

Spurgeon on Psalms-Pt8

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C. H. Spurgeon Sermons on Psalms Part 8

Psalm 107:17-22 A Visit to Christ's Hospital

NO. 3070

**PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12TH, 1907,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he sayeth them out of their distresses. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.” — Psalm 107:17-22.

IT is a very profitable thing to visit a hospital. The sight of others' sickness tends to make us grateful for our own health., and it is a great thing to be kept in a thankful frame of mind, for ingratitude is a spiritual disease, injurious to every power of the soul. A hospital inspection will also teach us compassion, and that is of great service. Anything that softens the heart is valuable. Above all things, in these days, we should strive against the petrifying influences which surround us. It is not easy for a man, who has constantly enjoyed good health and prosperity, to sympathize with the poor and the suffering. Even our great High Priest, who is full of compassion, learned it by carrying our sorrows in his own person. To see the sufferings of the afflicted, in many cases, would be enough to move a stone; and if we go to the, hospital, and come back with a tenderer heart, we shall have found it a sanatorium to our eyes.

I purpose, at this time, to take you to a hospital. It shall not be one of those noble institutions so pleasingly plentiful around the Tabernacle; but we will take you to Christ's Hospital, or, as the French would call it, the Hotel Dieu: and we shall conduct you through the wards for a few minutes, trusting that while you view them, if you are yourself healed, you may feel gratitude that you have been delivered from spiritual sicknesses, and an intense compassion for those who still pine and languish.

May we become like our Savior, who wept, over Jerusalem with eyes which were no strangers to compassion's floods: may we view the roes guilty and impenitent with yearning hearts, and grieve with mingled imp and anxiety over those who are under the sound of the gospel, and so are more especially patients in the Hospital of God.

We will go at once with. the psalmist to the wards of spiritual sickness.

I. And, firsts, we have see out before us The Names And Characters Of The Patients.

You see, in this hospital, written up over the head of every couch, the name of the patient and his disease, and you are amazed to find that all the inmates belong to one family, and, singularly enough, are all called by one name, and that name is very far from being a reputable one. It is a title that nobody covets, and that many persons would be very indignant to have applied to them, — “Fool.” All who are sick in God’s Hospital are fools, without exception, for this reason, that all sinners are fools. Often, in Scripture, when David means the wicked, he says, “the foolish “; and, in saying this, he makes no mistake, for sin is folly.

Sin is foolish, clearly, because it is a setting-up of our weakness in opposition to Omnipotence. Every wise man., if he must fight, will choose a combatant against whom., he may have a chance of success.; but he who wars with the Most High commits as gross a folly as when the moth contends with the flame, or the dry grass of the prairie challenges the fire. There is no hope for thee, O sinful man, of becoming a rioter in the struggle. How unwise thou art to take up the weapons of rebellion! And the folly is aggravated, because the One who is opposed is so infinitely good that opposition to him is violence to everything that is just, beneficial, and commendable. God is love; shall I resist the infinitely loving One? He scatters blessings; wherefore should I be his foe? If his commandments were grieve us, if his ways were ways of raised-y, and his paths were paths of woe, I might have some pretense of an excuse for resisting his will. But O my God, so good, so kind, so boundless in grace, 'tie folly, as well as wickedness, to be thine enemy!

“To all that’s good, averse and blind,

But prone to all that’s ill,

What dreadful darkness veils our mind!

How obstinate our will!”

Besides this, the laws of God are so supremely beneficial to ourselves, that we, are our own enemies when we rebel. God’s laws are danger signals. As sometimes, on the ice, those who care for human life put up the warning word “Danger” here and there, and leave the part that is safe for all who choose to traverse it, so God has left us free to. enjoy everything that is safe for us, and has only forbidden us that, which is to our own hurt,. If there be a law which forbids me to put my hand into the file., it is a, pity that I should need such a law, but a thousand pities more if I think that law a hardship. The commands of God do, but forbid us to injure ourselves. To keep them is to keep ourselves in holy happiness; to break them is to bring evil of all kinds upon ourselves in soul and body. Why should I violate, a law, which, if I were perfect, I should myself have made, or myself have kept finding it in force? Why need I rebel against Chat, which is never exacting, never oppressive, but always conducive to my own highest welfare? The sinner is a feel, because he is told, in God’s Word, that the path of evil will lead to destruction, and yet he pursues it with the secret, hope that, in his case, the damage will not be very great. He has been warned that sin, is like a cup frothing with a foam of sweetness, but concealing death and hell in its dregs; yet each sinner, as he takes the cup, fascinated by the first drop, believes that, to him, the poisonous draught, will not be fatal. How many have fondly hoped that God would lie unto. men, and would not fulfill his threatenings! Yet be assured, every sin shall have its recompense of reward; God is just., and will by no means spare the guilty. Even in this life many are feeling in their bones the consequences of their youthful lusts; they will carry to their graves the scars of their transgressions. In hell, alas! Chore are millions who will for ever prove that sin is an awful and am undying evil, an infinite curse which has destroyed them for ever and ever.

The sinner is a fool, because, while he doubts the truthfulness of God as to the punishment of sin, he has the conceit to imagine that transgression will even yield him pleasure. God saith it shall be bitterness; the sinner denies the bitterness, and affirms that it shall be sweetness. O feel, to seek pleasure in sin! Go rake the charnel-house to find an immortal soul; go walk into the secret springs of the, sea to find the source of flame. It, is not there, stud thou canst never find bliss in rebellion. Hundreds of thousands before thee have gone upon this search, and have all been disappointed; he is indeed a fool who, must, needs rush headlong in this useless chase, and perish as the result. The, sinner is a fool — a great fool — to remain as he is in danger of the wrath of God. To abide at ease in imminent peril, and scorn the way of escape; to love the world, and loathe the Savior; to set the present fleeting life above the eternal future; to choose the sand of the desert, and forego the jewels of heaven; — all this is folly, in the highest, conceivable degree.

Though all sinners are fools, yet there are fools of all sorts Some are learned fools. Unconverted men, whatever they know, are only educated fools. Between the ignorant man who cannot read a letter, and the learned man who is apt in all knowledge, there is small difference if they are both ignorant, of Christ.; indeed, the scholar’s folly is in this case the greater of the two. The learned fool generally proves himself the worst of fools, for he invents theories which would be ridiculed if they could be understood, and he

brings forth speculations which, if they were judged by common sense and men were not turned into idiotic wet-shippers of imaginary authority, would be scouted from the universe with a hiss of derision. There are fools in colleges and fools in cottages.

There are also reckless fools and reckoning fools. Some sin with both hands greedily. "A short life, and a merry one," is their motto; while the so-called "prudent" fools live more slowly, but still live not for God. These last, with, hungry greed for wealth, will often heard up gold as if it were true treasure, and as if anything worth the retaining were to be found beneath the moon. Your "prudent" "respectable" sinner will find himself just as much lost as your reckless prodigal. They must all alike seek and find the Savior, or be guilty of gross folly. So, alas! there are old fools as well as young ones. There are those who, after an experience of sin, burn their tinge at it still. The burnt child dreads the fire, but film burnt sinner lovingly plays with his sin again. Hoar hairs ought to be a crown of glory, but too often they are fool's caps. There are young sinners who waste the prime of life when the dew is on their spirit, and neglect to give their strength to God, and so miss the early joy of religion, which is the sweetest, and makes all the rest of life the sweeter: these are fools. But what is he who hath one foot hanging over the mouth of hell, and yet continue without God and without Christ, a trifler with eternity?

I have spoken thus upon the name of those who enter God's Hospital; permit me to add that, all who go there, and are cured, agree that this name is correct. Saved souls are made to feel that theft are naturally fools; and, indeed, it is one stage in the cure when men are able to spell their own name, and when they are willing to write it in capital letters, and say, "That is mine! If there is no other man in this world who is a fool, I am. I have played the fool before the living God:." This confession is true, for what madness it is to play the fool before the Eternal One, with your own soul as the subject of the foolery! When men make sport, they generally do it with trifling things. A man who plays the fool, and puts on a cap and bells, is wise in comparison with him who sports with his God, his soul, heaven, and eternity. This is folly beyond all folly. Yet the sinner, when he is taken into God's Hospital, will be made to feel that he has been such a fool, and that his folly is folly with emphasis. He will confess that. Christ must be made unto him wisdom,, for he himself by nature was born a fool, has lived a fool, and will die a fool, unless the infinite mercy of God stroll interpose.

II. Now, for a minute or two, let us notice The Cause Of Their Pains And Afflictions. "Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted."

The physician usually tries to find out the root and cause of the disease he has to deal with. Now, those souls that are brought into grief for sin, those who are smarting through the providential dealings of God, through the strikings of conscience, or the smitings of the Holy Spirit, are here taught that the source of their sorrow is their sin. These sins are mentioned in the text in the plural: "Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities." How many have our sins been? Who shall count them? Let him tell the hairs of his head first. Sins are various, and are therefore called "transgressions and iniquities." We do not all sin alike, nor does any one man sin alike at all times. We commit sins of word, thought, deed, against God, against men, against our bodies, against our souls, against the gospel, against the law, against the week-day duties, against the Sabbath privileges — of all sorts, and these all lie at the root of our sorrows. Our sins also are aggravated; not content with transgression, we have added iniquities to it. No one is more greedy than a sinner, but he is greedy after his own destruction. He is never content with revolting; he must need rebel yet more and more. As when a stone is rolled downhill, its pace is accelerated the further it goes, so is it with the sinner, he goes from bad to worse.

Perhaps I speak to some who have lately come into God's Hospital. I will suppose a case. You are poor, very poor, but your poverty is full fruit of your profligate habits. Poverty is often directly traceable to drunkenness, laziness, or dishonesty. All poverty does not come from these sources. Blessed be God, there are thousands of the poor who are the excellent of the earth, and a great many of them, are serving God right nobly; but! am now speaking of certain cases, and probably you know of such yourselves, where, because of their transgression, and iniquities, men are brought to want. There will come to me, sometimes, a person who was in good circumstances a few years ago, who is now without anything but the clothes he tries to stand upright in, and his wretchedness is entirely owing to his playing the prodigal. He is one of those whom I trust God may yet take into his Hospital.

At times, the disease breaks out in another sort of misery. Some sins bring into the flesh itself pains which are anticipatory of hell; yet even these persons may be taken into the Hospital of God, though they are afflicted, to their shame, through gross transgression. Oh,, how many there are, in this great City of London, of men and women who dare not tell their condition, but whose story is a terrible one indeed, as God reads it! Oh, that he may have pity upon them, and take them into his lazaret-house, and heal them yet through his abundant grace!

In more numerous cases, the misery brought by sin is mental. Many are brought by sin very low, even to despair. Conscience pricks them; fears of death and hell haunt them. I do remember well when I was in this way myself; when I, poor fellow, because of my transgression and my iniquities, was sorely bowed in spirit,. By day, I thought of the punishment of my sin; by night, I dreamed of it. I woke in the morning with a burden on my heart, burden which I could neither cast nor shake off, and sin was at the bottom of

my sorrow. My sin, my sin, my sin, — this was my constant plague. I was in my youth, and in the heyday of my spirit; I had all earthly comforts, and I had friends to cheer me, but they were all as nothing. I would seek solitary places to search the Scriptures, and to read such books as “Baxter’s Call to the Unconverted” and “Alleine’s Alarm,” feeling my soul ploughed more and more; as though the law, with its teas and great black horses, was dragging the plough up and down my soul breaking, crushing, furrowing my heart, and all for sin. Let me tell you, though we read of the cruelties of the Inquisition, and the sufferings which the martyrs have borne from, cruel men, no racks, nor firebrands, nor other instruments of torture can make a man so wretched as his own conscience when he is stretched upon its rack.

Hence, then, we see both the fools and the cause of their disease.

III. Now let us notice The Progress Of The Disease. It is such that “their soul abhorreth all manner of meat,” like persons who have lost their appetite, and can eat nothing; “and they draw near unto the gates of death,” they are given over, and nearly dead.

These words may reach some whose disease of sin has developed itself in fearful sorrow, so that they are near unable to find comfort in anything. You used to enjoy the theater; you went lately, but you were wretched there. You used to be a wit in society, and set the table on a roar with your jokes; but you cannot joke now. They say you are melancholy, but, you know what, they do not know, for a secret arrow rankles in your bosom. You go to a place of worship, but, you find no comfort even there. The manner of meat that is served to God’s saints is not suitable to you. You cry, “Alas, I am not, worthy of it!” Whomever you hear a sermon thundering against the ungodly, you feel, “Ah, that is for me!” but when it comes to “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,” you conclude, “Ah, that is not for me!” Even if it be an invitation to the sinner, you say, “But, I do not feel myself a sinner. I am not, such an one as may come to Christ. Surely I am a castaway.” Your soul abhorreth all manner of meat, even that out of God’s kitchen. Not only are you dissatisfied with the world’s dainties, but the marrow and fatness of Christ himself you cannot relish. Many of us have been in this way before, you.

The text adds, “They draw near unto the gates of death.” The soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto, death, and feels that it cannot bear up much longer. I mean, for once, in the bitterness of my spirit, using those words of Job, “My soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life,” for the wretchedness of a sin-burdened soul is intolerable. All do not suffer like strong convictions; but, in some, it bows the spirit almost to the grave. Perhaps, my friend, you see no hope whatever; you are ready to say, “There cannot be any hope for me. I have made a covenant with death, and a league with hell; I am past hope. There were, years ago, opportunities for me, and I was near the kingdom; but like the man who put his hand to the plough, and then turned back, I have proved myself unworthy of eternal life.” Troubled heart, I am sent with a message for you: “Thus saith the Lord, your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your league with hell shall not stand. The prey shall be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive shall be delivered.” You may abhor the very meat that would restore vigor to strength, but, he who understands the human heart knows how to give you better tastes and mire these evil whims: he knows how to bring you up from the gates of death to the gates of heaven, Thus we see how terribly the mischief progresses.

