

Spurgeon on Psalms-Pt5

Psalms Resources

Commentaries, Sermons, Illustrations, Devotionals

Psalms - Collection of Commentaries Part 1

Psalms - Collection of Commentaries Part 2

Psalms - Our Daily Bread - Over 400 Devotionals

Psalms - All of Spurgeon's Sermons on the Psalms

Psalms - Spurgeon's Devotionals - Part 1

Psalms - Spurgeon's Devotionals - Part 2

Psalms 1-31 - Today in the Word Devotionals

Psalms 32-100 - Today in the Word Devotionals

Psalms 102-150 - Today in the Word Devotionals

C. H. Spurgeon Sermons on Psalms Part 5

Psalm 71:15 God's Innumerable Mercies

NO. 3022

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 10TH, 1907,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCT. 22ND, 1868.

“ I know not the numbers thereof ” — Psalm 71:15 .

The writer of this Psalm describes all the dealings of God with him under the heads “ righteousness ” and “ salvation, ” That description is perfectly accurate, for all that God does for his people is, first of all, in faithfulness to his promise. As he hath spoken, so he doeth. Never, even in the sharpest trial, can the heir of heaven accuse God of being unfaithful to what he has promised. He told his disciples that they would have to endure tribulation; and when it came, they proved the truth of his prophecy; and everything that God does to us, whether little or great, whether sharp or kind, will prove to have been done in accordance with his faithful word. And then the psalmist calls the dispensations of God's providence by the name of salvation; and this term is also the right one, for everything that he doeth for us who are his people tends to our ultimate salvation. He is working out our deliverance from inbred sin as well as from outward temptation and trial. Very often, the darkest days that we have are bright with divine mercy, even though we cannot discern the brightness. There is a good reason, a needs-be, for all that he sends to us, and that reason is to be found in the fact that he intends to present us “ faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. ” Open your diaries, beloved, and write across the record of your daily experiences, “ All this is being done to us in righteousness, and all this is working out our full salvation. ” Never read the book of your life's history without putting that head-line upon every page. Emblazon that motto as an illuminated picture at the beginning of every distinct chapter of your life, and believe that it is all righteousness and all salvation from first to last Having thus comprehended all God's mercies under these two heads, the psalmist adds, “ I know not the numbers thereof. ” I. In considering these words, let us think, first, of this thing which we do not know, namely, the number of God's mercies.

Have you ever tried to count them? Probably you never did that even for any day in your life. I would like you to undertake that task, and to jot down every mercy you receive from God in a single day, from the moment when the eyelids of the morning are opened till the moment when the curtains of the night are drawn. If your judgment were sufficiently enlightened to discern all the items, you

would find that your arithmetic would fail to tell the total of them. But, brethren, the days of most of us have been many, and there are some here who are approaching the longest period of human life. If the mercies of one day would surpass their computation, what shall we say of the mercies of all these days in which they have been living as gentlemen-commoners upon the bounty of God, pensioners upon the lovingkindness and faithfulness of the Most High? Truly, they may say, in the retrospect of all the lovingkindness of the Lord, “ We know not the numbers thereof. ”

Let me now — not by way of attempting to help you to count the mercies of God, but by way of showing you the utter impossibility of even numbering them, — just remind you, first, of the divine promises which have been fulfilled to you. They are very many. As you turn over the pages of Sacred Writ, you see them sparkling like grains of gold in the bed of some African or Australian river. God’s words of promise are there in great abundance, each of them as mighty as those words of power which built the skies; and, in your experience, from first to last, these words of promise have been fulfilled. It would be a colossal task for you to write out all God’s promises that have been fulfilled to you. Take your Bible, and put a pencil mark in the margin for each one that has been proved true to you. Your task will be blessed to your memory, and will move you to gratitude. And the most of God’s promises have been fulfilled to us over, and over, and over again. We have taken these promissory notes into the great bank of heaven, and we have received what was promised in them; but we have taken them to the bank again, for, strange to say, after the Lord has fulfilled his promise to-day, that promise still stands good for to-morrow, and right on until the end of time. Reckon up the multitude of God’s promises, and think of the many times in which those promises have been fulfilled to you and others of his children, for this will help you to realize how innumerable are the mercies of God.

Think of the mercies of God in another form, namely, the many deliverances which have been vouchsafed to you. You have had deliverances when you knew nothing of your danger, when the Lord —

**“ Watch’d o’er your path When,
Satan’s blind slave, you sported with death. ”**

You have had deliverances from sickness, when, had death come to you, you would have died unforgiven. You had deliverances, perhaps, in childhood, from many temptations which would have been your lot had you been born under less happy auspices. Then came the great deliverance, when your soul was released from the bondage of sin and Satan, and how many deliverances are wrapped up in that one! David says that God delivered him from all his fears; and that day when he delivered us from all our sins, he emancipated us from every yoke of bondage that had rested on us. O happy day of glorious liberty, when Christ made us free indeed! Well may each one of us sing, —

**“ Oh happy day, that fix’d my choice
On thee, my Savior, and my God;
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all abroad. “ ’
Tis done! the great transaction’s done;
I am my Lord’s, and he is mine:
He drew me, and I followed 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. ”**

From that day onward, our march through the wilderness has been a series of remarkable deliverances and salvations. You have been delivered, dear friends, from pride; — you have been brought low when you were exalted above measure. You have been delivered from depression of spirits; your eyes have been delivered from weeping, and your heart from fainting. You have been delivered in your seasons of bereavement, you have been succored in your times of pain and sickness; you have been delivered during the rush of business, and you have been delivered in the time of solitary temptations; you have been delivered from self, from sin, from Satan, from the evil that alarmed you, and from the more insidious mischief that sought to fascinate you. Until now, the Lord has held you up, and you have been kept in safety even while passing by the dens of lions, or fighting with Apollyon down

in the Valley of Humiliation.

Can you count all your deliverances? I feel sure that, you must say with the psalmist, " I know not the numbers thereof. " Let us think for a minute or two, just to stir up our gratitude to God, of the innumerable mercies attending our very existence. Any physician can tell you what a wonderful thing our life is. Dr. Watts truly wrote, — " Our life contains a thousand springs, And dies if one be gone; Strange, that a harp of thousand strings Should keep in tune so long! " The operations of nature are conducted in a most intricate manner, the continuation of our life depends upon the slenderest thread; ay, often, upon particles of matter which are so minute as scarcely to be perceived by the eye. As the blood circulates through our system, there is a risk of death at every beat of our pulse. As the air is inhaled by us, there is a further risk every time our lungs are inflated. I am not an anatomist, neither is it a part of my duty to dissect the fabric of the human body; but those who have searched into it have told us that life is a continued miracle from the cradle to the grave. We cannot even imagine what innumerable mercies, from the crown of our head to the soles of our feet, are concerned in our continuing still to be in the land of the living.

Think, again, of the numberless mercies connected with happy existence, any one of which taken away would make life sadder, many of which removed would make life an intolerable torture. Can you ever pass a lunatic asylum without thanking God that your reason has not left her throne? Can you pass by a place where idiots are dwelling without thanking God that your mind has not become lowered till it has almost ceased to be? Can you go by our great hospitals without blessing God that you are not tossing on a bed that grows hard through unceasing pain? Can you look upon the many diseased folk whom we see in our streets, and not thank God for the health you enjoy? I like to feel grateful for every minute that my tooth does not ache, or that my head does not ache, for some of these lesser pains do so distract us that we can scarcely attend to our daily duties. When we have to endure these pains, we think how grateful we should be if they were gone; but when they are gone, we are apt to forget the mercy which has removed them.

Think, dear friends, of the mercies which have made life happy for you in your domestic circle. " Ah! " say some of you, " but we have sore sorrows there now. " Yes, it may be so; but you ought to think how long you had almost unalloyed happiness. If a man lends you something, and after a long while takes it, back again, you ought not to mourn because he takes it, but to thank him for letting you have it so long. Think of the ten thousand mercies that cluster around a happy fireside. What music there is in that blessed word " home! " Ay, and with all the troubles that a family may bring, those dear little prattlers bring a world of happiness with them, and you ought to be thankful if they are still spared to you; and not only spared, but in robust health, firm of limb, clear in intellect, and many of them hopeful and promising in moral and spiritual things. Truly, if I were to attempt to record the mercies that make life happy here below, I should need a vast volume written within and without with thanksgiving, and even then I should have to make the psalmist's confession, " I know not " the numbers thereof. "

Take another measuring line, beloved friends. Think of the preventing providences of God, and you have quite another vista opened before you. Walking in the street yesterday, you might have fallen, and injured yourselves, for another did so. Sitting even in your house, the deadly fever might have entered; it did go in at a neighbor's door or window. In travelling, you might have been killed as many others have been, or have been mangled, and scarcely escaped with life. We talk of " providences " when we have hairbreadth escapes, but are they not quite as much providences when we are preserved from danger? I have told you before what the old Puritan said to his son,, who had ridden several miles to meet him. " Father, " said the son, " I have had a remarkable providence; my horse stumbled badly three times, yet did not throw me. " " Ah, my son, " said the father, " I have had a still more remarkable providence than that; for my horse did not stumble once. " We do not think, as we should, of the preventing providences of God which keep off evil from us. It is a mercy that so many of you are not brought to poverty; that when so many others are out of work, you working-men are not among the unemployed, but are able to provide for your families. We could probably all make a long list of trials from which we have been preserved; and after making out the list, we should still have to say, " We know not the numbers thereof. "

But when I turn to a still wider field, the best arithmetician must find his powers in vain. Think of the bounties of God's grace. Your sins, though many, all forgiven, and every forgiveness a mercy; — do any of you know the numbers thereof? The evils which sin has wrought in you, all remedied by the great Physician, or to be ultimately removed by his gracious hand; — do you know the numbers thereof? Think now, you are the elect of God; trace the streams of his love up to that eternal council in which he planned your redemption, and then say, with David, " How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand. " Beside that, you have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ? Do you know the number of mercies included in that one word " redeemed? " It includes that mercy of mercies, God descending to take our human nature into union with himself. It includes the whole life of Christ, and his death upon the tree, ay, and his resurrection, and ascension, and the glory of his second coming; for all this has to do with your redemption. Truly, you know not the numbers thereof. You have also been called by grace. You resisted God's calls, perhaps hundreds of times, yet were the sweet persuasions of the Holy Spirit continued until you were at last constrained to yield; and repentance was given to you, faith was wrought, in you, you were made to pray, and your prayers were heard and answered. Do you know the numbers of all these

mercies?

Further, the work of sanctification has gone on in you by the power of the Holy Spirit Every good thought you have ever had, every right word you have ever spoken, every holy action you have ever done has been a mercy from God to you. He gave these blessings to you, or else you would never have had them; and I challenge you to try to count this great budget of mercies. Beside all that, you are this day an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ; you have heaven in reversion, assured to you by the faithful promise of God who cannot lie. Sit down, and take your pen, and count your mercies if you can. Even as you count them, your mercies multiply, and every beating pulse increases the innumerable multitude of them, so that you must utterly despair of counting them. To what shall I liken them? To the countless odors that rise from the garden when the summer's sun is smiling on the innumerable beauties that are gathered there? Shall I liken them to the drops of dew that sparkle on ten thousand times ten thousand blades of grass? Shall I liken them to the innumerable birds and insects that fly in the air, or to the fishes without number that swim in the seas, or to the beasts untold that wander on the mountains or range the woods and forests? Shall I liken them to the innumerable leaves of autumn that fall when the frost cometh, or to the shells or sands upon the sea here, or to the stars of heaven which no man can number? I know not whereunto to liken God's mercies to you; for all comparisons fail me, and I can only wonderingly say with the psalmist, " I know not the numbers thereof. "

II. Now, turning from that to another Point, as we know not the numbers of God's mercies, we need not be surprised that there are other matters which are also beyond our knowledge.

To know the numbers of certain things would not be so difficult as to know their value. My God, I know not the numbers of thy mercies, and I do not even know the value of any one of them. If I were to take one of them, and try to estimate its worth, I should find that it would exceed all my powers of computation. I have never been able to weigh one of them in the scales, and especially thy lovingkindness in working by thy grace in my soul. To have been washed in the precious blood of Jesus, — angels, can you tell what a priceless boon this is? Devils, call you tell; — for you are still covered with sin; — lost spirit in hell, can you even imagine what it must be to be a forgiven soul? Bright spirits before the throne, who have washed your robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, do not even you, who have experienced this wonderful bliss, continue to marvel at the greatness of it? Then, dear brethren and sisters in Christ, we need not be surprised that we do not know the value of the mercies which our God has so abundantly bestowed upon us.

It is even more to be regretted that we have never felt due gratitude for the mercies of God to us. We might be forgiven for not being able to number that which teacheth almost to the infinite. That would be an imperfection rather than a sin; but, alas! we have been so ungrateful that we have not been thankful to God for the favors which he has so liberally showered upon us. They have been buried in forgetfulness, and yes have gone on, from year to year, as if we owed nothing to the Lord, but had received all his good gifts by mere chance. How many men are like the swine, that eat the acorns which fall from the oak, but never thank the tree on which they grew, or the God who made it grow. They receive the benisons of heaven, but thank not the God of heaven for them as they should. The mercies of God are uncountable; the ingratitude of man is unaccountable. We, Christian men and women, cannot tell how it is that we can be so stolidly indifferent when we ought to be so devoutly thankful to God for all his goodness to us.

And, beloved, as our gratitude has never kept pace with God's goodness, I am also sure that our praises have not How many tongues there are that are blistered through their murmuring and complaining because of the hard lot which God has given them! There are some of us, who have learned too well how to make discord, yet who know little about harmonious praise. Yet our God is a good God; let us say so, and stand to it; and repent that we have not said it oftener, and proclaimed it more publicly among the sons of men. God has been so gracious to us that we cannot count his mercies; may we be pardoned for our past silence concerning them, and henceforth may our mouth be filled with his praise and with his honor all the day.

And, my dear brethren, as we have fallen short in our praise, I am sure that we have fallen much more short of anything like a proper return for God's goodness in our conduct and conversation. If we had been his slaves, we could not have served him worse than we have done though we are his children. If he had been a tyrant to us, we could scarcely have done less for him than we have done although he is our Father. I have often felt that I could blot my diary with tears again, and again, and again, as I have said to myself, —

“ What have I done for him that died

To save my guilty soul?

How are my follies multiplied

Fast as my minutes roll!

Much of my time hath run to waste;

My sins how great their sum!

Lord, give me pardon for the past,

And strength for days to come! ”

Let these practical reflections abide in your memories, dear friends. You do not know the number, or the value, or the weight of God's mercies; you do not feel the gratitude for them that is due; you do not give to God the praise that is fitting, nor live the life that is consistent with his goodness to you. Here are reasons for deep humiliation, and for seeking the grace that will enable us to amend our ways.

III. Now, lastly, while there are these things which we do not know, there are some things which we do know, which ought to increase our thankfulness.

First, dear brethren and sisters in Christ, you and I know very well the source from which all these mercies come to us. We cannot count them, but we know that they all spring from the eternal love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord towards his own people. We can trace every one of these sacred drops of mercy to the fountain of God's discriminating, distinguishing love. He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. It was according to the greatness of his lovingkindness to us, or ever the earth was, that he chose us to be a people to show forth his praise, — a people to be “ filled with all the fullness of God. ” Let us trace even our common mercies up to this source, and let us specially see the love of God in every spiritual boon that we receive, for so shall we be moved to praise and bless him more than we have ever yet done.

