in the conquest of the world for Christ, — "if ye do not so, behold ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out."

Again, we may view this from another point of view. It is the sin of untruthfulness. These people pledged themselves that they would go forth with the other tribes, and that they would not return to their own homes until the whole of the campaign was ended. Now, if after that they did not go to the war, and did not fight to the close of it, then they would be guilty of a barefaced lie. It is a wretched thing for a man to be a covenant-breaker. It is sacrilege for any man to lie, not only unto man, but unto God. I would speak very tenderly, but if any man has been converted from the error of his ways, by that very conversion he is bound to serve the Lord. If he has been baptized as a believer, by that baptism he declared that he was dead to the world, and buried to it, that henceforth he might live in newness of life. Now, if he lives only to make money and hoard it, and he does nothing for God's church and for poor sinners, is not his baptism a lie? Such a baptized person was buried, but he was never dead: is not this to turn baptism into a farce? He gave himself up to the church of God, he became a member of it; and by that act and deed he pledged himself to do all he could for its growth and its prosperity; and if he does nothing, he is a deceiver. If his joining a church meant anything, it meant that he would take part in the common service of God. A do nothing professor is a merely nominal member, and a nominal member

is a real hindrance. He neither contributes, nor prays, nor works, nor agonizes for souls, nor takes any part in Christian service, and yet he partakes in all the privileges of the church. Is this fair? What is the use of him? He sits and hears, and sometimes sleeps under the sermon. That is all. Is not his union with the church a practical falsehood? I will not say so, but I will ask the question. It does seem to me that if I belong to the Israelites, and they are sent by God to conquer a country, and I do not go forth to the war with them, and take my part in the conflict, I am not a true Israelite. I am unworthy of my nation; I am disloyal to the standard; I am false to my fellow-soldiers. I think it is so: do not you? Having entered the Christian ministry, if I did nothing in it, I should feel that I disgraced it. If I simply tried to enjoy religion without an effort to spread it, I ought to be drummed out of the army of preachers. If there be any in the church who have talent that they do not use for God, or money which they do not lay out for Christ, or time which they do not use for holy purposes, they are sinning, and their sin will find them out. Your buried talent, will it not rust, and rusting, will it not create within your spirits a most horrible disease, and be a peril to you? Must it not be so? Are they not guilty of an acted lie before high heaven who call themselves servants of God, and yet do not serve him? You often sing —

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

**High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,  
That vow renew’d shall daily hear:  
Till in life’s latest hour I bow,  
And bless in death a bond so dear.”**

Is that hymn true? Do you mean those verses, or do you mock God? You have all sung the hymn many times, and mark, “Happy day! Happy day!” the chorus; but is your singing true or false? If any man or woman among you shall after such a song sink back into himself, and do nothing for his Lord, what truth is there in him? God save us from using our lips to mock his holy name! It can be little short of blasphemy to sing such words and yet live a selfish, indolent life. Will a man thus insult his God? O sirs, I beseech you make such language true, or else have done with it, lest the record of it destroy your souls!

Once more, and I will have done with this painful subject. What would their sin be? According to Moses it would be a grave injury to others. Do you not notice how he put it to them? “Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?” What an example to set! If one Christian man is right in never joining a Christian church, then all other Christian men would be right in not doing so, and there would be no visible Christian church. Do you not see, you non-professing believers, that your example is destructive of all church-life? What are you at? If one Christian man, with the talent to preach, is right in not preaching, then other Christian men have a right to trifle in the same way, and then there would be no ministry left. An idler is a great waster, and makes others wasters too: his example is likely to make all around him as indolent as himself. I notice in our churches that a few earnest men and women lead the way, and others are sweetly drawn to follow them. How precious are the earnest few in a Christian community. David knew the value of the first three in his band. But if the leading spirits are dead, cold, indifferent, what happens? Why, lethargy spreads over the whole. I am sorry to say that I hear of instances in which a minister laments, “I labor with all my might, but I am persuaded that nothing will ever be done while Mr. So-and-so is there.” He is often a coldblooded deacon, or a purse-proud member. When you come to know him, you feel, “While there is such a great big iceberg floating close to the shore, the garden by the sea must be frostbitten: nothing can grow.” It were a pity that any of us should freeze others. God save us from it! “Oh,” says one, “nobody knows me, and therefore I cannot have much influence either for good or for evil.” Not over your own child — your daughter, your son? That influence which you have over even one or two little ones may spread far further than you imagine. We cannot calculate the range of moral influence: it is immeasurable. I suppose that there is not a single moving atom of matter which does not influence in some measure the entire universe. One atom impinges upon another, and that upon another, and so it reaches the remotest star. Whether we do or do not do, what we do or do not do, will have an influence upon all that are round about us, perhaps to all eternity. Perhaps the word I speak tonight shall thrill when yonder sun has burned out like a coal, and the moon has become black as sackcloth of hair. I am not sure but that our thoughts upon our bed may throb throughout the ages in their incessant results. “None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself:” for good or for evil we are yoked with the universe, and there is no possibility of severance. There is much influence for evil in an idle example: possibly such an example would not be set by certain persons if they would but think of the consequences. To such consideration of consequences I invite all whose gravest fault is forbearing to do good. O barren tree, do not excuse thyself because thou dost not drip with poison like the upas! It is crime enough that thou cumberest the ground!

Moses goes on to remark that if these people did not go forth to war they would discourage all the rest. “Wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord hath given them?” It is no slight sin to discourage holy zeal and perseverance in others. May we never be guilty of killing holy desires even in children! How often has a burning desire in a boy’s heart been quenched by his own father, who has thought him too impulsive, or too ardent! How frequently the conversation of a friend, so called, has dried up the springs of holy desire in the person with whom he has conversed! Let it not be so. Yet

without cold words our chill neglects may freeze. I know a terrace where the shutting up of one or two shops has a deadening effect upon the trade of the other shops. Somehow, the closed shutters give a gloomy look to the place, and customers are repelled. Does not the same thing happen to groups of workers when one grows idle? Does not the one call brother deaden the rest? We cannot neglect our own gardens without injuring our neighbors. Do you live anywhere near a house that is not let, which has a back garden left to run to waste? All manner of seeds are blown over upon your ground; and, though you keep the hoe going, yet the weeds baffle you, for there is such a nursery for them just over the wall. One mechanic coming late among a set of workmen may throw the whole company out of order for the day. One railway truck off the rails may block the entire system. Depend upon it, if we are not serving the Lord our God, we are committing the sin of discouraging our fellow-men. They are more likely to imitate our lethargy than our energy. Why should we wish to hinder others from being earnest? How dare we rob God of the services of others by our own neglect? O God, deliver us from this sin!

If I had preached a sermon about murder or theft, you would all have escaped the lash; but few of us will be without rebuke now that I have kept the text in the setting in which God originally put it, and in which he meant it to be presented for our rebuke and exhortation.