“Our beauty and our strength are fled,

And we draw near to death,

But Christ the Lord recalls the dead

With his almighty breath.

IV. And now the disease takes a turn. Our fourth point is The Interposition Of The Physician: “Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.”

The good Physician is the true Healer. Observe when the Physician comes in, — when “they cry unto the Lord in their trouble.” When they cry, the Physician has come. I will not say that he has come because they cry, though that would be true; but there is deeper truth still, — they cried because he came. For, whenever a soul truly cries unto God, God has already blessed it by enabling it to cry. Thou wouldst never have begun to pray if the Lord had not taught thee. God is visiting a soul, and healing it, when it has enough faith in God to, cast itself, with a cry, upon his mercy. I cannot hope that there is a work of grace in thee until I know that thou prayest. Ananias would not have believed that Paul was converted had it not been said, “Behold he prayeth!”

Note the kind of prayer here; it was not taken out of a book, and it was not a fine prayer in language, whether extempore or pre-composed; it was a cry. You do not need to teach your children how to cry; it is the first thing a new-born child does. It wants no

schoolmaster to teach it that art. Our School Boards have a great deal to, teach the children of London, but they need never have a department for instruction in crying. A spiritual cry is the call of the new-born nature expressing conscious need. "How shall I pray?" says one. Pour thy heart out, brother. Turn the vessel upside down, and let the contents run out to the last drop, as best, they can. "But I cannot pray," says one. Tell the Lord you cannot pray, and ask him to help you to pray, and you have prayed already. "Oh, but I don't feel as I should!" Then confess to the Lord your sinful insensibility, and ask him to make your heart, tender, and you are already in a measure softened. Those who say, "We don't feel as we should," are very often those who feel the most. Whether it, be so or no, cry. If thou art a sin-sick soul, thou canst, do nothing towards thine own healing but, this, — thou canst, cry. He who hears thy cries will know what they mean. When the surgeon goes to the battlefield, after a conflict, he is guided to his compassionate work by the groans of the wounded. When he hears a soldier's cry, he does not inquire, "Was that, a Frenchman or a German, and what does he mean?" A cry is good French, and excellent, German too; it is part of the universal tongue. The surgeon understands it, and looks for the sick man. And, whatever language thou usest. O sinner, uncouth or refined, if it be the language of thy heart, God understands thee without an interpreter.

Note well that, as we have seen when the Physician intend, we shall see next what he did. He saved them out of their distresses, healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. Oh, the infinite mercy of God! he reveals to the heart pardon for all sin; and, by its Spirit's power, removes all our weaknesses. I tell thee, soul, though thou art at death's door this moment, God can even now gloriously deliver thee. It would be a wonder if your poor burdened spirit should, within this hour, leap for joy; and yet, if the Lord shall visit thee in mercy, thou wilt do so. I fall back upon my own, recollection; my escape from despondency was instantaneous. I did but believe Jesus Christ's word, and rest upon his sacrifice, sad the night of my heart was over; the darkness had passed, sad the true light had shone. In some parts of the world there are not long twilights before the break of day, but the sun leaps up in a moment; the darkness flies, and the light reigns; so it is with many of the Lord's redeemed. As in a moment, their ashes are exchanged for beauty, and their spirit of heaviness for the garment of praise. Faith is the great transformer. Wilt thou cast thyself now, whether thou shalt live or die, upon the precious blood and merits of Jesus Christ the Savior? Wilt thou come and rest thy soul upon the Son of God? As thou dost so, thou art saved; thy sins, which are many, are now forgiven thee. As of old the Egyptians were drowned in a moment in the Red Sea, and the depths had covered them so that there was not one of them left; so, the moment thou believest, thou hast lifted a mightier rod than that of Moses, and the sea of the atoning blood, in the fullness of its strength, has gone over the heads of all thine enemies; thy sins are drowned in Jesus blood. Oh, what joy is this when, in answer to a cry, God delivers us from, our present distresses and our threatened future destructions!

But how is this effected? The psalmist saith, "He sent his word, and healed them." 'His Word.' How God enables language when he uses it! That word "word" is uplifted in Scripture into the foremost place, and put on a level with the Godhead. "THE WORD." It indicate, a God-like personage, for, "in the beginning was the Word;" nay, it denotes God himself, for "the Word was God." Our hope is the Word; — the incarnate Logos, the eternal Word. In some respects, our salvation comes to us entirely through the sending of that Word to be made flesh, and to dwell among us. He is our saving health, by his stripes we are healed. But, here the expression is best understood of the gospel, which is the Word of God. Often, the reading of the Scriptures proves the means of healing troubled souls; or, else, that same Word is made effectual when spoken from a loving heart with a living lip. What might there is in take plain preaching of the gospel! No power in all the world can match it. They tell us, nowadays, that the nation will go over to Rome, and the gospel candle will be blown out. I am not a believer in these alarming prophecies; I neither believe in the battle of Dorking, nor in the victory, of Pius the Ninth. Leave us our Bibles, our pulpits, and our God, and we shall win, the victory yet. Oh, if all ministers preached the gospel plainly, without aiming at rhetoric and high flights of oratory, what great triumphs would follow! How sharp would the gospel sword prove itself to be if men would but pull it out of those fine ornamental, but, useless scabbards! When the Lord enables his servants to put plain gospel truth into language that will strike and stick, be understood and retained, it heals sick souls, that, else might have lain, fainting long.

Still, the Word of God in the Bible and the Word of God preached cannot heal the soul unless God shall send it in. the most emphatic sense; "He sent his Word." When the eternal Spirit brings home the Word with power, what a Word it is! Then the miracles of grace wrought within us are such as to astonish friends and confound love. May the Lord, even now, send his Word to each sinner, and it will be his salvation. "Hear, and your soul shall live." "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God," and faith brings with it all that the soul requires. When we have faith, we are linked with Christ; and so our salvation is ensured.

V. That brings us to the last point, — The Consequent Conduct Of Those Who Were Healed.

First, they praised God for his goodness. What rare praise a soul offers where it is brought out of prison! The sweetest music ever heard on earth is found in those new songs which, celebrate our recent deliverance from the horrible pit and the miry day. Did you ever keep a linnet (Ed: a common small brownish Old World finch) in a cage, and then bethink yourself that it was cruel to rob it of its liberty? Did you take it out into the garden, and open the cage door? Oh, but if you could have heard it sing when it had fairly escaped from the cage where it had been so long, you would have heard the best linnet music in all the wood. Whoa a poor soul

breaks forth from the dungeon of despair, set, free by God, what songs it pours forth! God loves to hear such music. Remember that ancient word of his, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness." God loves the warm-hearted praises of newly-emancipated souls; and he will get some out of you, dear friend, if you are set free at this hour.

Notice that these healed ones praised God especially for his goodness. It was great goodness that such as they were should be saved. So near death's door, and yet saved! They wondered at his mercy, and sang of "his wonderful works to the children of men." It is wonderful that such as we were should be redeemed from our iniquities; but our Redeemer's name is called Wonderful, and he delights in showing forth, the riches of his grace.

Observe that, in their praises, they ascribe all to God; they praise him for his wonderful work. Salvation is God's work, from beginning to end. Their song is, moreover, comprehensive, and they adore the Lord for his love to others as well as to themselves; they praise him "for his wonderful works to the children of men."

Forget not that they added to this praise sacrifice: "Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving." What shall be the sacrifices of a sinner delivered from going down into the pit? Shall he bring a bullock that hath horns and hoofs? Nay, let him bring his heart; let him offer himself, his time, his talents, his body, his soul, his substance. Let him exclaim, "Let my Lord take all, seeing that he hath saved my soul." Will you not lay yourselves out for him who laid himself out for you? If he has bought you with such a price, confess that you are altogether his. Of your substance give to his cause as he prospers you, prove that you are really his by your generosity towards his Church and his poor,

In addition to sacrifice, the healed ones began to offer songs, for it was to be a "sacrifice of thanksgiving." May those of you who are pardoned sing more than is customary nowadays. May we, each one of us, who, have been delivered from going down to the pit, enter into the choir of God's praising ones, vocally singing as often as we can, and in our hearts always chanting his praise!

Once more, the grateful ones were to add to their gifts and psalms a declaration of joy at what God had done for them: "Let them declare his works with rejoicing." Ye who are pardoned should tell the Church of the Lord's mercy to you. Let his people know that God is discovering his hidden ones. Come and tell the minister. Nothing gladdens him so much as to know that souls are brought to Jesus by his means. This is our reward. Ye are our crown of rejoicing, ye saved ones. I can truly say that I never have such joy as when I receive letters from persons, or hear from them personally the good news, "I heard you on such-and-such a night, and found peace;" or, "I read your sermon, and God blessed it to my soul." There is not a true minister of Christ but would willingly lay himself down to die if he could thereby see multitudes saved from eternal wrath. We live for this. If we miss this, our life is a failure. What is the use of a minister unless he brings souls to God? For this we would yearn over you, and draw near unto God in secret, that he would be pleased in mercy to deliver you.

But, surely, if you are converted, you should not, conceal the fact. It is an unkind action for any person, who has received life from the dead, through any instrumentality, to deny the worker the consolation of hearing that he has been made useful; for the servant of God has many discouragements, and he is himself readily cast down, and the gratitude of those who are saved is one of the appointed cordials for his heavy heart. There is no refreshment like it. May God grant you grace to declare his love, for our sake, for the Church's sake, and, indeed, for the world's sake. Let the sinner know that you have found mercy; perhaps it will induce him also to seek salvation. Many a physician has gained his practice by one patient telling others of his cure. Tell your neighbors that you have been to the Hospital of Jesus, and been restored, though you hated all manner of meat, and drew near to the gates of death; and, may be, a poor soul, just in the same condition as yourself, will say, "This is a message from God to me."

Above all, publish abroad the Lord's goodness, for Jesus' sake. He deserves your honor. Will you receive his blessing, and then, like the nine lepers, give him no praise? Will you be like the woman in the crowd, who was healed by touching the hem of his garment, and then would fain have slipped away? If so, I pray that the Master may say, "Somebody hath touched me," and may you be compelled to tell us all the truth, and say, "I was sore sick in soul, but I touched thee, O my blessed Lord, and I am saved, and to the praise of the glory of thy grace I will tell it! I will tell it, though devils should hear me; I will tell it, and make the world ring with it, according to my ability, to the praise and glory of thy saving grace."

Psalm 111:4, 5 Remembering God's Works

NO. 2849

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17TH, 1903,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 4TH, 1877.

“He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion. He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.” — Psalm 111:4, 5.

God’s works are, of course, wonderful because they are his works, but they are not “a nine days’ wonder.” They are not intended to be admired for a little while, and then to be forgotten. The psalmist says, “He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered.” I fear that we too often fail to keep in our memory the recollection of God’s exceeding goodness, and that we suffer the works of the Lord, as well as his mercies, to lie “forgotten in unthankfulness.” If it has been so, in the past, with any of us, let us, at the outset of our meditation, begin to chide ourselves for our forgetfulness, and ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen our memories that we may remember the wonderful works of the Lord more than we have done.

Our subject is twofold; first, it is God’s design that his wonderful works should be remembered; and, secondly, it is our wisdom constantly to have those wonderful works in remembrance.

I. First, then, I learn, from our text, that It Is God’s Design That His Wonderful Works Should Be Remembered.

He has ensured the carrying out of this design, for, first, the very greatness of his works prevents them from being forgotten. When God has come forth, out of his secret places, to work redemption for his people with a high hand and an outstretched arm, he has wrought such mighty marvels that all history has been made to ring with the tidings of them. Is it possible that Israel could ever forget what the Lord did in Egypt when he smote the hosts of their oppressors, and brought forth his people with a great deliverance? Could they ever forget the wondrous scene at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh and all his army sank like lead in the surging waters that had stood upright, like massive walls, to make a way for the ransomed hosts to escape. There were other events, in the conquest of Canaan, and in the life of David, which must have been, through their extraordinary character, for ever burned into the recollection of God’s ancient people; and, truly, you and I can say, of many of God’s works on our behalf, that they have been so great that it would be quite impossible for us to forget them. Do you remember your conversion, beloved friend? Peradventure, you were a great and open sinner and the change in you was so remarkable that you can easily recollect the time when it occurred, and it would not be possible for Satan himself to make you doubt that such a change did happen to you. You remember, my brother, when the load of your guilt was removed from your burdened heart. I can imagine that I could forget my own name, and that I could forget my own sons, but I think I never could, under any circumstances, forget the day when I began to sing to my dear Lord and Savior,

“I will praise thee every day

Now thine anger’s turned away.”

It was such a marvellous thing so wonderful a thing in itself so altogether extraordinary that it could never, never, never be forgotten. “He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered” because they are so wonderful. Study deeply what sovereign grace has done to you, that you may see the greatness of the mercy, and admire it, for, very much in proportion as you appraise the mercy of God at its proper value, will you be sure to have it fixed upon your memory all your life.