Further, we know the channel through which every mercy comes to us; it comes through our blessed Lord and Mediator Jesus Christ; and — “ There's ne'er a gift his hand bestows But cost his heart a groan. ” I like to see the mark of my Master's sufferings upon every jewel with which he adorns my spirit; — to know that, if I am righteous, it is in his righteousness; if I am washed, it is in his blood; if I am saved, he is my Savior; if I am fed, he is my food; if I am glad, he is my crown of joy; and if I ever enter heaven, he will be my bliss for ever. All-in-all is he to his people, everything comes to us through him, so that we have a reason for gratitude in the way in which the mercy comes to us as well as in the mercy itself. We do not know the numbers of God's mercies to us, but we do know that every one of them comes to us by way of the cross, and bears the mark of the Redeemer's blood upon it

We do not know the number of God's mercies, but we do know the rule of them; that is to say, we know that they are always sent in love. If they seem to be stinted, it is love that stints them; and if they are increased, it is love that increases them. The whole of the day, God's love is shining upon us; and when the natural sun has gone to his rest, there is no harmful moon to smite, us, but the selfsame love of God makes it light within our soul. If the Lord chastens me, it is because he loves me. If he takes away thy child, thy husband, or thyself, believer, it is because he loves thee. The rule of every mercy is the great rule of our Father's wisdom, our Father's faithfulness, our Father's affection.

We know, also, with regard to all God's mercies, the design of them. We know that they are all sent to us to be tokens of his love, and helps in our journey to heaven. In addition to the mercy, and the love that gives it, and the way by which it comes, there is a blessed end that sanctifies it, all. The Lord said to Israel, concerning the Angel whom he promised to send with them, “ He shall bless thy bread and thy water. ” Oh, to have the common mercies of life so blessed that they become spiritual helps to us! It can be so; for it is the design of God, in all that he sends to us, to bring us nearer to him.

Then, we know, over and above all this, the grand climax of it all. I know not the numbers thereof; but I know, my God, that when I shall have received my last mercy on earth, I shall receive my first enjoyment in heaven; when I shall have had the last blessing of this mortal life, I shall have the first blessing of the life everlasting; when the goodness and the mercy, that have followed me to the brink of Jordan, shall cease, I shall have angels there to escort me up to the celestial hills, and to admit me to my Savior's presence, where there are pleasures for evermore. It is an endless chain, beloved; when it has seemed to conclude in one place, it begins in smother. David said, “ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me me the days of my life; ” — and what did he say next? — “ and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. ” For ever to behold the face of their Father, in his house above, is the portion of all the children of God.

After all that I have said, I hope you will all say that a Christian's life is a happy one. It is; it is. We have our cross to carry; we have our daily sorrows, and losses, and trials; but each one of us can say, with Dr. Watts, —

“ I would not change my blest estate,

For all that earth calls good or great “

We enter our Masters service, and accept the cross, and all he gives us. We take the road to heaven with all its thorns and briers. Yea, let what will come, he is so good and blessed a God who has made himself to be his people's portion that, if the rod be a part of the covenant, then blessed be the rod, and the hand that wields it, and let the Lord be praised from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same!

Brethren and sisters in Christ, since God is never wearied in giving, let us never be wearied in serving him; let us be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Since he never stays his hand in bestowing mercies upon us, let us never stay our patient endurance of any of the ills of life that he is pleased to send us; and since his mercy will continue with us as long as we are here, let us never cast away our confidence in him. Let us stay ourselves upon him, and fall back into his arms when we are weary. If we faint, let us faint on his bosom.

I wish that all of us here, constantly receiving, as we do, so many mercies, had more thought of the hand and heart from which they come. Alas! alas! with many, "the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib," but these people do not know God. Feed a dog, and he will get to know you; but here are men and women, who know not the God who made them, and in whose hands their breath is. Let this text abide with you: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." You have not done anything amiss, you say; you do not drink, or swear, or lie; but "all the nations that forget God" are to have the same portion as "the wicked" will have. Beware ye that forget God; and if you would remember him, the easier way to do that is to see his love in the death of his Son, Jesus Christ. Think of Jesus bleeding for sinners, trust yourself to Jesus, and so you shall be saved, for "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life."

May God bless you all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Psalm 71:17 God, the Children's Teacher

NO. 3271

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 15TH, 1911,- THE DAY OF SPECIAL PRAYER FOR SUNDAY-SCHOOLS AND OTHER WORK AMONGST CHILDREN,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON TUESDAY EVENING, MARCH 2ND, 1869.**

"O God, thou hast taught me from my youth."- Psalm 71:17 .

David was a very great man, and at the time he used these words he ruled a kingdom, and wore a crown; but he needed to be taught, and he tells us that he had been to school, and that the wisdom he had was given to him by the great Teacher who taught in that school. You who are at school now must take care that you use well the privilege you have. You will not be wise without learning. Learning does most grow up in our heart, like weeds do in the fields, but it must be sown in us, as good wheat and barley must be cast into the ground if there is over to be a harvest.

David did well in life because he had been well taught in his youth. He was one of those in whom God fulfilled that text "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it." You know, when boys go to school, their teacher feels very anxious that they should turn out well, and be a credit to him. The teacher is very sorry when, after all his trouble, the boy becomes a dunce; and he is very happy when he sees some lad prosper in life, because he says, "I trained that boy." The success of the scholar brings honor and credit to the teacher. So David speaks of God having taught him, in order that he may give honor and glory to God. David feels that he owes so much to his God that he cannot help saying what he does. "Lord," he seems to say, "if I have learnt anything, if I have learnt how to fight giant Goliath, if I have learnt how to bear my troubles, if I have learnt how to pray, if I have learnt how to preach and how to be a king, I had it all from thee. I was the scholar, thou wast the Teacher, and unto thy name be all the praise." Now, I shall not keep on any longer with the preface to my sermon; it is a cold, damp night, and people do not like to be kept outside the doors at such a time; we will just put our finger on the latch, and get to the inside of our sermon at once.

Special Note To Sunday-School Teacher, Parents, Etc. Mr. Spurgeon seldom preached specially to children, his Sermons were all so simple that boys and girls as well as the common people, heard him gladly, and understood his words easily. The accompanying discourse is one of the very few delivered to a congregation of young people by the beloved preacher who has been for nearly twenty years at home with the Lord. It was preached at the Tabernacle during a series of special services in March 1869; and it is now published in the regular weekly series at the time of special prayer for the children and young people in Sunday-schools, Bible-classes, Christian Endeavour Societies, etc., in the hope that all who are interested in the spiritual welfare of the young will aid in its widespread circulation among them.

I. As soon as we come into it the first thing we see is The Great Teacher. Who is the Teacher? David says, Thou hast taught me from my youth. ” Who taught David?

The Children: God.

Mr. Spurgeon: Yes, that is right, God was David's Teacher; he says in the text, " O God, thou hast taught me from my youth. " I have no doubt that David had other teachers; but all the teachers he had would not have been of any practical use to him if he had not also been taught by God.

Now, if God be the Teacher, we shall police, first, that God is an effectual Teacher. David had been taught by his good mother. I know he had a godly mother, for he says, " Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of shine handmaid. " He calls his mother God's handmaid, which shows that she was one of God's servants. I have no doubt that she took David on her knee and taught him God's Word while he was but a child, for he had such a love to it afterwards that he must have, had a love to it while he was yet little. After his mother, I have no doubt his father taught him. What was the name of David's father?

The Children: Jesse.

Mr. Spurgeon: Quite right; and we believe that Jesse was also one of God's people, and that he would have been sure to teach his son wisely, and train, him up in the way he should go. I think there was another person who taught David, namely, the prophet Samuel. You recollect that Samuel anointed David while he was yet a youth; he poured oil on his head, and told him that he would one day be a king of God's people. I feel sure that Samuel told him what God's will was, and tried to train him so that he might, when he became a king, do God's good pleasure rightly. But all these teachers-his mother, his father, and the prophet, could not have taught David if God had not taught him too. You see, dear children, your teachers, though they are very good and kind, can only get at your error; but God gets at the heart, and that is where we most need to be taught. Suppose my watch should get out of order so that it would not go, and I could not get it open, all I could do in polishing up the gold outside, or gleaning the glass, would not make it go. I must take it to some watchmaker who could get at the inside, and who could touch the mainspring, or clean out the wheels. Now, your teachers cannot get at that which is inside of you as they could wish unless God helps them; but God can get at the heart, which is like the mainspring of the watch. He can get at our thoughts and feelings, which are like the wheels. I trust that you, my dear children, may be taught of God from your youth, because God is an effectual Teacher.

The next point is that God is a condescending Teacher. Have you ever thought of this: The graces God made yon blue sky, the sun and this moon, and all these bright stars that we see at night, and piled up the big mountain, and poured out the great seas and oceans from the hollow of his hand, and he is so great that all the things in this world are just like nothing when compared to him; and yet he stoops to teach children. He stooped to teach David. David says, " Thou hast taught me from my youth. " Would not some of you girls like to go to school if the Queen would but teach a class? I am sure that nearly all the young ladies and all the little girls in London would be tearing away to the place if the Queen would but teach a class; you would think it such a great honor to be taught by Her Majesty. Oh, but when God teaches, what a wonderful stoop of condescending love that is! He who made the world, and bears all things up by his everlasting might, condescends to be a Teacher of little children: " Thou hast taught me from my youth. " Perhaps you have heard of that holy man, Mr. John Eliot. He went away from all his home comforts, out among the Red Indians, and spent his life in preaching to them; and when he was sick, and near to death, he was lying in a hut upon a hard couch, and what, think you, was the last thing he did? He had a New Testament, and he was teaching a little Red Indian boy his A B C, and making him spell out some simple text from God's holy Word. " Oh, but! " one said, " does this great missionary teach that little red-faced, copper-coloured boy? " " Yes, " replied Eliot; " I prayed to God that I might never live to be useless; so, now I cannot preach, I am trying to teach Jesus Christ to this one little boy. " That was very kind of him; but think of the kindness of the great God, who wheels the stars along, and calls them all by their names, that he should condescend to teach us. Dear children, do not refuse to be taught by God; but, on the contrary, let this be your resolve, " My Father, thou shalt be the Guide of my youth. " Ask the Lord to teach you; for, as surely as he taught David, he is willing to teach you to-night.

My next remark is that God is a loving Teacher. I know you boys and girls in the Sunday-school classes like to have a smiling-faced teacher. You do not care to have one who is very cross and short-tempered with you, and inclined to give you a box on the ear; you like somebody who is very kind. I cannot tell you how kind God is to us; how patient, how pitiful, how tender. A good mother was telling her little girl a lesson over ever so many times,-I think it was nineteen or twenty times,-and someone said, 'How can you have the patience to tell the child the same thing twenty times? " " Why! " she replied; " I tell her twenty times because nineteen are not sufficient. " Now, our God not only tells us twenty times, but twenty thousand times if necessary: " for precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little. " From our very earliest childhood, right on, God keeps teaching us with great patience; and yet some of us are so wicked or so thoughtless that we forget what he teaches us almost as soon as we hear it; and we go on to do the wrong thing which he tells us not to do, and we forget to do the right thing

which he bids us do. Yet he does not strike us dead. He still continues preaching to us, teaching us on the Sabbath, and on the week-days, by his Book, and by his Spirit, and by his ministers, and by our teachers, and in a thousand ways. Oh, what a kind and patient Teacher the Lord our God is! But I must not keep you long on any one point.

The next truth is that God is a wise Teacher. Have you ever thought what a wise Teacher God is? I will prove to you that he is very wise; for, do you know, he teaches not only men, but he can teach beasts? Did you ever see a beaver? Perhaps you did at the Zoological Gardens. Well, those beavers have flat tails, and they know how to use them just like bricklayers use their trowels; and they will go and nibble away at trees, and get bits of wood, and go down to a river, and build a house. Nobody could build such a house, so fit for beavers, as they build; they daub it, and plaster it; you would think that they had been apprenticed to a plasterer, they do the work so well. Who taught the beavers to build a house? Why, God! And how wise he must be to teach even the animals he has created? How wise he must be to teach the beaver to build a house! But God not only teaches beasts, he also teaches fish, and I never heard of any man who could teach a fish as God does. The fishes of the sea know exactly the day of the month when they ought to begin to go round the English coast; and the herrings and the mackerel come exactly to the time, though nobody rings the bell to say to them, "It is such a day of the week, and such a month of the year; and you ought to swim away." When the time comes for them to go back again, away they go, and they seem to understand everything that they should do. If God can teach even the fish of the sea, what a wise Teacher he must be!

It is said that, many years ago, there was a very wise man who lived at Cambridge, and he taught scholars Latin and Greek, and many things that seemed very queer to the people who lived there; and the news flew abroad that there was a wonderful man there who knew everything, a little about the stars, and a great deal about all sorts of things. The young men all over Europe began to flock to him, and that is how there came to be a University at Cambridge, for the fame of the man's learning drew those who wanted to be taught to come and be pupils to him. Now, when God can teach even the beasts and the fishes, you boys and girls and grownup people ought to say, "Lord, let us be scholars in thy school!" "Why, my dear friend over here, Mr. Johnson, is such a good teacher that the boys come and fill the school-house! If he were a bad teacher, he would not have half the number of boys that he has. A good teacher is sure to draw pupils, and God is the best and wisest Teacher. Oh, may his grace draw you to his school, that you may be able to say with David, "Thou hast taught me from my youth!"

I have only one more point to speak upon under this head, so do not grow weary. God is a needful Teacher. It is really necessary that every one of us should be taught of God; for, if we are not, somebody else will teach us, and that somebody else will so teach us that we shall lose our souls for ever. There was a sad sight seen some years ago, I daresay the like of it has been seen far too often. A minister called at a house, and he saw a woman crying, oh, so bitterly, and she refused to be comforted! The minister said, "My good woman, what is the matter?" She answered, "Oh, my boy, my boy, my boy!" "What, is he ill?" "Oh, no, sir; worse than that!" "Is he dead?" "Worse than that." "What is the matter?" "Oh, my boy, my boy!" "Where is he?" "Oh, sir, he is in prison, in prison for stealing, and it is all my fault!" "How is that?" said he. "Why, I took him to the theater; and if there is any place where children can learn to do wrong, it is there!" And so she began to cry again. "I took him there, and that was the first step in his ruin; and now my boy is lost." Ah, if you do not go to God to teach you, the devil will teach you! Do you know, the devil has plenty of teachers? I see them on Sunday; I mean bad boys and bad girls, who teach other boys and girls to do wrong: The devil can make a Sunday-school teacher out of a very small boy. "Come," he says, "I'll teach you;" and he teaches that boy to say bad words, and to do wrong things; and then away the boy goes, and teaches others. A bad boy is like a sheep that comes into the flock with a disease in it, and the disease goes from one sheep to another.

**" One sickly sheep infects the flock,
And poisons all the rest. "**

But if we have God for our Teacher, we shall most be taught to son; but we shall be taught everything that is good.