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## **II. Secondly, let us carefully notice What Was The Chief Sin In This Sin?**

Of course, if the Reubenites did not keep their solemn agreement to go over Jordan, and help their brethren, they would sin against their brethren; but this is not the offense which rises first to the mind of Moses. Moses overlooks the lesser, because he knows it to be comprehended in the greater; and he says, "Behold, ye have sinned against the Lord." In this he anticipated the confession of David, "against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." To refuse to help their brethren would be disobedience to the Lord. Did he not command all Israel to drive out the Canaanites? In like manner, neglect of holy work is positive sin against the Lord. It is disobedience against the Lord not to be preaching his truth if we are able to do so. Did not our Lord say, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature?" This command was not confined to a dozen or so, but was meant for all his people, as they have opportunity and ability. We who hear the gospel are bidden to proclaim it, for it is written, "Let him that heareth say, Come." The hearer of the gospel is bound to be a repeater of the gospel. We are all called upon, as we know the Lord, to tell to others what the Lord has told to us; and if we do not so, we are guilty of disobedience to a great gospel precept.

We are certainly guilty, dear friends, of ingratitude, if, as I have already said, we owe so much to other men, and yet do not seek to bless mankind; but chiefly we owe everything to the grace of God, and, if God has given us grace in our own hearts, and saved us with the precious blood of the Only-Begotten, how can we sit still, and allow others to perish? As we value salvation we are under bonds to make it known. We rejoice to be in the kingdom of God — should we not spend and be spent for the growth of that kingdom? He that doth not bear arms in this war is a traitor to his sovereign Lord.

There would be sin against God in the conduct of these people, if they did not aid in the conquest of Canaan for they would be dividing God's Israel. Shall the Lord's heritage be rent in twain? God meant them all to keep together. They all came out of Egypt together; they all marched through the wilderness together, and now he meant them to fight his battles together. Were these to take their inheritance, and abide among the sheep-cotes, and leave the other ten and a half tribes to go over Jordan and wage the war alone? This would be scattering the family of God. Can it be that any of us are dividing the church of God; that is, dividing it into drones and workers? This would be a terrible division: and I fear that it exists already. It is apparent to those who are able to observe; and it is mourned over by those who are jealous for the God of Israel. Half the schisms in churches arise out of the real division which exists between idlers and workers. Mind this. Be not sowers of division by being busy-bodies, working not at all.

If you are not serving the Lord, you are sinning against the sacred Trinity. You sin against our Father, who would have you do good and be imitators of him as dear children. You sin against the Son of God, who has bought you with a price that you might be zealous for his glory. You sin against the Holy Ghost, whose impulses are not to sleep and idleness, but to quickening and to holiness. May we no longer sin against the Lord by refusing to perform his will!

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## **III. We have now reached the last point, and the point that is most serious: What Will Come Of This Sin Of Doing Nothing? What will come of it?**

"Be sure your sin will find you out." Now, as the time is nearly gone, I will not do more than show that these Gadites and Reubenites would be sure to be found out by their own neglect. Their sin would find them out to their shame and sorrow if they did not lend all their strength to their brethren according to their promise.

It would find them out thus: they would be ill at ease. One of these days their sin would leap upon their consciences as a lion on its prey. They would wake up and say, "We were wrong. We were bound to have taken our share in that war;" and every man among

them that was good for anything would be troubled in heart because he had failed to do his duty in the hour of need. He would feel uneasy: he would not want anybody to point him out with the finger, but he would point himself out and he would say to himself, "I failed in that case. I know I did. I acted very wrongly. I ought to have been with Joshua chasing out those Canaanites: I received my own portion of the land, and ought therefore to have helped others to win their portions."

When conscience was thus aroused, they would also feel themselves to be mean and despicable. As king after king was conquered, and the notes of victory were heard all over Canaan, they would think themselves mice rather than men to have shunned so glorious a conflict. They would feel disgraced by their own inaction. Their manhood would be held cheap by the other tribes: in fact, they would become a by-word and a proverb, as men do who are notoriously greedy and selfish. Surely it is an intolerable disgrace to any one to profess to be a man of God, and to have no care about the souls of others, while they are perishing by millions.

More than that, the tribes who went not to the war would be enfeebled by their own inaction. God would have his people learn war; but if these men did not go to the fight they would not be soldierly, and they would not be able to take care of themselves when their land was invaded. How much of sacred education we miss when we turn away from the service of God! I believe that no man understands salvation so well as the man who, having tasted it for himself, has also preached it to those about him. If you want to know the evil of the human heart, try to do good to the unconverted, and endeavor to guide the unbeliever to Jesus. Get a dozen girls around you, my sister, and watch the workings of their hearts as you seek to lead them to Christ, and you will learn much more than you knew before. My dear brother, gather a number of youths about you, and observe their feeling and conduct while you seek their conversion. You will soon know the depravity of human nature if you watch for souls for a little season; and if you get souls converted, and act as a spiritual father to them, you will soon see how much they need the Holy Spirit to keep them; and how much you need him to keep you also, for your patience will be tried. You will learn both the sweet and the bitter of the things of God by being engaged in Christ's service. Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me": service is a yoke we must bear in order to learn of Christ. The only way to learn to swim is to get into the water. To be a soldier and never know the smell of gunpowder is impossible: at least, such soldiers are little to be relied on in case of war. No, no; our sin, if we do nothing, will find us out in our being enfeebled, in our being disgraced, in our feeling that we are mean, and in the accusation of our conscience. Let us find this sin out, and shake ourselves free from it before it finds us out.

Their sin would also have found them out, had they fallen into it, because they would have been divided from the rest of God's Israel. If they had not gone across the Jordan to fight, the ten and a half tribes would always have said, "What have we to do with you? The Jordan rolls between us, and so let it do. We do not want any connection with those who acted so basely to us in our hour of need." They would practically have cut themselves off from union with the Israel of God, and they would have secured to themselves the loss of all fellowship with earnest men. Those who are non-workers lose much by not keeping pace with those who are running the heavenly race. The active are happy: the hand of the diligent maketh rich in a spiritual sense. There is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty: I am sure it is so in a spiritual sense.

To come more practically home, brethren beloved, if you and I are not serving the Lord, our sin will find us out. It will find us out perhaps in this way. There will be many added to the church and God will prosper it, and we shall hear of it: but we shall feel no joy therein. We had no finger in the work, and we shall find no comfort in the result. We did not point out the way to troubled consciences; we never went to early morning prayer-meetings, nor to any prayer-meetings, to pray for a blessing; we never spoke a word or even gave a tract away; and therefore we shall see the blessing with our eyes, but we shall not eat thereof. While God's people lift up their loud hallelujahs of joy we shall only mourn, "My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!" It is no joy to see a harvest reaped from fields which we refused to plough.

It may be that you will begin to lose all the sweetness of public services. By doing nothing you lose your appetite. Many a person who has no appetite needs a wise doctor to say to him, "Of course you cannot eat, for you do not work. Exercise yourself; and your appetite will return." He that earns his breakfast enjoys his breakfast; and he who labors for Christ finds that the services of the sanctuary are exceedingly sweet to him. I know some dear brethren here who cannot get to a Sunday sermon because they have something to do for their Lord throughout the Sabbath; therefore they drop in to this Thursday evening sermon. Thus they gain a Sabbath in the middle of the week, which is exceedingly sweet to them. They can only attend one service on the Sunday, but that is doubly refreshing to them. They are engaged at the ragged-school, or at the corner of the street, where they are accustomed to preach: and the Lord makes up to them their lost opportunities. Believe me, when they do get a meal they heartily appreciate it; for they come with an appetite which they have gathered in the service of their Master. If you do not work, your sin will find you out in the loss of enjoyment when present at the means of grace.

