

# Spurgeon Sermons on Exodus 2

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## Sermons on Exodus by C H Spurgeon

### Exodus 21:5-6 Ears Bored to the Door-Post

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**“And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever.” — Exodus 21:5, 6.**

THE Jewish people had lived in Egypt, and had been themselves slaves. They had, doubtless, learned much of art and science in Egypt, but they also learned there many sinful manners and customs, and among the rest they learned the habit of slavery. When God found them, and led them out into the wilderness to make a nation of them, he did not give them a code of laws such as he would give to us in the light of this dispensation, but he gave them laws, as Jesus Christ himself says, “according to the hardness of their heart.” He gave them a law suitable to the state in which they were. Their ceremonial laws, their political and economic laws, were very far from being perfect, and were never intended to be regarded as perfect. They were not meant for a nation of men so much as for a nation of children. The nation was then in its infancy, and statutes and ordinances were very much in accordance with the infancy of the people. Slavery, for instance, was not forbidden. It was not even forbidden for a Hebrew to hold his brother Hebrew in bondage, but, though it was not forbidden, yet it was so hedged about and limited with many regulations and conditions, that it must have become very difficult, if not almost impossible.

In the first place, every Hebrew who held his brother in bondage was compelled to treat him as he treated himself. There was a law that his food and his raiment should be precisely similar to that of his master. Then, again, at the end of six full years, the man must go free, whatever might be the price at which he was purchased for six years. And when he went free he was not to go out empty, but his master was required to give him something out of his barn, out of the wine-press, and out of the flock. In fact, it was a sort of apprenticeship of one man to another, with the condition that the servant should be treated as one of the family, and was to be set up in business when he left. So much did the Jews feel that this was not a very profitable kind of thing, that it got to be a proverb that, “A Hebrew who buys a Hebrew servant, does not buy a servant, but he buys a master.” So the thing became very seldom practiced at all, and this, perhaps, was the best way of dealing with the evil. They would have kicked against a law which forbade slavery altogether, but they submitted to this one which regulated it, and so the thing was kept in such check that it must of necessity fall. That, however, again, was not at all a rule for you or for me. It was like the putting away of a wife with a writing of divorcement, of which the Savior said that “Moses suffered it because of the hardness of their hearts.” It was not right in itself, but it was simply endured because of the low moral state of the people when they came as a herd of slaves from Egypt’s brick-kilns, not having been trained and educated to understand the value of liberty as you and I happily have been in these later times for these many years.

But observe that sometimes the Hebrew servant, although free to go where he liked at the end of six years, would not go. He had married one of his master's female servants: he had children, and, besides, was so attached to his master and his family that he preferred to stay with him. Now, as God did not wish the people to love slavery, but would teach them the nobility of liberty, he made this ordinance that a man's wish to remain in servitude should be attested by a somewhat painful rite, and he made it a law that this rite should be administered to him in public before the judges.

Lest a master should say the servant wished to be with him, and then bored his ears by main force, and so ensured his perpetual service, it was commanded that this boring of the ears should always be done in public before witnesses and the judges. An awl was taken and the man's ears were fastened to the door-post, and then forever after he must remain, though he might change his mind, since he had once deliberately chosen it, to serve his master.

Leaving, however, this outline of the meaning of this picturesque ceremony, I now want to use the passage in its spiritual meaning.

First, I shall have to remind you that in Psalm 40 our Savior speaks of himself as having had his ears bored. Did you notice the expression in the fortieth Psalm, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: mine ears hast thou opened." The Hebrew says, "Mine ears hast thou digged;" Christ's ears, then, were pierced, so that he might from his own voluntary choice be the servant of God forevermore. When I have spoken a little upon that I want to speak of some professed servants of God who have never had their ears bored; and then, in the third place, I want to go into this business of boring some of your ears, and I have no doubt there are many here who have had their ears bored in days gone by, and who will be glad to renew the rite afresh tonight by consecrating themselves again unto their master. First, we have to speak —

### **I. Of The Savior Having Had His Ears Bored.**

One would not have dared to apply this to him if he had not instructed his servant David, by the Holy Ghost, to apply it to himself. "Mine ears," saith he, "hast thou opened." Oh, wonder of wonders! that the King of kings should thus come to be the servant of servants; that he who is "God over all, blessed for ever," and who thinks it not robbery to be equal with God, should take upon himself the form of a servant, and be made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and, being found in fashion as a man, should become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! Our Savior's first appearance here, was in the servant's place. He was the son of a carpenter, and he was laid in a manger. When he comes forward to begin his active life at thirty that life is one continual service. They would have made him a king, but he preferred to remain the servant of all. You see this from the first to the last of his earthly life, for even in view of the cross he took a towel and girded himself, and then a basin, and, showing he was a servant still, he washed his disciples' feet. He was a servant still when he was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as the last act of obedience that was possible he bows his head and says, "Not my will, but thine be done," and he yielded up the ghost. Our blessed Lord might have broken free from the servitude whenever he pleased. He claims this for himself, that he was voluntarily a servant, and especially that his obedience and sacrifice unto death were his absolutely willing offering. He says of his life, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again." He could have gone out free if he would. That host that came to seize him in the garden would have been no more able to take him than the Philistines were able to take Samson when he snapped the green withes. He did but speak to them, and they fell backwards, and this proved how powerful he was to have delivered himself. And when he was before Pilate he might even then have escaped. Did he not say, "Thou couldest have had no power against me if it had not been given thee from above?" And even on the cross when they said, "If he be the Son of God let him come down from the cross," he might have leaped in one tremendous stride into the midst of his foes and smitten them with lightning-flashes from those fearful eyes. He might have shaken the earth and removed heaven rather than have died, if so it had been his will. But he had given his ear to be bored, and he remained his Father's servant even unto death. Willingly, without a struggle, this victim was laid upon the altar. Like the passive lamb, which starts not even when the knife is thrust into it, the Savior gave himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the people, and to the full was the servant of his Father.

This is very delightful for us to think upon, especially when we remember that our Savior wears the print of the opened ear still. Still is he in heaven, and there —

**"Looks like a lamb that has been slain**

**And wears his priesthood still."**

For your sake he doth not hold his peace, and for Jerusalem's sake he doth not rest, but still continues to accomplish his Father's good pleasure, interceding still for his saints, and waiting until the time shall come when he shall take his great power and reign and the number of his elect shall be accomplished. Still is he the servant of God and the friend of man, his opened hands, his side and feet bearing the marks that like the scar in the ear of the Jewish slave made him to be recognized as a slave forever.

So is he our friend and his Father's servant, eternally. Brethren and sisters, there is this to be said, which ought to endear the Savior to you and to me — that his only motive for so having his ears bored, or digged, was his love. What says the servant in the

text? "I love my master: I love my wife: I love my children." This is what our Servant-Savior said. He loved his God: never man loved God as Christ did. As God he loved infinitely him who is one with him, even his Father, and as perfect man he loved God with all his heart, and soul, and strength. He had voluntarily become a servant, and he loved his Master. And he also loved his spouse. Oh, there was little in her to love, but he thought much of her, and does think much of her now. The Church is his bride, and he sees her —

**"Not as she stood in Adam's fall,**

**When sin and ruin covered all;**

**But as she'll stand another day**

**Fairer than sun's meridian ray."**

he saw his character reflected in her, he saw her as what she is to be when she is perfect through the Spirit, and he loved her, oh, with such a perfect, all-constraining love, and said —

**"For her I'll go**

**Through all the depths of sin and woe;**

**And on the cross will even dare,**

**The dreadful weight of wrath to bear."**

He found his spouse in the mire; he brought her up out of it. He found her in poverty, and he became poor for her sake. He found her in rags, and he stripped himself to clothe her. He found her condemned, and he was condemned for her acquittal. He found her on earth, he came from heaven to bring her up from earth, that she might be with him where he is in heaven forever. Then I love the last word, "I love my children." That may be laid hold of by each one of us, for as he is "the everlasting Father," every believer may regard himself or herself as his child; and he loves each one. He could die, but he could not deny his people. He could leave heaven, but could never abandon us. He could not be content to be glorified unless, too, his people were. He dared not be satisfied to sit upon a throne, whilst they might be cast into hell, but he could come down and bring them near to himself by stooping as low as they had become. Let us bless him! Let us tonight in our hearts extol this blessed servant of God, who though King of kings had his ears opened because he loved his master, he loved his spouse, and he loved his children, and has therefore become their servant forever.

Now, I thought when I was turning over this in my mind, that perhaps some troubled conscience here might get comfort out of it, that perhaps someone might say, "Oh, well, if Jesus Christ has so given himself up to be the Savior of sinners that he will never give up the work, then perhaps he will save me." You know what is meant by nailing the flag to the mast. It means that the man means to fight it out. Jesus Christ has, so to speak, nailed the flag of mercy to the mast-head, and he will fight it out with the devil. Yes, he will save the meanest of his people. He has given himself up heart and soul to be the Savior of sinners. It is his business, and he will never give it up. So long as there is an unsaved sinner Christ will be seeking him. So long as this world has sinners in it it will be a hunting-ground for this glorious Nimrod, this "mighty hunter before the Lord," who has come to seek out poor wondering souls and bring them to himself. "He is able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us." His ears being bored for this work, the work of intercession will be his as long as he liveth. We will now pass from that to remark, in the second place, —

**II. That Every Genuine Servant Of God Is One Who Would Not Accept His Liberty, Or Leave Off Being The Servant Of God, If He Could.**

He has had his ears bored, and he means to be, and must be, a servant of God as long as ever he lives. There are, however, a great many professors, of whom we are going to speak to you, and a great many other men in the world, too, who have never had their ears bored to be God's servants at all. There are some, in the first place, who hate the very thought of being God's servant. "Serve God!" says one, "who is he? Who is Jehovah that I should obey him?" The mass of men are of Pharaoh's mind: they are not going to obey God: they think they are their own masters. I do not believe there ever was a man who was his own master, but that every man has a master of some kind or other. How many men whose master is money, and if money orders them to do anything, however outrageous, they would at once do it to obtain the money. No matter how dirty the trick might be, there are some men who would do it if it promised profit to them, and they would not be found out. No matter though they were to half starve themselves, and lose comfort in their houses, how many there are who would suffer much, if they might but gain gold? Mammon is their master. Some take pleasure to be their master, and pleasure is a very hard master indeed, for the pleasures of sin, though they seem to be cheap, are always dearly bought. A man never gets his penny's worth for his penny when he goes into the lusts of the flesh. There whatsoever he getteth he hath to pay back again; in his own flesh and bones shall he have to pay back every drachma of joy that

he winneth by unhallowed lust! But, oh, how men will bend their necks to gods many and lords many rather than serve Jehovah! As for the God that made them, many never think of him, and many never think of him but to mention his name in ribald jest or oath, and to despise his authority. Ah, sinner, God knows how to deal with such as you are, for if you sin with Pharaoh you shall perish with Pharaoh. If you say, "I will not serve God," God will take care to make you a monument of his justice, if you will not be a trophy of his grace. "For this purpose," said he to Pharaoh, "have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee," and if God does not show his love in you he will show his power by bringing you down one of these days, till you shall loathe the things you once loved, and curse the day in which you dared to think yourselves wiser than God. When a creature is out at elbows with its creator, depend upon it, it is also out at elbows with itself. Things can never go along well when the wheel of our hearts does not cog with the wheel of God's heart. We must come down to God's will if we would rise up to happiness and peace.