God made his wonderful works to be remembered, in the next place, because of the persons upon whom those were wrought. There is many a man, who would soon forget all he hears about the favor of God, because he is not conscious of his own need of it; but when a person is, spiritually, in an exceedingly anxious state of mind and heart, and God’s great mercy comes to him, he is sure to recollect it. You remember that the Israelites were in Egypt as a nation of slaves, so that, when God fetched them out, the serfs of the brick-kiln, the men who were driven to their daily tasks by the oppressors’ whips, the poor slaves who were denied even the straw with which to make the bricks, well, when they were divinely delivered, at the very time when Pharaoh’s tyranny had become utterly unbearable, they could not possibly forget how they had been delivered. That day of their emancipation became the beginning of months to them, and they numbered their years from it, for, to poor oppressed Israel, it was like life from the dead. At the present time, in a spiritual sense, God, in his mercy, interposes on behalf of those who are in a similar condition to that of Israel in Egypt. You remember how Hannah sang, “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.” That dunghill would help the beggar’s memory; he would say, “How can I forget that I was thrown away there like a worthless thing? In my own estimation, I was a rotten, worthless, useless thing, fit only to be thrown among the rubbish of creation; but the Lord suddenly appeared to me, and lifted me up, and set me among the princes of his people. Can I ever forget that? Let the bride forget her ornaments, and let my right hand forget her cunning, but never can my soul forget how the Lord brought me up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.” Some of us were mere wrecks of humanity; yawning chasms gaped beneath us, and we thought that we should be speedily swallowed up; but we cried unto the Lord in our trouble, and he brought us unto a quiet haven. Can we ever forget his wonderful works? We were sore sick; our soul abhorred all manner of meat, and we drew near to the gates of the grave; but the good Physician came, and restored us from all our sicknesses just when death stared us in the face. Beloved

brothers and sisters, I feel certain that I can appeal to many of you, and say that you were in such a plight as this when the Lord revealed himself to you. Such was your distress, and the abject condition in which you were, that, for you to forget what the Lord did for you would be such base ingratitude that I cannot believe that it is possible. Surely, you feel that you must remember him, and that sooner might a woman forget her sucking child than that you should forget the wonderful works which the Lord your God hath wrought for you.

Besides this, the Lord took care that his wonderful works should be remembered by putting them on record in the Scriptures. The five Books of Moses, the Pentateuch, are the divinely-inspired record of the wonderful works which God did for his people in the very early times of the world's history. The pen of inspiration was carefully employed in order that what God had done might be written down for all future generations to read. This blessed Book has made the wonderful works of God to be remembered for all time; it was written for that very purpose. It tells the unique story of the eternal love of God to us; it also tells us the wonderful story of love incarnate in the Christ of Bethlehem, and further tells us how he died, and how he rose again, and how he lives in heaven to plead for us as our great Intercessor before the throne. Let us bless him more and more for these sacred pages in which he makes his wonderful works to be remembered; and I venture to suggest to you beloved, that it is well, when God performs any work of mercy for you, that you should cause it to be remembered in a similar way. Much of God's praise is never made known on this earth for want of a ready pen to record the gracious experiences of his people. The keeping of a diary is very apt to lead to a stilted form of piety. If a man feels that he must put something down every day, he is very liable to put down that which is not true. He may think it is true even when it is really false. But the recording of the many special mercies that we receive from God appears to me to be a duty which we owe to our age, and also to our successors. If some of the wonderful deliverances, which are recorded in the biographies of the saints, had not been jotted down at the time, we should have been great losers; and if we have anything worth recording, and I think we have even if we do not care to write it down to be seen by the public eye, yet, at least, let us record it for the sake of the little circle in which we live and move, that, peradventure, some of our descendants, or some of our friends, may gather comfort from our personal experience of God's mercy. "He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered." Let us act in harmony with this grand design, and preserve the memory of the Lord's great goodness to us.

Moreover in order to preserve the memory of his wonderful works, God was pleased to command, his people to teach their children to remember what he had done for them. In addition to the inspired records, he told them to make their children's memories into books of remembrance. Jewish fathers were commanded to call their children together, and tell them how the Lord brought them out of Egypt, how he led them through the wilderness, and how he gave them the land of Canaan to be their own possession. They were to teach their children, and their children's children, the wonderful story of the Lord's dealings with them; and we ought to be concerned to hand down, from father to son, the memory of God's great goodness to us. Tell your own children if you cannot tell anyone else, what God has done for their father. Sitting around the fire in the evening, your children might often be, not merely interested, but instructed and impressed by the narrative of God's providential dealings with you. Possibly, the story might not read well in print; but never mind that, for there will be an interest about it to your own household; so, be sure that you tell it. My memory recalls, at this very moment, many a pleasing incident from what my grandsire told me concerning his early struggles in the ministry, and the providential interpositions of God on his behalf. Perhaps he might as well have written them down, but he did not; I think that, possibly, he knew that he had a living book within his grandchild's brain, and that the boy might, in after days, tell out to others what his grandsire had told to him. At any rate, I do earnestly exhort all Christians to make God's wonderful works to be remembered wherever they can, and do it specially by telling to your children what you have experienced of his goodness. Do not die, O ye greyheads, ye who have passed your threescore years and ten, do not pass away from this earth with all those pleasant memories of God's lovingkindness to be buried with you in your coffin; but let your children, and your children's children, know what the everlasting God did for you.

Once more, in order to make his wonderful works to be remembered, the Lord was pleased to institute certain ordinances to keep them in the minds of his people. To preserve the memory of the deliverance out of Egypt, there was the significant rite of the Passover. On that night when God brought his people out of the house of bondage, it was the blood of the paschal lamb that protected each house that was sprinkled with it, and so Israel ever afterwards kept the Passover in memory of that night when God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." And you know how our blessed Redeemer has given us the institution of the Lord's supper, saying, "This do in remembrance of me," that the atonement, that great master-fact of the Christian religion might always be fresh upon our memories, and Christ be set forth visibly crucified among us as though it were but yesterday; for, if anything may be forgotten, it must not be Gethsemane, and Gabbatha, and Calvary. Beloved, take care that you attend carefully to that sacred memorial. If I am addressing any true believers in Christ, who, nevertheless, have hitherto been disobedient to their Lord's command, "This do in remembrance of me," I would solemnly ask them to be disobedient no longer. I am sure, beloved, you miss a great privilege, and I am equally sure that you are omitting a very sacred duty by not obeying your Lord's command. If it is right for you, as a believer in Christ, to stay away from your Master's table, it is also right for me, and right for all God's servants; if we all did so, there would be no celebration of the Lord's supper anywhere; and, so, that which our Savior, in his divine wisdom, instituted for a memorial, would cease to be. Perhaps you say that you are not a church member; if so, I reply that, if you are a Christian, you ought to be a member of Christ's visible church on earth; for, if you have a right not to be a member, I have a right

not to be one, and so have all the people of God; and, so, the Church of God, as an organization in the world, would cease to exist. Who is to maintain the ministry of the Word? Who is to keep up the ordinances of God's house if all his people break up into separate grains of sand instead of being living stones built up into his spiritual temple, "He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered;" so, join with him in that sacred purpose, and, in observing the ordinances instituted by your Lord, set forth, in your baptism, your death, burial, and resurrection with him; and, in the memorial supper, show forth his death until he come.

Thus I have shown you how God has made his wonderful works to be remembered, and I press it upon the heart and conscience of all the Lord's people to see that their memory be happily burdened with the recollection of God's mercy. Study diligently, in the Biblical record, what he did in the olden time. Learn, from Church History, what he has done from the days of Christ's sojourn upon the earth until now. But especially recollect what he has done for you, and often say, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." Abundantly utter the memory of God's great goodness. The Lord's children should not be dumb. Worldlings are noisy enough in praising their false gods; often, they make night hideous and startle us from our sleep as they sing the songs of Bacchus, or Mars, or other heathen deities. Then, shall the children of God be silent, and allow his mercies to lie forgotten in unthankfulness. Nay, nay; but write the record of them upon your doors, let it be seen upon the walls of your houses, publish the glad news wherever you go, tell it even to unwilling ears, and say, again and again, "The Lord is good, and his mercy endureth for ever; I can speak with confidence upon this matter, for in my experience I have proved it to be so." Facts like these are among the best arguments to silence infidel doubts and Satanic temptations. Tell the sceptics what God has done for you, and ask them whether unbelief can work such wonders for them. You, poor widow, with your seven little children, tell them how you took your troubles to the Lord, and he helped you, so that you know that there is a God, for you rested, and your family rested, upon him, in your great sorrow, and he upheld and delivered you. Tell them you who have been sick, and in poverty, and who cried unto God, and he helped you, tell them that you know that there is a God that heareth prayer. Tell them you who are rejoicing in God with joy unspeakable, and who often feel so happy that you scarcely can bear the great delight, tell them that God still lifts up the light of his countenance upon his people; and if they sneer at you, tell them that you are as honest as they are, and that they have as much reason to believe your word as you have to believe theirs. Pit your experience against their arguments; lay your facts over against their fallacies; and, in this way, you shall become valiant soldiers for the truth as it is in Jesus.

II. Now, secondly, It Is Wisdom On Our Part To Remember These Wonderful Works Of The Lord, for the effect upon our minds will be useful in many ways.

First, it will assure us of the Lord's mercy and compassion. Read the next sentence of the text: "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion;" gracious, that is, to the sinful, full of compassion, that is, to the weak and to the sorrowful. If we keep in remembrance the wonderful works of God, our experience will prove the truth of the text. How gracious the Lord was to sinful Israel! When they rebelled against him, and murmured at him, he still wrought great wonders for them; he fed them with manna from heaven; and brought them flesh to eat, and guided them by his fiery-cloudy pillar. He would not let their sin turn away his grace, but he still loved them. Does not your life, beloved, prove to you that God is very gracious to you, forgiving your sin, overlooking your infirmities, and bearing long with you? I want you to notice that it has been so in your own life; because, then, when you meet with a poor trembling sinner, you can say to him, or to her, "I know that God is very gracious, for he has been gracious to me;" you can tell the man with a troubled conscience that Christ can ease it for he has eased yours. You can tell how your great sin was taken away by Christ's great atonement; and you can comfort those who are burdened, and bowed down, by saying, "He did all this for me; and though, to my shame, I have to confess that I have often grieved him, he has never left me, nor forsaken me. Even when I have lost the light of his countenance, through my own fault, yet, when I have mourned over my guilt, he has beamed upon me again. In great mercy has he dealt with me, and he has been wonderfully gracious to me." Such testimony as that will be a great encouragement to others; as they hear what the Lord has done for you, they will be led by the Spirit of God to turn to him that the like favor may be displayed towards them.

Recollect also the great compassion of the Lord. I hope your own life has shown you how very tender he is towards those who trust him, even as the psalmist says, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." I can recollect how, in a time of terrible depression of spirit and of intense anguish of pain, I cast myself upon my God with that text in my mouth. I said to him, "O Lord, I am thy child, and if any child of mine were pained as I am, and I could take away his pain, I would do so. Thou art my Father; prove thy fatherliness by easing me, or else by strengthening my frail spirit to endure all this agony." I can even now recall the wonderful relief that came over both body and mind when I had pleaded like that before God; and I, therefore, speak with confidence of his fullness of compassion, for I have tried it, and proved it for myself, and I invite all who are bowed down to do as I did. Some of you may be in great distress of mind, a distress out of which no fellow-creature can deliver you, you poor nervous people at whom others often laugh. I can assure you that God will not laugh at you; he knows all about that sad complaint of yours, so I urge you to go to him, for the experience of many of us has taught us that "the Lord is gracious and full of compassion." As a mother comforteth her children so will he comfort you. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; so go to him in all the weakness of your deep contrition, and you shall find a mother's heart in the bosom of Jesus, something more tender than

a man's heart could ever be. Flee away to your God this very hour; our own experience leads us to urge you to do so, does it not, brothers and sisters in Christ? If this were the time and place, and we could turn this service into an experience meeting, would not many of you rise, and say, "It is even so," as you remembered God's wonderful works to you? Would you not say, "Yes, truly he is the God of grace, gracious and full of compassion"?"

The next effect that this remembrance will have on our mind is this. It will make us consider and acknowledge the divine bounty to us throughout all our lives. Observe what the psalmist says next: "He hath given meat unto them that fear him." Now, as we recollect that, as the Israelites might have recollected how they had abundance of food even in the wilderness, we shall be led to think of what poor creatures we must be to be so dependent upon our God. We should not have been alive if he had not fed us. How poor we all are in our natural condition! I heard one say of another, who had grown to be a rich man, and it was said in a wicked, envious spirit, I recollect the time when he had not two shirts to his back, and I said to him, "And your mother recollects the time when you had not one." There is not much for the richest man to boast of; men glory in their possessions, and they talk of others, who are poor, as though they were to be despised. There is not a man alive who has not had to be indebted to God for the breath in his nostrils. We owe everything to him; and in looking back upon our spiritual career, we have to say, "He hath given meat unto them that fear him." We have had to receive from the Lord the daily food that our souls have required; in temporal things and in spiritual, we have been pensioners at his gate, beggars wholly dependent upon his bounty. We have not been able to provide for ourselves one morsel of the bread of heaven. The Lord has had to give us all that we have had all through our whole life, both physically and spiritually. He has not only given meat to his people once or twice, but all their lives. The bread you eat to nourish your body, and the spiritual food whereon your soul has been fed, have been continually given to you. Have you ever counted how many meals you have eaten from the first day until now? Have you ever thought of the great store of spiritual food that you have received from the Lord? The queen of Sheba was astonished at the provision that Solomon made for his household for a single day; but oh, what wonderful provision Christ has made for you! He has given you, spiritually, his flesh to eat, and his blood to drink. He has given you, even in superabundance, the riches of his grace, and he will, in due time, give you the riches of his glory. Do not fail to recollect his wonderful works, in order that, while you realize your absolute dependence upon him, you may also see how he has continually supplied all your needs, so that you have lacked nothing from the first day even until now. He has prepared a table before you in the presence of your enemies, and he has made you to lie down in green pastures, and led you beside the still waters.