I have known this sin find people out in their families. There is a Christian man: we honor and love him, but he has a son that is a drunkard. Did his good father ever bear any protest against strong drink in all his life? No; he did not like the blue ribbon, of course. I will not dispute about total abstinence, but I do not feel much astonished at a boy drinking much when he sees his godly father drink a little regularly. Every man should labor by precept and example to put down intemperance, and he who does not do so may

be sure that his sin will find him out.

Here is another. His children have all grown up thoughtless, careless, giddy. He took them to his place of worship, and he now enquires, "Why are they not converted?" Did he ever take them one by one and pray with them? Did he ever speak earnestly to each boy and each girl, and labor for the conversion of each one? I am afraid that in many cases nothing of the sort has been attempted. Certain mistaken individuals almost think it wrong to seek the conversion of their children while they are children, and their sin finds them out when they see them growing up in ungodliness.

Besides, if we do not look after God's children, it may be that he will not look after ours. "No," says God, "there were other people's children in the streets, and you had no concern about them, why should your children fare better? You never opened a ragged-school for the poor, why should I bless you? There were men in your employment by whom you gained your living, but you never spoke to them about their souls, nor cared whether they were saved or damned, and I am not going to look after your family when you have no concern for mine." "Be sure your sin will find you out."

I do not know how this warning may come home to any brother or sister here who has been idling: but it is better that my warning should find him out than that his sin should find him out. I do not know whether there are any idlers here, though I have a pretty shrewd guess that there are. Friends, neglect of the Lord's work will come home to you, and I will tell you when it will come to you, if it does not do so before. When you are sick and ill, your faith in Christ will bring you great comfort, but you will be sorrowful if you have to say to yourself, "Oh, that I had served God while I was young!" A friend said to me not long ago, "My dear sir, you are often laid aside, and no doubt the reason is the imprudent manner in which you worked away in your youth. You preached ten times in a week almost all the year round, year after year, and of course you wore yourself out." "Oh, yes," I said, "it may be so, but I do not regret it in the least. Thank God, I preached with all my might all over the land when I could do so; and I would again if I could only get renewed strength!" If I cannot work so much as in earlier days, I have not the misery of saying, "I wasted my opportunities, and spent my best days in ease." I do say to myself, "Would God I had done more, or had done it better; but I am thankful to be able to exonerate myself from all charge of sloth." If those of us who do much have to whip ourselves a bit, what should those do who practically do nothing at all, and discourage others? What can idlers do but fear that their sin will find them out?

Thus far have I spoken to God's people, and if you think that this is rather rough upon them, what shall I say to you who do not love the Lord at all? O sirs, if the fan that is in Christ's hand purges his own floor in this stern way, what will that fan do with you who are as chaff to the wheat! If he sits here as a refiner, and purifies the sons of Levi, and puts even the gold into the fire, what will become of the dross? "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" If the language of God is sharp even to his own beloved, because he says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent," what will his language be to those who are not his children, but are living in open rebellion against him? Tremble, ye that forget God. Hear his own words, they are none of mine: "Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." God help you to flee from the sin of doing nothing! The Lord Jesus Christ himself lead you into the Father's service! Amen.

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## Numbers 35:11

### The Sinner's Refuge

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**"Then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares." — Numbers 35:11**

YOU are aware that the principle of blood-revenge is a deep-seated one in the Eastern mind. From the earliest ages, it was always the custom with the Orientals, when a man was murdered, or slain without malice aforethought, for the nearest relative, his heir, or any person related to him, to take revenge for him upon the person who, either intentionally or unintentionally, was the means of his death. This revenge was a very special thing to the Oriental mind. The avenger of blood would hunt his victim for forty years,— ay, until he died, if he was not able to reach him before,— and would be on his track all his life, that he might slay him. It was not necessary that the manslayer should have any trial before a judge; his victim was dead, and if the one who killed him was not put to death, it was reckoned among some tribes to be legitimate to kill his father, or indeed any member of his tribe; and until someone in that tribe was put to death, as a revenge for the man who had been slain, by accident or otherwise, a deadly feud existed between

the two clans, which never could be quenched except by blood.

Now, when the Lord gave to the Jews this law concerning the cities of refuge, he took advantage of their deep-rooted love towards the system of the revenge of blood by the nearest relative; and God acted wisely in this, as he has done in all things. There are two matters mentioned in Scripture which I do not believe God ever approved, but which, finding they were deep-seated, he did not forbid to the Jews. One was polygamy; the practice of marrying many wives had become so established that, though God abhorred it, yet he permitted it to the Jews, because he foresaw that they would inevitably have broken the commandment if he had made an ordinance that they should have but one wife. It was the same with this matter of blood-revenge; it was so firmly fixed in the mind of the people that God, instead of refusing to the Jews what they regarded as the privilege of taking vengeance upon their fellows, enacted a law which rendered it almost impossible that a man should be killed, unless he were really a murderer; for he appointed six cities, at convenient distances, so that, when one man killed another by accident, and so committed homicide, he might at once flee to one of these cities; and though he might have to remain there all his life, yet the avenger of blood could never touch him, if he were innocent. He would have a fair trial; but even if he were found innocent, he must stay within the city, into which the avenger of blood could not by any possibility come. If he went out of the city, the avenger might kill him. He was therefore to suffer perpetual banishment, even for causing death accidentally, in order that it might be seen how much God regarded the rights of blood, and how fearful a thing it is to put a man to death in any way. You see, dear friends, that this prevented the likelihood of anyone being killed who was not guilty of murder; for, as soon as one man struck another to the ground by accident, by a stone, or any other means, he fled to the city of refuge. He had a start of the pursuer; and if he arrived there first, he was secure and safe.

I wish to use this custom of the Jews, as a metaphor and type, to set forth the salvation of men through Jesus Christ our Lord. I shall give you, first, an explanation; and, then, an exhortation.

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### **I. I Shall Attempt An Explanation Of This Type.**

Note, first, the person for whom the city of refuge was provided. It was not a place of shelter for the wilful murderer; if he fled there, he must be dragged out of it, and given up to the avenger, after a fair trial; and the avenger of death was to kill him, and so have blood for blood, and life for life. But, in case of accident, when one man had slain another, without malice aforethought, and had therefore only committed homicide, the man fleeing there was perfectly safe.

Here, however, the type does not adequately represent the work of our Lord Jesus Christ; he is not a refuge provided for men who are innocent, but for men who are guilty,— not for those who have accidentally transgressed, but for those who have wilfully gone astray. Our Savior has come into the world to save, not those who have by mistake and error committed sin, but those who have fearfully transgressed against well-known Divine commandments, and who have followed the sinful dictates of their own free-will, their own perversity leading them to rebel against God.