But there are many who profess to be the servants of God but who have not had their ears bored, and this is proved by the fact that some of them go out from us after a time. Oh, it is a thing the most vexatious beneath the skies, it is the plague of the Church, and it is the minister's nightmare and specter, that there should be so many hollow professors, who, nevertheless, are able to maintain a whitewashed profession for so many years. Truly, it is but a poor test of Christianity even to walk uprightly in appearance for ten or even twenty years, for there are inventions nowadays by which counterfeits may be brought to such perfection that you can scarcely tell them from the pure gold.

Through many a crucible will the false thing go, and not betray its falseness until at last there comes a discovering hour, and then woe to the Church of God, but, most of all, woe to the man who duped that Church, and misled those who trusted him! I am inclined to say to everyone of you, "Do not be too sure; do search yourself." I am inclined, most of all, to say it to myself. I do so like to read a sermon sometimes — for I do not often hear one — that seems to give me a ring down upon the counter. You know I am often afraid of the jingle, whether it will sound like true gold or not, but it is a good thing to get a ring. A preacher with a soft and mealy mouth is but of little service to a Christian, but the man who sets forth plain and unpalatable truth often comforts him, because he is able to say, "Well, I can stand this searching truth," and then he goes away satisfied that things are right with God. Do try yourselves, dear friends, do try yourselves constantly, and ask the Lord to search you, and come afresh to the blood of Jesus lest you should be mistaken. There was an apostle who turned out to be a Judas; many a minister has been a deceiver; many a church member and many a church officer, too, has been nothing but a whitewashed sepulcher full of bones and rottenness. Take care, dear hearer, lest your lot should be the same.

Then there are others, who make a very fine profession, who are even worse, if possible, than these, for they are religious and irreligious, too. I know some of you can carry a hymn book in your pockets, and a songbook too. You can come here, I daresay, on Sunday evenings and drop in of a weeknight, but there are some other places of very doubtful reputation which know you, too. Oh, yes! I know some who have said, "Well, I must give up my seat there, because I cannot give up the other, for the preacher does give it to me so severely."

Ah, how the preacher wishes he could give it to you more severely still, for of all classes of men that should excite our sorrow and our pity, it is the men who are able to stand the gospel and yet go on in their sins. Why, I have known professors in the country who would stand up in the singing-pew, or sit near, who did not know what time of night they came home on Saturday from market. And we know there are not a few people who can drink the cup of the Lord, and deep draughts of the cup of the devil, too; who will sing well when they are here, but will also sing a roaring good song at a public dinner. Jolly fellows! They are not very particular, but they had better be, or else they will find their lot at last particularly severe, for surely none so deserve the wrath of God as those who knew better. As I heard a poor soul say the other day, "Ah, sir, I sinned in the light," and say it with a broken heart, too, I hope, I thought. What a thing to be forced to say! Some of you, I hope, will be forced to say it. You have sinned knowing that you were sinning, sinned knowing the penalty of sin, sinned knowing something about better things, too; yet have you gone like the dog to his vomit — vomited on Sunday, but have gone back to it on the Monday — and like the sow that was washed on the Sabbath have gone back to wallow in the mire for six days! God have mercy upon some of you! I would that in his mercy he would come and make you keep close to what you profess, and to be no longer halting between two opinions, but have your ears bored to be the servants of God forever, and not the slaves of sin.

I think I might make out a pretty long list of people of this sort, but I shall only mention one class. There is a great number of young men and a greater number of young women who attend this place, and we are delighted to see you, dear friends; may your numbers never grow less, for we love you and we desire to bless God that so many of you have been converted. But I am always fearful about some of you young people lest your religion should in any way depend upon any sort of excitement, or your happening to be connected with a really quickened and living church, or happening to be in such an earnest class, as some of our classes are, or because you attend upon the ministry in this place. I do know some, who when they get away into the country, where perhaps the minister is not much more than half alive, they grow cold, and by-and-by, and especially if they happen to get married, then the zeal which once fired them quite subsides. Now recollect, that the religion that depends upon any man, whoever he may be, or upon any woman, or that rests at all upon the company you have to keep, is not genuine religion at all. For our religion ought to maintain, and will maintain, its vitality at least, if not its constant health, be you cast into whatever circumstances

you may be. Some of you young women, perhaps, are going out to service where there are ungodly masters. Now you will know whether your grace is real or not. Some of you young men are apprenticed, or obliged to go into situations where you are constantly in the midst of those who chaff you and jeer you; now we shall know what stuff you are made of; now we shall see whether you are only stony-ground hearers, or whether there is real depth of earth in you, for if there is no depth of earth you will soon wither away; but if your conversion was a genuine one, we defy all the wicked men on earth, and all the devils in hell, to destroy it, for what God has done none can undo, but what comes from man and not from the Spirit of God, depend upon it, will be of no use to you in the day of judgment.

Thus there are many servants in God's house who are only there a little while, and who go out at the end of their six years. But now I am going to talk to —

### **III. Those Who Have Had Their Ears Bored.**

First, I shall bring out the awls. Genuine Christians have had their ears bored, that is to say, they are such Christians that they could not be anything else, and when they have their choice — and they do have it everyday, for temptation gives them many an opportunity — they will not go out, but are obliged to remain the servants of God. I am now going to tell you some of the awls with which God has bored their ears. Christian, you have had your ear bored. What was one of the things that did it? I think it was past mercies. Forsake the Lord Jesus Christ! How can I? He loved me — bought me.

**“He saw me ruined in the fall,**

**He loved me, notwithstanding all.”**

Some of us were in great distress, and Christ gave us peace: we were ready to destroy ourselves and he gave us joy and liberty, and since that day he has led us into green pastures and beside still waters, and we have been a happy people: he has supplied us night and day: we cannot leave him: we cannot leave him!

He has bored our ears, his infinite mercy in the past has fastened us to his door-post. We dare not leave him: we would not if we could. Do not many of you feel that the verse of the hymn is just the real truth —

**“A very wretch, Lord, I should prove,**

**Had I no love to thee.”?**

We owe our gracious Master so much that our ears are bored, and we cannot leave him. Think you see Ignatius standing up in the amphitheater when he is told that if he will curse Christ he shall escape, and he says, “How can I curse him? He has never done me a displeasure!” So with us; he has never done us ill; we cannot but speak well of his name and cling to him.

But I think our ears are bored, also, by a sense of our present helplessness. You say, “Go from him! Ah, but where to?” We cannot do without him. You tell us to do without Christ! As well tell the helpless baby that is hanging on its mother's breast to leave its mother, but we are more helpless than that infant; there is nothing but death lying before us if we leave him. Brethren and sisters, what could you and I do the next hour if we had no Savior to depend upon, none of his grace to keep us from sin, and none of his love to comfort us in affliction? We should be utterly ruined! Go from him! Ask the young husband to forsake his spouse; ask ye the man who has hunted after gold and won it to throw away his treasure; but as for us we cannot leave our spouse, nor forsake our divine treasure. Now have we found contentment: now have we got all that our souls can wish for: never, Jesus, never can we leave thee! What could we do without thee?

**“To whom or whither could we go**

**if we should turn from thee?”**

That is the second awl with which to bore our ears.

Then there is a third awl. Leave him! How can we, when we think about the future? We expect between now and getting to heaven a great many storms, and what could we do without the Captain and Pilot of souls? We know there are many giants to fight and dragons to kill, and what could we do without our soul's Greatheart to be our champion and protector? There are many arrows flying, and what could we do without our shield? We could not leave our castle and high tower, or, if we did, what might not happen to us? Every ill, certainly would, if we forsook him. The past, the present, and the future are all like sharp awls to bore right through our ears and fasten us to Christ.

Leave him! Why, the joy he gives us, the satisfaction, the delight, make it impossible for us to leave him. Can a bride forget her ornaments? Can it be possible for a nation to put away its gods? Can a mother forget her child? All these things might be, but we cannot forget him who is all in all to us. Once get the flavor of Christ in your mouth, and you will never be satisfied with anything

short of him. Drink water from the well of Bethlehem, and you will be like David, you will say of it again and again, "Oh, that one would give me to drink of the water of the well." "My heart is fixed," said David, "my heart is fixed." Some people's hearts are flying about like feathers in the air; whichever way the wind blows they blow, but "my heart is fixed." Christ has driven four nails right through it, and fastened it to his cross; the spear has gone through my inmost, soul; I have no other love but him, and I must love him as long as I live." Thus can the Christian speak; the joy which Jesus gives him, is the awl that has pierced his ear.

And then, dear friends, is there not another reason, and a very strong one, namely, our hope forever? Leave Christ! Why, then we should have to leave heaven and its felicity. We are expecting. We sometimes hear of people who have "great expectations." Yes, believers have great expectations. We are not watching for dead men's shoes, but we are looking for the golden sandals that they wear in the land of the living. We are not expecting the legacies of earthly relatives, but we are expecting the blessed legacy which Christ has left to all his people — to be with him where he is. Yes, the son of poverty is expecting one of the many mansions. The child of tribulation is expecting to have every tear wiped away from his eye. We are expecting to hear it said, "Well done, good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Give up Christ? No, the thought of heaven bores our ear yet again. We cannot give him up: we must still cling to him, because "we have respect unto the recompense of the reward." Now all of these awls are sharp ones, but I do not suppose they have pierced some of you. If, however, any of you have ever felt them piercing your ears, I am sure you felt very happy, whilst the boring was going on, and may you be pierced by them, yet again and again.