Recollect, too, the circumstances under which some of you have been fed. It was a great wonder when God furnished a table in the wilderness; and it has been a wonder, to some of you, where your daily bread has come from, has it not? I can look back upon the past history of some of you, and note how trying your circumstances have been; yet all your real needs have been supplied. You often woke up, in the morning, feeling very much like the little birds that do not know where their breakfast is to be found; but I hope that you, like the little birds, began to sing even before you found your breakfast, for you did find it. I love, in the winter, to see the robins sit on the bare boughs, and yet sing. It is easy enough to sing in springtime when all the birds are singing; but it is not so easy to sit on the bare boughs, and still praise the Lord; still, you should do even that, for you have been fed up till now, have you not, You know that ancient promise, "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure;" and that promise has been fulfilled in your experience. Sometimes, perhaps, you have attended a ministry where your soul has been well-nigh starved, and you have not known where to look for the spiritual meat that you needed to make you grow. Yet, you are still alive, for the Lord Jesus has himself fed you. "Not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" has your soul been nourished; so, bless him, and praise his holy name, this very hour, and let not the memory of his great goodness ever be forgotten by you.

Then recollect, dear brethren, the variety of supplies that you have had. "He hath given meat to them that fear him;" all sorts of spiritual meat has he given to you. When you were a child, you fed upon the simple doctrines of the Word; but, since then, your Lord has given you strong meat that you may become a man in Christ Jesus. In all conditions, you have had food convenient for you. At some stages of your spiritual history, it was not every ministry that could meet your wants. You could not listen with profit to this man or that; but the Lord himself fed you with his Word, and many a choice morsel you had while you were reading your morning chapter, and it seemed as if every verse in that chapter had been written specially for you, or as if the ink were still wet upon the page, and that the love-letter came to you fresh from your dear Father's hand. Thus has he, many a time, given meat to you who fear him. Blessed be his holy name, not some good thing has failed of all that he has promised. Have ye ever lacked anything! Has your Lord been a wilderness unto you, a land of barrenness? No; you have dwelt in a land flowing with milk and honey, and you have been fed to the full. Do not forget this but tell the story of it to others. Tell it to your poorer neighbors; tell it to poor saints when they are in low water; tell it to the poor distressed children of God who cannot feed upon the Word; tell them that their Heavenly Father will never let them die of starvation, for God, who feeds the ravens and the sparrows, will surely not allow his own children to starve.

There is another thing to be learnt from the memory of God's goodness. It is intended to certify us of his faithfulness. "He will ever be mindful of his covenant," is the last clause of our text. The Lord never forgot the covenant he made with Abraham. Often, when he might, otherwise, have destroyed Israel, he recollected that covenant, and he turned aside his wrath; and do you think he will ever forget the covenant which he has made with his only-begotten Son, a covenant signed, and sealed, and ratified, "in all things

ordered well," a covenant confirmed by the sacrifice of his well-beloved Son, a covenant which he signed with his own blood, and which is to stand fast for ever and ever? No, he cannot be false to his oath; he cannot lie, he must perform what he hath promised. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it?" All the past history of our lives goes to show that God is faithful, and will be faithful even to the end. I have never met with a child of God, whose experience did not go to confirm the fidelity of God. "Ye are my witnesses," saith the Lord, and if he were to call me into the witness-box, and I may say that, if he were to call many of you, your witness would be very straightforward, very plain, very clear, very definite. You would say, "He keeps his covenant for ever and ever." He is not forgetful of the pledge which he gave to David, and to David's Lord; therefore, go forward with unwavering confidence in him; doubt not, nor be discouraged, but rejoice in him, and trust him evermore.

The last thing that this memory of God's wonderful works ought to do for us is to make us praise him. This Psalm begins with, "Praise ye the Lord," and it finishes up with "His praise endureth for ever." Well, beloved, the memory of his great goodness is intended to make us praise him for ever and ever, so let us begin to do it at once. Do not go out of this place sorrowful; let your recollection of God's goodness move you to praise him. If you have no present cause for joy, so far as you can see, think of the past mercies that you have received. If everything looks gloomy on ahead, recollect how the Lord has helped you in all the steps you have already trodden. Give him a grateful song this very hour.

Smooth those wrinkles from your brow. Let your eyelids no longer hang down with heaviness, but say in your soul, "The Lord hath dealt well with his servants, according to his Word; therefore will we praise him with our whole heart in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation." I frequently exhort you to praise the Lord because I feel how needful it is, and because we shall soon be in heaven; and therefore, it is well to be holding frequent rehearsals here of that which is to be our everlasting song.

Now I turn to the unconverted, and say, Dear friends, from our own experience, we can tell you that, to serve God is a blessed thing. He is a grand Master; there is none like him. He makes his servants blessed for ever. He never leaves them, nor forsakes them; therefore, come, and put your trust in him. Hide yourself under the shadow of his wings; and, then, you too shall be able to say, even as we do, "He is faithful; his mercy endureth for ever." God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Psalm 115:1 Non Nobis, Domine!

NO. 2784

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 22ND, 1902,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 16TH, 1878.**

"Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."-Psalm 115:1.

Every careful reader can see the connection between this 115th Psalm and the one which precedes it. In the 114th Psalm, we see the gracious and grateful Jews sitting around the Passover table, having eaten of the lamb, and singing of the miracles of Jehovah at the Red Sea and the Jordan. He must have been a very jubilant song that they sang; I think I can hear them singing, "What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?" When that joyful hymn was finished, and the cup of wine was passed round the table, they struck another note. They remembered their sad condition, as they heard the heathen say, "Where is now their God?" They recollected that, perhaps for many a year, there had been no miracle, no prophet, no open vision, and then they began to chant a prayer that God would appear,-not for their sakes, but for his own name's sake, that the ancient glory, which he won for himself at the Red Sea and the Jordan, might not be lost, and that the heathen might no longer be able tauntingly to say, "Where is now their God?" because the wonders wrought by God should cause them to tremble before him. You remember that, when the Israelites came up out of Egypt, and were marching through the wilderness, the Lord put "the dread of them and the fear of them" upon all the nations in their track, so that they were half defeated through the terror that had made them almost like dead men in the presence of the mighty God of Israel. So, the psalmist's prayer here is, practically, "Lord, do the like again;-not for our sakes, but for thine own name's sake;-that once again the heathen all around may know that there is a God in the midst of Israel, and that they may be caused again to tremble as they did before, and no longer blaspheme or defy the God of Jacob." These observations will, I hope, show you how suitably this Psalm would be chanted while still the paschal supper was proceeding.

Now let us take the words of our text by themselves, and examine them under the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit. They are, I think, instructive to us in five ways."

I. First, they furnish us with A Powerful Plea In Prayer: "Not unto us, O Jehovah, not unto us, but unto thy name give

glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."

There are times when this is the only plea that God's people can use. There are other occasions when we can plead with God to bless us, for this reason or for that; but, sometimes, there come dark experiences, when there seems to be no reason that can suggest itself to us why God should give us deliverance, or vouchsafe us a blessing, except this one,-that he would be pleased to do it in order to glorify his own name. Moses is an example of how this plea prevails with the Lord. When he was on the mount with God, and Jehovah threatened to destroy the idolatrous Israelites, Moses pleaded: "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people." Joshua also used the same plea when he said to the Lord, after Israel's defeat at Ai, "What wilt thou do unto thy great name?" He could not say, "Lord, hear me for Israel's sake," for they were utterly unworthy. He did not dare to say, "Deliver us for my sake;" he had not conceit or self-righteousness enough to present such a plea as that. He could not even say, "Hear us for Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob's sake," for the people had broken the covenant which God had made with their fathers; so he pleaded with the Lord, "Think of thine own honor; think of thy great name; think of thy repute among the heathen;" and thus he prevailed. It is noteworthy that that awful attribute of holy jealousy, which, under some aspects, is like a terrible flame, is the very one which helps us when everything else fails. Jehovah is very jealous of his own honor, and hence it is that, when the heathen say, "Where is now their God?" he answers their taunt by ceasing to chasten his people;-not for their sakes, but for his own mercy and truth's sake, that the heathen may not think him unmerciful to his people, nor be able to accuse him of being unfaithful to his covenant.

Brothers and sisters, in all your times of distress, you will do well to urge this plea with the Lord. Possibly, you are pleading for a certain class of men or women who have grossly sinned; it may be that you have, on your heart, the case of one person who has gone to great lengths of iniquity. You can always plead, "Lord, save that sinful soul, to make thy grace the more illustrious. Do it that others, who have witnessed his sin, may admire thy wonderful compassion; -that his relatives and friends, who have heard his blasphemies, and been horrified by them, may see what thou canst do when thou dost bare thine almighty arm, and magnify thy deeds of grace."

You may be emboldened to urge that plea, notwithstanding the vileness of the person for whom you plead. In fact, the sinfulness of the sinner may even be your plea that God's mercy and lovingkindness may be seen the more resplendently by all who know of the sinful soul's guilt. And if your prayer should not be on behalf of some gross transgressor, but on behalf of a fallen church; - suppose it should be for a church that has lost its first love, a church that has turned aside from the truth, a church which has ceased to be zealous, a church like that of Laodicea, fit only to be spewed out of the mouth of Christ;-you may still come before him, and say, "Lord, revive it;-not for that church's sake, for thou mightest well make it a desolation, like Shiloh, where the ark of the covenant was at the first;-but do it for thy name's sake, that all may see that thou canst trim the lamp when it already smokes, and gives forth a nauseous stench;-that thou canst take the fig tree ere it is utterly barren, and dig about it, and dung it, and make it bring forth fruit, O thou wondrous Husbandman of the vineyard!" I leave that thought with you, suggesting that, in your solitude when you withdraw to pray,-I mean you who, like Jacob, have your Jabboks and your Peniels,-you will find that this is one of the mightiest weapons that you can wield in that secret midnight conflict. There is a sacred art of gripping even the Angel of the covenant in that time of mysterious wrestling. Say, "For Christ's sake, for God's name's sake, for his love's sake, for the gospel's sake;"-for all these are mightily prevalent pleas with the Most High.

Let me just whisper a word in the ear of anyone who has scarcely learnt to pray. Poor sinner, Laden with guilt and full of fears,"-thou sayest, "How can I plead with God for mercy? I have rejected it for years; I have been often rebuked, and I have hardened my neck; I fear I have no plea with which to urge my suit in craving God's mercy." Here is one for thee to use; say to him, "For thy mercy and thy love's sake, have pity upon me, the least deserving of all thy creatures; for, surely, if thou wilt but save me, it will be an eternal wonder to men and to angels. If thou wilt save me, then will I sing,-

"All thy mercy's depths I prove,

All its heights are seen in."

I remember one, who said, "Oh, if the Lord Jesus Christ will but pardon me, he shall never hear the last of it!" And this is what all poor guilty souls may truly say, "Should there be mercy for such a sinner as I am,-so old a sinner,-so daring a sinner,-so God-provoking a sinner? God's grace blot out my sin? Will the Lord put me into his family, and call me his child? Then, tell it in the deeps of hell, and let all the devils know what great things God can do; and tell it in the heights of heaven, and let all the principalities and powers there learn new music as they sing of the greatness of the lovingkindness of the Lord, who can pardon and save the very chief of sinners." I suggest that every seeking sinner here should plead the name of God, and plead the glory of Christ; plead that he will be honored, that men will magnify his great name and the preciousness of his atoning blood, and the power of his gospel, if it

shall save you. This is a good plea; take care that you use it.

II. Now, secondly, my text appears to me to embody The True Spirit Of Piety: “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake.” That is to say, true religion does not seek its own honor.

Self-seeking is the exact opposite of the spirit of a true Christian. He would rather strip himself, and say, “Not unto me, but unto thee, O Lord, be all honor and glory!” He seeks no crown to put upon his own head; twice he refused to wear it. Even if the world would press it upon him, he says, “Not unto me; not unto me.” He does not wish for honor; he has done with self-seeking; his one great object now is to glorify God: “Unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake.” Do you not think, dear friends, that, if this is the true spirit of religion, we shall very often have to condemn ourselves for being so faulty in it?

For instance, suppose, in preaching the gospel, a man has, even as a small part of his motive, that he may be esteemed an eloquent person, or that he may have influence over other men’s minds;-I will not suppose that he has so sordid a motive as worldly gain;-but I need not “suppose” what I have suggested, for it is lamentably true that this mixture of motives may steal over the preacher’s soul. Ah! but we must fight against this evil with all our might. Somebody once told Master John Bunyan that he had preached a delightful sermon. “You are too late,” said John, “the devil told me that before I left the pulpit.” Satan is a great adept in teaching us how to steal our Master’s glory. Yet, if ever we speak aright, it is because we are taught of the Spirit, and not because of our own wisdom. Even when we have had the undoubted help of the Holy Ghost, we are far too apt. to attribute at least some little power to ourselves. But a true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ loathes himself when he finds that this evil habit has fastened itself upon him; and he cries, “No, Lord; not unto me, not unto me, but unto thy name give all the glory and praise.” We are to preach so as to glorify God, not to glorify ourselves; and the man who occupies the pulpit merely that he may manifest his own cleverness, ought to be hurled from it forthwith, for he has no right there whatsoever. “Glory be to God,” should always be the preacher’s motto.

And as it should be so with our preaching, do you not think that the same thing is true concerning our praying? Are there no petitions, presented at prayer-meetings, in which there is at least some idea that we are saying very proper things, and very pretty things, and that people will think we have a great gift of prayer? Did you never have such a feeling as that steal over you? Yet, my brother, the only prayer of the right kind is that which is offered for the glory of God. If I turn from your public prayers, and look into your private supplications, shall I not see self there?