Note, next, the avenger of blood. In explaining this portion of the type, I must, of course, take every part of the figure. The avenger of blood, I have said, was usually the next of kin to the one who had been slain; but I believe any other member of the family was held to be competent to act as the avenger. If, for instance, my brother had been killed, it would have been my duty, as the first of the family, to avenge his blood, if possible, there and then,— to go after the murderer, or the man who had accidentally caused his death, and to put him to death at once. If I could not do that, it would be my business, and that of my father, and, indeed, of every male member of the family, to hunt and pursue that man, until God should deliver him into our hand, so that we might put him to death. I mean not that it is our duty now, but it would have been so regarded under the old Jewish dispensation. It was allowed, by the Mosaic law, that those who were of the kith and kin of the man killed, should be the avengers of his blood.

We find the counterpart of this type, for the sinner, in the law of God. Sinner, the law of God is the blood-avenger that is on your track! You have wilfully transgressed, you have, as it were, killed God's commandments, you have trampled them under your foot; the law is the avenger of blood, it is after you, and it will have you in its grasp ere long; condemnation is hanging over your head now, and it shall surely overtake you. Though it may not reach you in this life, yet, in the world to come, the avenger of blood, the Moses, the law of the Lord, shall execute vengeance upon you, and you shall be utterly destroyed.

But, further, there was a city of refuge provided under the law; nay, more, there were six cities of refuge, in order that one of them might be at a convenient distance from any part of the country. Now, there are not six Christs; there is but one; but there is a Christ everywhere. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

The city of refuge was a priestly city,— a city of the Levites; and it afforded protection for life to the manslayer. He might never go out of it till the death of the then reigning high priest; after which he might go free, without being touched by the avenger of blood. But, during the time of his sojourn there, he was housed and fed gratuitously; everything was provided for him, and he was kept

entirely safe. And. I would have you mark that he was safe in this city, not because of its walls, or bolts, or bars, but simply because it was the place divinely appointed for shelter. Do you see the man running towards it? The avenger is after him, fast and furious; the manslayer has just reached the borders of the city; in a moment, the avenger halts; he knows it is of no use going any further after him, not because the city walls are strong, nor because the gates are barred, nor because an army standeth without to resist, but because God hath said the man shall be safe as soon as he has crossed the border, and has come into the suburbs of the city. Divine appointment was the only thing which made the city of refuge secure. Now, beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ is the divinely — appointed. way of salvation; whosoever amongst us shall make haste from our sins, and fly to Christ, being convinced. of our guilt, and helpers by God's Spirit to enter that road, shall, without doubt, find absolute and eternal security. The curse of the law shall not touch us, Satan shall not harm us, vengeance shall not reach us, for the Divine appointment, stronger than gates of iron or brass, shieldeth every one of us "who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" in the gospel.

The city of refuge, I must have you note, too, had round it suburbs of a very great extent. Two thousand cubits were allowed for grazing land for the cattle of the priests, and a thousand cubits within these for fields and vineyards. Now, no sooner did the man reach the suburbs of the city, than he was safe; it was not necessary for him to get within the walls, but the outskirts themselves were sufficient protection. Learn, hence, that if ye do but touch the hem of Christ's garment, ye shall be made whole; if ye do but lay hold of him with "faith as a grain of mustard seed," with faith which is very feeble, but is truly a living principle, you are safe.

**A little genuine grace ensures  
The dearth of all our sins.**

Get anywhere within the borders of the city of refuge, and thou art at once and for ever secure from the avenger.

We have some interesting particulars, also, with regard to the distance of these cities from the habitations of men in ancient Judea. It is said that, wherever the crime of homicide might be committed by any man, he might get to a city of refuge within half a day; and, verily, beloved, it is no great distance from a guilty sinner to the sheltering breast of Christ. It is but a simple renunciation of our own powers, and a laying hold of Christ, to be our All-in-all, that is required, in order to our being found within the city of refuge. Then, with regard to the roads to the city, we are told that they were strictly preserved in good order. Every river was bridged; as far as possible, the road was made level, and every obstruction removed, so that the man who fled might find an easy passage to the city. Once a year, the elders of the city went along the route to see that it was in proper repair, and to provide, as far as they could, that nothing might occur, through the breaking down of bridges, or the stopping up of the highway, to impede the flight of any manslayer, and cause him to be overtaken and killed. Wherever there were by-roads and turnings, there were axed up sign-posts, with this word plainly visible upon them, "Refuge," — "Refuge," — pointing out the way in which the man should fly, if he wished to reach the city. There were two people always kept on the road, so that, in case the avenger of blood should overtake a man, they might intercept him, and entreat him to stay his hand, until the man had reached the city, lest haply innocent blood should be shed, without a fair trial, and so the avenger himself should be proved guilty of murder; for the risk, of course, was upon the head of the avenger, if he put one to death who did not deserve to die.

Now, beloved, I think this is a picture of the road to Christ Jesus. It is no roundabout road of the law; it is no obeying this, that, and the other command; it is a straight road: "Believe, and live." It is a road so hard, that no self-righteous man will ever tread it; but it is a road so easy, that every sinner, who knows himself to be a sinner, may by it find his way to Christ, and his way to heaven. And lest any should be mistaken, God has set me and my brethren in the ministry, to be like hand-posts in the way, to point poor sinners to Jesus; and we desire ever to have on our lips the cry, "Refuge! Refuge! REFUGE!" Sinner, that is the way; walk thou therein, and thou shalt be saved.

I think I have thus given the explanation of the type. Christ is the true City of Refuge, and he preserves all those who flee to him for mercy; he does that because he is the divinely-appointed. Savior, able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by him.

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## **II. Now, in the second place, I Have To Give An Exhortation.**

You must allow me to picture a scene. You see that man in the field. He has been at work; he has taken an ox-goad in his hand, to use it in some part of his husbandry. Unfortunately, instead of doing what he desires to do, he strikes a companion of his to the heart, and he falls down dead! You see the poor fellow with horror in his face; he is a guiltless man; but, oh! what misery he feels when he gazes upon the corpse lying at his feet! A pang shoots through his heart, such as you and I have never felt,— horror, dread, desolation! Yes, some of us have felt something akin to it spiritually; — we will not allude to the when and the wherefore; — but who can describe the agony of a man who beholds his companion fall lifeless by his side? Words are incapable of expressing the anguish of his spirit; he looks upon him, he tries to lift him up, — he ascertains that he is really dead,— what does he do next? Do you not see him? In a moment, he flies out of the field where he was at labor, and runs along the road with all his might; he has