Thus, then, I have shown you the awls, but I cannot pierce your ears: the text forbids me, for it says, "the master was to pierce the servant's ear." Yes, there is no man can bind a soul to Christ, but Christ himself must do it. There is such a struggle in men's hearts against Christ, that only the High Priest, who knows how to bind the sacrifice, can ever cast the cords of love around us and to his altar bind us fast. If, dear friends, you are afraid of backsliding, if you are afraid you should grow cold, and turn aside from the Master, bore your ears again tonight. Ask him to open the scar afresh, and let you feel it until you can have no doubt that it is there. That sweet sermon by Mr. Lewis some of you have never forgotten — on the text — "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." May you feel that you have had the Master boring your ears.

Now, just one word upon what is to be bored, namely, the ear. The boring of the ear was the emblem of obedience, for it is with the ear that the servant hears. The Christian man, then, will be mainly God's servant through his ear. We hear God's will, and therefore do it. Some of you have ears that need a little opening, for you know some things to be your duty, and you profess to be God's servant, but you do not attend to them. Your ears, I hope, are bored, but you seem to have taken cold in them, and you cannot hear the Master's voice. Some of you, for instance, know that as believers you ought to be baptized but yet you shrink from it. Others of you know you ought to be united with a Christian church. "They gave themselves first to the Lord, and afterwards to the saints by the word of God." "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." The obedient servant only has to hear his Master's voice, and he runs at once to do his bidding. "Oh," say you, "but it is not essential, sir." No, I know it is not; but still, if you keep a servant you do not expect her to say that what you tell her to do is "not essential." Try your servant Mary tonight. Tell her to do something: she does not do it. You tell her again: she does not do it, and she says to you, "But, sir, remember it is not essential!" You say to her, "I do not keep servants to argue points with me: if they will not do my bidding they must find another master."

Mind the Lord does not say this to you: for if a thing be his will, all that you have to do is to do it, asking no questions. I never heard of an angel in heaven asking God why he was ordered to do such and such a thing. They serve him there without questioning, and so may his will be done by us on earth after the same fashion, "as it is done in heaven."

May you be like the high priests whose thumbs and toes were touched with blood, to show that their active powers were given to the service of God; and may you also be like those whose ears were touched with blood to show that you hear the Master's will, and that your thoughtful faculties are given to the attentive observation of what his mind is, that so the hands and the feet may be guided as to what you should do.

Lastly, I want you to notice that when the ear was bored it was bored to the door-post in the presence of the judges. It was not done in secret, in some back room. It was done in public, with witnesses present. If this man is going to devote himself to his master he must be brought right out to the door-post. "Now then, your ear, sir; the awl must be driven right through it in the presence of spectators." And methinks consecration to Christ is not a thing to be done in secret. You who love the Lord Jesus Christ — own it! If you are his servants wear his livery. If you are his servants, come out and profess to be so. Have your ears bored to the very door-post, publicly, and openly avow yourselves to be on the Lord's side. He asks it, and it is no more than he deserves. "He that confesseth me before men," saith he, "him also will I confess before my Father who is in heaven."

I think this man might say, "My master's house is to be my dwelling-place for ever." I know some of us seem to have had our ears bored even to the posts of this very house of prayer. Some of you are never absent, whatever service there may be. If it were to rain I do not know how much, I do not think it would thin this congregation much, for you love to come up to the house of God. Well, the assembling of yourselves together will always, I hope, be a means of profit to you, and it is always a manifest indication of your retaining your service under the good Master. May you thus ever keep close to the posts of his door, and when he cometh may he

find you like servants waiting at the door for their lord.

Now, are there any here tonight who would like to have their ears bored with the awls which I have mentioned? If so, I would say to them, "If your heart be right with God, and you are trusting in Jesus only, instead of making a resolution, offer a prayer, and let this be the prayer — 'Lord, while I live, and till I die, I desire to be thy servant to the utmost of my power: I desire to do thy will or to suffer it; I give myself up without reserve or limitation; all that I am, all that I have, I give up to thee. Take me from this night forth, and let me not offer this prayer as a mere matter of form or hypocrisy, but may I offer it heartily, and from my inmost soul; enable me to say I am thy servant. Oh, God! sanctify me, spirit, soul, and body, for thy name's sake. Amen.'"

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## Exodus 32:14 The Meditation of Moses

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**"And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people."- Exodus 32:14.**

I SUPPOSE that I need not say that this verse speaks after the manner of men. I do not know after what other manner we can speak. To speak of God after the manner of God, is reserved for God himself; and mortal men could not comprehend such speech. In this sense, the Lord often speaks, not according to literal fact, but according to the appearance of things to us, in order that we may understand so far as the human can comprehend the divine. The Lord's purposes never really change. His eternal will must forever be the same; for he cannot alter, since he would either have to alter for the better or for the worse. He cannot change for the better, for he is infinitely good; it were blasphemous to suppose that he could change for the worse. He who sees all things at once, and perceives at one glance the beginning and the end of all things, has no need to repent. "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent;" but, in the course of his action, there appears to us to be sometimes a great change, and as we say of the sun that it rises and sets, though it does not actually do so, and we do not deceive when we speak after that fashion, so we say concerning God, in the language of the text, "The Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people." It appears to us to be so, and it is so in the act of God; yet this statement casts no doubt upon the great and glorious doctrine of the immutability of God.

Speaking after the manner of men, the mediation of Moses wrought this change in the mind of God. God in Moses seemed to overcome God out of Moses. God in the Mediator, the Man Christ Jesus, appears to be stronger for mercy than God apart from the Mediator. This saying of our text is very wonderful, and it deserves our most earnest and careful consideration.

Just think, for a minute, of Moses up there in the serene solitude with God. He had Left the tents of Israel down below, and he had passed within the mystic circle of fire where none may come but he who is specially invited; and there, alone with God, Moses had a glorious season of fellowship with the Most High. He lent his listening ear to the instructions of the Almighty concerning the priesthood, and the tabernacle, and the altar; and he was enjoying a profound peace of mind, when, on a sudden, he was startled. The whole tone of the speech of the Lord seemed changed, and he said to Moses, "Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves." I can hardly imagine what thoughts passed through the great leader's mind. How Moses must have trembled in the presence of God! All the joy that he had experienced seemed suddenly to vanish, leaving behind, however, somewhat of the strength which always comes out of fellowship with God. This Moses now needed if ever he needed it in all his life; for this was the crucial period in the history of Moses, this was his severest trial, when, alone with God on the mountain's brow, he was called to come out of the happy serenity of his spirit, and to hear the voice of an angry God, saying, "Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them."

The language of God was very stern; and well it might be after all that he had done for that people. When the song of Miriam had scarcely ceased, when you might almost hear the echoes of that jubilant note, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea;" you might quickly have heard a very different cry, "Up, make us gods;" and, in the presence of the calf that Aaron made, the same people blasphemously exclaimed, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Such a prostitution of their tongues to horrid blasphemies against Jehovah, such a turning aside from the truth to the grossest of falsehoods, might well provoke the anger of a righteously jealous God.

It is noteworthy that Moses did not lose himself in this moment of trial. We read at once, "And Moses besought Jehovah his God." He was undoubtedly a man of prayer, but he must have been continually in the spirit of prayer, or else I could conceive of him, at

that moment, falling on his face, and lying there in silent horror. I could imagine him flying down the mountain in a passionate haste to see what the people had done; but it is delightful to find that he did neither of these two things, but that he began to pray. Oh, friends, if we habitually pray, we shall know how to pray when praying times become more pressing than usual! The man who is to wrestle with the angel must have been familiar with angels beforehand. You cannot go into your chamber, and shut to the door, and begin a mighty intercessory prayer if you have never been to the mercy-seat before. No, Moses is "the man of God." You remember that he left us a prayer, in the ninetyeth Psalm, bearing this title, "A prayer of Moses the man of God." There is no man of God if there is no prayer, for prayer makes the man into "the man of God." So, instinctively, though startled and saddened to the last degree, Moses is on his knees, beseeching the Lord his God.

**I. This, then, is the scene I have to bring before you, and my first observation shall be, that Nothing Can Hinder A Truly Loving Spirit From Pleading For The Objects Of Its Love.**

There were many things that might have hindered Moses from making intercessory prayer; and the first was, the startling greatness of the people's sin. God himself put it to Moses in strong language. He said, "The people have corrupted themselves: they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." This terrible accusation from the mouth of God, spoken as God would speak it, must have impressed Moses greatly with the awful character of Israel's sin; for, farther on, we find Moses saying to God, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold." It has happened to you, I suppose, as it has to me, that in the sight of a great sin one has almost hesitated to pray about it. The person sinned so wantonly, under circumstances so peculiarly grievous, transgressed so willfully and so altogether without excuse, that you felt thrust back from the mercy-seat and from pleading for such a sinner; but it was not so with Moses. Idolatry is a horrible sin, yet Moses is not kept back from pleading for its forgiveness. It astounds him, his own wrath waxes hot against it; but still, there he is, pleading for the transgressors. What else can he do but pray? And he does that after the best possible fashion. Oh, let us never say, when we see great sin, "I am appalled by it; I cannot pray about it; I am sickened by it, I loathe it." Some time ago, we had revelations of the most infamous criminality in this great city, which we cannot even now quite forget; and I must confess that I sometimes felt as if I could not pray for some of the wretches who sinned so foully; but we must shake off that kind of feeling, and, even in the presence of the most atrocious iniquity, we must still say, "I will pray even for these Jerusalem sinners, that God may deliver them from the bondage of their sin."

A second thing that might have hindered Moses was, not only the sin, but the manifest obstinacy of those who had committed the sin. Moses had it upon the evidence of the heart-searching God that these people were exceedingly perverse. The Lord said, "I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people." Poor Moses had to learn, in after years, how true that saying was, for though he poured out his very soul for them, and was tender towards them as a nurse with a child yet they often vexed and wearied his spirit so that he cried to the Lord, "Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldst say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?" He was crushed beneath the burden of Israel's perversity; yet, though God himself had told him that they were a stiff-necked people, Moses besought the Lord concerning these obstinate sinners.