II. But now we are going on to the second head, and that is, The Lessons Which The Great Teacher Taught David.

One of the lessons which God taught David was, to value his soul. We all want to be taught that lesson. We generally value our bodies, and take care of them; and up to a certain point that is right. Some of us like to look into the glass, for we think we are rather pretty; but there is danger in that glass as well as in others. I like to see the boys well-washed and clean, and I am pleased when they keep themselves tidy; and though I do not like to see girls dressed very finely, yet it is very nice to see them neat and trim. But, after all, you know, the body is only like the shell of the nut; the inside is the nut itself. It is the soul that is the thing we ought to care about. Some time ago, there was a great fire. What a noise there was in the street! Here come the engines! People are gathering together all round the house, and there is a woman shouting and crying, "Oh!" she says, "come and help me! Do come and help me! I want to save some of my things. She gets a bed downstairs, she brings out a box, she has secured some little trinkets and jewellery, and she gets everything that she can out of the fire, and she says to herself, "Dear me, am I not fortunate in

having saved so much? ” The fire is burning, the house is crackling, everything is being consumed, and all of a sudden the woman starts up, and says, “ Oh, dear! where’s my child? ” The neighbors cry, “ What, did you not think of your child first? ” “ Oh! “ she replies, “ what a foolish woman I’ve been! I have saved these paltry things, and forgotten my child, my precious child! “ That is like a person who cares only for his body, what he shall eat, and what he shall drink, and what he shall put on, and then at last when he comes to die, he says, “ Oh, dear! I have forgotten my soul, and now my soul must be cast away for ever into the everlasting burning that never shall be quenched. ” Dear children, I hope God will teach every one of you in the Sunday-school to look after the welfare of your soul, and to recollect that, if you were to gain the whole world, and lose your own soul, all the gain would be an eternal loss.

The next lesson that God taught David was to value the world aright. David, I am sure, valued the world aright because he says, “ There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us! “ And he says again, “ Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. ” Young people generally think of this world. I will tell you a story, and ask you a question. There was a little boy carrying a basket of peaches, and he had to cross a railway. Just as he crossed it, the train came up, and went right over him, and crushed him to atoms. A little girl heard that story, and I do not think you could guess what question she asked, because it was such a silly question that you never would guess it, I think. Her mother said the dear little boy was all crushed to pieces by the train going over him; but the little girl was silly enough to say, “ Mother, what became of the peaches? “ Was not that a foolish question to ask, Now, when I hear of people dying, and I often do hear of persons who have been living without God, and without Christ, and they have been said to be “ worth “ perhaps £20,000, or £50,000, what silly question do you think I hear people ask? They say, “ How much money did he leave? “ as if that was of any consequence at all compared with the other question, “ What has become of his soul? Where is his immortal spirit? ” The little basket of peaches that the child carried was nothing compared with the boy himself, and all that you can ever gain in this world is nothing compared with your own self, your own real self, your soul. So I hope you will be taught by God’s grace to put the world in its right place, and look at it as being nothing compared with the saving of your soul.

Another thing that David was taught of God was, to see his sin. I know that, in your classes, you have read the fifty-first Psalm. How much David talks about his sin in that Psalm! He says, “ My sin is ever before me. ” This is one of the lessons that every boy and every girl here must learn, if they would enter heaven. You must learn that you are a sinner, and learn it so that it makes you mourn and cry out before God. I saw, last week, in the West-end of London, two soldiers, with bayonets fixed, one walking on one side of a soldier, and the other on the other side of him, and the man who was walking in the middle had a coat over his hands. I knew what that meant; he had handcuffs on his wrists. He had been deserting; and he had his hands chained together; but he did not like the people to know it, and therefore he had asked his comrades to be kind enough just to throw a cloak over his hands, so that he might not look as though he was chained. I do not blame him for that. But, you know, the devil-though men are all chained by nature, and are all of them slaves,-puts something over them so that they cannot see their chains, and they walk on believing that they are free, whereas they are in the worst possible bondage. One of the best lessons you can learn is to find out that you are a slave, and that you need someone to set you free; to find out that your soul is sick, and needs to be healed. Oh, may God’s Spirit teach you that, and teach it to you in your youth!

But, better still, the next lesson that God taught David was, where the remedy was for all his sins. If you read the fifty-first Psalm, you can hear him say, “ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. ” David knew that the blood of Jesus Christ could take away his sin. I have heard, but I do not know whether it is true, that a little creature, called the ichneumon, which lives in Egypt, lives by killing and eating snakes. It is a very useful little creature, for it destroys many things that would be deadly to men. But sometimes these snakes bite the ichneumon, and he would die, but the story goes that there is a kind of grass growing near the river which heals snakebites, and as soon as ever the ichneumon gets bitten, and feels the poison, he runs away to this little herb, and nibbles at it, and gets healed directly. Whether it is true or not, you and I have been bitten by the old serpent Satan, and there is “ the Plant of Renown ”, the Lord Jesus Christ; and if we go and feed upon him, all the wounds that sins can make will soon be healed.

Well, these were very good lessons to be learned by David. Let me remind you what they were. God taught him to value his soul, to value the world aright, to see his sin, and to see the remedy for it. Another thing David learned was, to live as in God’s sight. How wonderfully David talks, in various parts of the Psalms, about God seeing him! When I was a boy, about the size of many of these boys that I see before me here, my father made me learn that long Psalm, the one hundred and thirty-ninth, in which Dr. Watts puts thus the great truth that God is everywhere, and can see everyone:-

“ If mounted on a morning ray

I fly beyond the Western sea,

Thy swifter hand would first arrive,

And there arrest thy fugitive.

“ Or should I try to shun thy sight
 Beneath the spreading veil of light,
 One glance of time, one piercing ray,
 Would kindle darkness into day.
 “ The veil of night is no disguise,
 No screen from thy all-searching eyes;
 Thy hand can seize thy foes as soon
 Through midnight shades as blazing noon
 “ O may these thoughts possess my breast,
 Where’er I rove, where’er I rest!
 Nor let my weaker passions dare
 Consent to sin, for God is there. ”

One other lesson David learnt was this, he learnt to prepare to die. This is one of the grandest lessons that any man can ever learn; for, you know, we must all die. There was a great king who was a great warrior as well as a king. His name was Saladin; and when he was very ill in his tent, he said to his generals who gathered round him, “ Go and fetch the crescent banner, around which my warriors have always rallied in the day of battle. ” So they brought it in, on a long lance, and they unfurled the colors right before him, and the dying man said, “ Take off the colors, and see, there is the shroud that I have had prepared to wrap me in when I am dead. Now, put the shroud on the lance instead of the colors; ” and they did so. These were the last words he uttered, “ Go and take that shroud on the lance, and go through every street of the city, and cry aloud, ‘ This is all that remains of the mighty Saladin! This is all that remains of the mighty Saladin! ’ ” “ And this is what will be said of all of us, “ This is all that remains of that fair girl with the beautiful hair; “ “ This is all that remains of that dear boy who was once so full of mirth and laughter; ” “ This is all that remains of that grey-headed man, so wise and learned; ” “ This is all that remains of the merchant with all his wealth; ” or “ This is all that remains of the preacher with all his speech. ” Oh, to be ready, thoroughly ready, whenever the summons shall come for us to leave this world behind us, and go to the better land!

III. Now the third head is about When The Scholar Went To School. I hope none of these boys who go to school ever go too late.

“ Dilly, dilly dollar, ” don’t they say? “ ten o’clock scholar. ” He is always a bad scholar who comes in late. Those who go to God’s school are never very good scholars if they go too late. When did David go to God’s school, according to the text,

The Children: In his youth. ”

Mr. Spurgeon: That is right; in his youth. He says, “ O God, thou hast taught me from my youth. ” He went to school in his early days, and that is one of the reasons why he turned out so good a scholar, because he went to school betimes. Why should we go to God’s school early? I think we ought to do so, first, because it is such a happy school. Schools used to be very miserable places; but, nowadays, I really wish I could go to school again. I went into the Borough Road School the other day, into the Repository, where they sell slates, and pencils, and books, and all such things. The person who was there said to me, “ Do you want to buy any of these things? ” I said, “ What are they? ” He opened a box, and I said, “ Why, they are toys, are they not? ” He answered, “ No, they are not; they are used for the lessons that are taught in the Kinder-garten school. ” I said, “ Why, if I were to take them home, my boys would have a game with them, for they are only toys! ” “ Just so, ” he said, “ but they are what are used in the Kinder-garten school to make learning the same as playing, so that little children should play while they are learning. ” Why, I thought, if that were so, I should like to go at once! Now, those who go to God’s school are made much more happy than any toys can make children. He gives them real pleasure. There is a verse, I don’t know how many of you know it; I will say the first line, you say the second, if you can.

Mr. Spurgeon: “ ’Tis religion that can give ”

The Children: “ Sweetest pleasures while we live; ”

Mr. Spurgeon: 'Tis religion must supply

The Children: "Solid comfort when we die.

Another reason why boys and girls should try to get to God's school very early is because they will not have so much to be sorry for afterwards. Two or three times during the last fortnight, I have heard good men pray in the Tabernacle, and each one has said something like this, "O God, save my dear children! Grant that they may never go into sin as I did, that they may never have so much to repent of and to weep over as I had!" That was the father of some boy here, I expect; and oh, I know, if he were here to-night, he would say, "Dear boy, dear girl, do not go into sins which will afterwards cause you to weep." This story will show you what I mean. A boy's father once said to him, "Now, John, I will tell you what I am going to do to make you look at yourself a little. Every time you do wrong, I am going to drive a nail into that post; and every time, you do right, and are a good boy, I shall draw one out." "Well," John thought, "I will not have any nails in that post if I can help it." But they did get in somehow; boys will be boys, and girls will be girls; and there was a lot of nails in the post, and the boy felt very sorry as he saw them, for they seemed to speak to him, and to say, "You disobeyed your father that day; you disobeyed your mother another day," and he thought he would be a good boy. So he tried with all his might, and got half the nails out; and after a while, he got every nail out of the post. And what do you think he said then? His father said to him, "You have got all the nails out, John." "Yes, father," he said, "but there are the holes still there. There are the holes still there." Now when God's grace comes to a man who has led a wicked life from his boyhood, it pardons him, and takes the nails out. "Ah!" says he, "but there are the holes still there. I recollect the sins I did, and they have done me serious hurt, though God has forgiven me." One good man said, "I never shall forgive myself, to think that I lived so long without serving God." Get then, dear children, to God's school early, that you may not have the holes in the post, nor have so much to be sorry for in your after life.

Another reason why I would have boys and girls go to God's school early is because it will make them most useful. A man cannot be very greatly useful who has only the fag end of his life to use for God. The tree that has been transplanted very lately cannot be expected to bear much fruit; but a tree that was put into the soil when but a scion, and that has continued to grow there year after year, is more likely to become a good fruit-bearing tree.

One other reason why I would have you go to God's school soon is that you will die soon. Even if you live long, life will be very short. Oh, that God's mercy would take you into God's school now, even to-night, that you may be able to say with David, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth." Let this be your cry,-

Soon as my youthful lips can speak

Their feeble prayer to thee

O let my heart thy favor seek;

Good Lord, remember me! "

IV. Now the last thing, and that is the most important of all to-night, and it will not take many minutes to tell you about it, the last thing is this.

David said, "God, thou hast taught me from my youth." But David is dead now. I wonder whether there are some here to-night who can say the same, as he did: I hope there are many. So the last head is, The Scholar-Where Is He? The Scholar-Where Is She?

Pass them questions all round the building, and I hope there are many who will be able to say, "O God, thou hast taught me," - Mary, Jane, Thomas, William,- "Thou hast taught me from my youth." I do not suppose you could make much of a speech to-night if you were on this platform; but, do you know, if I could have my choice between being able to speak as well as Mr. Gladstone, who spoke so grandly to-night, or only be able to say, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth," - if I could only have one of the two, I should certainly choose the latter. There is more music in that sentence than in all the eloquence of the greatest orator.

I shall now ask a question or two, and then I shall have done. All the children here believe that, when we have gone from this life, we shall go into another world; and you are all hoping, I am sure, that, when you die, you will go to that happy Land of which we sometimes sing,-

"There is a happy land,

Far, far away,

Where saints in glory stand,

**Bright, bright as day;
Oh, how they sweetly sing,
Worthy is our Savior King,
Loud let his praises ring,
Praise, praise for aye.
“ Come to this happy land,
Come, come away:
Why will you doubting stand?
Why still delay?
Oh, we shall happy be
When from sin and sorrow free
Lord, we shall live with thee,
Blest, blest for aye!
“ Bright in that happy land
Beams every eye; Kept by a
Father’s hand,
Love cannot die.
On then to glory run,
Be a crown, and kingdom, won;
And bright above the sun,
Reign, reign for aye. ”**

May we have that crown and kingdom! That is what we are looking for. A little girl came home one Sunday, and asked her mother a question. Little boys and girls will sometimes ask questions which cannot be very easily answered. She said, “ Mother, do you believe what teacher told me to-day? ” “ What’s that, dear! ” “ Why, she says that we are only going to stop in this world for a little while, and that we are going to another world; do you believe it, mother? ” “ Oh, yea, my dear, of course I do; the Bible says so! ” Then, mother, you know aunt Eliza is going to Australia. ” “ Yes, what about that? ” “ She is getting ready, is she not? ” “ Yes; she is packing up her trunks, and getting ready. ” “ Then, mother, if you are going into another world, why don’t you get ready, too? ” A very proper question for a child to put, and a very proper question for me to put to you here. If you are going to another world, dear children, may God’s Holy Spirit help you to get ready to go!

Dear children, I hope you will be scholars who will learn that the next world is the one for us to look for.

This world is but a very poor thing at the best. A great man, a very rich man, and a mighty emperor, invited a friend of his youth to come and stay with him; and this friend, when he entered into the palace, was quite dazzled by the marble, and ivory, and gold, and silver, and gems on every side, and he said to the great man, “ How happy you must be with all this wealth! I never saw such a palace, nor such servants in livery, nor such gardens! ” “ Ah! ” said the other, “ I will one of those evenings tell you what I think of all I have. ” So, one evening, a servant brought to this gentleman, on a golden dish, an apple so lovely that it seemed as if such an apple never grew; it was, as we sometimes say, like wax, perfect. He took it off the golden dish, but put it back again, and the servant took a knife, and cut it down the middle, and inside it was full of black dust, and a great worm dropped out of it. The emperor said nothing, but looked at his friend, and his friend knew that he meant, “ That is like my life; all outside looks very beautiful, but inside there is a worm. ” Now, in all the joy that this world ever gives to us there is a worm. The only apples that have no worms grow only in Paradise, and there, dear children, if God shall teach us, we shall sit and pluck new fruit from the celestial tree. Let us go there, and leave this poor world behind, seeking a better rest, where fruits immortal grow.

Mr. Spurgeon then went over the heads of the sermon with the children. The latter, having omitted one point in their replies, Mr.

Spurgeon added:-

That is just like most people; they forgot the time, that is, now, now, NOW; and I must just say this one sentence or so. The way to go to God's school is this, Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, died on the cross be open the door into that great school; and if any of you, my dear young friends, will trust in Jesus Christ to save you, because he died for sinners, you are then inside his school, and you shall be taught and trained, and as I told you about the little ichneumon that ate the grass, and healed all its wounds, so shall you have all your sins forgiven, and your soul-wounds healed, and you shall go on your way rejoicing.