many weary miles before him, six long hours of hard running, and as he passes the gate, he turns his head, and there is the man's brother! He has just come into the field, and seen his brother lying dead. Oh! can you conceive how the manslayer's heart palpitates with fear? He has a little start upon the road; he just sees the avenger of blood, with red face, hot and fiery, rushing out of the field, with the ox-goad in his hand, and running after him. The way lies through the village where the dead man's father lives; how fast the poor fugitive lies through the streets! He does not even stop to bid good-bye to his wife, nor to kiss his children; but on, on, he speeds for his very life. The relative calls to his father, and his other friends, and they all rush after him. Now there is quite a troop on the road; the man is still flying ahead, there is no rest for him. Though one of his pursuers may pause for a while, or turn backer, the others still track him. There is a horse in the village; they mount it, and pursue him. If they can find any animal that can assist their swiftness, they will take it. Can you not conceive of the manslayer crying, "Oh, that I had wings, that I might fly to the city of refuge"? See how he spurns the earth beneath his feet! What to him are the green fields on either hand; what the babbling brooks? He stops not even so much as to wet his lips. The sun is scorching him; but still on, on, on, he runs! He casts aside one garment after another; still he rushes on, and the pursuers are close behind him. He feels like the poor stag hunted by the hounds; he knows they are eager for his blood, and that, if they do but once overtake him, it will be a word, a blow, and he will be a dead man. Watch how he speeds on his way! Do you see him now? A town is rising into sight; he perceives the towers of the city of refuge; his weary feet almost refuse to carry him further; the veins are standing out on his brow, like whipcords; the blood spurts from his nostrils; he is straining all his powers to the utmost as he rushes on; and he would go faster if he had any more strength. The pursuers are after him,— they have almost clutched him; but see, and rejoice! He has just reached the outskirts of the city; there is the line of demarcation; he leaps it, and falls senseless to the ground; but there is joy in his heart. The pursuers come and look at him; but they dare not slay him. The knife is in their hand, and the stones, too; but they dare not touch him. He is safe, he is secure; his running has been just fast enough; he has managed to leap into the kingdom of life, and to avoid a cruel and terrible death.

Sinner, that picture I have given thee is a picture of thyself, in all but the man's guiltlessness, for thou art a guilty man. Oh, if thou didst but know that the avenger of blood is after thee! Oh! that God would give thee grace, that thou mightest have a sense of thy danger to-night; thou wouldst not then stop a solitary instant without flying to Christ. Thou wouldst say, even while sitting in thy pew, "Let me away, away, away, where mercy is to be found," and thou wouldst give neither sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids, till thou hadst found in Christ a refuge for thy guilty spirit. I am come, then, to exhort thee now to flee away to Jesus.

Let me pick out one of you, to be a specimen of all the rest. There is a young man here who is guilty; the proofs of his guilt lie close at hand; he knows himself to be a great transgressor; he has foully offended against God's law. Young man, young man, as you are guilty, the avenger of blood is after you! Oh! that avenger — God's fiery law; did you ever see it? It speaketh words of flame; it hath eyes like lamps of fire. If you could once see the law of God, and mark the dread keenness of its terrible sword, you might, as you sat in your pew, quiver almost to death in horror at your impending doom. Sinner, bethinks thee, if this avenger shall seize thee, it will not be merely temporal death that will be thy portion; it will be death eternally. Sinner, remember, if the law doth lay its hand on thee, and Christ doth not deliver thee, thou art damned; and dost thou know what damnation means? Say, canst thou tell what are the billows of eternal wrath, and what the worm that never dies, what the lake of fire, what the pit that is bottomless? No; thou canst not know how dreadful these things are. Surely, if thou couldst, man, thou wouldst be up on thy feet, and flying for life, eternal life. Thou wouldst be like that man in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, who put his fingers in his ears, and ran away; and when his neighbors ran after him, he cried, "Eternal life! Eternal life!" O stolid stupidity! O sottish ignorance! O worse than brutal folly, that makes men sit down in their sins, and rest content! The drunkard still quaffeth his bowl; he knoweth not that in its dregs there lieth wrath. The swearer still indulgeth in his blasphemy; he knoweth not that, one day, his oath shall return upon his own head. You will go your way, and eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and live merrily and happily; but, ah! poor souls, if you knew that the avenger of blood was after you, you would not act so foolishly! Would you suppose that the man, after he had killed his neighbor, and when he saw the avenger coming, would, coolly take his seat, and wait to be slain, when there was a city of refuge provided? No; that consummate folly was reserved for such as you are; God has left that to be the topstone of the folly of the human race, the most glittering jewel in the crown of free-will, the dress of death wherein free-will doth robe itself. Oh! you will not fly to Christ, you will stop where you are, you will rest contented, and one day the law will seize you, and then wrath, eternal wrath, will lay hold upon you! How foolish is the man who wastes his time, and carelessly loiters, when the city of refuge is before him, and the avenger of blood is after him!

Suppose, now, I take another case. There is a young man here, who says, "Why, sir, it is no use my trying to be saved; I shall not think of prayer or faith, or anything of that sort, because there is no city of refuge for me." Suppose that poor man, who had killed his neighbor, had talked like that; suppose he had sat still, and folded his arms, and said, "There is no city of refuge for me." I cannot imagine such folly; and, surely, you do not mean what you said just now. If you thought there was no city of refuge for you, I know what you would do; you would shriek, and cry, and groan. There is a kind of despair, that some people have, which is a sham despair. I have met with many who say, "We do not believe we ever could be saved," and they seem not to care whether they are saved or not. How foolish would the man be, who would sit still, and so let the avenger slay him, because he fancied there was no entrance for him into the city! But your folly is just as great, and even worse, if you sit still, and say, "The Lord will never have mercy on me." He is as much a suicide who refuses the medicine, because he thinks it will not cure him, as the man who takes the dirk,



and stabs himself to the heart. You have no right, sir, to let your despair triumph over the promise of God. He hath said it, and he means it: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." If he has shown you your guilt, depend upon it, there is a city of refuge for you; haste to it, haste to it; may God help you to betake yourselves to it now! Oh! if men only knew how dreadful is the wrath to come, and how terrible will be the day of judgment, how swiftly would they flee away to Jesus! There is not a hearer of mine here who would delay an hour to fly to Christ, if he did but know how fearful is his condition out of Christ. When God the Holy Spirit once convinces us of our sin, there is no halting then; the Spirit says, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice;" and we cry, "To-day, Lord, to-day, hear our voice!" There is no pausing then; it is on, on, on, for our very life. I beseech you, men and brethren, you who have sinned against God, and know it; you who want to be delivered from the wrath to come, I beseech you, by him that liveth and was dead, flee to Christ.

Take heed that it is to Christ you flee; for, if the man who had slain his neighbor had fled to another city, it would have been of no avail; had he fled to a place that was not an ordained city of refuge, he might have sped on with all the impetuosity of desire, and yet have been slain within the city gates. So, ye self-righteous ones, ye may fly to your good world's, ye may practice your baptism, and your confirmation, and your church-going, or your chapel-going; ye may be all that is good and excellent, but ye are flying to the wrong city, and the avenger of blood will find you, after all. Poor soul! remember that Christ Jesus the Lord is the only refuge for a guilty sinner; his blood, his wounds, his agonies, his sufferings, his death, these are the gates and walls of the city of salvation. But if we trust not in these, without a doubt, trust where we may, our hope shall be as a broken reed, and we shall perish after all.