Then, thirdly, the prayer of Moses might have been hindered by the greatness of God's wrath; yet he said, "Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people?" Shall I pray for the man with whom God is angry? Shall I dare to be an intercessor with God who is righteously wrathful? Why, some of us scarcely pray to the merciful God in this gospel dispensation in which he is so full of goodness and long-suffering; there are some who profess to be God's people who make but very little intercession for the ungodly. I am afraid that, if they had seen God angry, they would have said, "It is of no use to pray for those idolaters. God is not unjustly angry. He knows what he does, and I must leave the matter there." But mighty love dares to cast itself upon its face before even an angry God; it dares to plead with him, and to ask him, "Why doth thy wrath wax hot?" although it knows the reason, and lays no blame upon the justice of God. Yes, love and faith together bring such a holy daring into the hearts of men of God that they can go into the presence of the King of kings, and cast themselves down before him, even when he is in his wrath, and say, "O God, spare thy people; have mercy upon those with whom thou art justly angry!"

Perhaps it is an even more remarkable thing that Moses was not hindered from praying to God though, to a large degree at the time, and much more afterwards, he sympathized with God in his wrath. We have read how Moses' anger waxed hot when he saw the calf, and the dancing; do you not see the holy man dashing the precious tablets upon the earth, regarding them as too sacred for the unholy eyes of idolaters to gaze upon? He saves them, as it were, from the desecration of contact with such a guilty people by breaking them to shivers upon the ground. Can you not see how his eyes flash fire as he tears down their idol, burns it in the fire, grinds it to powder, straws it upon the water, and makes them drink it? He is determined that it shall go into their very bowels; they shall be made to know what kind of a thing it was that they called a god. He was exceedingly wroth with Aaron; and when he bade the sons of Levi draw the sword of vengeance, and slay the audacious rebels, his wrath was fiercely hot, and rightly so. Yet he prays for the guilty people. Oh, never let your indignation against sin prevent your prayers for sinners! If the tempest comes on, and your eyes flash lightning's, and your lips speak thunderbolts, yet let the silver drops of pitying tears fall down your cheek, and

pray the Lord that the blessed shower may be acceptable to himself, especially when you plead for Jesus' sake. Nothing can stay the true lover of men's souls from pleading for them; nay, not even our burning indignation against infamous iniquity. We see it, and our whole blood boils at the sight; yet we betake ourselves to our knees, and cry, "God be merciful to these great sinners, and pardon them, for Jesus' sake!"

A still greater hindrance to the prayer of Moses than those I have mentioned was, God's request for the pleading to cease. The Lord himself said to the intercessor, "Let me alone." Oh, friends, I fear that you and I would have thought that it was time to leave off praying when the Lord with whom we were pleading said, "Let me alone: let me alone." But I believe that Moses prayed the more earnestly because of that apparent rebuff. Under the cover of that expression, if you look closely into it, you will see that Moses' prayer was really prevailing with God. Even before he had uttered it, while it was only being formed in his soul, Jehovah felt the force of it; else he would not have said, "Let me alone."

And Moses appeared to gain courage from that which might have checked a less earnest suppliant; he seemed to say to himself, "Evidently God feels the force of my strong desires, and I will therefore wrestle with him until I prevail" It was a real rebuff, and was, doubtless, intended by the Lord to be the test of the patience, the perseverance, the confidence, the self-denying love of Moses. Jehovah says, "Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them;" but Moses will not let him alone. O you who love the Lord, give him no rest until he saves men; and though he himself should seem to say to you, "Let me alone," do not let him alone, for he wishes you to be importunate with him, like that widow was with the unjust judge! The wicked man granted the poor woman's request because of her continual coming; and God is testing and trying you to see whether you really mean your prayers. He will keep you waiting a while, and even seem to repulse you, that you may, with an undaunted courage, say, "I will approach thee; I will break through all obstacles to get to thee. Even if it be not according to the law, I will go in unto the King of kings; and if I perish, I perish; but I will pray for sinners even if I perish in the act."

And, dear friends, there is one thing more that might have hindered the prayer of Moses. I want to bring this all out, that you may see how tenderhearted love will pray in spite of every difficulty. Moses prayed against his own personal interests, for Jehovah said to him, "Let me alone, that I may consume them;" and then, looking with a glance of wondrous satisfaction upon his faithful servant, he said, "I will make of thee a great nation." What an opportunity for an ambitious man! Moses may become the founder of a great nation if he will. You know how men and women, in those old days, panted to be the progenitors of innumerable peoples, and looked upon it as the highest honor of mortal men that their seed should fill the earth. Here is the opportunity for Moses to become the father of a nation that God will bless. All the benedictions of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, are to be met in Moses and his seed; but no, he will not have it so. He turns to God, and cries to him still to bless the sinful people. It seems as if he passed over the offer that God made, sub silent, as we say; leaving it in utter silence, he cries, "Spare thy people, and bless thine heritage."

## **II. Now I introduce to you a second thought, which is, that Nothing Can Deprive A Loving Spirit Of Its Arguments In Prayer For Others.**

It is one thing to be willing to besiege the throne of grace; but it is quite another thing to get the ammunition of prayer. Sometimes you cannot pray, for prayer means the pleading of arguments; and there are times when arguments fail you, when you cannot think of any reason why you should pray. Now there was no argument in these people, nothing that Moses could see in them that he could plead with God for them; so he turned his eyes another way, he looked to God, and pleaded what he saw in him.

His first argument was, that the Lord had made them his people. He said, "Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people?" The Lord had said to Moses, "Get thee down, for thy people have corrupted themselves." "No," says Moses, "they are not my people; they are thy people." It was a noble "retort courteous", as it were, upon the ever-blessed One. "In thy wrath thou callest them my people; but thou knowest that they are none of mine; they are thine, thou didst choose their fathers, and thou didst enter into covenant with them, and I remind thee that they are thy chosen ones, the objects of thy love and mercy; and therefore, O Lord, because they are thine, wilt thou not bless them?" Oh, use that argument in your supplications! If you cannot say of a sinner that he is God's chosen, at least you can say that he is God's creature; therefore use that plea, "O God, suffer not thy creature to perish!"

Next, Moses pleads that the Lord had done great things for them, for he says, "Why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?" "I never brought Israel out of Egypt," says Moses, "how could I have done it? I did not divide the Red Sea; I did not smite Pharaoh; thou hast done it, O Lord, thou alone hast done it; and if thou hast done all this, wilt thou not finish what thou hast begun?" This was grand pleading on the part of Moses, and I do not wonder that it prevailed. Now, if you see any sign of grace, any token of God's work in the heart, plead it with the Lord. Say, "Thou hast done so much, O Lord; be pleased to do the rest, and let these people be saved with thine everlasting salvation!"

Then Moses goes on to mention, in the next place, that the Lord's name would be compromised if Israel should be destroyed. He says, "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?" If God's people are not saved, if Christ does not see of the travail of his soul, the

majesty of God and the honor of the Redeemer will be compromised. Shall Christ die to no purpose? Shall the gospel be preached in vain? Shall the Holy Spirit be poured out without avail? Let us plead thus with God, and we shall not be short of arguments that we may urge with him.

Moses goes on to mention that God was in covenant with these people. See how he puts it in the thirteenth verse: "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." There is no pleading with God like reminding him of his covenant. Get a hold of a promise of God, and you may pray with great boldness, for the Lord will not run back from his own word; but get a hold of the covenant, and you may plead with the greatest possible confidence. If I may compare a single promise to one great gun in the heavenly siege-train, then the covenant may be likened to a whole park of artillery; with that, you may besiege heaven, and come off a conqueror. Moses pleads thus with the Lord: "How canst thou destroy these people, even though thou art angry with them, and they deserve thy wrath? Thou hast promised to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, that their seed shall inherit the land; and if they be destroyed, how can they enter into Canaan, and possess it?" This is grand pleading; but what bravery it was 'when Moses dared to say to God, "Remember thy covenant, and turn from thy fierce anger, and repent of thy thoughts of evil against thy people"! O Lord, teach us also how to plead like this!

Nor was Moses without another argument, the most wonderful of all. If you read in the next chapter, at the sixteenth verse, you will notice how Moses says to God, in effect, "I cannot be parted from these people; with them I will live; with them I will die. If thou blottest their name out of thy book, blot out my name also. If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us?" See how he puts it: "land thy people.. Thou goest with us." "No," says Moses, "I will not be favored alone; I will sink or swim with these people." And I do think that this is how the Lord Jesus Christ pleads for his Church when he is interceding with God. "My Father," says he, "I must have my people. My Church is my bride, and I, the Bridegroom, cannot lose my spouse. I will die for her; and if I live, she must live also; and if I rise to glory, she must be brought to glory with me." You see, it is, "I and thy people;" this is the glorious conjunction of Christ with us as it was of Moses with the children of Israel. And, brethren, we never prevail in prayer so much as when we seem to link ourselves with the people for whom we pray. You cannot stand up above them, as though you were their superior, and then pray for them with any success; you must get down by the side of the sinner, and say, "Let us plead with God." Sometimes, when you are preaching to people, or when you are praying for them, you must feel as if you could die for them, if they might be saved, and if they were lost it would seem as if you, too, had lost everything. Rutherford said that he should have two heavens if but one soul from Anwoth met him at God's right hand; and, doubtless, we shall have the same, and we have sometimes felt as if we had a hell at the thought of any of our hearers being cast into hell. When you can pray like that, when you put yourself side by side with the soul for which you are pleading, you will succeed. You will be like Elisha, when he stretched himself upon the Shunammite's son, and put his mouth upon the child's mouth, his eyes upon the child's eyes, his hands upon the child's hands, and seemed to identify himself with the dead child. Then was he made the means of quickening to the lad. God help us to plead thus in our prayers for sinners!

There is one other thing, which I think has hardly ever been noticed, and that is the way in which Moses finished his prayer by pleading the sovereign mercy of the Lord. When you are pleading with a man, it is sometimes a very wise thing to stop your own pleading, and let the man himself speak, and then out of his own mouth get your argument. When Moses pleaded with God for the people, he had at first only half an answer; and he turned round to the Lord, and said, "Thou hast favored me, and promised to me great things; now I ask something more of thee. 'I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.'" I do not think that was idle curiosity on the part of Moses, but that he meant to use it as the great master-plea in prayer. When the Lord said to him, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee," I think I see the tears in the eyes of Moses, and I seem to hear him say, "He cannot smite the people, he cannot destroy them. He is going to make all his goodness pass before me, and I know what that is, infinite love, infinite mercy, mercy that endureth for ever." And then, when the Lord said, "I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will show mercy," how the heart of Moses must have leaped within him as he said, "There it is, that glorious truth of divine sovereignty; the Lord will shew mercy on whom he will show mercy. Why, then, he can have mercy on these wicked wretches who have been making a god out of a calf, and bowing before it!" I do delight, sometimes, to fall back upon the sovereignty of God, and say, "Lord, here is a wicked wretch; I cannot see any reason why thou shouldst save him! I can see many reasons why thou shouldst damn him; but then thou doest as thou wilt. Oh, magnify thy sovereign grace by saving this great sinner! Let men see what a mighty King thou art, and how royally thou dost handle the silver scepter of thy pardoning mercy."