Psalm 80:14 The Vine of Israel

NO. 3243

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 30TH, 1911,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**On behalf of the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 9TH, 1878.**

“ Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine. ”- Psalm 80:14 .

I FEEL somewhat straitened on this occasion, because of the, speciality of my subject. I have, been persuaded by the Society to preach on the behalf of the Jews, but my mind does not quite run in the direction which is prescribed for it. I have been so in the habit of preaching the gospel to everybody, knowing neither Jew nor Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free, that the very recognition of anything like nationality and speciality is somewhat difficult to me. I do not think that the recognition of the distinction is wrong; nay, I think it right, but it is so unusual that I scarcely feel at home. I would sooner, by a thousand times, take a text, and preach the gospel to sinners or to saints than discourse upon a special race; yet is it needful, and therefore let it be done; and I trust the Holy Ghost may make our meditation profitable. Assuredly, if there be any distinction which might be maintained, and I think there is none, for that distinction of Jew and Gentile seems to me to be wiped out and obliterated,-if there be any distinction, we may, at least, recollect that which lingeringly subsists between the seed of Israel and the nations, for God's election of old fell upon them, and when the old world lay in darkness, gleams of light gladdened their eyes. To them belonged the oracles. They were long the sole preservers of precious truth, which they have handed down to us; and if through their unbelief we have taken their place, we cannot but recollect who occupied it for so many centuries, and we cannot but look with extraordinary tenderness and affection and earnest desire to that elder family when the Lord loved so long, and towards whom, methinks, his love still burneth, as shall be seen when the day comes in which he shall gather Israel again unto himself.

We shall view the prayer of the text, in its reference to Israel. “ Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine. ” The vine was peculiarly a type of Palestine and the Jewish nation. When this Psalm was written, the Gentiles were not in the psalmist's mind, but only Israel. So let us speak of Israel now, and let us pray to, God that he will return in mercy, behold in pity, and visit this vine, and the vineyard which his right hand hath planted.

I. First, let us reflect upon What An Amount Of Interest Surrounds This Vine,-this chosen people.

Brethren, Israel has a history compared with which the annals of all other nations are but poor and thin. Israel is the world's aristocracy, and her history is the roll-call of priests and kings unto God. At the very beginning, what interest attaches to the planting of this vine! The psalmist speaks of the Lord bringing the vine out of Egypt, and casting out the nations that he might find a trench wherein he might place Israel's roots, that she might strike deep, and take possession of the soil. But what wonders God wrought in the removal of Israel from the soil of Goshen, wherein her vine seemed to have taken deep root, until the wild boar of Egypt began to uproot her! Never can we forget what he did at the Red Sea. Even at the very mention of the name, we feel as if we could sing unto the Lord who triumphed gloriously, and cast the horse and his rider into the depths of the sea. What marvels he wrought all through, the wilderness, when he turned the rock into a pool of water, and made refreshing streams to follow his chosen along the burning sand! Neither can we forget the Jordan; our hearts begin to sing at the mention of the name,-What ailed thee, O Jordan, that thou wast driven back when the Lord's ark led the way through the depths of the river, and the priests stood still in the midst, while all the hosts of his people passed over dry-shod? Neither can we fail to exult, as we think of the planting of the vine in Canaan. Saw ye not the walls of Jericho tottering in ruins at the sound of the ram's horns when Israel gave her shout, for the Lord was in the midst of his people? Therefore the sword of Joshua smote the Canaanites till they were utterly destroyed, the sun stood still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, because the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man, working marvelously with his people, that he might settle them in the land which he gave unto their fathers,-the land which flowed with milk and honey.

When I think of such a planting, it seems to me that this vine can never be given up to be utterly burned with fire after wonders as

these. It is not God's fashion to cast away a people for whom, he has done so much. The commencement of Israel's national history is by far too good to close, as we fear it must, if we judge only according to carnal reason. An era brighter and more glorious must surely dawn, and the Lord must, bring again from Bashan, and lead up his chosen nation from the depths of the seas. Once again he will make bare his arm, even he that cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon, and the whole earth shall behold all Israel, both spiritual and national, singing in one joyous song the song of Moses the servant of God, and of the Lamb. The very planting of the nation makes us feel the deepest possible interest in its welfare. O God, behold, and visit this vine, as the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted!

Let us reflect again upon the prosperity of Israel, and the wide influence which the nation exercised for centuries. I am, keeping closely to, the Psalm, which is really my text, for we are told that, after the planting of the vine, " the hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto, the sea, and her branches unto, the river. " No nation has ever exercised such an influence upon the thought of the world as the Jewish people have done. I grant you that some other nations exercised greater influence upon the world's art and sculpture, and the like for Israel eschewed much of art and science, not greatly to her loss, especially since the reason, for it was so greatly to her gain. But the idea of one God, which the Lord had graciously written upon the hearts of his elect people, though it took many an age to erase the natural lines of idolatry which nature had imprinted there, -that idea of the unity of the Godhead is a treasure, handed to us by the seed of Abraham. The grand truths which were contained in type and shadow, and outward ordinance, and given to the chosen people of God, exercised a far more powerful influence over the world than, perhaps, most of us have ever dreamed. I feel certain that the religion of Zoroaster came from the Jews. I believe that much of whatever is pure in Eastern religions might be distinctly traced to the teachings of Moses, to gleanings of the Israelitish vintage which were carried to the nations through their commerce and intercommunication; perhaps directly and distinctly by the teachings of Jews who journeyed thither as exiles in captivity.

The earth had become corrupt even in father Abraham's time; and though, here and there, there might have been found goodly individuals like the patriarch Job, adhering to the simple worship of the one only God, yet, for the most part, the whole world was sunken in idolatry, and the light came, to it, and remains in it, gleaming strangely in the darkness, like flashes of lightning amidst the blackness of a tempest: that light came always, as I believe, by the way of Israel. The original light of tradition grew dimmer and dimmer, and threatened to die out, for in transmission from father to son its brightness was sadly beclouded with human error. But the truth retained much of its vitality and purity in the midst of Israel, and from, Israel it influenced the rest of the nations. In the days of Solomon, how proudly did the temple stand upon its holy hill, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, the one Pharos of the, midnight, sea of humanity! That little country-we often forget what a very little district Palestine occupied,-was, nevertheless, the very queen among the nations. From far-off Sheba they came to hear the wisdom of Solomon and to other lands the rumor of his glory extended, and all his greatness was connected with the worship of God, for she who came from Sheba, came to hear all the wisdom of Solomon " concerning the Lord his God. " That little land thus influenced all lands, and transmitted far-off adown the centuries what was known of the ever-blessed God among the people. To me it seems so sad that she that sat over against the treasury should now be poor; that she that laid the daily showbread before the Lord should now be famished; that she that piled the temple, and brought the offering, should now turn away from the one only Sacrifice, and should these many days remain without priest or temple. Alas! poor Israel; our hearts take the deepest interest in thee, and we pray the, Lord to look down, and behold, and visit this vine, when we remember the days of thy glory, and all the splendor of the revelation of the Most High in the midst of his people.

Nor does the interest become one particle the less when we come to the time of Israel's decay. She would imitate the heathen, and go aside to false gods; nothing could cure her of it. She was chastened again and again, and at last, it came to banishment, and the people were scattered. Alas, for the tears that Judah and Israel shed! What sea could hold them all? How were God's people made to smart, and cry, and groan! Let the waters of Babylon tell how salt they flowed with Judah's griefs. How could they sing the Lord's song in that strange land? What a history of woe has Israel's story been! And then, when they were brought back cured of idolatry, as, thank God, they most effectually are, there came an equally mournful decay; for formalism, the absence of all spiritual life,-the mere observance of outward ritual, came into the place of idolatry, and the people in whom all the nations of the earth were blessed had the Christ among them, but refused him. " He came unto his own, and his own received him not. " Woe worth the day! Speak of it with sevenfold sorrow. He came for whom they long had waited-Israel's hope,-and they refused him; yea, they crucified him.

My tongue will not attempt to tell what came of it, when his blood was on them and on their children. Earth, never saw a more terrible sight than the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. Then did they sell the ancient people of God for a pair of shoes, and the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, were esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter. The enemy ploughed the holy place, and sowed it with salt, and the seed of Abraham were scattered to the four winds of heaven. Alas! the evil ceased not when the last stone was overthrown, but wrath followed the fugitives. Through many, many centuries Israel was persecuted-shame covers my face,-persecuted by those who called themselves Christians. The blood of Israel hangs in great gouts upon the skirts of Rome, and will bring down upon that thrice-cursed system the everlasting wrath of the Most High; for did they not grievously oppress the Jews in Spain and every other Catholic country, remorselessly hunting them, down as if they were unfit

to live; torturing them in ways that it were impossible for us to describe, lest your cheeks should blanch as you heard the horrible story? The men that were of the same race as the Christ of God were so hated by the professed followers of Jesus that no indignities were thought to be great enough, and no severities to be fierce enough, for execution upon those they thought to be the execrable Jews.

Thank God, such persecution is over now,-let us hope for ever, at least in the Western world. The race would have been stamped out, however, if Rome's tender mercies could have wrought their will. Go to the Ghetto to-day, in the Jews' quarter in Rome, and see the church, as I have done, in which a certain number of Jews were compelled to hear a sermon, once in the year, levelled at their own race and faith, and over the door of which is written what from such a quarter is a wanton insult to them, " To Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. " Verily it would be so eternally if the hands of Rome were the hands to be stretched out, when she encouraged if she did not command the racing of Jews in the Corso, and the pouring of contempt upon them in the rudest fashion. Israel would never worship images, saints, and virgins. Blessed were they as a nation for this thing at least, that they utterly rejected the idolatry of which Rome is shamelessly guilty. It were better far to be no Christian than to think Popery to be Christianity, for it is one of the vilest forms of idolatry that ever came from the polluted heart of man. Alas, poor Israel, what haste thou suffered! What tongue can tell thy woes? I feel, perforce, compelled to apply to Israel the language which Byron applied to Rome, when he galled her " the Niobe of nations, " and reckoned all sorrows beside hers put petty misery:-

" What are our griefs and sufferance?

Come and see Jerusalem in heaps, and plod your way

O'er steps of broken thrones and temples. "

Look, too, on a princely people crushed under persecution, laboring and finding no rest. Princes were hanged up by their hand; the faces of elders were not, honored. Then was fulfilled Jeremiah's Lamentation, " How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets: they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills. "

But we will not end here, my brethren. The interest which we feel with regard to Israel, and which makes us pray, " Lord, visit this vine, " rises as we think of its future. I am no prophet or interpreter of the prophecies, but this much seems clear to me,- that the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of the Jews, will have dominion over them, and they shall be converted, and shall own him to be the Messiah who was promised to their fathers, so doth the New Testament teach us as well as the Old. It seems to me that we may work for the conversion of Israel with the absolute certainty that, if we do not see it ourselves, yet it shall be seen; for the natural branches of the olive, which for a while were cut off, shall be grafted in again, and so all Israel shall be saved. The future of the Gentiles in the fullness of its glory can never be accomplished till, first of all, the Jews shall be ingathered. Ye shall have no millennia, day, or full brightness of Messiah's glory, until yonder, by Jordan's streams and Judah's deserted hills, where once the Savior worked, and walked, and preached, the song shall yet again arise of Hallelujah to the God of Israel.

One thought more, and then I leave this paint of the interest we take in Israel; we must forever take a special interest in the Jews, because of them came our Lord. He was so completely a man that, one forgets that he was a Jew, and, perhaps, for the most part it is best that we should, for he is more a man than a Jew; but, still, " he took not up the nature of angels, but he took up the seed of Abraham. " Jesus is the Son of David. The Jews have a part in him, after the flesh which we have not; and, amid ads the privileges which we enjoy, we call wolf afford to, let them have everything that they can claim; and they can certainly prove a special kinship to him whom our soul loveth. Oh, if it were far nothing else but that our Savior was of the Jews, we ought to love them, and make them the subject of our prayers and of our earnest efforts! Surely the mention of that will suffice, and I need not say so much as one solitary word more. Interest in the Jews, indeed, is a very wide subject, and we have said enough for the present purpose.

II. Now, Secondly, What Is It That The Jewish People Need? We have been exhorted by all the things to pray for this vine. What is it that is needed?

The answer of our text is, " Look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine. " A visitation from God is the one thing needful for Israel. For what purpose should God visit the Jews, then? I say, brethren, it is the one essential thing in order to give them spiritual life. Our acquaintances with the interior of the Jewish commonwealth at the present time is not very large, but some of us have observed that there are two sorts of Israelites. Some are devout,-devout men, with some of whom it has been our privilege to have hearty fellowship in matters of common interest touching the things of God. When we have spoken together of the providence of God and of faith in the divine mercy, we have been much of the same mind. In the late debate brought on by Colenso, we were able, in, comparing notes, to feet the same zeal for the value of the Old Testament and for the glory of the ever-blessed God. Whether we were Christians or Jews, we were equally zealous to repel the infidel assaults of the famous master of arithmetic. We meet now and then with men whose sincerity and devotion we could not doubt at all: would to God that their sincerity led them to

such the Scriptures, and to examine the claims of our Lord Jesus! Such men lament that many of their people seem to, have no religion, or-what is almost the same thing,-to have nothing more than the outward form. Their being of the Israelite race is distinctly recognized, and never for a moment held back; the Sabbath is almost universally hallowed, for which let Israel put to shame many so-called Christian lands; much is done that is commendable, much which exhibits high integrity and uprightness; but yet to a large extent the race is sunk in worldliness and misled by superstition. Oh, that God would visit the Jew, and endow him with an enquiring and unprejudiced heart, with longing after the God of his fathers, with a deeper reverence and a truer zeal for the glory of Jehovah!

The visitation of God may well be entreated that he would next grant enlightenment to his people, taking away the veil which has been cast over their eyes, and enabling them to see the true Messenger of the covenant. There are thousands of Israelites today who only want to know that Jesus is the Messiah, and they would as gladly accept, him as any of us have done. It seems to us so strange that they can read the fifty-third of Isaiah, and so many other plain passages of the prophets and of the psalms, without seeing that the Man of Nazareth is the Christ of God; yet they do read, but the veil is on their hearts so that they do not perceive Christ in their interpretations. Alas, that the Son of righteousness should shine, and Israel should be in darkness! With many of the seed of Abraham there is an honest desire to receive whatsoever can be shown to be the truth of God. If the Lord will touch, their eyes and remove the scales; what an enlightenment on the whole nation would follow! A nation would be born in a day. What joy for us, what honor to God, what happiness to themselves, if they might but be delivered from their present alienation! O God, thou alone canst do this; we cannot. All arguments seem to be in vain, but do thou behold, and visit this vine!

When the spiritual life of the nation shall have been revived, and there shall be an enlightenment of the intellect, they will only not the Spirit to work upon the heart. Even as the Holy Ghost has quickened and regenerated us, so must it be with them, for there is no difference between Jew and Gentile in this matter. The same regenerated work is wanted,-the same enlightening of the Holy Ghost; and if the Lord will do this, our hearts shall be exceedingly glad.