I may have one here who is newly awakened, just led to see his sin, as if it were the corpse of a murdered man lying at his feet; it seems to me that God has sent me to that one individual in particular. Man, God has shown you your guilt; and he has seat me to tell you that there is a refuge for you; though you are guilty, he is gracious; though you have revolted and rebelled against him, he will have mercy on all who repent, and trust in the merits of his Son. He has bidden me to say to you, "Fly, fly, fly!" and, in God's name, I say to you, "Fly to Christ." He has bidden me warn you against delays; he has bidden me remind you that death surprises men when they least expect it; he has bidden me assure you that the avenger will not spare, neither will his eye pity; his sword was forged for vengeance, and vengeance it will have. God has also bidden me exhort you, by the terror of the Lord, by the day of judgment, by the wrath to come, by the uncertainty of life, and by the nearness of death, to fly to Christ this very moment.

**Haste, traveler, haste, the night comes on:  
And thou far off from rest and home, Haste, traveler, haste!**

But, oh! how much more earnest is our cry, when we say, "Haste, sinner, haste!" Not only doth the night come on; but, lo! the avenger of blood is close behind. Already he has slain his thousands; let the shrieks of souls, already damned, come up in your ears! Already the avenger has wrought wonders of wrath; let the howlings of Gehenna startle you, let the torments of hell amaze you. What! will you pause with such an avenger in swift pursuit? What! young man, will you stop this night? God. has convinced you of your sin; will you go to your rest once more without a prayer for pardon? Will you live another day without Seeing to Christ? No; I think I see signs that the Spirit of God is working in you, and I think I hear what he makes you say, "God helping me, I give myself to Christ even now; and if he will not at once shed abroad his love in my heart, this is my firm resolve no rest will I find anywhere till Christ shall look on me, and seal with his Holy Spirit my pardon bought with blood."

But if thou sittest still, young man,— and thou wilt do so, if left to thine own free-will,— I can do no more for thee than this, I must and I will weep for thee in secret. Alas! for thee, my hearer; alas! for thee; the ox led to the slaughter is more wise than thou art; the sheep that goeth to its death is not so foolish as thou art. Alas! for thee, my hearer, that thy pulse should beat a march to hell! Alas! that yonder clock, like the muffled drum, should be the music of the funeral march of thy soul! Alas! alas! that thou shouldst fold thine arms in pleasure, when the knife is at thy heart! Alas! alas! for thee, that thou shouldst sing, and make merriment, when the rope is around thy neck, and the fatal drop is about to be given to thee! Alas! for thee, that thou shouldst go thy way, and live joyfully and happily, and yet be lost! Thou remindest me of the silly moth that dances round the flame, singeing itself for a while, and then at last plunging to its death; such art thou! Young woman, with thy butterfly clothing, thou art leaping round the flame that shall destroy thee! Young man, light and frothy in thy conversation, gay in thy life, thou art dancing to hell; thou art singing thy way to damnation, and promenading the road to destruction. Alas! alas! alas! that ye should be spinning your own winding-sheets; that ye should every day, by your sins, be building your own gallows; that, by your transgressions, ye should, be digging your own graves, and working hard to pile the faggots for your own eternal burning! Oh, that ye were wise, that ye understood this, that ye would consider your latter end! Oh, that ye would flee from the wrath to come! O my hearers, think of the wrath to come, the wrath to come! How terrible that wrath is, these lips dare not venture to describe; at the very thought of it, this heart filleth with agony. O my hearers, are there not some of you who will soon be proving what the wrath to come really is? There are some of you who, if you were now to drop dead in your pews, must be damned. Ah! ye know it; ye know it; ye dare not deny it; I see you know it, as you hang down your heads, you seem to say, "It is true; I have no Christ to trust to, no robe of righteousness to wear, no heaven to hope for!" My hearer, give me thine hand; never did father plead with son with more impassioned earnestness than I would plead with thee. Why dost thou sit still, when hell is burning almost in thy very face. "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" O God! must I yearn over these people in vain? I must I continue to preach to them, and be "a savor of death unto death" to them, and not "a savor

of life unto life" I And must I help to make their hell more intolerable? Must it be so? Must the people who now listen to us, like the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida in the days of our Lord, have a more terrible doom than the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah? O ye, who are left to your own free-will, to choose the way to hell,— as all men do when left to themselves,— let these eyes run down with tears for you, because you will not weep for yourselves!

It is strange that I should feel more concern for your souls than you do for yourselves; my God knoweth there is not a stone that I would leave unturned to save each one of you; there is nought that human strength could do, or human study could learn, which I would not seek after, if I might but be the instrument of saving you from hell; and yet you act as though it concerned you not, whom it should concern the most. It is my business, but it is far more yours. Sirs, if ye be lost, remember that it is yourselves who will be lost; and if you perish, bear me witness that I am clear of your blood. If ye flee not from the wrath to come, forget not that I have warned you. I could not bear to have the flood upon my head which some, even of those who like sound doctrine, I fear, will have at the last day of account. I tremble for some I know, who preach God's gospel, in some sense idly, but who never warn sinners. A member of my church said, to me lately, "I heard Soand-so preach; a sound-doctrine-man, he is called. I listened to him for nine years, and I was attending the theater all the time. I could curse, I could swear, I could sin, and I never had a warning from that man's lips during the whole nine years." Ah, me! I would not like one of my hearers to say that concerning my preaching. Let this world hiss me; let me wear the coat that sparkleth, and the cap that garnisheth a fool; let earth condemn me, and let the fools of the universe spurn me; but I will be seen from the blood of my hearers. The only thing I seek, in this world, is to be faithful to my hearers' souls. If you are damned, it will not be for want of faithful preaching, nor of earnest warning. Young men and maidens, old men with grey heads, merchants and tradesmen, servants, fathers, mothers, children, I have warned you this night, you are in danger of hell; and, as God liveth, before whom I stand, you will be there soon, unless you flee from the wrath to come! Remember, none but Jesus can save you; but if God shall enable you to see your danger, and give you grace to fly to Christ, he will have mercy upon you, and the avenger of blood shall never find you out; no, not even when the red lightnings shall be flashing from the hand of God in the day of judgment. That city of refuge shall shelter you for ever; and in heaven with Jesus, triumphant, blessed, secure, you shall sing of the blood and righteousness of Christ who delivers penitent sinners from the wrath to come. God bless and save you all! Amen.

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## Exposition of Numbers

by C H Spurgeon

### NUMBERS 7

**Numbers 7:12 "He that offered his offering the first day was Nahshon the son of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah."**

Further, the tribe of Judah had precedence in presenting offerings unto the Lord. In Numbers 7:12, we read, "He that offered his offering the first day was Nahshon the son of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah."

The Lord had said to Moses, "They shall offer their offering, each prince on his day, for the dedicating of the altar," and the prince of the tribe of Judah therefore led the way by bringing his offering on the first day. We know that our Lord sprang out of Judah, so he was first with his offering.

"No," says someone, "Abel was first with his offering." Yes, apparently he was in the order of time, but Christ's offering was much more ancient than his, for he was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." In the divine purpose, his sacrifice was offered long before the great tragedy on Calvary, and the merit of his atonement was reckoned to his people's account long before man was created, but certainly in order of precedence Christ's offering comes first. Christ brought for his offering his own most precious body and blood, and we by faith present the same offering when we come to God in the name of Jesus. What sacrifice could we bring if Judah's Prince had not first brought his one offering by which he hath offered for ever them that are sanctified?