That is a grand argument, for it gives God all the glory; it puts him upon the throne; it acknowledges that he is an absolute Sovereign, who is not to be dictated to, or held in with bonds and cords. Shall he not do as he wills with his own? We need often to listen to the sublime truth that thunders out from the throne of God, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So, then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Out of this truth comes the best plea that ever trembles on a pleader's lips. "Great King, eternal, immortal, invisible, have

mercy upon us! Divine Sovereign, exercise thy gracious dispensing power, and let the guilty rebels live!"

**III. Now, in the third place, let me say that Nothing Can Hinder A Pleading Spirit Of Success. The text says, "The Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people."**

If you and I know how to plead for sinners, there is no reason why we should not succeed, for, first, there is no reason in the character of God. Try, if you can, to get some idea of what God is; and though you tremble before his sovereignty, and adore his holiness, and magnify his justice, remember that he is still, first and foremost, love. "God is love," and that love shines in all the divine attributes, It is undiminished in its glory by any one of them. All the attributes of God are harmonious with each other, and love seems to be the very center of the circle. Let us never be afraid of pleading with God. He will never take it ill on our part that we pray for sinners, for it is so much after his own mind. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live." The character of God is infinitely gracious; even in its sovereignty, it is grace that reigns; therefore, let us never be afraid of pleading with the Lord. We shall surely succeed, for there is nothing in God's character to hinder us.

And, next, there is nothing in God's thought to hinder the pleader's success. Look at the text: "The Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people." I will therefore never be hindered in my pleading by any idea of the divine purpose, whatever that purpose may be. There are some who have dreaded what they call "the horrible decrees of God." No divine decree is horrible to me; and it shall never hinder me in pleading with the Lord for the salvation of men. He is God; therefore let him do what seemeth him good, absolute authority is safe enough in his hands. But even if he had thought to do evil to his people, there is no reason why we should cease from praying; we may yet succeed, for so the text has it, "Jehovah repented of the evil, which he thought to do unto his people."

I will go yet farther, and say that there is nothing even in God's act to hinder us from pleading with success. If God has begun to smite the sinner, as long as that sinner is in this world, I will still pray for him. Remember, how, when the fiery rain was falling upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and the vile cities of the plain were being covered with its bituminous sleet, Zoar was preserved in answer to the prayers of Lot. Look at David; he was a great sinner, and he had brought upon his people a terrible plague, and the destroying angel stood with his drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem; but when David saw the angel, he said to the Lord, "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done?" So the Lord was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel. Why, if I saw you between the very jaws of hell, so long as they had not actually engulfed you, I would pray for you! God forbid that we should sin against any guilty ones by ceasing to pray for them however desperate their case! My text seems to me to put this matter with astonishing force and power; the evil which God had thought to do was prevented by the intercession of his servant Moses.

**IV. I had many more things to say to you, but I must leave them unsaid, and conclude by reminding you, in only a sentence or two, that Nothing In The Mediation Of Moses Can Match Our Greater Intercessor, The Lord Jesus Christ.**

Remember, brethren, that he not only prayed, and willingly offered himself to die for us, but he actually died for us. His name was blotted from the book of the living, he died that we might live. He went not to God saying, "Peradventure, I may make atonement for the guilty;" but he made the atonement; and his pleading for sinners is perpetually prevalent. God is hearing Christ at this moment as he makes intercession for the transgressors, and he is giving him to see of the travail of his soul. This being the case, nothing ought to prevent any sinner from pleading for himself through Jesus Christ. If you think that God means to destroy you, yet go and pray to him, for "The Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people." Thus may he deal in mercy with you, for his dear Son's sake! Amen.

## **Exodus 32: Exposition**

**by C H Spurgeon**

**Exodus 32:1. And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wet not what is become of him.**

What a terrible speech to be made by the people whom God had chosen to be his own! "Make us gods. Make our Creator." How could that be?

**Exodus 32:2. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.**

Poor Aaron! He never had the backbone of his brother Moses. He was a better speaker; but oh, the poverty

of his heart! He yields to the will of these idolatrous people, and bows to their wicked behests at once

**Exodus 32:3. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.**

Idolaters spare no expense; there is many a worshipper of a god of wood or mud who gives more to that idol than professing Christians give to the cause of the one living and true God. It is sad that it should be so.

**4. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.**

This was an Egyptian idolatry, the worship of God under the fashion of an ox, the emblem of strength; but God is not to be worshipped under emblems at all. What a poor representation of God any emblem must be!

**Exodus 32:5. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD.**

They were going to worship Jehovah under the emblem of an ox. This is what you will hear idolaters say; they do not worship the image, they say, but the true God under that image. Yet that is expressly forbidden under the second commandment.

**Exodus 32:6. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people eat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.**

Lascivious games were sure to accompany idolatrous worship, for idolatry always leads to filthiness in some form or other, as if it were inevitable.

**Exodus 32:7. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:**

How startled Moses must have been when Jehovah said this to him!

**Exodus 32:8, 9. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff necked people.**

Moses perhaps begins to lift his voice in prayer, and God says:-

**Exodus 32:10. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.**

"I will keep my promise to Abraham by destroying these rebels, and taking thee, his true descendant, and fulfilling the covenant in thee."

**Exodus 32:11-13. And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 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 awarest 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 shalt inherit it for ever.**

What a brave prayer this was! Here is a wrestling Moses, true son of wrestling Israel; and he brings his arguments to bear upon Jehovah when he is angry, and he succeeds in turning aside the Lord's wrath.

**Exodus 32:14, 15. And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. And Moses turned, and went down from the mount,**

An unhappy, broken-hearted man, going from the closest communion with God, down into the midst of a wicked people.

**Exodus 32:15-17. And the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp.**

Joshua had probably waited lower down, and he met Moses in his descent. He heard with the quick ears of a soldier, and his thoughts went that way.

**Exodus 32:18, 19. And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear. And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.**

This is he who had been praying to God, and saying, "Why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people?" Now he is in deep sympathy with God, and he is himself angry with the idolaters. He cannot help it when he begins to see their sin. Before, he had only thought of the people; but now he looks at their sin. When you see sin, if you are a man of God, your wrath waxes hot, and you get into sympathy with that holy God who cannot be otherwise than indignant at iniquity wherever it may be.

**Exodus 32:20. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.**

See the power of this one man who has God at his back, and God in him. While the people are dancing around their idol, he tears it down, grinds it to powder, and says, "You shall drink it every one of you." Why, there are millions to one; but what cares he about their millions? God is with him, and he is God's servant; and, therefore, they all tremble before him.

**Exodus 32:21-24. And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my Lord was hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off so they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.**

That was a lie, for he had made the calf, and shaped it himself. Aaron had not any backbone, nor any principle, he could not be stout-hearted for God. What a poor little man he seems by the side of his great brother! How he shrivels up under the rebuke of Moses!

**Exodus 32:26. And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:)**

Moses does not spare Aaron, he lays at his door the guilt of the great sin he had committed: "Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies."

**Exodus 32:26, 27. Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD Clod of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.**

This is the man who pleaded for them on the top of the mount. See how he acts in the sight of their sin; by divine authority, he smites them right and left. Possibly, those who were slain were the men who refused to drink the water on which the powder had been sprinkled, or those who continued in rebellion against the Lord.

**28-30. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin; and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.**

I will be bound to say that this was said after a sleepless night. The people's sin is now so vividly before him that he begins to feel that God will be just if he punishes them, and does not grant them any forgiveness, so he goes once more up that steep climb to the top of Sinai with a trembling heart, and with only a "peradventure" on his lip.

**Exodus 32:31, 32. And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin-,**

There he broke down, he could not finish that sentence.

## Exodus 32:

### 32. And if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

“Let me die in their stead!” But God could not accept one man in the stead of another; there is a great Substitute, ordained of old, but he is more than man, and therefore he can stand in the sinner’s stead.

### 33-35. And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them. And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

Moses had only half success in pleading for the people; they were not to die as yet, but God declared that he would visit their sin upon them.

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## Exodus 32:26 Who Is On The LORD's Side?

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**“Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD’S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.” — Exodus 32:26.**

Those idolatrous people seem to have been awestruck by the appearance of Moses in their midst. You can picture them gathered around Aaron, worshipping the golden calf, and performing their unclean rites; but, as soon as ever Moses marches into the camp, they recognize his commanding presence and his kingly authority. “Drag down that abomination,” he cries; “and break it in pieces;” and though, just now, they were adoring it, they implicitly obey him. The calf is hurled from its pedestal, burnt in the fire, ground to powder, and mingled with the water that the idolaters drank. Then rings out the grand challenge of our text. The, brave man, who seems to stand like a solid rock amid the raging billows, feels it necessary to strike a decisive blow for Jehovah, and once for all to put an end to that shameful idolatry; so, taking his stand, as though to lift up the banner of Jehovah, he cries, “Who is on the Lord’s side? let him come unto me; and all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him;” — the men who afterwards became the priests of the Most High God. Then came that just but terrible command to execute the idolaters, and three thousand of the people perished as a warning to the rest, and that cursed image-worship was stamped out of the camp; at least, for a time.

Now, dear friends, very much as Moses did, on that occasion, needs to be done very frequently in every age. It is needful that a banner should be displayed because of the truth, and that men should be called out, to rally around it; and those, who do so, those who are the most fearless and the most faithful, shall receive a great reward, even as we read, in the Book of Deuteronomy, that Moses - bestowed a special blessing upon the tribe of Levi because its sons were faithful in that trying and testing time:” And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have-observed thy word, and kept thy covenant.” Blessed are they also, who, in these days, bow not down before the modern idols that so many worship, — blessed are the brave men who never question whether a certain course will “pay” or not, but who do the right thing, whatever the consequences of their action may be. These are they who, amidst the bright ones in heaven, shall he doubly bright; and who, here below, shall be the officers in the army of the Lord, who shall be called to lead the way in the day of battle. I would that we had many, among us, who would come forward with brave decision, and yield themselves up, without doubt or fear, to follow wherever the God of truth and the truth of God should lead them. High shall be their renown, and great shall be their reward, even as it was with these courageous sons of Levi who so promptly responded to the challenge of Moses, “Who is on the Lord’s side? let him come unto me.”