III. What, Then, Can We Do? We are great debtors to Israel, what can we, do for her?

Some people are always afraid of telling Christian people to do anything. They mutter between their teeth, " The Lord will do his own work, " and they are afraid that they should be interfering with God's prerogatives. Ah, my dear brethren, I am not afraid that some of you will ever do the Lord's work, for you do not do your own; that part which you can do is neglected. Do not be so mightily frightened lest you should be too active. It is God's work to visit Israel, and gather out his people, and he alone can do it; but he works by means. What, then, would he have us do?

I answer, the first thing we can do is to pray for Israel. You believe in the power of prayer, do you not, my brother? Why, some of us can no more doubt the power of prayer than we can doubt the force of a steam-engine or the influence of the law of gravitation, because to us the effects and results of prayer are everyday things. We are in the habit of springing with God about everything, and receiving replies which to us are as distinct as if he had spoken to us with words. We can speak boldly in prayer to God concerning Israel. No nation can be nearer to God's heart than the Jews. We may be bold with the mighty God. We may open our mouth wide, for he will fill it. We may plead with him urgently after this fashion,-Wilt thou not glorify thyself by the salvation of the Jews? What couldst thou do that would more signally strike the whole world with awe than if thou went to turn this wonderful nation to the faith of Christ? Thou hast taught them the unity of the Godhead, thou hast burnt this truth into their very souls; now teach them the Deity of thy Son, who is one with thee. Bring them; to rejoice in the triune God with heart and soul, and all lands shall hear of it, and say with wonder, " Who are these? " Great God, were not these thy messengers of old? When thou wantedst heralds, didst thou not look to Israel? Thou didst take James and John, and Peter and Paul. Thou wilt find such as these amongst them now, if thou wilt call them,-both boastful Peters and persecuting Pauls, whom thy grace can transform into mighty testifiers for the name of Jesus. Let us pray to God to do this. We can pray.

The next thing we can do is to feel very kindly towards that race. I know all that will be said about converted Jews, and I lament that there should have been grave occasion given in many instances; but, for my part, I have been glad of late to smart a little for the sake of my Lord. I have said, " Well, it was a Jew that saved me; and even if this professed convert should have a hypocritical design upon my purse, I had better be deceived by him than turn away an honest kinsman of my Lord. " I do not marvel that there should be deceivers among the Jews, for have not we plenty of such in our churches, who, for the sake of loaves and fish and pelf, creep in among us, pretending to be followers of Christ when their hearts know nothing about him In all ranks and conditions of man, hypocrisy is sure to be found; but, for all that, we do not turn round and say, " The Gentiles are a bad lot. We will have nothing more to do with them, because two or three of them deceived us. " The Gentiles are always taking us in; we know they are, and still we have hope for them. And so must we always have hope towards Israel, and instead of thinking bitterly and speaking bitterly, we must cultivate kindness of spirit both to those who become Christians and to those who remain in unbelief. I, for one, thank God that this land has now for several years swept away the civil disabilities of the Jew. He is no longer a stranger in the land, but he settles down in the midst of us, and exercises all the rights of citizenship. May the kindness of feeling which has prompted this

change,-and it came, I think, mainly from earnest Christians,-lead the Israelites to think kindly of our faith!

Another thing we can do, dear friends, and that is, to keep our own religion pure. I marvel not that Jews are not. Christians when I know what sort of Christianity, for the most part, they have seen. When I have walked through Rome, and countries under Rome's sway, and have seen thousands bow before the image of a woman carried through the streets,-when I have seen the churches crammed with people bowing down before pieces of bone, and hair, and teeth of dead saints, and such like things,-I have said to myself, " If I were a worshipper of the one true God, I should look with scorn upon those who bow before these cast clouts, and mouldy rags, and pieces of rotten timber, and I know not what besides. No, no, good Jew; join not with this idolatrous rabble; remain a Jew rather than degrade yourself with this superstition! If the Lord has taught you to know that there is an unseen God who made the heavens and the earth, and who alone is to be worshipped,-if you have heard the voice of thunder which saith, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is our God,' stand you to that, and go not one inch beyond it, if the way before you invites to the worship of things that are seen, and the reverence of men who call themselves priests, and the whispering out of every filthy thought into a confessor's ear. No, no, no, Israel; thou art brought very low, but thou art far too noble to become an adorer of crosses and wafers, and pictures and relics. "

Even in our own land there is a good deal which would not wish a Jew to regard as Christianity. To my mind, baptismal regeneration is about as glaring a piece of Popery as there is to be found in the world; and they can hear that lie publicly taught in England. Grievous, too, it is to my very heart that they may hear it among them who profess a purer form of faith than that of which we have spoken. Try, brothers and sisters, to keep Christ's religion as Christ taught it. Purify it. Let it come back to its original form.

Labour also to be Christians in ordinary life. If a Jew says, " I would like to see a Christian, " do not let him see a person full of superstitions. Let him see one who believes in the triune God, and who tries to live according to the commands of God, and who, when he talks about Jesus, lets you see the mind which dwelt in Jesus, the same mind bring in him. When once the Church of God shall bear a clear testimony to the truth of God both with lip and life, great hindrances will be taken out of the way of Israel. I know you say, " Well, Jews ought to know that we hold a very different faith from Romanists. " I know that you think so, but I am not able to perceive how the Jews are to learn the distinction, for Baptists are called Christians as much as we are. Their religion is dominant in some countries: it is prominent in every country. How is the Jew to know that it is not the religion of Christ? As he thinks that it is so, he declared that he will have nothing to do with it; and I for one cannot condemn him, but approve of his resolve. I only hope that, as the years roll on, we who worship God in sincerity, and have no confidence in the flesh, we who are saved by the faith which saved Abraham, who is our father after the spirit though not according to the flesh, that we, I say, may be able to bring this purer faith more clearly to the knowledge of Israel, and that God will lead his ancient nation to be fellow-heirs with us. We must keep our doctrine pure, and hold it individually with clean hands and a pure heart, or we have not done all that we can for Israel.

This being done, I will next say that we must each one evangelize with all his might. Do this not among Jews only, but among Gentiles also. Wherever you are, tell abroad the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Do not live a single day, if opportunity serve you, without testifying concerning the love of God which is revealed in the cross of Calvary. Your prayer should be for the whole Church of God, " Behold, and visit this vine. " And as a large number of God's elect ones are as yet hidden in darkness, let us pray unto the Lord that he, would visit this vine, and make these branches to spring out into the light, that on them also there may be rich clusters to his praise.

Brothers and sisters, we are ourselves saved, are we not? Come, ere you go away, let the question be put, to you, Are you saved? Are you really believers in Jesus? Is the Christ formed in you? Have you realized that he is your Savior? Are you trusting him now? Will you live to him? Are you consecrated to him, spirit, soul, and body? If you are, that is the first thing. If you are not, I cannot ask you to pray for Israel, or for anybody else, till first of all God has put a, cry into your soul for yourselves. If you are saved, then let me ask myself and you, " Are we doing all we might for the honor and love of Jesus? " Sitting on these seats, might not many say, " We have not begun to live for Christ yet as we ought "? May the Lord quicken you!

There was a young man here, one Thursday night, when I closed with some such words as these, who derived lasting benefit from them. Or was a gentleman doing a large business, to whom it had never occurred that he might preach Christ. It did occur to him that night, and he went to the town in which he lived, and began to preach in the streets straightway. He is now the pastor of a large church, though he still continues his business; and his is an example to be imitated by many. I would to God that some young man might be quickened to feel that he must do something, for Israel perhaps, for Christ certainly. And you, sisters, may you feel a divine impulse upon you while you pray God to visit the vine which he has planned! May he also visit you, and make you fruitful vines unto his praise! The Lord bless every one of you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Psalm 81:10 The Wide-Open Mouth Filled

NO. 2879

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 14TH, 1904,

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON.
AT THE PASTOR'S COLLEGE CONFERENCE,
ON FRIDAY MORNING, APRIL 7TH, 1876.**

“ I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. ” — Psalm 81:10 .

You have, no doubt, met with various interpretations of this metaphor: “ Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. ” You will find that several expositors say that there is an allusion here to a custom which is said to have been observed by the late Shah of Persia, who, being greatly pleased with one of his courtiers, made him open his mouth, and then began to fill it with diamonds, pearls, rubies, and emeralds. I shall expect that, under such circumstances, the courtier would open his mouth very widely indeed.

Well, you may use that incident as an illustration, if you like to do so; and, certainly, the spiritual blessings, which God gives to his children, are far more precious than pearls, and diamonds, and rubies, and there is every inducement for you to open your mouth to receive such treasure as he is waiting and willing to give you. But I do not feel sure that the Holy Spirit intended the psalmist to allude to any such custom as this. It is too expensive an operation to be very frequently performed, and it strikes me that even such semi-maniacs as Shahs and Sultans usually are would not be likely often to attempt such a feat as that. In default of a more suitable illustration, it might be used, but it does not appear to me to be in accordance with the chaste and natural tone of the Word of God.

Another illustration of the text may be found in a custom which is much more common in the East. At Oriental feasts, when the head of the household wishes to select the best part of the joint for an honored guest, he usually chooses the fattest portion he can find, as the Oriental mind conceives just what we should not conceive, namely, that a mass of fat, all dripping with grease, is the most delicious morsel that can possibly be given to a guest, so the host searches for the fattest piece of meat in the dish, takes it in his hand, and puts it deliberately into the mouth of the principal guest, bidding him open his mouth wide that he may receive it. This seems a revolting practice to us, but it was evidently the custom then, as it still is in the East. Thus we have David saying, “ My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, ” — as if the lips sucked it with delight even while the fat was still upon them.

But I am inclined to look for quite another explanation of the text, though admitting that the second one is probably that upon which the psalmist was thinking when he wrote these words. One springtime, I discovered a bird's nest, in which there were a number of little birds. They were not fledged enough to fly, and their judgments were not well developed, and therefore they mistook me for their mother or father. I would not touch them, but I held my fingers over them, and they opened their mouths wide, — nay, the little creatures seemed to me as if they were all mouth. I could not see any other part of their bodies; all seemed lost in one great vacuum. If you have ever seen the mother-bird come to the nest with a worm in its mouth, you have noticed that, in an instant, all her little ones are up, and eager to swallow that worm. She can only fill the mouth of one, and she can scarcely do that; for, no sooner has it swallowed what she gives it than it begins to gape again; so the parent-birds have to keep flying very fast, all day long, collecting food for their family; but, however many times they come, they never have to use the exhortation of our text. The little birds in their nests are far more sensible than we are. When God hovers over us with his wide-spread wings, and covers us with his warm feathers, he has need to say to each one of us, “ Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it; ” but the little birds take good care, without any teaching, to open their mouths wide, that their mothers may fill them. This illustration may occur again during the sermon; for, whether it is the one to which the psalmist alludes, or not, it is a very useful one, and is full of instruction. It also has the further advantage that it does not appertain to either the East or the West alone; and, as this blessed Book is neither for East nor West alone, but for both, I like to find an illustration which, in all time, and in every clime, may open up the meaning of the Word. “ Open thy mouth, ” then, as a bird opens its mouth when the mother-bird returns with its food, and he who, in the infinitude of his condescension, likens himself to birds, says, “ I will fill it. ”

Let us imitate the inspired teachers in using things in nature to illustrate the meaning of the messages they have to deliver. Look from our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of preachers, through the long line of prophets, to evangelists, and apostles, and you will see that they did not utter the truth with their eyes closed; but, with large sympathy, they looked abroad upon the whole range of creation, both animate and inanimate, and yoked every creature to the chariot of truth, if by any means, through the use of simile, and metaphor, and illustration, they might enable the divine message to ride triumphantly into the hearts of the people.

If any of us are to succeed in teaching, either few or many, we must imitate these masters of the art. God has given the preacher eyes as well as a tongue; — ay, two eyes to one tongue; — and he must take care to observe all that can be seen, and to make abundant use of his observation; otherwise, he will find his speech prove to be, as Shakespeare says, “ stale, flat, and unprofitable. ” The true teacher should not seek to soar on the gaudy wings of brilliant oratory, pouring forth sonorous polished sentences in rhythmic harmony; but should endeavor to speak pointed truths, — things that will strike and stick, — thoughts that will be remembered and recalled, again and again, when the hearer is far away from the place of worship where he listened to the

preacher's words.

The text naturally divides itself into three parts. First, there is the exhortation: "Open thy mouth wide." Secondly, there is the promise: "I will fill it;" and, thirdly, there is the encouragement contained in the name by which God speaks of himself: "I am Jehovah thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt."

I. First, then, brethren, here is The Exhortation: "Open thy mouth wide."

What does that expression mean? Well, I should have to open my mouth very wide indeed if I were to explain all it means. You probably will know, by putting it in practice, better than by any explanation that I can give you; but, certainly, first of all, I should say that it means that there should be a greater sense of your need. The wide-open mouth means that you hunger. The little birds need no instruction in opening their mouths except the inward monitor. They feel a lack of food; they are growing, and growing fast, and feathers have to be made, and they need much food, and those strong needs of theirs make them open their mouths by instinct, as we say. Brethren, if we had more sense of our need, prayer would be more of an instinct with us; we should pray because we could not help praying; we should pray, perhaps, less methodically, but we should pray, probably, more truly, if we prayed because there were groanings within us, caused by intense pain, and moanings that came out of inward agony, and longings that came out of the consciousness of our dire necessities. Surely, this kind of opening of the mouth, by the sense of our need, ought to be easy to us, for our needs are very great. I must not say that they are infinite, for we are only finite beings; but they are so vast that only infinity can ever supply them. What is there that you do not need, my brother? Someone said in prayer, the other day, that we were "a bag of wants." That was a very accurate description. Are we all conscious of our many needs?

Dear brother, are you growing conscious of your own power? If so, pray against it with all your might. A much better thing is to become conscious of your own weakness. You will not open your mouth wide if you do not realize how weak you are. If you feel that you are strong, you will cease to cry to God for strength. Are you getting proud of your experience of divine things? Strive to hurl that pride down, for you will be no wiser than a wild ass's colt if you rely on your own experience. Do you feel that you have now attained to a very high degree of grace? You have certainly not attained it if you think you have. If you are still conscious of your own shortcomings, you are probably far ahead of your own belief; but if you are conscious of your attainments, you are far behind those attainments; rest assured of that. I do solemnly believe, brethren, that it is as good a test of a man's spiritual riches as can be found, namely, his own sense of his spiritual poverty. Oh, get less and less in your own esteem; grow poorer and poorer, weaker and yet weaker still; become, in yourselves, nothing, and less than nothing. This is a grand way of opening the mouth; because our needs, when they are truly felt, are really prayers, for prayers are merely the expression of the wants of our heart; and if, to the consciousness of our need, there is added the knowledge that God can supply that need, we have, at any rate, the basis of all true prayer. Oh, for a great sense of our spiritual poverty! Oh, for an awful vacuum within the soul, a consciousness most truly felt, that there is room for God! Oh, for a deep chasm to yawn within one's nature, which only Christ himself can fill!