The right spirit in which to do everything is to do all to the glory of God. In almsgiving, for instance,-a practice which, I trust, will never die out, though there are some who tell us that it is wicked to give to the poor;-in almsgiving, is it not possible to do it simply to get rid of the applicant, or to satisfy your own conscience, or that you may be thought generous? That is not right; we must give our alms to God alone. Let not our right hand know what our left hand giveth, for it is not to man that we are giving it, but as unto the Lord. Let our thanks offering be dropped into the box, and nothing be said about it. Let us get as far as possible from the spoiling glance of the human eye, that the whole act may be as a spring shut up, a fountain sealed, something done for Jesus, and for Jesus only, that he may have it, and have all the glory of it.

And in any service that you may render, do you not know that it must be done simply and only for Christ’s sake if it is to be acceptable to him? Yet, often, you can scarcely set a man to open pew doors, or to give out a hymn, or to teach a Sunday-school class, but “great I” will be sure to lift its head unless it is constantly kept under. Pride grows apace, like other ill weeds. Yet remember that, whatever we do in order that we may make ourselves the end and object of it, is spoiled in the doing, and is not pleasing to God. Indeed, we are not offering it to God; we are offering it to ourselves. May we never be swayed by the fear of man, or the wish to win human approbation! May we do that which we believe to be right, because it is right, and because we wish to honor and glorify God in doing it; and when we are rendering any service to the Master, let us never even wish for human eyes to see it. That is the true spirit of piety; may God grant that we may have it to the full! But, oftentimes, we cherish another kind of spirit. Even the sweet singer among you may be singing a hymn “to the praise and glory of God,” yet be thinking to himself or herself, all the while, “Do not those who are listening to me think that I have a very sweet voice?” Or, possibly, you are in the Sunday-school, and you feel, “Well, now, I really am one of the most efficient teachers here. They must think a great deal of me, or they ought to, at any rate.” Very often, even in the household, when we have done some little thing, we congratulate ourselves upon it, and feel that everybody ought to pat us on the back, and burn a little incense in our honor. Ah, dear friends, if we think anything like this, may the Lord speedily drive it out of us! Such poor creatures as we are, if the Lord would let us be doormats for all his saints to wipe their dirty boots upon, it would be an honor to us. If he only allows us to be hewers of or drawers of water, like the Gibeonites of old,-and if he accepts what we do, it will be all of his grace. But for us to set up on our own account, to live to ourselves, and to want honor and glory for ourselves;-this will never do. We say, of some people, that they are “poor and proud;” and, truly, that is what we are when we begin to boast. Lord, take away our pride; our poverty will not so much matter then!

III. I leave that point, and come, thirdly, to use the psalmist's words in yet another sense. I think that the spirit of my text is A Safe Guide In Theology.

When I am going to read the Scriptures, to know what I am to believe, to learn what is to be my creed, even before I open my Bible, it is a good thing to say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." This is, to my mind, a test of what is true and what is false. If you meet with a system of theology which magnifies man, flee from it as far as you can. If the minister, whom you usually hear, tries to make man out to be a very fine fellow, and says a great many things in his praise, you should let him have an empty place where you have been accustomed to sit. This shall be an infallible test to you concerning anyone's ministry. If it is man-praising, and man honoring, it is not of God. The negro said, of a certain preacher in America, "He do make God so great." I would that it might be said of all of us that our preaching made God great. That plan of salvation that makes man to be somebody, is a wrong one, depend upon it; for he is a nobody, and nothing. That kind of preaching which leaves a great deal for man to do, and tells him he can do it well, brethren, let those people who are so very good, and strong, and great, go and listen to it; but as for you and me,-at any rate, for the most of us,-we know that, by nature, we are dead in trespasses and sins, that our strength is perfect weakness; and, therefore, the kind of preaching that exalts man does not suit our experience. We do not ask for it, nor do we want it. It will poison those who receive it, for it comes not from God.

This is why I believe in the doctrines of grace. I believe in 'divine election, because somebody must have the supreme will in this matter, and man's will must not occupy the throne, but the will of God. The words of Jehovah stand fast like the great mountains.

I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. The sovereignty of God is a doctrine which lifts him up high, and therefore do I accept it, and reverently bow before it. According to some men, it seems that salvation is mainly the work of the creature. Christ died for him, but Christ may have died in vain unless he, by something that he does, makes Christ's death effectual. That kind of teaching I do not believe, because it throws the 'onus of redemption, after all, upon man, and makes him to give efficacy to the redemption of Christ. Nay, verily; but I believe that those, for whom Christ gave himself as a ransom price, shall surely be his for ever; and that he did really redeem them, and needeth not that they add anything to make that everlasting ransom price sufficient and available for their deliverance.

There are some who seem to think that the sinner takes certain steps towards God before God comes to him; but it is not so. The sinner is dead, and life must come to him from God ere he can stir from the grave, or even have a wish to stir therefrom. And there are some who teach that, after man is saved, he still needs to keep himself and confirm himself in grace; in fact, that his salvation depends upon himself. But it is not so; for he who hath called us, and saved us, has given us gifts which are without repentance, which he will never take back; and having once loved us, he will love us to the end. We are firmly persuaded that he who has begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. From top to bottom, salvation is all of the grace of God. From its first letter, Alpha, to its last letter, Omega, it is all grace, grace, grace. There is no room for human merit, and no room for confidence in self whatsoever; there is room for good works, yet no room for glorifying in them, "for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." You know that jewelers have certain tests by which, if you take them a ring or a coin, they can tell you at once whether it is gold or silver. Here is a test for you to apply, and by it you may tell whether a thing is true or not. Does it glorify God? Then, accept it. If it does not, if it glorifies man,-puts human will, human ability, human merit, into the place of the mercy and the grace' of God,-away with it, for it is not food fit for your souls to feed upon. I wish that all Christians were more concerned for the glory of God than they are. Surely, then, they would become sounder in doctrine than many are nowadays.

IV. The fourth way of using our text is this. It seems to me to be A Practical Direction In Life.

You want to know, young man, how to direct your steps aright, and wherewithal to cleanse' your way. This text will help you, dear brother, in the selection of your sphere of service. You will always be safe in doing that which is not for your own glory, but which is distinctly for the glory of God. Have you two situations offered to you? Are they equally remunerative, or equally difficult? Select that one in which you may hope to glorify God more than you could in the other. This is the voice behind you which says, "This is the way; walk ye in it." Are you choosing a profession, or seeking an honorable career in life? Then, I pray you, let this text guide you. Adoniram Judson, full of ambition, seeking a great name, met with this text, and rebelled against it; but he says that all his bright visions for the future seemed to vanish as these words sounded in his soul, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory." Are you going to live, young man, to get glory to yourself? It will not do; it will not do. If the Lord loves you, he will not let it be so. "But what, then, am I to do?" you ask. Why, labor so to live, in any calling, that you may bring glory to God in it.

Sometimes, my text will guide you as to which you should choose out of two courses of action that lie before you. Did I understand that you have had a little tiff with your brother or sister, and the question with you is, "What shall I do in this dispute?" Something says, "Go and make it up, and say that you were wrong;" but something else says, "Oh, but you know that we must not always be

giving way, and yielding; because some people, if you give them an inch, will take an ell!" So, possibly, you do not know which course to take. Which is the one you do not wish to follow? Why! you do not like to humble yourself. Then, that is the plan you should adopt. What flesh revolts against, your spirit should choose. Say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory. I will do that which will most honor my Lord and Master, and not that which would best please myself."

Or it may be that there are two ways in which you might serve God, and you are rather perplexed about which one to choose. One of them would give you a good share of honor; the other would involve more work, and you would not be likely to get much credit out of it. You really do not know which of the two you ought to choose. I suggest, brother, that the probabilities are that that is the right one for you from which you will get the less credit; at any rate, I am afraid that, if you hold the scales impartially, as you think, your hand will incline just a little to give the preponderance to that which would bring you into fame. Do not do so; school yourself so that you can say, "For my Master's sake alone will I choose that which shall be my course, and I will follow where he leads the way, seeking to give him all the glory." That is a direction post which, I think, will guide you out of many of the perplexities of life.

V. Now, fifthly, and lastly, my text seems to contain within itself The Acceptable Spirit In Which To Review The Past.

Brothers and sisters, this is the spirit in. which to live. Has God blessed us? Do we look back upon honorable and useful lives? Has our Sunday-school class brought in souls for Christ? Have we been privileged to preach the gospel, and has the Lord given us converts? Then, let us be sure to stick to the text: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory." Now, young man, if you are beginning to serve the Savior, and he has given you success, your conduct in this first time of testing may decide the whole of your future life. "As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise." There are very few men who can bear success; none can do so unless great grace be given to them; and if, after a little success, you begin to say, "There now, I am somebody; did not I do that well? These poor old fogies do not know how to do it; I will teach them;"-you will have to go into the back rank, brother, you are not able to endure success yet. It is clear that you cannot stand praise. But if, when God gives you blessing, you give him every atom of the glory, and clear yourself of everything like boasting, then the Lord will continue to bless you, because it will be safe for him to do so, He is not going to put his treasure, let me tell you, into the leaky vessels of self-exaltation. Nay, nay; he wants good sea-going ships which bear at the masthead the flag on which is inscribed, "Not unto us O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory."

Ay, and when the time comes for us to die, this is the spirit in. which to die, for it is the beginning of heaven. What are they doing in heaven! If we could look in there, what should we see? There are crowns there, laid up for those that fight the good fight, and finish their course; but do you see what the victors are doing with their crowns? They will not wear them; no, not they; but they cast them down at Christ's feet, crying, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory." Brother, sister, living, dying, let this be your continual cry. If the Lord favors you, honors you, blesses you, always say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, be the glory." Are you prosperous in business? Do not be proud of your riches. Are you getting on in education? Do not boast of what you know, for there is a great deal more that you do not know. Has God given you a few converts? Do not begin thinking that you are a mighty soul-winner, for there are many more yet to be won. The way up is downward. Your Master descended that he might afterwards ascend, and fill all things; and your way of ascent must be downward, downward, downward, so that you become less, and less, and less. Say, over and over again, "Not unto us, not unto us," till you utterly loathe the idea of human glory, and let the Lord have all the praise.

As a church, we can look back upon many years of spiritual prosperity; but we must still sing, "Non nobis, non nobis, non nobis, Domine." We can bless and magnify the Lord for unity, and peace, and concord, and perpetual increase and success in all the works of our hands. Glory be unto the Lord for it; but, as Paul shook off the viper from his hand into the fire, so would we shake off everything that looks like attributing success to ourselves, even to our prayers, our tears, our devotion. Let all the glory be given to God alone, for-

"To him all the glory belongs."

Now I finish by saying that perhaps there is someone here, who is longing to be saved, and the only thing that stands in his way is that he will not come to this point, and say, "Not unto us, not unto us." Ah, my friend! you want to be a little somebody; you want to do something, or be something. Brother, be nothing; for then shall Christ be your All-in-all. Recollect that the end of the creature is the beginning of the Creator. When you have done with every other confidence, then you can have confidence in God. The Lord bless you to this end, for Jesus Christ's sake I Amen,

Psalm 116:7 Return Unto Thy Rest

NO. 2758

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 22ND, 1901,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEP. 7TH, 1879.**

“Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.”— Psalm 116:7.

You, who have not believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, have no rest to which you can return, for you have never, found any. May God grant to you the grace to come unto Christ that you may find rest unto your souls! But we, who believe in him, do enter into rest. We are sometimes described as journeying through the wilderness towards Canaan, and the type is quite allowable; but, still, it must not be pressed, too far; for, in another sense, we have already entered into our rest. We have entered the Canaan which our Joshua has given unto us; Moses, by the law, could not lead us into this promised land; but Jesus has brought us into it, and we now have our portion and our inheritance in the covenant blessings which God has provided for his people in Christ Jesus his Son. God's people, when they are as they ought to be, are in a state of rest even now. I do not mean that they will have rest so far as this world is concerned, for this earth is not our rest, it is polluted; but I do mean that as the apostle Paul writes to the Romans, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are, in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” I do mean that, as he also says, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;” and that peace includes “rest, sweet rest,”—especially that “peace of God, which passeth all understanding,” which, the apostle declares, “shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

If I am, at this time, addressing any who have, for a while, lost the enjoyment of this blessed rest, my message to them is, “Return unto thy rest.” I hope that they will be able to take the psalmist's words to themselves, and to say with him,

“Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.”

I. The first thing for us to remember is, that The Believer Has His Rest.

The psalmist says, Return unto thy rest, O my soul,” There is a position, or an experience, in which the believer's heart is perfectly at rest. While trying to think how I should describe it, nothing seemed to strike me as a more full and accurate description of the believers rest than the apostolic benediction with which we are accustomed to dismiss our assemblies. He has true rest of heart who abides in the spirit of these words: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”

The first rest of the heart comes to us through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We generally speak of him as the second Person of the blessed Trinity; but, in the, benediction, he is put first, because, to our experience, he is first. No man comes unto God the Father except by God the Son; so, to us, Christ is first, because that is the way his grace works in us. And, beloved, when you know how to come to Christ for grace;—nay, when you have come to him, and have received from him the grace to cover all your sin;—the grace to justify you in the sight of God;—the grace of adoption, by which you become a son of God in him who is the Father's only-begotten and wed-beloved Son;—when you have received the grace of union with Christ, so that you know yourselves to be members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;—when you know that all his grace is yours, and that he himself is yours, then it is that you get rest unto your souls. Sin cannot any longer disturb you, for it is drowned in the Red Sea of his stoning sacrifice. Your necessities cannot distress you, for they are all supplied by God “according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” Nothing need perplex, or afflict, or worry you any more. All the troubles of thought are ended as you believe what your Lord tells you. All the cravings of your heart are satisfied as you take him to be the Beloved of your soul. All the struggles of your conscience are ended as Christ brings to you peace and rest for ever concerning all your sin. In fact, as soon as you come to him, he gives you, through his abundant grace, rest about everything. This, then, is the first rest of the believer, which comes to him through the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

There is a further rest for us who believe, and a very sweet one; it is, in the love of God. It comes to us when we hear such a gentle whisper as this, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee;” or this, “Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life;” or this, “Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire: thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior.” Oh, what blessed rest springs out of electing love, and adopting love! What sweet rest we obtain from the assurance that God the Father and God the Son both love us, even as our Lord Jesus said to his disciples, “He that hath, my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him? Thus is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given, unto us.