What I am going to try to do is, first, to describe the conflict, and show which is the Lord’s side; secondly, to point out to the Lord’s followers what they must do; thirdly, to remind the Lord’s hosts of their encouragements; and, fourthly, to repeat the question of the text, and to put forward proposals for enlistment in the army of the Lord.

**I. First, then, I have To Describe The Conflict Which Is Now Going On, And To Show You Which Is The Lord’s Side. That is not a very difficult task, and the conscience of each one of you ought to help me in its accomplishment.**

This is where “the Lord’s side” begins, — Belief in God against Atheism and other forms of unbelief. Infidelity assumes many forms,

— the doubt as to whether there is any God at all; — the daring defiance of God, if there be a God; or the indifference, which utterly neglects God, not caring about him either one way or another. Believers are on the opposite side to all of these, and you know that the side they are on is “the Lord’s side.” To fear him, to reverence him, to trust him, to love him, to serve him, to worship him, — that is being on “the Lord’s side.” On which side are you, dear friend? Are you a believer, a fearer, a truster, a lover, a worshipper of God; or are you a neglecter, a rejecter, a hater of him?

Here again are two sides; obedience to the commands of God, or a determination to please ourselves. Are we endeavoring to obey the moral law, or are we pouring contempt upon that law, and seeking to be happy by having our own way? How is it with you, my dear friend? Are you making yourself into your only god? Are you allowing your own lusts and passions to be the supreme governing influence over you? Are you saying to yourself, “I will have my own way; I will do as I please; so long as I can make myself merry, I care nothing whatever about the commands of God”? If that is the way you talk, it is quite clear on which side you are. Between the will of the flesh and the will of God, there is no possible question as to which is “the Lord’s side.”

Here is another battle-ground; Christ and his righteousness, or your self-righteousness; — cleansing in Christ’s blood, and covering with his perfect righteousness, on the one hand; and, on the other, salvation by your own works, salvation by your own prayers, salvation by your almsgiving, or by anything of your own. You know, at once, which is “the Lord’s side” out of those, two, for the Lord is always on Christ’s side; indeed, Christ himself is God. Justification by faith is the side on which God is; but justification by the works of the law is a lie; in fact, it is an impossibility. Now, dear friends, on which side are you with regard to this matter of salvation by Christ or salvation by self? Are you “on the Lord’s side” of that question?

Here is yet another point from which to view this great conflict; the gospel of the grace of God, or the superstitions and falsehoods of men. The Bible teaches us that sinners are saved by believing in Jesus Christ; but superstition says, “No, they are saved by being sprinkled with water, through the subtle influences that trickle from priestly fingers; they are saved by baptism, saved by sacraments. Here, then, is a sharp conflict between salvation by Christ and salvation by priests. We know which is “the Lord’s side” of that controversy; but, dear friend, on which side are you? Do you go direct to the Lord Jesus Christ as your great High Priest, and do you trust alone to the merit of his atoning sacrifice; or will you go crouching to your fellow-creature, and pour into his ear the infamous story of your sin, and so defile him even more than he is already; and, then, will you come back deluded with the false notion that you have obtained “absolution” at his hands? We know that none can forgive sins save God alone; this is the Lord’s way of making reconciliation through the blood of Jesus Christ his Son; so, friends, are you for Zion or for Rome? Are you on the side of Christ or on the side of antichrist?

There is a fierce battle, still raging in the world, between Scripture and tradition, — between this Grand Old Book and certain things which have been handed down, by tradition, from the fathers. They are said to be customs of the early church, or to have been ordained by various councils, or decreed by infallible popes. Well, dear friends, are you on the side of God’s Word or of man’s word? Is your rule of life, “Thus saith the Lord,” or “Thus say the fathers,” or “Thus say the councils,” or “Thus say the popes”? “Who is on the Lord’s side “in this matter? There is a stern fight still to be fought over this question; the battle has long been raging, and it will continue to rage until the victory is won by the truth of God. I am looking forward to the time when there will be only two parties left to fight, — the men who will have this text emblazoned on their standards, “One Lord, one faith, one baptism,” and who will have nothing but the Bible for their rule of conduct, — and those bearing the other banner in praise of the inventions of men and the traditions of the fathers. They will cling to their errors, I have no doubt, as long as they can; but the Lamb will overcome them, and they who are on “the Lord’s side” will also come off more than conquerors through him that hath loved them.

There are also two sides to all the moral questions in the world. There is holiness, for instance; you all know on whose side that is; and there is unholiness, and you have no difficulty in deciding on whose side that is. Then, as to order, peace, quietness, love, generosity, and so on; you all know on whose side they are; and you equally know on whose side disorder, strife, disaffection, tumult, selfishness, and covetousness are. You are well aware, brethren, that wherever there is anything that is right, true, pure, holy, and of good report, that is “the Lord’s side.” Wherefore, always be on that side. But if there is anything that is impure, unchaste, unlovely, unjust, that is not “the Lord’s side”, and it should not be his people’s side. At the present time, this dear land of ours seems as if it were going to be swallowed up by the demon of drunkenness. Temperance, righteousness, sobriety, — these are all on “the Lord’s side” of that question, so let every Christian see that he takes the same side as the Lord does. I need not go into all the questions that are prominent at the present time, because they keep on changing their positions; and sometimes it is one question that is most prominent and sometimes another; but to almost every question which comes up, there is “the Lord’s side” and there is another side, and the question must always be asked, “Which is the Lord’s side?” and I trust, as soon as that question is answered, you will say, “That is the side for me to take, — the side upon which the Lord is.”

## **II. Now, secondly, I am To Point Out To The Lord’s Followers What They Must Do To Show That They Are On His Side.**

And the first thing is, they must own it. The truth of God deserves to have bold adherents and brave proclaimers. Righteousness ought not to be claimed as the portion of men who are ashamed to own it. Suppose that those sons of Levi had slunk away to their

tents, and had said, "Oh, yes; we are on the Lord's side; but we do not mean to expose ourselves to any risk in dealing with these idolaters." That would have been like the craven spirit of a soldier who shirks his proper place on the field of battle. He is too modest, too retiring to fight; that is only another way of saying that he is a coward, and unworthy of the uniform he wears. In like manner, it is a mean, beggarly spirit that will not lay down life and limb, substance and honor, and everything else that one has, for the cause of God and truth. Oh, for more of the true spirit of chivalry amongst those who call Jesus their Lord and Master! It is a shame that they should ever blush to own his name; they might rather blush with shame to think that they have ever been ashamed of him. I count it nothing, brethren, to speak for the cause that everybody thinks to be good, or to float with the stream by agreeing with what the multitude reckons to be right. Every time-server can do that; but, to swim against the stream, to speak unpopular truth, to declare that which God him taught you, even though nobody else believes it, to beard the lion in his den, to stand — like Athanasius, — against the whole world for God and for his Christ, — this is being a man indeed; nay, more, this is being a Christian; and the time shall come when this shall be reckoned the noblest kind of man whom even God himself has made. So, if you are on God's side, own it.

Then, next, rally to the standard. Moses cried, "Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me." If you are a Christian, you should unite with other Christians. I believe, brethren and sisters, that it is the duty of all converts to test the various sections of the professing church by the Word of God, and then to cast in their lot with that part which holds the truth most fully and clearly; and, having conscientiously done that, to rally with the hosts of God in the great battle against wrong. Oh, you converts, who have never joined the church, what are you at? I beseech you, think over this matter, pray over it, and remember that, in the olden times, they first gave themselves unto the Lord, and afterwards they gave themselves unto his people, according to the will of God; and so ought you to do. Believers ought not to be solitary stones, lying by themselves; they should be built up into "a holy temple in the Lord, builded together for a habitation of God through the, Spirit." So, dear friends, if you are on "the Lords side", own it and join with those who also are on that side.

Then, next, if you are on "the Lord's side", be willing to be in a minority. It is true that, minorities have generally come in for kicks and blows, rather than kisses and caresses; but, at the great day of judgment, all such wrongs will be righted. And, after all, it has often been a minority, — ay, and even a minority of one, — that has done great things for God, after all. Just now, I mentioned Athanasius. You remember that, when the whole of Christendom seemed to swing round to Arianism, it was Athanasius, standing alone, "Athanasius contra mundum," as he truly said, who brought the Church back to belief in the Deity of Christ. And in the days of Luther, who can ever tell what a pivot and hinge that one lone man was for Germany and Europe? And in Scotland, what force there was in the one brave man, John Knox, whose preaching and prayers Queen Mary feared more than an army of soldiers! Few followed these brave leaders at the first, for following meant the stake, the scaffold, the prison, suffering, shame, reproach, and death, yet these were the men and women who did the true work of God, after all, and who fought the good fight of faith. Be ye followers of them, run not with the multitude to do evil; rather choose the narrow way, that leadeth unto life, though few there be that find it. From the days of Noah, the followers of the Lord have usually been in the minority. If the rightness of any course could be decided by the counting of heads, the devil would mostly be in the right: but we do not reckon in that way. We test every question by the Word of God, not by the votes of men. If the Lord has said anything, believe it, even if no one else does. If the Lord has revealed any truth to your conscience, hold to it, even though, to all others, it should seem to be a lie; and, verily, I say unto you, you shall have your reward. The sons of Levi were in a minority, in comparison with the great host of idolaters in the camp of Israel, yet they came out boldly for the Lord, and are, therefore, held in honor even to this day.