Did I say just now that Christ's offering had precedence? I must correct myself, for it is first, it is last, it is midst, it is the only sacrifice that can put away sin, and make us acceptable unto God; and there is no sacrifice either of prayer or of praise that we can present to God unless we bring it by virtue of Christ's own great sacrifice. Let us, therefore, praise our Judah-Jesus; let us give him our loudest hallelujahs, for he comes first to the altar, and we afterwards approach it through him. Jesus, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise for thy wondrous atoning sacrifice.

# EXPOSITION

## NUMBERS 9

**Numbers 9:1, 2 And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, Let the children of Israel also keep the Passover at his appointed season.**

I should almost fear that they had omitted the keeping of the Passover for a year. There was a first celebration of it when they came out of Egypt; but then it was not so much a type as a matter of fact; it was the thing itself, not the remembrance of the coming out of Egypt, but the actual coming out, the exodus. One would gather from this command of the Lord that, on the first anniversary of that memorable season, the children of Israel had omitted its observance, and hence Jehovah said to Moses, "Let the children of Israel also keep the Passover at his appointed season." If this conjecture is correct, it is very significant that a rite which belonged to the law, and was therefore to pass away, was so soon neglected, and certainly it was afterwards neglected for many, many years; whereas, the great memorial ordinance of the Christian dispensation, the Lord's supper, was not neglected even when Christians were under fierce persecution from the Jews or other nations. When the observance of that rite among the heathen was pretty sure to bring death, yet Christians met together on the first day of the week, and continually broke bread in remembrance of their Lord's death, even as we do to this day. I suppose that the supper, which is the memorial of Christ our Passover, has never been altogether neglected throughout the world; but has been a matter of constant observation in the Church of Christ, and shall be "till he come."

**Numbers 9:3-7. in the fourteenth day of this month, at even, ye shall keep it in his appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it. And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, that they should keep the Passover. And they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month at even in the wilderness of Sinai: according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel. And there were certain seen, who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the Passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day: and those men said unto him, We are defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the LORD in his appointed season among the children of Israel?**

They were in a great difficulty. They were commanded to come to the Passover, they sinned if they did not come; but they had defiled themselves, either through accident or of necessity and if they came thus to the Passover they would be committing sin, so that either way they were in an ill case. There must be somebody to bury the dead. I suppose that these persons had fulfilled that necessary office, and there had not been time for them to purge themselves from the ceremonial defilement involved in the touching of the dead; so what were they to do?

**Numbers 9:8. And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the LORD will command concerning you.**

Oh, how wisely we should give advice if we would never decide till we had prayed about the matter! Possibly, we think ourselves so experienced, and so well acquainted with the mind of God, that we can answer off-hand; or, peradventure, we think that we need not consult the Lord at all, but that our own opinion will be sufficient guide. Moses was greater and wiser than we are, yet he said to these men, "Stand still, and I will hear what Jehovah will command concerning you."

**Numbers 9:9-12. And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the Passover unto the LORD. The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it.**

So that, provision was made for the holding of a second Passover, that persons who were defiled at the first observance might have the opportunity to keep the feast a month afterwards.

**Numbers 9:13. But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the Passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the LORD in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin.**

What a solemn sentence that is! Let me read it apart from its connection: "Because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin." You see, the great offering of the Lord, the

atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the only way by which sin can be put away; and if any man will not bring that, in other words, if he will not believe in Jesus, then here is his certain doom, "that man shall hear his sin." No more terrible judgment can be pronounced upon any one of us than this, "that man shall bear his sin." "If ye believe not that I am he," said Christ, "ye shall die in your sins."

**Numbers 9:14. And if a stranger shall sojourn among you, and will keep the Passover unto the LORD; according to the ordinance of the Passover, and adoring to the manner thereof, so shall he do ye shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger, and for him that was born in the land.**

Now comes another subject: -

**Numbers 9:15, 16. And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning. So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night.**

This was the sign of the presence of God in the midst of that vast canvas city. I suppose that the great cloud rose up from the most holy place, and probably covered the whole camp of the tribes, so that it shielded them from the fierceness of the sun, while at night the entire region was lit up by this marvelous illumination. The chosen nation had the pillar of cloud by day for a shelter, and the pillar of fire by night for a light. God's presence acts upon us in much the same way as the cloudy fiery pillar acted upon Israel.

**"He hath been my joy in woe,  
Cheer'd my heart when it was low,  
And, with warnings softly sad,  
Calm'd my heart when it was glad."**

We get shelter from the fierce heat of the world's day and deliverance also from the darkness of the world's night through our Lord's gracious presence.

**Numbers 9:17-20. And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. At the commandment of the LORD the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the LORD they pitched as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents. And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the LORD, and journeyed not. And so it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the LORD they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the LORD they journeyed.**

Happy people to be thus divinely guided! They could never tell when they would have to be on the move; they had no abiding city. When their tents were pitched, and they were just getting comfortably settled, perhaps that very morning the pillar of cloud moved; and, at other times, when they desired to be marching, it stood still. They could never be certain of staying long in any one place. It is just so with you and with me; our Lord intends to keep us with a loose hold on all things here below. We cannot tell what changes may come to any one of us; therefore, reckon on nothing that God has not plainly promised. Be certain of nothing but uncertainty; and always expect the unexpected. You cannot tell between here and heaven where your Guide may take you; happy will you be if you can truly say that you desire ever to follow where the Lord leads.

**Numbers 9:21-23. And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed 'whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed. Or 'whether it were two days or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not but when it was taken up, they journeyed. At the commandment of the LORD they rested in the tents, and at the commandment of the LORD they journeyed: they kept the charge of the LORD, at the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses.**

So may each one of us ever be divinely guided!

**"Let the fiery cloudy pillar  
Lead me all my journey through."**

## **EXPOSITION NUMBERS 10**

**Numbers 10:14 In the first place went the standard of the camp of the children of Judah according to their armies: and over his host was Nahshon the son of Amminadab.**

Yet again, Judah had the singular precedence of always leading the van when the tribes were on the march. In Numbers 10:14, we read that, when the fiery-cloudy pillar moved, “in the first place went the standard of the camp of the children of Judah according to their armies.”

First in the encampment, first on the march, first everywhere was Judah's lion. The tribe of Dan brought up the rear, but the tribe of Judah always went in front; and here again let Jesus Christ be praised, for He always leads the way. If I descend into the Valley of Humiliation, I shall see His foot-prints all adown the slippery steep. If I pass through the Enchanted Ground where so many fall asleep, I shall see the track of the wakeful One all along that dangerous way. If up the Hill Difficulty I have to scramble on my hands and knees, I shall see the marks of the blood drops where His hands were torn by the thorns and His feet were cut by the flints as He climbed there too. And when I go down to the river, I shall still see His footprints; and up the other side I shall see the track of my risen Lord. All up the eternal hills I shall but follow where He leads the way; ay, and up to the very throne of God He has gone before us, clearing a way for His people, and leading them along it.