This glorious fact gives us rest with regard to our position here. We cannot be troubled by affliction, because it is sent to us in love. We cannot be worried about the future, for all its concerns are in the hands of the God of love. We no longer harbour doubt and

mistrust, for we know that "God is love." O dear friends, when you once come really to know the love of God, it will be your wondrous rest! You will feel that he never smote a child of his except in love, that he never even frowned at one of his children except in love, and that he never was angry with one of his children except in love; and love, perhaps, never rises to a greater climax of affection than when it is forced to show its anger, and so uses the rod more to its own pain than to the suffering of those who feel it. Beloved, I trust that, each one of you, who believes in Jesus, knows what that rest of heart, which enables you to say, "My God, my Father, thou canst do nought to me but what infinite love dictates, for I know that thou lovest me even as thou lovest thy firstborn and only-begotten Son."

The third rest of the believer is in the communion of the Holy Ghost. O beloved, this is the truest rest of the soul,—so far as your actual experience is concerned,—when the Holy Spirit comes, and takes complete possession of you, so that your will does not any longer struggle against the will of God, but sweetly yields to its control; your desires do not wander, but stay at home in full content; and you give yourself up entirely to the divine indwelling, so that Christ dwelleth in you, and you abide, in him, by the power of his gracious Spirit. Then that same blessed Spirit brings to your mind the deep things, of God, which are full of rich comfort for the soul, and the precious things of the everlasting hills of the covenant of grace, which abound in all the blessings that you can possibly want between here and heaven; for it is the Holy Spirit's special office to be the Comforter of Christ's people, and he makes the soul either to sit still at the feet of Jesus, to hearken to his gracious words, or else to run with cheerful yet restful alacrity on his errands, for there is such a thing as rest in running in his holy service.

Now, dear friend, if you have these three things,—the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost,—I am sure I need not stay to prove to you that, in your experience, you have realized what it is to enjoy rest for your soul. Do you all know what it is thus to rest in the Lord. I thank God that I do; I feel, specially at certain times, that I could not ask the Lord for anything more than he has given me; I could not wish anything altered, I could not desire to be in any other state;—nay, I do not even wish to be in heaven at such times as those to which I am referring. When I sit down beneath his shadow with great delight, and his banner over me is love, and his fruit is sweet unto my taste, it is a little nether heaven,—the vestibule of the palace of the great King. Many of you must know what this rest is, I feel sure that you do.

II. This fact makes it rather sad work to turn to the second division of my subject, which is that, Sometimes, The Believer Leaves That Rest. He should not do so; it is most grievous that he does; but, alas he does, as many of us are only too well aware by painful personal experience.

Sometimes, he leaves it through affliction, and especially if that affliction comes from man. The psalmist tells us that, in his haste, he said, "All men are liars." Perhaps he said some other naughty things, for which he was sorry afterwards; it is not always easy to be calm and prudent when you are provoked, and to be quite restful when everybody speaks ill of you, or tries to lay traps to catch you. But the child of God should try so to master himself that all the dogs that bark can no more disturb him than the baying of a hound would turn the moon out of her nightly course. Happy and blessed is that man whose heart is fixed, so that he can sing and give praise even though his adversary is all the while speaking bitterly against him. Yet the flesh is very frail, and aches and pains of body, as well as cruel slanders against the character, will sometimes turn the Christian aside from his restful state. He is not quiet and calm; he is in a hurry, the leisure of his heart is broken, and he is in great confusion, freed save us from getting into such a sorrowful condition as that! For, if we had more confidence in our God, we should have less confusion in our own experience. We should be much more restful if we did but do our God the justice of trusting him at all times, for he can never fail us.

I have known some Christians to be driven from their restful state through a want of submission to the divine will. O dear friends, when you have, been in sharp trials, when things have gone awry with you, and, especially, if some beloved object of your heart's affection is taken, from you, then you have had a quarrel with your God! It is a very sad thing that we should ever differ from infinite love, or think that we know better than eternal wisdom, or begin to suspect the, grace of the Most High. It is sorrowful that this should ever be the case with any of us; and we cannot, Without many tears, confess that we have sometimes had a dispute with God about what he has been doing with us. And, then, of course, we could not rest; for, in addition to our other sorrows, our wise and loving Father chastised us for our naughtiness. He would not spare us for all our crying, but he went on with his own designs concerning us even while we were so wilful and rebellious. Perhaps he even chastened us the more because of that rebellion. We may be sure that we shall never truly rest in the Lord while we have a stubborn will; until every desire learns to lay its head in Christ's bosom, and is fully satisfied with him, we shall never be at perfect peace. There is, for each one of us, a modified agony and bloody sweat until, like our Lord, we can truthfully say to our Heavenly Father, "Not my will, but thine, be done" That want of submission to God lies at the root of half our trouble. We must submit to him; it would be well for us if we did so at, once.

Some Christians lose their rest through want of contentment. They are very happy in their present condition, for God has greatly blessed them but their eye catches sight of a Christian who is better off than they are; and, straightway, they want to have as much as he has. They are not quite so well dressed as that brother is, and they wish that they were; their wife and family do not look, as

the world says, quite so “respectable” as his; and, sometimes, in their folly, they will throw themselves out of a happy position in life, where they have the privileges of the means of grace, and go into a state of spiritual starvation just for the sake of being a little better-off in temporal things, which is both foolish and wrong. Now, until we are perfectly content with what the Lord appoints for us, we shall not have rest unto our souls. Until we can honestly say,—

**“To thy will I leave the rest,
Grant me but this one request,
Both in life and death to prove
Tokens of thy special love;”—**

we shall never know what it is to enjoy full rest of heart.

I fear that there are many Christians who lose their rest, in another way, namely, through the world's joys. Have you ever been, with a party of friends, where there has been a great deal of mirth and very little grace? If so, have you not felt, when you got home, that you could not pray as you were wont to do? Sometimes, you have been taking your recreation properly enough, but you have not carried Christ with you as you should have done; and you have found after a while, that your rest has gone. Laughter and merriment may do you untold harm unless they are sanctified by the Word of God and prayer; if they are so sanctified, they may not cause us to leave our rest.

Frequently, too, Christian people lose their rest through allowing some conscious sin; for Christ and you will not long keep company with one another if you permit anything in your heart, or speech, or shop, or home, that is not according to his mind. His communion is with “the pure in heart for they shall see God.” But if sin be knowingly harboured, communion with Christ will not be enjoyed. The old Puritan was right when he said, “Sinning will make thee leave off communing, or else communing will make thee leave off sinning;” for the indulgence of any known sin is not compatible with a close walk with God. If, beloved, you and I get at a distance from God; if we follow Christ afar off, as Peter did; if we grow cold in heart, if we are neglectful of prayer, if the Word of God is not the subject of our constant study, if we get worldly and carnal, like so many of our fellow-Christians are, we shall soon find that the rest of our soul is gone.

It is a great mercy if you know when it is gone. It is a terrible thing to lose the joy of the Lord, and the rest of your spirit, and yet hardly to be aware that it is so with you. There is a very simple simile of this state of things, but it is a useful one. You know that a hen, if she has some eggs under her, will keep on sitting. You may take half her eggs away, you may take three-fourths of them away; but she still keeps on sitting, for I suppose she cannot count. Now, there are some Christians who are very much like that hen; they lose the most of their grace, yet they are just as happy as they were before. But, beloved, your spiritual sense ought to be something much higher than the instinct of a poor silly bird; your care of the divine grace entrusted to your charge ought to be something far superior to the care of a sitting hen over her eggs. To lose a little grace, is to lose a great deal. To miss even five minutes communion with Christ, is to, lack an incalculable blessing. Therefore, brethren, if you have lost the blessed rest you once enjoyed, do not be satisfied to remain in that condition. Do not sing, with Cowper,—

**“What peaceful hours I then enjoy’d,
How sweet their memory still!”—**

unless you can also say, with him,—

**“But now I find an aching void
The world can never fill.”**

Never be happy unless you are truly resting in Jesus.

III. That brings us to our third point, which is, that The Believer, When He Has Gone Away From His Rest, Should Return To It, and the sooner he does so, the better. Return at once, dear friends, if you have gone away from your rest. As Noah's dove came back to him, so fly back to Christ, who is your Noah, your rest, for that is the meaning of the name.

And I would argue with you to come back, first, because it is quite certain that you can never rest anywhere else. A man, who knows not the Lord Jesus Christ, can find rest in many places,—such rest as it is. Give him a large estate, abundance of money, and plenty of worldly friends, and you will find him quite content with those things. Like the mole, which has its home in the earth, he will go and burrow, and make his home there. An eagle cannot do that; and you are one of God's eagles if you are a believer in

Jesus Christ. Neither in wealth, nor in honor, nor in pleasure, nor in conjugal domestic comfort, can you ever find perfect rest. You have eaten the white bread of heaven, so your mouth is out of taste for the brown bread of earth. You might have been satisfied with the world if you had never known Christ, but you are spoiled for that now. A countryman, who has lived all his life in a lonely village where he never heard any music, might be chained when he first listened to one of our street organs; but let him hear some of the sweet strains of true music, then the noise of the street organ jars upon his ear, he cannot endure it. So, beloved, your ears have been attuned to something better than the world's merriment; that can never satisfy you. To you, there is only one rest; and you must come back to it. Some of you backsliders have come in here to-night; you have not been here lately, and you have been trying to be happy and comfortable apart from God; but, as surely as the Lord loves you, you will have to come back to him; and, the longer you stay away, the more bitter will be your weeping and Lamentation when you do come back. Oh, that you would be wise, and return at once, and never wander away again! You know too much, and you have felt too much, ever to rest except in Christ, so do not attempt it.

Further, this unrest puts you out of order for everything. I should like to put the question to, you, who love the Lord, but are not perfectly at rest in him,—Does not your present state very much spoil your devotions? You cannot pray as you used to do when you had such a sweet sense of the love of God; you know that you have not the power in prayer that you had, God does not hear you now as he Once did. You used to run to him with your request, and come back with the favor you had asked of him; but, now, you ask many times, yet you receive no reply. The reason is, that you are walking contrary to him, and therefore he walks contrary to you.

Does not this want of restfulness, also decrease your power of working for Christ? You cannot plead with a sinner as you used to do, you cannot speak to the anxious as you once did; for, while your own soul is in the dark, although you may be wishful to give light to others, you feel that you cannot do it. If you wish really to serve the Lord effectively, you must have the joy of the Lord to be your strength.

Then, besides, do you not think that your want of rest is putting you into a state in which you are very liable to be tempted, and to be overcome? "The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks;" and they are very sensible conies to do so, for there are many beasts of prey to seek their lives; but they run in to the rock, and so they are safe. If you are out of your Rock, you are, like the coney, exposed to danger, so run back again as quickly as you can. You are never so safe as when you dwell in the wounded side of Jesus, peacefully resting in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost.

There is one thing more that I must say to those of you who are not thus resting; that is, this unrest can do no possible good. I say this to myself as well as to you, for I, too, have sometimes erred in that way. I am ashamed to confess that it is so, for it ought not to have been the case, and I feel that I am more guilty than some of you in having done so; but I never yet have found any good come of a state of unrest. When I have not rested in God about everything, I have nearer found things improve any the more for all my worrying. Suppose a farmer grumbles against God because the wheat is spoiling; does his grumbling save it? Suppose a tradesman begins quarrelling with God because business is dull; he will not bring one more customer to his shop by all his complaining. No; there is no good in grumbling, and no use in complaining; the very best thing that you can do for yourself is just to come back, and rest in God, and say, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good. I have done, all I can that was right for me to do; but, I know that it is vain for me to rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, unless he is pleased to send the increase. So I leave it all with him. I will not fret and worry any longer; I cannot improve matters if I do, so I will just leave everything in the Lord's hands." That is a right decision, my brother; for the end of your heart's controversy will be the beginning of your heart's rest. So, "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." But if thou wilt be unbelieving, if thou wilt rebel and revolt against thy God, thou shalt be smitten more and more, and no rest will come to thee at all. So, cry, with the psalmist, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul;" and not only say it, but do actually return at once unto thy rest.

IV. The last thing about which I am going to speak to you is this. The Believer Has One Excellent Encouragement To Return: "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

The psalmist tells us in detail what the Lord had done for him; or, rather, he tells the Lord: "For thou hast delivered my soul from death." In the fourth verse, he prayed, "O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my' soul." That was a single prayer, but he received a triple answer to it, for God is always "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." So the psalmist proved, it, and he was able to say to the Lord, "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." Now, believer, you ought to come back, and rest in God, because you have received from him these three marks of his divine favor.