The next way of opening the mouth will be to increase the vehemence of desire. How did the psalmist do this? He says, "I opened my mouth, and panted." This is what we need to do, to get such vehement desires after good things that we cannot take a negative answer to our petitions. We know that what we ask is for God's glory and our own good and, therefore, we are not going to ask as men who may be put off, but our resolve is like that of Jacob at Jabbok, —

"With thee all night I mean to stay, And wrestle till the break of day."

We cry, with good John Newton, —

"No, — I must maintain my hold,

'Tis thy goodness makes me bold;

I can no denial take,

When I plead for Jesus' sake."

Those prayers speed best that are fullest of holy vehemence. There is a naughty kind of vehemence which we must get rid of. I am not sure that all the expressions we sometimes hear in prayer are right; there is no need for us to seem to fight with God at the mercy-seat. I feel, sometimes, a sort of shivering when I hear brethren make a great noise in prayer without any evidence of corresponding earnestness deep down in their soul. Yet I know that our Lord Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." If you want to have great things of God, you must want them terribly; you must get to want them more and more, your sense of want must keep on growing. You know also that our Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst," — hunger is bad enough, and thirst is awful, but hunger and thirst combined bring a man to the verge of death; — yet Jesus says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for" — Christ's promise is parallel to

the text before us, — " they shall be filled. " Get that blessed hunger and thirst, brethren. When you cannot live without conversions, you shall have conversions; when you must have them, you shall have them. May the Lord drive that " must " into us all! May he urge us on, with a passionate desire, to resolve that we will know the reason why if souls are not converted to God.

Another way of opening the mouth is to ask for greater capacity. If you have ever fed a lot of little birds — no doubt my friend, Archibald Brown, has often done it, — with pieces of egg, if you have some very small pieces, you drop them into the smaller mouths; but if you have a large piece of egg, where does it go? Into the biggest mouth you can find. You seem to feel, " That little bird must not have a large piece, because he has only a tiny mouth; but here is one, whose mouth yawns like the crater of a small volcano. " So you drop into his mouth a larger piece; and I have no doubt the mother-birds exercise a good deal of discretion in feeding their young. They do not give the large worms to the little birds, but they drop the large ones into the large mouths; and, in like manner, if we get large capacities, we shall receive large blessings. What a wonderful difference there is in the capacity of different individuals! I have heard it said that a sinner sucks in happiness, such as it is, with the mouth of an insect, but that a believer drinks in bliss with the mouth of an angel; and it is as. The stream of mercy seems to run right over some men because there is no place for it to run in; it runs into others in dribblets because there is only a little hole into which it can drip; but when the mouth is opened wide to receive the blessing of the Lord, how capacious it is! I should like, spiritually, to have my mouth like that of Behemoth, of which the Lord said to Job, " he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth. " Oh, for a mouth of such mighty capacity as to be capable of receiving a far greater blessing than we have ever yet received!

Dear brethren, we are not straitened in God; if we are straitened at all, it is in ourselves. No wise man will try to put a gallon of any liquid into a quart pot. You cannot expect to put a bushel of anything into a peck measure. " Be ye therefore enlarged, " is still the message we need to hear; and one part of that enlargement must consist in the enlargement of the mouth in prayer and in holy vehemence. God grant to all of us far greater capacity! What little men we all are! We sometimes call one another great, and perhaps fancy that we are. I wonder what our Heavenly Father thinks of us. We see our little children, one of them three years old, and another only two, and another only a month or two; they think the baby is a very little thing, and that they themselves are ever so big, and they talk of their big brother, who is only four or five years old! It is very much like that with us; there is not much more difference between the greatest and the least of us than between those children. So, if we can, we must grow, — grow at the mouth, and grow all over. We need to have greater grace given to us; but the Lord will not give us great blessings until we are able to bear them. You remember how he said to his disciples, " I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now; " and he might say to us, " I have yet many things to give unto you, but ye cannot bear them at present. " If God were now to give to any man all the blessings that he means to bestow upon him in a few years' time, it would ruin him. When God has given us any success, it is a great addition to the mercy if he has first fitted us to bear it. Some of us can recollect brethren, taken almost straight from the miners' pit, and elevated suddenly into a position of great popularity, with no training for the ministry, and no persecution, no criticism from the public press, and no unkind remarks from Christian men; and we remember with sorrow how they failed. So, if you, while you are young men, have to run the gauntlet of a good deal of trial, and difficulty, and opposition, and non-success, you ought to thank God for it. You are now being made ready to receive the blessing for which you were not fit before. The Lord is increasing your capacity; and when the capacity is sufficient, he will fill it.

Next, dear brethren, I feel that the text must mean, seek for greater blessings than any that you have yet received. You have opened your mouth, and you have received something; possibly, you think that you have received a great deal; but the Lord " is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. " I have heard people say in prayer, " Thou art able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. " Well, I suppose that is true, but that is not what Paul was inspired to write. We can ask and can think a great deal; but Paul says that God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we actually do ask or think. Well, then, as this is the case, will we not ask for greater things than we have ever asked for before? It is a singular fact that the certainty of obtaining is in proportion to the largeness of what you ask. Some men go to God, and ask only for temporal favors; and, possibly, they do not obtain them. He who would be content with this world will probably never get it; but he who craves spiritual good may ask with the absolute certainty of receiving it. Christ's promise is, " Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. " If you ask only for temporal mercies, and can be satisfied with them, you may get what you ask. There are gushing springs from which you might drink if you would, but the muddy waters of Sihor are evidently good enough for you. But if you ask the Lord for spiritual blessings, he is sure to give them to you. It is more natural for God to give great things than little things; they are more in his line, — more in his way. You know that certain men have certain ways. There are men whom you can get to do anything if it is in their way, but they will not act in another way. Well, now, the Lord's ways are as high above our ways as the heavens are above the earth; yet David knew what God's ways were, for he said, " Then will I teach transgressors thy ways. " One of the ways of God is to do great things for his people. Some of them sang, " The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. " So you are more sure of getting blessings from God if you ask him for great things; therefore, be sure to ask for very great things. When you do get to the mercy-seat, do not begin asking for little things, and go home with trifles; but ask for as big things as ever your soul can desire, and as big things as the promises of God cover. There you have a task before you that will tax your greatest powers, but give your heart and soul to it, and you will find it to be a very pleasant and profitable one.

Ask great things for yourselves, brethren. Ask to know all the truth of God; ask to know the fullness of God; ask to know the riches of his grace; ask to know “ the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; ” and when you have asked for all that, ask for holiness, and do not ask for anything less than perfect holiness. Continue to open your mouth wide, that every grace may be given to you; adding “ to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love; ” and do not rest satisfied until you have all these Christian virtues. You may ask also for joy; and, oh, what an ocean of bliss is before you in the joy of the Lord! In “ the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, ” what a wondrous depth of joy there is laid up in store for you! Our Lord Jesus said to his disciples, “ These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. ” It may be the same with you; therefore, ask for great things. Do not be satisfied with being little Christians, seek to come to the full stature of men in Christ Jesus. I will be thankful to get just inside the gate of heaven; but if I can sing more sweetly, and if I can have more fellowship with Christ, nearer his throne, why should I not get there? God grant that we may all have that high privilege!

Once more, I think that this exhortation, “ Open thy mouth wide, ” means attempt great things for God as well as ask great things from God. Brethren, go in for something great. Go in for saving one soul; that is something great. Go in for preaching the whole truth of God; that is something great. Go in to be faithful to the teaching of the whole Word of God; that is something great. It is not sufficient if you have filled your own place; — a good many of you have not done that yet; — go in to preach the gospel somewhere else as well. Open some other building for worship; penetrate into some region where the gospel is not yet known. I wish that our College would open its mouth so wide as to include the whole world in the sphere of its operations. Brother Wigstone tells us that, if we open our mouth wide, we shall swallow up the whole of Spain and Portugal. Other brethren want us to open our mouth wide enough to absorb France, and Germany, and Russia, and all Europe. Some of our brethren have gone to India; there is a mouthful for us. If we open our mouth wide, India may be evangelized, and China, and the new world of America, and the far-distant world of Australia, will feel the power of the gospel that we take there in the name of the Lord. Let us pray, as David did, long ago, that the whole earth may be filled with God’s glory. What is the whole earth, after all, compared with the greatness of God, and with the infinite sacrifice that Christ has offered? Well may the Lord say to each one of us, “ Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. ”

I do like big prayers, brethren. I have some regard for the memory of William Huntington, though I should be sorry to endorse all that he said and did. He was a man whose prayers God heard and answered, but what were his prayers often? I smile, sometimes, as I think of what he asked of God: “ Lord, give me a new pair of leather breeches; ” or, “ Give me a horse and carriage, ” and he got them. William Carey cried, “ India for Christ, ” and his prayer has kept on ringing right down the ages, and the Church of God is still praying, “ India for Christ, ” and that prayer will be heard and answered in God’s good time. Little boats, that carry small cargoes, come quickly home; but the big ships, that do business in great waters, are much longer in reaching the home port; but, then, they bring back much more precious loads. Huntington’s prayer was the little boat that proved God’s faithfulness; but Carey’s prayer was the big ship, which will come home as surely as the other one did. So, “ open thy mouth wide, ” brother, and ask something that will be honoring to God to give.

Did you ever think, dear friends, how wonderful is the condescension of God in hearkening to the voice of a man? That he should hear our prayers at all, shows that, in his condescension, he is as infinite as he is in his glory. Do you know, in your own soul, that God has ever heard your prayers? Then bless him, and love him, all your days. You know how the writer of the 116th Psalm put the matter: “ I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. ” It is truly marvellous that, though our prayer is so full of faultiness, and has to do with such insignificant worms as we are, yet that the Lord hears us, and grants our requests.

There are some who talk as if prayer was a meaningless form to us. “ It is a beneficial thing, no doubt, for you to pray, ” say they. Surely, sirs, you must be measuring our corn with your bushel if you imagine that we could do such an idiotic thing as pray to a god who cannot hear us. That is an employment only fit for imbeciles; and if you tell us that no doubt it is a good thing for us to do, we reply that it would probably be a good thing for you to do it, for it could only be suitable to the imbecility which originated the charge brought against us. We assert, and rejoice to assert that, without working miracles, God still accomplishes his eternal purposes in answer to the supplications of his people. In earlier days, he wrought miracles for the deliverance of his servants; but, to-day, he does the same thing without the miraculous process, and as manifestly grants the requests of his suppliants as if miracles were as plentiful as the leaves upon the tree in summer.

II. Now, secondly, we turn to The Promise: “ I will fill it. ”

Great asking seems to me to be on a scale proportionate to the great things that are according to the very nature of God. I have never been able to believe in a little hell because I cannot find, in the Bible, any trace of a little heaven, or of a little Savior, or of a little sin, or of a little God. I believe in a theology that is drawn to scale. If it is on the scale of an inch all round, I can receive it; but if it is on the scale of a foot in one place, I think it should be on the same scale throughout. Look, brethren, at the brightness of the

Shekinah glory shining above the mercy-seat, and that mercy-seat red with such blood as was never spilt but once, and the Eternal Spirit leading us up to that mercy-seat; — can we go there to ask for a mere trifle? That does not seem to me to be at all congruous; far more congruous does it seem that, before the great God, with the great Mediator, and the great Spirit helping our infirmities, we should open our mouth wide, and expect God to fill it. O brethren, we may be quite sure that, in dealing with the infinite Jehovah, if we can rise to his scale of things, he will fill our mouths when we open them. It is hard work to fill a hungry mouth, for the food disappear, down the throat in a moment; when once fed, it opens again, and is as empty as it was before. But God has the way of filling mouths that makes them keep full. He gives us water to drink, of so wondrous a kind, that we do not thirst again. Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, “ Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. ” And God says to each child of his, “ ‘Open thy mouth wide,’ and though it seems to be like a horse-leech crying, ‘Give, give,’ ‘I will fill it;’ though it seems as insatiable as the grave, ‘I will fill it.’ ” The great God himself says it; and, therefore, it must be true. If he had not said it, I would not have believed it; but having said it, he can do what seems to us impossible; he can satisfy our most insatiable cravings and longings; and he bids us keep on longing and craving, that he may keep on satisfying us again and again.

This promise is given by One who knows what we are going to ask. The Lord says, “ Open thy mouth wide, ” and he knows what we desire to receive from him, and he has it all ready to give to us. Did you never bring home a present for your children, and ask them to wish for something, although they did not know that, all the while, it was in your pocket? You have brought them up to the point of asking for something that they want; then they go to bed, and when they wake in the morning, they are surprised to see the very thing they longed for lying on their pillow. In a similar manner, our Heavenly Father gives additional sweetness to his mercies by tempting us to long for various things that he has all ready to give to us. He may well say, “ Open thy mouth wide, ” when he has so many good things ready to fill it.

What will he fill our mouths with? Sometimes, he will fill them with prayer. Do you not find, at times, that you cannot pray? Never mind, brother, if it is so with you; open your mouth wide, for he will fill it. He will fill your mouth with arguments. Kneel down, and groan because you cannot pray, agonize because you cannot pray, and the next day you will say, “ I wish I felt as I did yesterday, for I never prayed with greater power than when I thought I was not praying at all. ” Open your mouth with a sense of want, a sense of desire. Open your mouth with the sensibility of insensibility; you can comprehend, by experience, the paradox that I cannot explain. God knows how to fill your mouth with prayer when you go to your pulpit. Perhaps, before the time for the service came, you thought you could not pray or preach at all. You remember how the Lord said to Ezekiel, “ Eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel; ” and the prophet says, “ So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. ” You also may be able to do the same thing. Sitting in your study, you may be anxious because you cannot get a subject to really lay hold of you. At any rate, brother, open your mouth with desire, and eagerness, and longing, as you sit there; and if the Lord sends a roll to you, and shows you how to eat it, when you go to talk to your people, you shall get that promise to Ezekiel fulfilled in your own experience, “ I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God. ” When you open your mouth in private, and eat the roll that the Lord gives you, he will open your mouth in public, and you shall tell the people the truth upon which you have privately feasted.

Next, the lord will fill our mouth, with all manner of spiritual blessings. David says that the Lord “ satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s. ” Time fails me to attempt any list of proof texts upon this point; I can only say that, when the Lord opens your mouth, you may be quite certain that anything he puts into it is wholesome and good; even though, sometimes, it is not according to your own taste, though it will be if your spiritual palate is in a healthy condition. If your taste is out of order, even sweet things will seem bitter to you. If your heart is not right with God, you will ask for that which would injure you if he granted your request. When the Israelites craved for flesh in the wilderness, they made a terrible mistake. It will be far wiser for you, when you open your mouth in prayer, not so much to go into details as to say, “ Lord, I am a mass of wants; I hardly know what they really are, and what I think I want may be a mistake, but my mouth is open to receive whatever thou seest to be best for me. ” Then you may expect that he will fill it with all sorts of good things.

Further, the Lord will fill your mouth with sacred joy. When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, his people said, “ Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. ” It is a blessed mouthful when you get such an amazing mercy that you cannot understand it. Have you not, sometimes, received a mercy that has been like Isaac, the child of laughter? It has come to us as Isaac came to Abraham, and we have heard the sound of the mercy, and have laughed for very joy. God will also fill your mouth with his praise. That was a wise prayer of the psalmist, “ Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honor all the day. ” What a blessed mouthful it would be to have your mouth so full of the praise of God that you could not help letting it run out!