## EXPOSITION

### NUMBERS 21

**Numbers 21:1 And when king Arad the Cannanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners. And Israel vowed avow unto the LORD, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities. And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and he called the name of the place Hormah. And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.**

They were not allowed to go through the land of Edom, they had therefore to turn round, and go right away from the land where they one day hoped to dwell, and the road was a particularly trying one, over hot and burning sand, “and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.” Sometimes, God's own people, when they find that they are not so far advanced in the divine life as they thought they were, when they find old sins reviving, and when troubles multiply upon them, get “discouraged because of the way.” If this is our experience, let us not fall into the sin into which these Israelites fell, but even in our discouragement let us turn to our God.

**Numbers 21:5. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.**

One gets tired, in reading of the wanderings of Israel in the wilderness, of this parrot cry, “Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt?” For nearly forty years, this was their cry whenever they met with any sort of difficulty. How weary God must have been of their cry, and how weary of them too! And now it was raised because they had been fed with “angels' food” which they called “light bread.” It was easy of digestion, healthful, and the very best kind of food for them in the wilderness; but they wanted something more substantial, something that had a coarser flavour about it, more of earth and less of heaven. There is no satisfying an unregenerate heart. If we had all the blessings of this life, we should still be vying for more.

**Numbers 21:6. And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.**

Like a true mediator, he was always ready — even when they had most insulted him, and grieved his meek and quiet spirit, — still to bow the knee, and intercede with the Lord on their behalf. The people implored him to ask that the serpents might be taken away from them; but, apparently, they still continued to trouble them. However, if God does not answer prayer in one way, he does in another. The fervent prayer of a righteous man may not prevail in the particular direction in which it is offered, but it “availeth much” in some direction or other. Just as when the mists ascend they may not fall upon the very spot from which they rose, but they fall somewhere, and true prayer is never lost, it cometh back in blessing, if not according to our mind, yet according to another mind that is kinder and wiser than our own.

# EXPOSITION

## NUMBERS 22

### Numbers 22:34 The Double-Minded Man, Balaam — “I have sinned.”

Now for a second text. I beg to introduce to you another character — the double-minded man, who says, “I have sinned,” and feels that he has, and feels it deeply too, but who is so worldly-minded that he “loves the wages of unrighteousness.” The character I have chosen to illustrate this, is that of Balaam. Turn to the book of Numbers, the 22nd chap. and the 34th verse:

“And Balaam said unto the **Angel of the LORD**, I have sinned.”

“I have sinned,” said Balaam; but yet he went on with his sin afterwards.

One of the strangest characters of the whole world is Balaam. I have often marveled at that man; he seems really in another sense to have come up to the lines of Ralph Erskine —

**“To good and evil equal bent  
And both a devil and a saint.”**

For he did seem to be so. At times no man could speak more eloquently and more truthfully, and at other times he exhibited the most mean and sordid covetousness that could disgrace human nature. Think you see Balaam; he stands upon the brow of the hill, and there lie the multitudes of Israel at his feet, he is bidden to curse them, and he cries,

“How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed?”

And God opening his eyes, he begins to tell even about the coming of Christ, and he says,

“I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh.”

And then he winds up his oration by saying —

“Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!”

And ye will say of that man, he is a hopeful character. Wait till he has come off the brow of the hill, and ye will hear him give the most diabolical advice to the king of Moab which it was even possible for Satan himself to suggest. Said he to the king,

“You cannot overthrow these people in battle, for God is with them; try and entice them from their God.”

And ye know how with wanton lusts they of Moab tried to entice the children of Israel from allegiance to Jehovah, so that this man seemed to have the voice of an angel at one time, and yet the very soul of a devil in his bowels. He was a terrible character; he was a man of two things, a man who went all the way with two things to a very great extent. I know the Scripture says, “No man can serve two masters.” Now this is often misunderstood. Some read it, “No man can serve two masters.” Yes he can, he can serve three or four. The way to read it is this: “No man can serve two masters.” (see notes Matthew 6:24) They cannot both be masters. He can serve two, but they cannot both be his master. A man can serve two who are not his masters, or twenty either, he may live for twenty different purposes, but he cannot live for more than one master purpose — there can only be one master purpose in his soul.

But Balaam labored to serve two, it was like the people of whom it was said, “They feared the Lord, and served other gods.”

Or like Rufus, who was a loaf of the same leaven; for you know our old king Rufus painted God on one side of his shield, and the devil on the other, and had underneath, the motto: “Ready for both “catch who can.”

There are many such, who are ready for both. They meet a minister, and how pious and holy they are, on the Sabbath they are the most respectable and upright people in the world, as you would think; indeed they effect a drawling in their speech, which they think to be eminently religious. But on a week day, if you want to find the greatest rogues and cheats, they are some of those men who are so sanctimonious in their piety. Now, rest assured, my hearers, that no confession of sin can be genuine, unless it be a whole hearted one. It is of no use for you to say, “I have sinned,” and then keep on sinning. “I have sinned,” say you, and it is a fair, fair face you show; but, alas, alas I for the sin you will go away and commit. Some men seem to be born with two characters. I remarked when in the library at Trinity College, Cambridge, a very fine statue of Lord Byron.

The librarian said to me,

“Stand here, sir.”

I looked, and I said,

“What a fine intellectual countenance! What a grand genius he was!”

“Come here,” he said “to the other side.”

“Ah! what a demon! There stands the man that could defy the deity.”

He seemed to have such a scowl and such a dreadful leer in his face; even as Milton would have painted Satan when he said —

“Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven.”

I turned away and said to the librarian,

“Do you think the artist designed this?”

“Yes,” he said, “he wished to picture the two characters — the great, the grand, the almost superhuman genius that he possessed, and yet the enormous mass of sin that was in his soul.”

There are some men here of the same sort. I dare say, like Balaam, they would overthrow everything in argument with their enchantments, they could work miracles; and yet at the same time there is something about them which betrays a horrid character of sin, as great as that which would appear to be their character for righteousness. Balaam, you know, offered sacrifices to God upon the altar of Baal: that was just the type of his character. So many do; they offer sacrifices to God on the shrine of Mammon; and whilst they will give to the building of a church, and distribute to the poor, they will at the other door of their counting-house grind the poor for bread, and press the very blood out of the widow, that they may enrich themselves. Ah! it is idle and useless for you to say, “I have sinned,” unless you mean it from your heart. That double minded man’s confession is of no avail.

**Numbers 26:11 Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not** (Spurgeon in his exposition of Psalm 84 has the following note)

“To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.” I have often reminded you that these sons of Korah owed their continued existence to an act of special sovereign grace. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and all their company, were swallowed up alive, they went down to the pit because of their rebellion; but in the Book of Numbers we read, “Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not.” (Nu 26:11) Why they were spared, we cannot tell; but, ever after, they were made to be the singers of the sanctuary. They who are saved by sovereign grace are the most fit to praise the name of the Lord. The sons of Korah also became door-keepers to the house of the Lord; and hence, probably, is the allusion to a doorkeeper which we find in this Psalm.

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