First, he has delivered your soul from death. You will never die the second death. You are a saved man. As a believer in Christ, for

your death has lost its sting. You may die, after a fashion; yet living and believing in Jesus, you shall never see death in the full sense of that term. For you, there are no flaming fires of wrath no pit that is bottomless, no curse of "Depart." Your soul has been delivered from death. Now, if that does not make you happy, what will? Why, my dear friends, the fact that God has saved our soul from death ought to fill our hearts with perpetual delight. Suppose I should be starved to death; still, it is a small matter now that my soul is delivered from going to hell for ever. Suppose I had to live in poverty and obscurity, and die like the martyrs at the stake; well, what of that? There is an everlasting crown that fades not away, that will abundantly recompense all. "Strike, Lord," said Luther, "now that thou hast heard me. Do what thou wilt with me now that thou hast delivered my soul from death." I know how very poor you are, my dear friend, and what grievous burdens you have to carry; but, still, do not forget that the Lord has delivered your soul from death. You may be very poor, and very sick, and very sad, but you can never be lost. You may be laughed at by the ungodly, but you can never be cast into hell. Blessed be God for this! Surely, that is one thing to make you glad, and to encourage you to return unto, your rest.

Next, the psalmist says, "Thou hast delivered mine eyes from tears;" and the Lord has done the same for many of us. We have no cause for grief now. "No, cause for grief?" exclaims one. No; none whatever!" But I have lost my dear mother; shall I not weep?" Well, she loved the Lord; so she is gone to heaven; she is now before the throne of the Most High. So, if thou dost weep because thou hast lost her, then immediately begin to sing with joy because she is up among the angels. "But I have lost my little child who was so very dear to me." Oh, well! in that case, thou art mother to one who is praising God day and night; so wipe those tears away. I rather like the idea of a young person, at Brighton, who asked that she might have grey horses to draw her to her funeral. Why not? Why always have black ones? Why not have the white horses of delight? Let those who linger here sorrow that their loved ones have gone, but let them not be so ungenerous as not to sympathize in the eternal joy upon which righteous souls have entered. No; wipe your tears away, for "ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we, believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." "Oh, but!" cries another tried friend, "I have real cause for sorrow because I suffer so much, and I am so poor." Well, if it is so, it will all be over soon; and remember what the apostle says, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight, of glory." "Yes," you say, "but, still, you do not know how much I suffer." No, I do not; and you do not know how much I suffer; but I know this,—if the two of us put all our sufferings together, they are not worthy to be compared with the eternal love of the blessed God who sent us all these aches and pains that we feel. They are all sent by him in love, so why should we cry over them? He has wiped our tears away, so let us not weep any more; or, if tears must come, let the salt that is in them tend to our sanctification; but do not let us shed one rebellious tear,—no, not even if all we have in the world were taken from us.

"Why should the soul a drop bemoan

Who has a fountain near;—

A fountain which will ever run

With waters sweet and clear"

If I have all things, I have them in my God; and if all things are gone from me, I would find them all again in him.

Now, lastly, God has also delivered our feet, from falling, as he did in the case of the psalmist. I know that one reason why so many do not fully rest is because they are afraid that they shall fall from grace,—afraid that they shall dishonor their profession, and so on. Now, dear friends, I hope that you will never get rid of the godly fear of falling into sin, and never lose that holy insecurity with regard to yourself; but do not let that feeling extend to your God. You know that, our Lord Jesus Christ, said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto, them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." He has delivered your feet from falling, so he will keep you. Therefore, begin to praise him and bless him this very moment. Cast away that fear of being cast away, and sing Jude's doxology, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

No, you have nothing at all to fret about; your soul is delivered from death, your eyes from tears, your feet from failing; so rest, rest, rest, rest! You will glorify God by resting. One of the highest acts of devotion is to rest in the Lord. God grant it to you now, at his table especially, for his name's sake! Amen.

Psalm 119:37 Vanity Deprecated

NO. 3026

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7TH, 1907,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, IN THE YEAR 1864.**

“Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.” — Psalm 119:37.

There are divers kinds of vanity. In the play of the frivolous and the sport of the idle, we see but one sort of vanity, — light, open, and undisguised. The cap and bells of the fool, the motley of the jester, the mirth of the world, the dance, the lyre, and the cup of the dissolute, — these men know to be vanities; they wear upon their forefront their proper name and title. Yet another species of vanity, and more deceitful, can be discovered in the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. A man may follow vanity as truly in the counting-house as in the theater. If he is spending his life in amassing wealth, he is heaping to himself vanity quite as much as though he openly passed his days in vain show or empty pageant. All the fools do not dance or drink; all the fools do not make jests; full many there are, of sombre mood, who spend money for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfieth not.

Moreover, there is such a thing as solemn vanity, — the vanity that may be seen among those who observe the empty ceremonials of religion, invest themselves with strange garments, and affect the odor of sanctity. Or, turning from the gorgeous fane (Ed: temple or church) to the lowly conventicle (Ed: meeting house for worship), vanity may even be discovered beneath the broad brim of the Friend who, seeking after the world rather than after Christ, thinks that he rebukes the world's vanity, when the world may well rebuke him. Vanity, I say, is quite as certainly to be found among the sober as among the frivolous. Unless we follow Christ, and make God the great object of our life, we only differ from the most frivolous in degree, and possibly the degree may not be so great as we suppose.

You will all understand my text, as you hear it, to mean, first, “Turn away mine eyes from looking upon the levities of men, the tomfoolery of the world.” But it means more than this. “Turn away mine eyes from looking at the world's pride, at the world's wealth, at the world's substantial temptations.” These, as the royal preacher has said, are vanity. “Vanity of vanities,” said Solomon, “all is vanity,” as he looked at everything beneath the sun. And we may say of everything short of Christ, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding it, lest my heart should love it “

The psalmist goes on to couple with this another petition: “Quicken thou me in thy way.” Beholding vanity is sure to bring deadness into the soul. You all know that this is true, not only of that which is frothy, but of all that, however specious, is not sterling. If you let the cares of this world enter into your mind too much, do they not destroy your spirituality? If honor be your game, or even if you are hunting after an honest livelihood without casting flee care of it upon God, you know that your grace declines, your faith grows weak, and your love becomes ready to expire. No high degree of grace can be attained when the eyes are fixed upon debasing things. We must have our eyes where we profess that our hearts already are, — beyond the skies. We must be looking for Christ to reveal the exceeding riches of his grace and glory, and not after vanities to display the pleasure of this present evil world, or else our souls will soon lose the force and strength of piety, and we shall have good reason to cry, “Quicken thou me in thy way.”

Beloved, I hope you all know what the psalmist means by being quickened in God's way. Often, your spirits get lethargic and dull when, suddenly, the Spirit of God comes upon you, and once, more your former vigor returns; and, instead of creeping, you begin to run in the way of God's commandments. Pray, then, this prayer as well as the former one, “Quicken thou me in thy way,” for, as the looking at vanity will make us dull, so our souls being quickened will be sure to turn off our eyes from vanity. As the first part of the text acts upon the second, so the second will act also upon the first. Put the two together, and may they be graciously fulfilled in the experience of every one of us!

To amplify the teaching of the text, I shall now call your attention to four things, — a tacit confession; a silent profession; a vehement desire; and a confident hope.

I. First, then, I observe here a tacit confession. It is not stated in so many words, but it is really meant.

The psalmist seems to impeach himself, and unburden his breast before God, deploring, indeed, a natural tendency towards vanity. What! — is it so after all that David has known of fellowship with the real? Does the vain still attract him? What! — when God's covenant has been peculiarly delightful to the shepherd-king, do the mirth and revelry of this world and the gewgaws of earth still attract him? He seems to confess it. He would not need to have his eyes turned off from vanity if there were not something in his heart that went after it; he would not ask God to turn them off unless he felt that he needed a stronger arm than his own to keep him fitting restraints. It is very easy for you and me to stand up and play the wise man, — ay, and in the closet to pray like wise men; we may feel, in our own souls, that we have got experience now, and shall never be again intoxicated by the world's draughts, never more be deceived by its lies; but no sooner does Madam Bubble show her face, than her strange fascinations draw our eyes. Let the world ring the bell, and straightway we start up, and our heart wanders, too oft before we are aware of it. We know they are vain things, — know it thoroughly; but yet, knowing it, we do not in our own nature therefore avoid them. Reckless of the snares, the

birds are foolish enough to fly into them. Though we know that the draught is poisoned, yet is it so sweet that, unless prevented by God's grace, you and I would soon be drunken with it Every child of God knows that he is a fool or he is a great fool indeed if he does not know it Every heir of heaven understands that there is within himself a very sink of vanities; his vicious tastes respond to the vile compounds of earth, as "deep calleth unto deep." It is clear enough, I think, if you turn over the prayer, that the psalmist confesses that his heart goes after vanity.

He confesses, yet again, that his eyes are on it now. He says, "Turn them off." What does he mean but that they are on it? And some of us, in coming up to the house of God to-night, and, perhaps, while sitting here, have had to confess that our eyes are on vanity. Why, some of you believers may have been thinking of some silly snatch of a song that you heard before you were converted, or some idle tale that was told you the other day. You would gladly forget it, but it has followed you in here, — ay, and may even follow you to the communion table. Or, possibly, your worldly cares have come up with you hither, and my poor talk has scarcely had power to lift you up from your families, and from your shops, and from all the carking anxious thoughts that burden you. Your heart is on these things now. When you stood up to sing about Christ, and asked him to set you as a seal upon his heart, where were your flighty imaginations roaming? We tried to pray just now; but while the preacher's words went up to heaven, did not your hearts wander, I wot not where?

The confession assumes another character, as it seems to hint that, no sooner are our eyes on vanity, than our heart goes after it What! can we not manage our own eyes? What! are we such vain creatures that the mere sight of vanity is a temptation to us? Surely, to see vanity ought to be sufficient to make us avoid it! Some men say that they will look at evil, and knowing that it is evil, they will be safe from the danger of being betrayed by it Ah, how many have proved the hollowness of that pretense! Brethren, the tree of knowledge of good and evil has brought little benefit to mankind; it has certainly brought a curse. Beware of the hope to be as gods through eating again of that tree; we are more likely to be as devils than to be as gods through feeding upon it Oh, no! I know enough of sin without looking at it There is enough knowledge of my sinfulness forced upon me by my daily temptations and failures, without my going to this place or to the other, that I may look upon sin. Do not tell me that you went into bad company just to ascertain its character. Do not tell me, young man, that, having heard a certain thing condemned, you thought you ought to see it for yourself. That will not do; that is not a believer's desire, nor a godly man's wish. He cries, "Turn away mine eyes. Lord, let me speak unto thee humbly. Am I so sinful and so weak that I have only to see a ditch, to fall into it, — only to see a fire, to put my finger into it? I am not like that in other things: how is it that I am so besotted in the carnality of my mind? Yet so it is, Lord; thou knowest, and thy servant feels that it is so." Therefore, let the confession stand, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity."

The psalmist's confession seems to go a little deeper, for he seems to say that he cannot keep his own eyes off vanity: "Turn away mine eyes." What, Lord! have I not an optic nerve? Is there not a power in my head to turn which way it wills? Am I compelled to look at vanity? Nay, not compelled by physical necessity; but, still, so compelled by the disposition of this vile nature of mine that, unless thou dost keep thine hands on my head, and turn mine eyes from beholding vanity, I shall surely be looking at it We will go anywhere to see vanity. It is able what mountains men will climb — into what depths they will dive — what leagues they will travel — what wealth they will spend, only to see vanity! And when they have seen all they can see, what does it come to but the sight of so much smoke, after all? And yet, brethren, we cannot keep our eyes off it If anybody tells you that there is a lewd or unseemly thing, a juggle, or some witchcraft, do you not feel an inward craving, an unholy desire to see it? Is not that a well-known principle of human nature? There is a little tract, I think, entitled, "Don't read it;" and why was it so entitled, think you? Because, whatever tract might remain unread, that one is certain to be read. "Don't read it," — the prohibition provokes appetite, and the moment you and I hear "don't" said, inclination begins to be astir. Thank God that this morbid propensity is restrained and subdued by sovereign grace through the love of Jesus; but, still, the natural bias is toward evil, and toward evil only. Therefore, Lord, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." The confession goes very deep, you see.

But there is even more in the next clause: "Quicken thou me in thy way." He seems to confess that he is dull, heavy, lumpy, all but dead. Do not you feel the same? I hope you do not; but I often do, and I am afraid you often do, even the best of you; and when we think of how fast our spirits ought to move along the heavenly road, constrained and moved by love like that of Jesus, I think we all must cry, —

"Dear Lord! and shall we ever lie

At this poor dying rate?

Our love so faint, so cold to thee,

And thine to us so great?"

Yes, we are dull if God leaves us for a moment, — so dull and so doting that the best motives cannot quicken us; otherwise, the psalmist would not have needed to appeal to the Almighty to effect that of which he was himself capable. What! will not the thought of hell quicken me? Can I think of sinners perishing, and yet not be awakened? Will not the thought of heaven quicken me? Can I

think of the reward that awaiteth the righteous, and yet be dull and stupid? Will not the thought of death quicken me? Can I think of dying, and standing before my God, and yet be slothful in my Master's service? Will not Christ's love quicken me? Can I think of his dear wounds, can I sit at the foot of his cross, and think of him, and yet not be stirred to something like fervency and zeal? Yet it seems that no such consideration can quicken to zeal, but that God himself must do it; or else there had been no need to cry, "Quicken thou me." It struck me, as I turned this text over, that it was wonderful how poverty-stricken the psalmist felt himself. What does a beggar ask for? The poorest beggar that I ever met never asked me, so far as I remember, for anything less than a drink of water and a bite of bread; but here is a man who does not ask God for anything so little as that, but he asks for life itself: "Quicken thou me." The beggar has life; he only asks me for means to sustain it. But here is a poor beggar, knocking at mercy's door, who has to ask for life itself; and that beggar represents me, — represents thee, — represents, I am sure, every Christian who knows himself. You may well ask, every day, even for spiritual existence. It is not, "Enlarge me, Lord; enrich me in heavenly things;" but, "Oh, do keep me alive! Quicken thou me, O Lord!" You see that the confession fires bakes us into the most secret places of man's want. I pray God to trench us all so to feel what our true state is that, with humble, sincere, and devout hearts, we may pray the prayer, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way."