Further, you must be aggressive if you are on "the Lord's side." These sons of Levi, directly they declared that they were on the side of Jehovah, had to come forth to smite and slay his enemies. So must you, if you are a follower of the Lord. There is nothing that the devil likes better than to be let alone. I am often asked, "Why do you not preach what you believe, and leave other people's doctrine alone?" "Ah, just so! Why don't I? And why did not the Lord Jesus Christ let the devil alone, and let false teachers alone; and why does not the gospel let error and falsehood alone? When the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, one part of his work was to destroy the works of the devil. The demons said to him, "Let us alone: what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us?" His answer was, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him;" and when the demons say to us, "Let us alone," we reply, "That is the very thing that we cannot do, and that we dare not do." We must not let falsehood, and sin, and error alone. Christ himself said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." His faithful servants are to follow his example, to quarrel with error, to fight against sin, to be aggressive against everything that is opposed to our Lord and his truth. The devil is quite ready to make a league of peace with us, or to agree to a truce, and say, "Now, do not go on fighting any longer. Let us shake hands, and be friends. There can be no reason why I should not continue to be the prince of the power of the air, and Christ should also have his disciples; only let them be very decorous and quiet, and mind their own business." But we will make no such wicked league or truce as that, for we are to resist the devil; as Peter writes, "whom resist steadfast in the faith." The sons of Levi had to smite the adversaries of God, and so must you who are on "the Lord's side."

You must also let love to God overmaster all nature's ties if you are on "the Lord's side." Moses expressly commended Levi for this: "Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own

children.” They were so jealous for the Lord of hosts, that they would not tolerate idolatry in their nearest kith and kin. Happily, brethren, we have not to fight anybody with a sword of steel. God forbid that any of us should ever take the life of a fellow-creature! Our one weapon is the two-edged sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; the force we use is the force of the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. But, I charge you, never do a wrong thing, or even a questionable thing, in order to please father, or mother, or wife, or child; and never allow any wrong to go unrebuked in the dearest friend you have, for “faithful are the wounds of a friend.” Some have condoned sin to please a wife or a husband; but they who are faithful to God must also be faithful to the members of their own household. This may involve persecution for themselves; but they must be willing to bear it, for Christ’s sake, and they must not yield an inch, or an iota, in any matter of principle, or any question of truth and right, even to the beloved of their heart. Can you do this? If so, you are worthy to be reckoned among those who are on “the Lord’s side.”

Once more, they who are on “the Lord’s side” Must do as they are bidden. They must be prepared to obey all Christ’s commands, to the letter, and also in the spirit of them, right to the end of life. I am ashamed of the way in which some professing Christians ignore so much of the Bible, shutting their eyes to Christ’s commands, or, like, Nelson, turning their blind eye to those they don’t wish to read. Finding themselves in a certain community, they believe what the community believes, without ever testing it, and trying it, by the Word of God. They do not want to know too much; and if anybody tries to teach them a truth which they do not know, they are unwilling to learn it, lest it should unsettle them in their ecclesiastical position. I bless God that, when I was converted to Christ, I laid down this rule for myself, — “Whatever the Lord teaches me, in his Word, I will follow. If it should lead me into a path where I shall be quite alone, because I can find nobody to believe as I believe, yet will I believe and teach that which the Holy Spirit reveals to me in the Word.” At this moment, I have not an atom of respect for any authority, in matters relating to divine truth, except the authority of God; and I would strongly urge all young people to try all catechisms, creeds, customs, doctrines, practices, and everything else, by that infallible test: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

### **III. Thirdly, I am to remind The Lord’s Hosts Of Their Encouragements.**

First, we may be encouraged to be on “the Lord’s side because it is the cause of right and truth. To me, it seems to be a sufficient reward to a man to know that he is defending a right cause even if he has to die for it. Do you crave the applause of human hands and voices? Do you covet the glance of approving eyes? If so, your self-respect has already fallen below the point which it ought to mark. Are you right in the course you are now pursuing? If you are, you need not ask for anything more. To be right, and yet to be poor; — to be right, and to be abused, or even to be put to death; — is, surely, sufficient for any follower of the Lord.

Better still, if there can be any better, remember that you are on God’s side. He, who is almighty, looks upon you as his friend; or, rather, say that he, who is almighty, is your Friend. He is much more than that, for he is your All-in-all. You may shelter yourself beneath his wings. Behind the bosses of his buckler, you may hide yourself in perfect security.

Moreover, Jesus the Crucified is with you, if you are on “the Lord’s side.” There he stands, whose head was crowned with the cruel thorns, and whose hands and feet were pierced by the terrible nails. Blessed is every soldier of the cross, for he hath Christ for his Captain; and where his pennon waves, victory must surely come.

Further, my brethren and sisters in Christ, all the saints of God are with us; — the countless hosts of the redeemed, before the throne of God above, are all on his side, and ours; and so are all the holy angels. “that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his Word.” All the unfallen intelligences in the universe are on “the Lord’s side.” Therefore let us not be afraid, who are enrolled beneath the banner of the cross; and let others cast in their lot with us; for, thus, they will be siding with a noble host that has gone on before us. The lineage of the saints of God is a very high one. Talk of the blood royal or imperial; — bah! a single drop of the blood of the martyrs, flowing through our veins, is far more to be desired. To walk as they walked, “of whom the world was not worthy,” — those first confessors of the destitute, afflicted, tormented;” — this is to be a member of the blood royal of heaven, the highest nobility that can be gained in this world. How many of you, young men and young women, or older men and women, are ready to say, “We are on the Lord’s side”? The air all around us is crowded with the spirits of just men made perfect. They are watching to see how we run the Christian race, and wrestle for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus; and they sing a new song of praise unto the Lord as he leads one and another to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints, to stand out boldly for Christ and him crucified, and to speak, or serve, or suffer, as best shall glorify the Lord Most High.

### **IV. Time and strength both fail me, so I cannot say more upon that point, though much more might be said. I am, in closing my discourse, To Repeat The Question Of The Text, And To Make Proposals For Enlistment In The Army Of The Lord. I should like to act as a recruiting sergeant, and to enlist some new soldiers for King Jesus.**

“Who is on the Lord’s side?” “Well,” says one, “I wish to be.” Well, I will gladly help you to enlist. You know what the sergeant does when he enlists a young man; the first thing he does is to give him something, — a shilling; and if you intend to be a follower of the Lord, you must receive something; or, rather, you must receive Someone, even the Lord Jesus Christ, for “as many as received

him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." You cannot be on "the Lord's side" unless you receive the Lord's Christ as your Savior; but as soon as you accept him as the free gift of Jehovah's free grace, you are enlisted into the army of the Lord. Will you take him on those terms? Will you have the Lord Jesus Christ as your Captain? I pray his gracious Spirit to make you say, "Ay, that I will, by his grace."

Next, the sergeant puts the ribbons in the young man's hat; and, if you receive Christ, the next thing you have to do is to confess Christ openly by being baptized. Our Captain's own words, as recorded in the gospel according to Mark, are these, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" and what he has joined together, no one has the right to put asunder. So, get the colors in your hat, young recruit, if you really are enlisted on "the Lord's side."

When you have done that, the next thing for us to do is to take you off to the barracks, and drill you. You will not be fully fitted to fight the Lord's battles until you have been drilled and trained by your new officers. So, submit yourself to the discipline of the Church of Christ. Be willing to take your place in the ranks with your brethren, to follow the New Testament church order, to be taught what are the first principles of the Christian faith, and to be instructed yet further in the things of God, so that, afterwards, you may be able, in your turn, to instruct others. Christ's commission runs thus, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach (make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them (those who are made disciples) in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." So, you see, we are to teach before we baptize, and afterwards still further to teach those who have been made disciples, and who have been baptized into the triune name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Then, we shall want you to put on your full regimentals. What are the regimentals of a Christian? The garments of holiness, the livery of love, and the whole armor of God. We pray the Lord to clothe you, from head to foot, in the divine panoply wherein all the warriors of the cross should be arrayed; — the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, "the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God." There is nothing like having you, Bible always with you, and being able to turn to any passage that you need when you are confronting the foe; for "It is written" is a wondrous weapon against the devil, as Christ himself proved. Satan flees from this sharp sword, and other adversaries of the Lord, and his people, feel the force of the Word when they will not yield to anything else.

Then, when you are fully armed, and drilled, and trained, we shall expect you to wage war for King Jesus; and the first war must be a civil war, — war within your own soul, — war to the bitter end against every sin, every evil habit, every false word. All iniquity must be driven out of your spirit, at the point of the bayonet, and no quarter must be given to any enemy of the Most High God. Then, even while the civil war is raging, we shall want you to carry the war into the enemy's territory. Attack the foe on all sides, — speak to your friends about Christ, so live that they will see Christ's life reproduced in you, at least in a measure; — plead with those with whom you work or live, — the servants in the house, or your companions, all sorts and conditions of men, — tell them all about Jesus Christ. If we were once to have a church fully awakened, and zealous for Christ and his truth, we should soon have the persecuting times back again. The early Christian church was very enthusiastic; they went everywhere preaching the Word. Somebody says, "Ah! they lived in the days of persecution." But it was not the persecution which made them enthusiastic; it was their enthusiasm that brought upon them persecution for Christ's sake; and, probably, if we were as good Christians as we ought to be, we should not be half as well liked by the world as we now are; and if there was more noise and opposition made against the followers of Christ, it would not, be at all a bad sign. If those, who hate righteousness, hated Christians more heartily than they now do, it might be a token that God was more manifestly at work in us, making us more "out-and-out" for him than we are at present.

Now, then, you who are on "the Lord's side" in this congregation, — you who really believe in Jesus, — I invite all of you to confess your faith in him if you have not already done so. Nay, more than that, in the name of Jesus, in whom you believe, I exhort and command you to confess your faith in him. Be not ashamed to avow your convictions; do not try to conceal yourselves from your fellow Christians. Come out, and come out soon; and may the numbers of this church, or of some other church, be greatly swollen by the addition of those who are truly upon "the Lord's side." I wish I could persuade some of you not to put off this confession any longer, but to say, "I love my Savior, and I mean to come out, and confess that I am on 'the Lord's side.' I have been far too long hesitating, and halting between two opinions; but I will not let another week go by without saying, as plainly as words can say it, "I have given myself to Christ, and now I wish to give myself to his Church." May God bless you all for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

## Exodus 32:1-29 Exposition by C H Spurgeon

**Exodus 32:1. And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us, for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.**

They wanted something to look at, — something visible that they could adore. It was not that they meant to cease to worship Jehovah, but they intended to worship him under some tangible symbol. That is the great

fault of Ritualists and Romanists, they aim at worshipping God, but they must do so through some sign, some symbol, some cross, some crucifix, or something or other that they can see.

**Exodus 32:2, 3. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.**

People are often very generous in their support of a false religion; and, to make idol gods, they will sacrifice their most precious treasures, as these idolaters willingly gave their golden earrings.