III. Now I must close by noticing The Encouragement. “ Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. ” Why? “ Because I am Jehovah, thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt. ”

Brother, it is Jehovah who says to thee, “ Open thy mouth wide. ” It does not do always to open your mouth wide to man, but the

Lord says to you, “ I am Jehovah, your God; open your mouth wide, and I will fill it. ” When you stand before men, ask little, and expect less; but when you stand before God, ask much, and expect more, and believe that he is able to do for you exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think. “ I am Jehovah. ” That is a boundless name; we know that our askings can never exceed his benevolence or his might. We are asking of a King; yea, of him who is king of kings, so let us open our mouths wide as we approach him; his very name prompts us so to do. Then he adds, “ I am Jehovah, thy God; ” so, will you not ask great things of the One who has given himself to you? Is God himself yours? Then, what is there that you may not ask of him? There is great force in Paul’s argument, “ He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? ” There is equal force in this other argument, — As he spared not his own Deity, but freely gave himself up to be the God of his chosen ones, saying, “ I will be their God, and they shall be my people, ” then he will not deny them anything that they ask of him if it is really for their good. Indeed, all things are yours already; since he is your God, you have only to ask him to give you that which is your own by his own gracious covenant. I should not feel afraid or ashamed to ask anyone to give me what really belonged to me, however big it was; and, in prayer, you have to ask from God what he has already given you in Christ Jesus, for “ all things are yours, ” because “ ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s. ”

Then he adds, “ which brought thee out of the land of Egypt. ” Notice this argument, brethren. Our own experience of deliverance from sin is a wonderful reason for asking great things of God. I speak with the utmost reverence, but it seems to me that God himself cannot give me anything more than he has already given me in the unspeakable gift of his only-begotten and well-beloved Son. His blessed Spirit has given unto us eternal life. All the embellishments and enrichments and sustenances of that life are not equal to the life itself; the life of God in the soul is the chief blessing, and that we have already received. Well, then, as God has given us life, surely he will give us all other great blessings that we need, and will deny us nothing that is for his own glory and our present and future good. Paul often uses this kind of argument; for instance, “ While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. ” The greater mercy having come, the lesser one will also surely come. So, ask God for large things; for you have already received larger things than you are ever likely to ask for, so you may rest assured that you will receive, in the future, whatever God sees that you really need.

God said to his ancient people, “ I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt. ” Might they not well ask large things of that God who smote Pharaoh with all those terrible plagues. Might they not well ask great things of him who darkened the sun at midday, who brought up the locusts till they covered the land, who made the very dust of Egypt to crawl with noxious life, and who sent terrific hailstorms, with fire mingled with the hail? Who would not ask great things of such a great God as that? Then think of his slaying the firstborn of Egypt, and dividing the sea, even the Red sea, and leading all the hosts of Israel through the deep and through the wilderness. He that could do all that could, in his infinite might, do all else that his people needed, so they might well ask great things at his hand. Moses sang, on the borders of the Red sea, “ He is my God, and I will prepare him a habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him. ” The Israelites might well ask great things of him who had overthrown all their adversaries; and you, who have experienced such a marvellous deliverance by the blood of Jesus Christ, ought surely to be bold when you go to the mercy-seat. The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt was by blood. The paschal lamb was slain, and its blood was sprinkled upon the houses of the Israelites; but you have not been redeemed with the blood of earthly lambs, “ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. ” Can it be possible, after such a redemption, that anything that is needed to bring you into the promised land, and to enrich you with all temporal and spiritual blessings, should ever be withheld from you? Let us each one go to the mercy-seat with our mouths wide open, and then let us go to our pulpits, and preach with our mouths wide open, even as Paul wrote, “ O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. ” Your mouths may well be open to your hearers because they have first been opened unto God. I am thankful that, throughout this Conference, I have seen no traces of doubt, and no signs of despondency. Every brother has seemed to have confidence in God, and to have hope, like a bright light, guiding him on his way. I have no doubt that some of you will see “ greater things than these ” even here on earth, while others will see them from the heights of heaven. As surely as we have the gospel with us, and the Holy Ghost with us, as surely as God has led us thus far through the wilderness, as surely as he keeps us knit together in love and unity, so surely will he lead us from strength to strength, and the Lord will be magnified in our mortal bodies whether by life or by death, and we shall, by his grace, all appear before him in Zion. God bless you, brethren! - Amen.

Psalm 84:3 The Sparrow and the Swallow

NO. 3041

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 23RD, 1907,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 30TH, 1870.

“ Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God. ” — Psalm 84:3 .

When David was far away from the services of the tabernacle, he envied the birds that had built their nests near the sacred shrine; and Christians, in like manner, when they are debarred from the holy associations of Christian fellowship and united worship, always sigh over the lost privilege of meeting with their brethren and sisters in Christ. With even greater emphasis we may say that, when a Christian loses the realization of the presense of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the “ minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man; ” then it is, above all other seasons, that he sighs and cries for a renewal of communion with Christ. We would envy any, however poor and insignificant they may be, who can maintain unbroken fellowship with their Lord; and when it falls to our lot, through our own sin or neglect, or in the inscrutable wisdom of divine sovereignty, to be, for awhile, spiritually in the dark, seeking our Savior, and not finding him, we would willingly take the place of the godly captive pining in the persecutors’ dungeon, or of the dying yet enraptured saint, if we could but once again enjoy the presence of our Master. This was David’s state of heart when he languished for the ancient tabernacle services; or, more probably, when he longed for that communion with his Lord which, perhaps, had been suspended together with his attendance upon the public worship of God’s house. It was then, as I believe, that he was inspired to pen., this “ Pearl of the Psalms ”, including the verse upon which I am going to try to speak, praying that the Holy Spirit may enable me to utter words which shall be to the profit of both hearers and readers.

It seems that the birds which came to David’s mind, when he wrote this Psalm, had found two things, — houses for themselves, and nests for their young; and these two things Christians find in Christ, and also, in a certain sense, in the assemblies of his servants for public worship in his name.

I. First, I want to remind you that Christians Find In Christ, And, In A Certain Sense, In The Assemblies Of The Faithful, Houses For Themselves.

Turn to the text and read: “ Yea, the sparrow hath found an house; ” and upon that our first question shall be, What were those creatures that there found a house?

Well, they were only sparrows, yet they found a house near the altars of God, and therefore David envied them. Now, sparrows are very insignificant things. “ Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? ” said Christ to his disciples; and you and I, dear friends, when we really know ourselves as we are in God’s sight, are led to feel that, because of our sin, we are even more insignificant than sparrows, and to realize that our being blotted out of the universe would be rather a gain to it than a loss. What unworthy creatures we see ourselves to be when once God pours upon us the bright light of his Word! Then, we think that any mercy is too great, and any blessing is far too good, for us to receive. Yet, as the sparrows were permitted to find their house under the eaves of God’s ancient tabernacle, we, insignificant and worthless as we are, may come and build under the shelter of God’s great house of mercy. There we may find a safe refuge from every danger, a perfect security for all time, and even for all eternity. O ye who think yourselves despised and forgotten, remember that the sparrow hath found a house on God’s altar; come, then, and see if there be not space there also for you! Jesus said, “ Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out; ” and the apostle Paul, writing under inspiration, says, “ God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence. ” Therefore, poor despised one, though you feel yourself to be a nobody, come and welcome to the Savior, come to him with cheerful confidence, for he will not, he cannot reject you.

The sparrows were not only very insignificant, they were also very needy. They needed a house, they needed a place of shelter; and they found it at God’s altar. How needy also are we! Though we are insignificant, our wants are anything but insignificant. How much we need! Who can tell what we do not want? Were it not for God’s superabounding mercy, we should all be in hell. Were it not for his unspeakable goodness, we should this day have no hope of grace, no prospect of pardon, no assurance of a holy, happy heaven hereafter. Our wants are countless; every moment brings a fresh one, and all the supplies of the past and the present are not sufficient to meet the voracious demands that will come upon us in the future. The sparrow, needy creature that she was, having nothing to bring to God’s house, found there a house freely given to her; and, ye needy souls, the infinite supply of divine mercy, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, is freely given to you. You need not bring anything with you when you come to Christ, only come and trust him, and all your wants shall be supplied. Whatever your souls can need to bear them safely through the troubles of earth, and bring them to the bliss of heaven, you shall have it freely given to you if you do but come, flying with the wings of faith, to find a house and a home in Jesus Christ. At the great altar where Christ was offered as the one sacrifice for sin forever, the most needy soul that ever lived on the face of the earth will find a hearty welcome.

These sparrows were uninvited guests, yet they found a house, and took possession of it, and they were never blamed for doing so; but, in this verse, David seems to commend them, and he certainly envied them. But, my dear hearers, you who have never come to the Lord Jesus Christ, are not uninvited guests. The gospel invitation rings through this building every Sabbath day, —

“ come and welcome, Come to Jesus, sinner come! ”

We not only invite you, but we earnestly press you, in Christ's name, to come and put your trust in his great sacrifice, assuring you that, if you do so, you shall find an everlasting and blessed home for your souls. So, as the sparrows came to God's house without an invitation, will not you come to Christ with one? They were bold enough to find a house when no man bade them do so; therefore, will not you be bold enough, trembler though you be, to take what divine mercy freely proffers to you? Do you not remember how Agur commends the spider as being “ exceeding wise ” because she “ taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces ”? No one ever asked the spider to come into the palace; she was a loathsome creature, quite out of place in a palace, and her web would mar the beauty of the place; yet the spider knew by instinct that a storm was coming on, and so sought shelter in the king's palace. There was Solomon's fine house of the forest of Lebanon, and the spider said within herself, “ Why should not I, spider though I am, abide here? ” So she crept about till she found a window open, and in she slipped, and made herself at home by taking hold with her hands, first of one wall and then of another, till she found herself at ease. There came along one who said, “ Let that spider and her web be removed; what business has she to be here? ” But Solomon thought otherwise, so the spider is immortalized in this Book of Proverbs, because of her wisdom in taking hold with her hands even on the walls of a royal palace. O soul, perhaps thou art, consciously to thyself, as loathsome as that spider was, and the King's great house of mercy seems too fair a place for thee to enter. You ask, unbelievably, “ Shall I ever be made a saint? Shall I ever be cleansed from sin? Shall I ever be taken up to dwell with the great King in heaven? ” Talk not so, but rather see whether thou canst not find an entrance into the King's palace; and if thou canst find it,, go in thereat. Surely, there is a window open for thee where it is written by the King himself, as I reminded you just now, “ Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. ” Then there is another window where the King has hung up the invitation, “ Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ” Doth not that avail thee? Come in, poor spider-sinner! Take hold of the walls of Christ's great house of love and mercy, and I can assure thee that my royal Master will not be angry with thee; but when he seeth thee there, he will immortalize thee in his “ book of life. ” Thou shalt have a name and a place there, and he will think thee wise, not intrusive, in daring to believe him, and to come into his palace, spider-sinner as thou art. He delights to have great things thought of him; and if you will but think great things of his love and mercy, I will warrant you that you will never think thoughts that shall outstrip the reality, for what he hath said is true, “ As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. ”

Let us learn, then, from the sparrow finding her house near to God's altar, that although we are inconsiderable and insignificant, although we are full of needs, and although we may even deem ourselves to be uninvited, yet we are at liberty to come to the Savior, and find in him our eternal dwelling-place.

Next,, what does the text tell us that these sparrows did? We should learn something from that.

The text says, “ Yea, the sparrow hath found an house; ” then, first of all, she looked for it. The sparrow wanted a house, and she searched to see where she could find it. One great reason why many do not find salvation is because they do not look for it. Many of them do not even know that they need it; or, if they know it as a matter of doctrine, they do not believe it so as to look for it, and appropriate it as their own. I feel persuaded that no man ever did sincerely seek salvation, through Jesus Christ, without finding it. I do not believe that, amongst all the lost, there is one who will be able to tell the Lord that he honestly and earnestly sought his mercy, yet could not obtain it. If you have not found Christ, my dear hearer, it is because you have not sought him, for he said, “ He that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. ” I grant you that the blessing may be delayed for awhile; you may be some time, in finding peace, perhaps through your ignorance, or through some cherished sin that you have not given up; but if you truly come to the throne of grace, and cry in real earnest for mercy, as surely as God is in Christ Jesus, he will stretch out his silver scepter toward you, and you shall touch it, and find grace in his sight. Be encouraged, O ye seekers, to persevere, in your search after salvation, and ask that the aid of the Holy Spirit may be given to you, that ye may wisely and rightly seek the way of faith, and may speedily find it!

Further, “ the sparrow found an house; ” then, there was a house for her, or she could not have found it. A traveler in Palestine writes in his journal that, as he was wandering among the ruins on the site of the temple at Jerusalem, he noticed a little bird — known in the Hebrew as tzippor, or sparrow, — fly out of a crevice between two great stones where the mortar or cement had been removed, and he thought at once of these words, “ The sparrow hath found an house. ” That is just what David meant. The sparrow no doubt found a little vacant place, just what she wanted, and in she went, and there was her “ house ” ready made for her; and let me say to thee, O seeker, that, if thou wouldst find rest in Christ, there is rest prepared for thee in him! He who has prepared thy heart to seek him has prepared that which thou wouldst fain find. It is not for thee to make a salvation for thyself; thy salvation is finished, and thou hast but to find it. It is not for thee to make an atonement for thyself; the one atonement for sin was made, once for all, on Calvary. It is not for thee to make a righteousness for thyself; the righteousness that Christ Jesus wrought out for thee is

perfect, and thou mayest not add thereto any supposed righteousness of thine own. If thou art an honest seeker after Christ, for thee there is already prepared, by those dear hands that once were pierced for thee, the salvation that shall lift thee up from the depths of sin to the heights of glory. As Bunyan said, — Does not your mouth water as you hear this? Do you not say, “ Is all this really prepared for me? Then, why do I not have it? ” Ah! why not, why not indeed? In my Master’s name, I do assure you that “ all things are ready ” for all who will seek him, for every soul that will trust him. If ye seek him not, if ye will not believe, there is no mercy for you, but if you seek heartily and trustfully, ye shall assuredly find it, for it was prepared for you long ago by him who has gone to heaven to prepare glory, having already prepared grace for you.

“ Yea, the sparrow hath found an house; ” that also means that, when she had discovered it, she appropriated it. There was the little place, so snug and cozy, just on the warm side of the tabernacle, where the South wind would blow, and she would be shielded from the cold, and in went the little bird. She had found it, and she took care to make it her own by personal appropriation. Now, we may find Christ, in a sense, so as to know much about him, to read about him, to hear about him, and even to understand much about him, yet not truly to find him. The root of the matter is to get Christ for yourself; in this respect, you must be selfish, and you can thus be selfish without being sinful. You must personally lay hold of Christ if you would be saved. One, who desired to teach a little girl this lesson, tried to do it when the child was waiting upon him while he was ill. “ Please pour out my medicine, Jane, ” said the sick man; and when it was poured out, he said to her. “ Now, Jane, take that medicine for me. ” “ O sir! ” she said. “ I would willingly do it, if it were the right thing to do, but the medicine would not do you any good if I took it. ” “ Just so, ” said he, “ and as I must personally take the medicine before it can do me good, my child, you must personally believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, or else another person’s faith will do you no good. ” The idea of anything like sponsorship in religion, one person vowing and promising certain things for another, is utterly without any foundation in the Word of God. Religion is wholly and only a personal thing; you must repent for yourself, believe for yourself, and lay hold on Christ for yourself. It would have been no benefit to that little bird if all other sparrows had found houses for themselves if she, herself, had been driven about, shelterless, in the storm. Oh, no! she must have a house for herself, “ and the swallow a nest for herself, ” where she might lay her young.