II. The text likewise involves a silent profession. Do you observe it? It is not all confession of sin; there is a profession of something.

There is a profession at least of this, "Lord, I know it is vanity." That is something. "O my God, how I bless thee that I do know the hollowness of the world, and the plague of my own heart! It always was so, but I did not always think so." There are some of you, who do not think that even worldly amusements are vanity. You love them; there is a sweetness and a substance in them to you. Perhaps you are like the lady, who said to the minister that she loved to go to the play, because, first of all, there was the pleasure of thinking of it before she went, and then there was the pleasure of being there; then there was the pleasure of thinking of it afterwards, and the pleasure of telling it to one's friends. "Ah!" said the man of God, "and there is another pleasure you have forgotten." "What is that, sir?" asked the lady. "It is the pleasure of thinking of it on a dying bed, madam." Small pleasure that! Some of you have never thought of that last pleasure, and therefore the world's vanity is very satisfactory to you. I know what a pig would say if he were to talk. As he munched his husks, he would say, "I cannot tell what to think of those stupid men; they call these husks empty, and throw them away. I think them very luscious and substantial." You would, then, attribute the quality of the taste to the nature of the beast. It is after the manner of a pig; and so sinners say, "We cannot make out why these strict people, these Puritans, find fault with worldly amusements; we find them very sweet." Yes, but you see that it is only a sinner who says so; it is only a sinner who feels so; the true child of God knows that both the pleasures of this world and its cares are alike vanity. I know how some of you have often felt when you were busy. Encumbered with many things, more than you could manage, a friend has complimented you, and said, "I am glad you are getting on so well. Appearances bespeak a thriving trade." "Well," you reply, "I think I am. I am grateful for business." But, as your friend turned his head, you thought to yourself, "Ah! but I should be more grateful if I had more grace, for I feel that much business needs much grace to balance it, or else the more I get the poorer I shall be." You felt that it was vanity unless you could have God's blessing and the presence of Christ with it.

It is a feature of this profession that, seeing this vanity, you do not want to love it, and would avoid being ensnared by it. If I say, "Turn away mine eyes from it," I do in effect confess before God that I do not love it. I hope there are many of us here who can say, "Lord, our evil heart sometimes goes after it, but we do not really love it; in the bottom of our souls, there is a hatred of sin so deeply rooted that, if the loss of our eyes would take away temptation, and prevent us from sinning, we would thank God never to allow us to see a ray of light, again, for sin is so terrible an evil to us that even blindness would be a blessing if it enabled us to escape from sin."

The second clause of the text has in it likewise the nature of profession: "Quicken thou me in thy way." The man who can pray thus is already in God's ways. He professes that he loves them, — that he desires to be obedient to God's will, and to continue to make greater progress in God's ways. What say you, dear brethren? Some of you find the ways of righteousness very rough; yet, would you leave them? Some of you are reproached and persecuted for Christ's sake; yet, would you like to go back to the ways of sin? The devil has put a horse at your door, and there is a golden bridle on it; and it ambles so softly! "Now mount," says he, "and come back, and serve your old master; nobody will laugh at you then. Everyone will call you a good fellow; charitable, and kind, and liberal. Come back," saith he, "and I will treat you better than before. Will you mount and ride?" "No," the very least of us would say; if we had the highest offer for the renunciation of Christ, we would not leave him.

"Go you that boast in all your stores,

And tell how bright they shine;

Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,

**But my Redeemer's mine.
'I would not change my blest estate
For all that earth calls good or great;
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold.'**

No, Lord, I may be weary in thy way, but I will never weary of thy way.

III. And now, in the third place, there is before us here a vehement desire, — how vehement, chose only experience who know the bitterness of vanity, and the disappointment which it brings, — how vehement those only can describe who know the excellence and sweetness of divine quickening.

The psalmist, breathes his whole soul out in this prayer. He seems to plead most vehemently, his body and his soul seem to pray together. "Turn away mine eyes," says the body. "Quicken thou me," says the soul.

This is a most reasonable and a most practical desire.

How reasonable it is! When a Christian is not quickened in God's way, he is very uncomfortable. The happiest state of a Christian is the holiest state. As there is the most heat nearest the sun, so there is the most happiness nearest to Christ I am persuaded that no Christian ever finds any comfort when his eyes are fixed on vanity, — nay, that he never finds any satisfaction unless his soul is quickened in the ways of God. The world may find happiness elsewhere, but he cannot I do not blame ungodly men for going to their pleasures. Why should I blame them? Let them have their fill; that is all they have to enjoy. I heard of a converted wife, who despaired of her husband's salvation, but she used to be always very kind to him. She said, "I am afraid he will never be converted;" but whatever he wished for she always got for him, and she would do anything for him, "for," said she, "I fear that this is the only world in which he will be happy, and therefore I have made up my mind to make him as happy as I can in it " But you, Christians, must seek your delights in a higher sphere, because you cannot be happy in the insipid frivolities of the world, or in the sinful enjoyments of it.

Besides being uncomfortable, it is very dangerous. A Christian is always in danger when he is looking after vanity. We heard of a philosopher, who looked up to the stars, and fell into a pit; but, if they fall deeply who look up, how deeply do filmy fall who look down! No Christian is ever safe when, his soul is so slothful or drowsy that it wants quickening. Of course, you do not understand me to mean that his soul is in danger of being lost Every Christian is always safe as to the great matter of his standing in Christ, but he is not safe as regards his standing and happiness in this life. Satan does not often attack a Christian who is living near to God; at least, I think not It is when the Christian gets away from God, and gets half starved, and begins to feed on vanities, that the devil says, "Now I will have him." He may sometimes stand foot to foot with the child of God who is active in his Master's service, but the babble is generally short He that slips as he goes down into tike Valley of Humiliation invites Apollyon to come and fight with him.

Again, for a Christian to have his eyes fixed on vanity is injurious to his usefulness; nay, more, it does positive damage to others. When a Christian man is found setting his affection upon worldly things, what do worldlings say? "Why, he is one of our own kith and kin; he is just like us. See, he loves what we love, where is the difference between us and him?" Thus the cause of Christ gets serious injury. How can you, my dear brother, from the pulpit, for instance, preach concerning a certain sin when you are yourself guilty of it? I should like, for instance, to hear a man, who swears that baptism regenerates when he knows it does not, rebuke a countess for saying that she is "not at home" when she is. I should like to hear him rebuke a draper for "a white lie" across the counter. I should like to hear him rebuke the devil, for, methinks, he could scarcely venture to do it Unfaithfulness to the Spirit of God is as great a sin as ever Satan committed. No, my brethren, we must keep ourselves clear of these sins, or else, for practical purposes, the tendon of Achilles has been cut, and we cannot serve God with might and main. We can only do some trifling service for him when our garments are spotted and our souls are sot on vanity.

For all these reasons, then, let the Christian pray this reasonable prayer that he may be kept from vanity.

Did I say that this is a very practical prayer? So, in truth, it is. You will observe that the former pain is practical, though the latter may seem spiritual. The psalmist says, "Turn away mine eyes." Now, the man who prays after his fashion will not fail in the directness of his aim. He who is diligent in praying this prayer will not be negligent in his life. He will not pray, "Turn away mine eyes from vanity," and then go and drink death-draughts of carnal pleasures. He will not pray, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity," and then go and turn his eyes on the very evil that he deprecated. No, brethren; there is something so practical in the text that I commend it to your earnest observation. Make it your Prayer to-night, each one of you!

IV. Lastly, there is, in the text, an expression of confident hope.

The psalmist does not pray like a waverer who will receive nothing of the Lord. It seems to me that he has an unmoved confidence that God will burn away his eyes from vanity, and that God can quicken him, Have any of you backslidden? Let this sentence comfort you to-night Do not lose the belief that divine love can restore you. Have you sunk very low? Do not, I pray you, doubt take efficacy of the right hand of the Most High to bring you back again. Satan will get a great advantage over you if you begin to think that God cannot quicken you. No, be assured that he can. And let me tell you that he can do so readily. It may cost you many pains, but it will cost him none. He the made the world out of nothing can certainly restore to you the joy which you have lost.

And may I tell you what I think is the means which God often uses with his people to restore and quicken them, and take their eyes from vanity? I think it is a sight of Christ At any rate, my personal witness is that I never know the vanity of this world so well as when I see the beauties and the perfections of the Lord my Master. That true man of God, Dr. Hawker — I am told by a friend of mine who visited him one morning, — was asked to go and see a review that was then baking place at Plymouth. The doctor said, “No.” My friend pressed him, and said, “I know you are a loyal subject, and you like to see your country’s fleets; it is a noble spectacle.” The doctor said, no, he could not go; and being pressed until he was ashamed, he made this remarkable answer, “There are times when I could go and enjoy it, but mine eyes have seen the King in his beauty this morning, and I have had so sweet a sense of fellowship with the Lord Jesus, that I dare not go to look upon any spectacle lest I should lose the present enjoyment which now engrosses my soul.” I think you and I will have felt the same thing, in our measure, when Christ has manifested himself to us. What! look on vanity, my Lord, when thy pierced hand has touched my heart? What are the grandest buildings of this world, with all their pomp of architecture, compared with thee, thou Great Foundation Stone, thou chief Corner Stone, elect and precious? What is the music of this world, with all its swell and roll, compared with thy name, Immanuel, God with us?

“Sweeter sounds than music knows

Charm me in Immanuel’s name:

All her hopes my spirit owes

To his birth, and cross, and shame.”

What are the world’s feasts compare with thee O Christ? Its dainties are not sweet, for I have tasted of thy flesh. Its wines are no longer luscious, for I have sipped from the cup of thy blood. What are the world’s choicest offers that she can make me of honor or of wealth? Hast thou not raised me up together sad made me to sit together in heavenly places with thyself, and hast thou not made me a king and a priest unto God, and shall I never reign with thee for ever and ever? Christian, thou mayest carry on such musing as this by the hour together. Thou mayest boast thyself in God, and thy leviathan faith may swim in this boundless deep of Jesus’ love. Thou surely, after this, canst never wish to go back to the pool wherein the minnow of this world disports itself. Here thou canst bask thyself in the rays of a meridian sun, and wilt thou afterwards cry for a farthing candle because thou hast lost its beams?

Shame on thee, Christian, if thy soul is taken up with vanities! Let those love them who find their all in them, but thou canst not The sight of him who is white as the lily for perfection, and red as the rose for sacrificial suffering, must have taken away the beauty of this world for us. Says Rutherford, “Ever since I ate the bread of heaven, the brown bread of this world has not been to my palate; and since I have feasted on the food of angels, I cannot eat the ashes that satisfy the men whose portion is in this life.” And truly it is so. Arise, Sun of righteousness, and our love of darkness shall be dispelled while we are charmed with thy light! We hear of some who worship the sun at its rising; that is sad idolatry; but rise, Sun of righteousness, and we will worship thee, and there shall be no idolatry in that Thou art not like the sun that burns out human eyes when they look upon it; but we will look into thy face until thy transporting light shall only burn out our sight for this world to help us to gaze upon thyself without a veil between.

Oh, that I were talking thus for you all, but I am conscious that I am not I do pray, however, that you, who love vanity, may find out how vain it is before you come to die. The other night, I lay awake, and tossed to and fro many hours before I fell asleep. I realized then, more than at any other time in my life, what it was to die. My every bone seemed to tremble. I lay, as I thought, upon a bed of sickness; the room seemed hushed around me; the ticking of my clock sounded like the flicking of the death-watch. I thought I heard them whisper, “He must die;” and then my soul seemed to fling itself back upon the realities of God in Christ, and I asked myself, “Have I preached or have I prayed for this? But now is Christ able to save me. He is my only hope, and my only plea. Is it true that Christ came into the world to save sinners.?” And I recalled those cogent and blessed arguments which prove that Christ is the Sent One of God, and my soul rejoiced that it could die in peace. And then I could but think of that sweet rest which Jesus brings when you can throw yourself on him. And now, to-night, in the recollection of that strange vision of the shadow of death, through which I passed, I can but ask others, “What will you do when you come really to die, if you have no Savior?” Men and

women, if you have no Christ to trust to, what will you do? You must soon have the death-sweat wiped from your clammy brows; you must soon have the needed drop of water administered to your parched lips. What will you do when death shakes the bones within the strong man, and makes each nerve thrill with the dread music of pain? What will you do when death, and hell, and judgment, and eternity, and the great white throne have become real things to you, and your business, and even your children and your wife seem banished from your eyes? Let a brother's love beseech you to flee from the wrath to come, and to fly to Christ, for salvation. God knoweth how I love your soul. It is for the sake of men's souls that I suffer contempt and scorn, and will gladly bear it, — ay, and will provoke it more than I have ever done, — provoke it because this dull, dead age needs provocation, — needs to be stirred up, even its ministers need to be stirred up to something like honesty and zeal for the souls of men. I say that I will gladly bear reproach for your souls' sake; and will not you — oh! will not you — be persuaded to think on, those things that make for your eternal peace? The gates of heaven are up there; the gates of hell are down yonder. The cross of Christ points you to heaven; follow its guidance. Look to the wounds of Jesus. These are the gates of pearl through which you must enter heaven. But if you will turn to your vanities and to your sins, and follow them, and delight yourself in worldly pleasures, then hell is your portion as surely as you sin. May the Lord give faith to those who have none, and help us who have believed through grace to walk in his ways; and unto his name shall be the glory, world without, end! Amen.

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