You and I, dear friends, will be wise if we do as this sparrow did; for she found a house for herself because she looked for it, she found it because it was there all ready for her, and she found it by appropriating it so that it became her very own. Thus may we appropriate the Lord Jesus Christ, by an act of faith, and so make him our very own!

I have, at various times, learned some lessons concerning living by faith. A friend frequently drives me through the streets of London; and, one day, when all the cabs and wagons seemed to leave us no room to move, I said to him, more than once, “ I am afraid we shall have an accident. ” When I had said that to him, perhaps for the third time, he put the reins into my hand, and said, “ There, if you cannot trust me, drive yourself. ” Suppose God should say that to us when we fear that we are getting into difficulties, “ If you cannot trust me, arrange for yourselves; ” what a position we should be in then! If he left the reins in our hands for a single hour, we should be like the one who sought to drive the chariot of the sun, and set the world a-blaze. When we leave all in the hands of God, — and we must leave all there whether we are willing or not, — then we can sing that sweet little song which Luther said that the sparrows always sing, —

**“ Mortal, cease from care and sorrow,
God provideth for the morrow. ”**

May we all be able to sing that little song, and to sing it to ourselves too!

We will further prolong this simile by noticing what the sparrow found.

“ Yea, the sparrow hath found an house. ” The word is a very simple one, but there is much meaning in it; and when we find, in the Lord Jesus Christ, a house for our souls, we find safety in him, even as the sparrow found safety in her “ house. ” When the stormy wind blew all around her, the sparrow felt safe in her house hard by the altar in God’s ancient tabernacle; and when the storm of conscience beats upon us, we feel safe in our hiding-place in the altar where Jesus suffered for us; and when the last dreadful storm of divine judgment shall come, we shall be safe beneath the shelter of the atonement that he offered upon Calvary. He that believeth in Jesus is safe forever. When the earth and all its works are burned up, and the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, no hurt shall come to the man to whom Jesus is “ a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest. ”

Next to safety, we find in Christ rest. The soul that is out of Christ knows not what true rest is, but “ we which have believed do enter into rest. ”

**“ ’Tis done! the great transaction’s done;
I am my Lord’s, and he is mine. ”**

My salvation is finished, my sins are pardoned, my security is established by the promise and oath of God himself, ratified by the

blood of the everlasting covenant. If this is your happy condition, you can enjoy the blissful sleep of the beloved of the Lord, “ and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. ” Just as the little sparrow felt perfectly at rest when she had entered her “ house ” in the tabernacle, so do we, come what may, enjoy complete, absolute, unbroken rest when we have truly believed in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. “ Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee! ”

Further, a house is a place of abode; the sparrow lived in her house in the tabernacle, and he, who finds the Lord Jesus Christ, finds in him a spiritual abode, he lives in Christ. He has heard his Master’s blessed command, “ Abide in me, ” and he desireth to dwell there, hard by the pierced heart of Jesus. My brothers and sisters in Christ, you have not a mere temporary lodging-place, out of which you may someday be driven back into the cold world where you used to live. That would be a poor prospect for us; but we need not anticipate such a sad future, for we can say, with Moses, “ Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations; ” and he always will be, blessed be his holy name!

Once more, a house is, or ought to be, a place of delight. When a man reaches his home, he is at his ease, and can unbend himself. If he is not happy at home, where can he be happy? The little sparrow, when it reaches its home, is perfectly content. Its day’s work is over, its day’s wants are supplied, and it chirps its evening song of joy. So, when we make our abode in Christ, our soul is filled with delight. We have a bliss that is not only full to the brim, but it even overflows. Truly happy are those who are Christ’s servants, thrice happy are they who are looking alone to his cross for their salvation.

But the point upon which David seemed to lay the greatest emphasis was that the sparrow’s house was near to God’s earthly dwelling-place; and oh, when we abide in Christ, how near we are to God! You remember how Christ prayed to his Father concerning his disciples, “ That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee ... I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one. ” No nearness imaginable can be greater than Christ’s nearness to his Father; yet, as we are in Christ, we are, in his person, as near even as he is!

I can only spare a minute or so for the secondary meaning which may be found in our text. In a certain sense, Christians, like the sparrow, find a house in the assemblies of the saints.

When the sparrow went to her house in the tabernacle, she never needed to be driven there, but she went there of her own accord; and I trust that, when we came up to our solemn assemblies, we need nothing to compel us to come, but, that our own delightful remembrances of fellowship with God, in seasons past, make us long for the renewal of such seasons again and again. I hate to see people going to any place of worship as if they were being marched off to jail; but I rejoice to see them come up to the house of God with alacrity and holy joy, and with fleet footsteps as if they were delighted to think that the time had come when they could once more unite with their brethren in worship before the throne of the Most High God. If you, like the sparrow, have found a house in God’s house, you will go there with joy; and when you are there, you will be happy to be there; and when the service is over, you will wish that it had to begin again, and you will long for the time when you will reach that city of God, —

“ Where congregations ne’er break up,

And Sabbaths have no end. ”

There are many poor people here who scarcely ever have any peace except when they are sitting in this house of prayer, and who find here the richest enjoyments they ever know. I know some of God’s afflicted children, who have but little sacred mirth except when the holy hymn goes up in glorious peals to heaven, and they can join in it, —

“ Then they forget their pains a while,

And in the pleasure lose the smart. ”

Cultivate more and more, your love for the assemblies of the saints. We have no reverence for bricks and mortar, stones and wood, glass and iron; we do not believe in the sanctity of any one place above others; but we have a reverence for the living temple of God, built up of living men and living women whose hearts are sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and we can say of their assemblies, —

“ I have been there, and still will go,

’Tis like a little heaven below; ”

and we can also say, —

“ There my best friends, my kindred dwell,

There God my Savior reigns. ”

The sparrow hath found a house, and we too have found a house, where God's people meet, and of that house we sing, —

**“ Here do I find a settled rest,
While others go and come,
No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home. ”**

II. After a man is himself saved, his first anxiety, if he be a father, will be concerning his children.

The next clause of the text will be helpful to such parents: “ The swallow (hath found) a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God. ” Every Christian should think that what is good for himself is good for his children, and he who does not labor and pray for the salvation of his own offspring has good reason to doubt whether he knows the grace of God himself. Believing parents cry, with Thomas Hastings, —

**“ God of mercy, hear our prayer
For the children thou hast given;
Let them all thy blessings share,
Grace on earth, and bliss in heaven. ”**

Children should early be brought to the house of God; to keep to the figure of the text, The Assemblies Of The Saints Should Be A Nest For Our Little Ones.

First, because they are safe there. At any rate, you need not fear that they will be taking hurt when they are where God is being worshipped in spirit and in truth. In the Sabbath-school, under the loving tuition of godly people, they will be safe. We never feel any need to ask whether they will be in a place of danger when we take them with us where Christ is preached, and his gospel is simply, earnestly, and faithfully proclaimed. Bring, then, your children with you to the house of God, for it is a place where you may expect that your little ones, as well as yourselves, will be blessed.

The “ swallow ” is expressed, in the Hebrew, by a word which signifies liberty. It is the bird of freedom; it is not to be caged. Even a whole continent does not give room enough for its rapid, untiring flight over hill and dale, mountain and plain, so it crosses the ocean and flies to other lands far away. The swallow is the bird of liberty, yet David writes of one that found her nest, where she might lay her young, at God's altar; and if you want your children to be truly free, train them in the fear of God, and the love of his truth. The spirit of liberty will always be maintained in this land as long as we have the open Bible, the family altar, and the training up of our children in the way that they should go; but take these things away, and Popery will again enchain our country, and bring back the curse from which our fathers set free our land even at the cost of their own lives.

Further, the nest is a place of delight to the little birds, and so ought the house of God to be to children; and so it would be if preachers would always seek to make their language simple, and would illustrate what they have to say, so that the children can comprehend it. It is a bad sign concerning any man's ministry when the children do not understand him. I always look upon it as being one of the highest compliments I ever receive when I see some little boy's or girl's bright eyes, that are all too apt to wander hither and thither, fixed upon me, while they seem to be drinking in what I have to say. There is a great lack, in the preachers of the present day, in this respect, and we need to have the Master's words to Peter, “ Feed my lambs, ” as well as the command, “ Feed my sheep, ” more and more impressed upon our hearts. May you, beloved, find a place of prayer for your children where it shall be their delight to go with you, and to join intelligently in the worship of God.

When you take them there, — as I have already hinted to you, they are in the way that the blessing is often given. I do not say that they will all be saved through coming to God's house; but if they are there with you, he who called you by his grace may also call them; and that ever-blessed Spirit who led you to find the Savior may also lead them to him. Bring them to Bethesda, “ the house of mercy, ” and pray to Christ to say to them, as he said to the impotent man, “ Wilt thou be made whole? ... Rise, ... and walk. ” At any rate, do not let your children miss the blessing through neglecting to use the means which the Lord has blessed to you, and to many others, both old and young.

Your children, if you take them with you to God's house, will be like the swallows in this respect, they will be pretty sure to return to the nest even if they do leave it for awhile. Though the swallows may fly, o'er the deep blue sea, to the lands that are far away, yet, when the next season comes, they find their way back again to the old nest and home. So, though some of our sons and daughters

may grow up, and leave the house of God for awhile, they cannot altogether forget it. The recollection of their father's prayers and of their mother's tears will follow them wheresoe'er they roam. Refrain your eyes from weeping, dear mothers; your sons and daughters shall come back again. Possibly, when you sleep beneath the clods of the valley, they will recollect what they heard when, as children, you took them with you to the house of God. Words that have been forgotten for fifty years may yet ring in their souls, and lead to their eternal salvation. At any rate, as the swallows found a nest for their young at God's altar, mind that you, Christian parents, make the house of God your children's house. Associate them, as far as you can, with all that is going on there, so that they shall feel at home when they go with you to the place where you worship the Lord, and serve him.

But, after all, it is not the main thing merely to bring our children to the house of God; oh, that we could bring them to Christ! That is where we long to lay our young, for there only shall they be truly safe, and happy, and blessed. Christian parents, can you rest content as long as your children are unconverted? I am ashamed of you if you can. Do you say that you hope they will be converted in future years? I hope so too, but are you not concerned that they are out of Christ now? Perhaps you remind me of what I said just now, that your instruction may be blessed to their salvation long after you have been called home. Yes, I recollect that I said that, and I do not wish to withdraw what I said; yet I would like to ask whether you are willing to run the fearful risk of your children dying unsaved. The object of parents, and preachers, and teachers should be that children should be saved while they are children; that, while they are yet young, their names should be enrolled in the array of the church militant.

How can we lay our children before Christ, as the swallow laid her young before God's altar? I answer, first, by prayer. The Lord will hear our prayers for our children as he heard our fathers' prayers for us. Example will also help toward the end we have in view, — godly example at home. And personal precept will also help. We must talk to our children, one by one, alone, about their souls. I am afraid that some of you parents do not do that; but if you do not see your children grow up to do what is right, you will have to blame yourselves because you never personally pleaded with them to flee from the wrath to come. I know that the words of my father with me alone, when he prayed for me, and bade me pray for myself, — not to use any form of prayer, but to pray just as I felt, and to ask from God what I felt that I really wanted, — left an impression upon my mind that will never be erased. I have heard of an idiot, who was one day scouring a brass plate to get the name out; but, the more he scoured, the more clearly it shone; and when the devil tries to erase the impressions, made upon my mind and heart, by my mother's tears and my father's prayers, he is as much like an idiot as he possibly could be; for, let him scour as he may, those impressions will never be removed, but will continue to shine yet more brightly.

Do, dear Christian parents, resolve that, if your children perish, it shall not be through any fault of yours. But why should they perish? .Why should I suppose that such a thing is possible? " The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. " Did not Paul and Silas say to the jailer at Philippi, " Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house " ? Do not be content with being saved yourselves; say, " No, my Master, I cannot be put off with half thy promise; it is 'and thy house', and I would fain have it all, and see my children, and if I live long enough, their children, too, all encompassed in the arms of thy love, and all of them saved. " Brethren and sisters, if you are like the sparrow, and have found a house, now be like the swallow, and find not only a nest for yourself, but a place where you may lay your young, even God's altar upon which Christ offered his great atoning sacrifice.

I wonder what other birds are represented here. Alas! alas! I fear that I am addressing some who will not heed what I have been saying. They are not like the sparrow and the swallow. Perhaps they are like the eagle, that was far too ambitious to think of building her nest anywhere near God's altar, — too fond of soaring and struggling, too fond of high and lofty things. But there will come a time when the wide of man shall be laid low. Beware, beware, thou who art like the eagle! Possibly there is one here who is like the vulture, far too foul to think of building in God's house, — fond of everything that is unclean, wicked amusements and sinful pleasures, which are sadly miscalled " pleasures " Ah! the time will come when sin, will be as bitter to thee as now it is sweet; ay, and far more so, for it " will eat as doth a canker. " When thou comest to film dregs of the cup of sinful pleasure, thou shalt find that there is hell in them, and that forever! Or, mayhap, there is one here who is like the cormorant, who will not build on God's house because he is far too greedy after the world, seeking to gather gold, and to amass property. Ah, sir! hast thou never heard of the rich fool whose soul was required of him the very night on which he boasted of his wealth? Play not thou the fool thus, but be willing to leave all those things, and come and seek enduring riches. If you do not care for your own souls, it must seem to you an idle task for me to talk to you about your children; yet I will venture to say to any unconverted man here, that it will increase his misery intolerably to see his children lost through his own example. If you must perish, man, if you are resolved to perish, why need you drag your child down with you? If you must drink, why need that boy of yours be taught the base habit into which you have fallen? If you will swear, do not let your child you. I would not have you swear at all; but if you will do so, why should your child learn from you to curse and blaspheme God? O sirs! you will find it dreadful enough to perish yourselves; but to bring down one, two, three, — I know not how many children you have, — to bring them down, one after the other, to that same place of awful and eternal misery, — what a terrible increase to your own wretchedness! You could not look at your dear child's face, and then do him harm. I know that you would not touch him so as to break a bone, or do his body any injury. No, you pat his curly head, and say, " God bless you! " Yes, but why do you then do injury to his soul by your evil example? Why do you take your boy where you know he will learn no

good and much harm? How dare you take him to places where the amusement is defiled and defiling, lascivious, unclean? No, if you really mean it when you say, “ God bless my boy! ” then live so that you will bless him by your example. May you be saved yourself, and then may you be a true parent to your children for immorality as well as for time! May these words abide with you; and God bless them, so that we and our children may meet in heaven, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

(Copyright [AGES Software](#). Used by permission. All rights reserved. See [AGES Software](#) for their full selection of highly recommended resources)