**Exodus 32:4. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.**

No doubt they copied the Egyptian God, which was in the form of a bull, which the Holy Spirit, by the pen of Moses, here calls a calf. The psalmist probably also alludes to it when he speaks of "an ox or a bullock that hath horns and hoofs." It seems strange that these people should have thought of worshipping the-living God under such a symbol as that.

**Exodus 32:5. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.**

"To Jehovah." They intended to worship Jehovah under the form of a bull — the image of strength. Other idolaters go further, and worship Baal and various false gods, but, between the worship of a golden calf and the worship of false gods, there is very little choice; and, between the idolatry of the heathen and Popery, there is about as much difference as there is between six and half a dozen.

**Exodus 32:6. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.**

It was usual to worship false gods with music and dancing and with orgies of drunkenness and obscene rites, and the Israelites fell into the same evils as they had seen among their neighbors.

**Exodus 32:7. And the LORD said unto Moses,-**

Just in the midst of his hallowed communion, the Lord said to him: —

**Exodus 32:7. Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:**

God would not own them as his people. He called them Moses' people: "thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves."

**Exodus 32:8-10. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, these are thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.**

For Moses began at once to pray for the people, — to interpose between God and the execution of his righteous wrath; and, therefore, the Lord said to him, "Let me alone,... that I may consume them."

**Exodus 32:11. And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath was hot against thy people,**

—  
See how he dares even to say to God, "They are thy people, though they have acted so wickedly. 'Why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people,'" —

**Exodus 32:11-13. Which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Therefore 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.**

Moses pleaded the covenant which the Lord had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and there is no plea

like that. Although it might have been to his own personal interest that the people should be destroyed, Moses would not have it so; and he pleaded with God, for the sake of his own honor, his faithfulness, and his truth, not to run back from the word which he had spoken.

**Exodus 32:14, 15. And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. And Moses turned, and went down from the mount,**

Does it not seem sad for Moses to have to go down from the immediate presence of God, and to stand among the idolatrous and rebellious people in the camp? Yet that is often the lot of those whom God employs as his servants. They have, as it were, to come down from heaven to fight with hell upon earth.

**Exodus 32:15-17. And the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides, on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp.**

For Joshua was a younger man than Moses, and also a soldier, so his ear was quicker to hear what he took to be "a noise of war in the camp."

**Exodus 32:18. And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.**

Moses knew that it was not a battle-cry either of the victors or the vanquished; but the song of idolatrous worshippers.

**Exodus 32:19. And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.**

In righteous indignation, preserving those sacred tablets from the profane touch of the polluted people, by dashing them to fragments in his holy anger

**Exodus 32:20. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.**

Think of the courage of this one man, to go single handed right into the middle of the idolaters' camp, and deal thus with their precious god!

**Exodus 32:21-24. And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.**

Which was a lie. Aaron was a poor weak-minded creature, easily persuaded to do wrong; and when his stronger-minded and more gracious brother was absent, he became the willing tool of the idolatrous people; and yet Aaron is called, by the psalmist, "the saint of the Lord," and so he was, taking him as a whole. One black spot, on the face of a fair man, does not prove him to be a negro; and so, one sin, in the life of a man who is usually holy, does not put him among the ungodly.

**Exodus 32:25-28. And when Moses saw that the people were naked, (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies) then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses:**

The rebellious, the idolatrous, the men who had defied the authority of God, were to be summarily executed on the spot.

**Exodus 32:28, 29. And there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.**

Such a colossal crime as that must be expiated before the Lord could again bless the chosen race.

## Exodus 33:15 Removal

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**"If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence."-Exodus 33:15.**

THIS is a prayer which has been used hundreds of times, and which is found quite in place on many different occasions. Moses was in the wilderness when he uttered it; he was about to lead the people into Canaan, the land that flowed with milk and honey; yet he felt that he would rather continue to endure the inconveniences of the tent and of the wilderness, with the presence of his God, than enjoy the rest and the fatness of the land of promise without him. God had made the desert to become to Moses like a garden; he felt that all the gardens of Canaan and the vineyards of Eschol would be as nothing to him if God should withdraw his presence.

Throughout the history of the Church of Christ, there have been particular places where men of God have been compelled to fall on their knees, and pray this prayer of Moses. I can conceive of our Puritan forefathers, when they first left this spot, Southwark, to seek in another land the liberty which they could not find here, bowing their knees before they entered their little vessel, "The Mayflower," and crying to God, "If thy presence go not with us carry us not up hence." I can imagine John Bunyan-after he had been twelve years in prison, and had become almost habituated to it, ere he crossed the threshold, when the time of his imprisonment was over,-looking upon the cold, damp walls of the prison on Bedford Bridge, and saying to his Lord, "If thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence." The immortal dreamer would rather abide in his "den" with his God than go forth into the world, and leave his Master behind him.

Many a time, dear friends, in your experience and mine, have we also had to feel the force of such a prayer as this. When, rather more than seven years ago, I left my kind and loving little flock at Water beach to come and preside over this great assembly, I could not help crying out to God, from my inmost soul, "If thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence." When you, beloved, have to pass through any changes in life; when, in God's good providence, you are removed from one sphere of service to another, I think that you also may look up to God in prayer, and say, "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." And at last, when you and I shall be about to die, when the hour shall approach for us to leave this world behind us, and to wade through the cold stream of death, what prayer can be more appropriate than this, "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence"? To go anywhere without our God, is terrible; but to die without the presence of God, would be awful beyond expression. To go down into death's dark river with no kind helper, with no loving voice saying to us, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; my rod and my staff shall comfort thee;" would be sad indeed. It must be indeed a solemn thing to meet death alone, to have no presence of God to cheer us in the last dread conflict.

I have thus mentioned various circumstances in which we might pray this prayer, and expect a gracious answer to it; but I think, as a church and people, such a text as this is peculiarly appropriate at this time. We are about to leave this place, which has, to many of us, very hallowed associations. When some of our older friends left Carter Lane Chapel, which once stood on the site now occupied by the London Bridge railway, I have no doubt that they felt it to be a very dreadful thing to leave the old place; yet, perhaps, it was one of the best things that could have occurred to the church, that they were obliged to come out, and build a larger structure,-although it is built, I suppose, in as bad a place as they could have found by a microscopic survey of this entire metropolis. There are, doubtless, many who will always cherish great love for this place because here Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth before their eyes, crucified among them. I think all of these will join with us, who are younger, and therefore less subject to pain concerning changes, and we will all unite-despite all the advantages which we hope will follow our entering upon a larger and more public place of worship,-despite the fact that three or four times as many will be able there to listen to the Word of God as can listen to it here,-despite all this, we will unite in saying to our Lord, "'If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence.' Here let us abide unless thou, who art the true Shekinah, wilt go with us, and still shine forth from between the cherubim." I feel inclined to stop my sermon, and to bow my head, and to ask you to bow yours, that we may together present this petition to our God; but, as you have already prayed by the mouth of two or three brethren, I spread it before you, and "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance," and urge you to plead it in secret, and at your family altars, before your God: "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence."

I will arrange my subject under three heads. First, what the presence of God always involves, secondly, what our present removal

involves; and thirdly, the sins by which God's presence may be driven away, and the means by which that presence may still be secured to us.

### **I. First, then, let us think What The Presence Of God Always Involves.**

The one great need in the Church of Christ is the presence of God. What is wanted in our places of worship is not that they should be specimens of the highest style of architecture; although, certainly, God's house ought not to be meaner than our own. It is not necessary that they should be sumptuously adorned, although the greatest riches are not too much to be devoted to the service of God. It is not essential that rich people should be in the congregation, although there is a promise which says, "The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favor." It is not absolutely needful that the minister should be eloquent or talented, although it is well that, if a man has ten talents, he should consecrate them all to Christ, since talent never glitters so much as when it is consecrated and given up to God. There are many things that the churches may need, or may not need; but, certainly, the one thing they need beyond everything else is the presence of God. It was better for the Church of Christ in England when her members met together by tens and twenties in the woods, and were hunted about by informers, and their ministers haled off to prison; it was better for them to be persecuted, and even put to death, in the conscious enjoyment of the Lord's presence, than it would have been for them to have had such soft, palmy, gentle days as these, but not to have had their Lord with them. It was better for the Church of Christ in Scotland when Cargill read his text by the lightning's flash, and when the Covenant's worshipped God, in dens and caves at midnight, through fear of Claverhouse's dragoons;-it was better for them to have their Lord with them in the midst of the snow and the tempest than to meet, calmly and peacefully, in a fine ceiled house from which the Lord himself was absent. It would be far better for us to go back to the age of old barns, and dingy thatched buildings, and to the times of an uneducated ministry, when God's power was manifestly with his servants, rather than to go forward, and to become great, and mighty, and intellectual, but to lack the presence, and power, and blessing of the most High God. It is the presence of God that makes the house glorious. Where he is, there is glory; and where he is not, "Ichabod" is written on the wall, even though that wall should be covered with pure gold.

Why is God's presence the one thing needful for his Church? Is it not God's presence that makes joy in his sanctuary? When are we most glad? Is it not when we consciously realize the presence of our God! That puts more joy into our hearts than when our corn, and wine, and oil are increased. What is it that comforts the mourners in Zion? Is it not a sight of Jesus face, and a vision of his glory? What handkerchief can wipe the weeping eye like that which is held in the hand of a covenant-keeping God? Where is the balm for our wounds, and the cordial for our fears, but in him? "As the hart panteth after the water brooks," so doth our spirit cry out for God, even the living God; and unless we have his presence, our soul refuseth to be comforted.

Further, what is it, but the presence of God that makes his people holy? Is it not, because they see the face of Christ, that they are transformed into his likeness? It is not mere teaching that can make a man Christ-like; it is beholding Christ,-Christ shining upon that man's face, and the man reflecting the light which he has thus received. The presence of God is absolutely essential for the edification, instruction, growth, and perfecting of believers. If we have not this, the means of grace are empty, and vain, and void; - clouds without rain, that mock the thirsty land;-wells without water, that tantalize the perishing caravan, but yield no moisture to burning lips;-a mere mirage in the desert, looking like pools of water, and fruit-bearing palm trees, but only mocking the wayfarer's gaze. We must have the presence of God for his people's sake, for without him they can do nothing.

And, my brethren, where is the power of our ministry with sinners unless we have the presence of God? We sow the seed, I grant you; but who prepares the soil, and makes the furrows soft with showers? Who is it sends the genial sunshine? Would not the seed rot under the clods unless the heavenly Husbandman watched over it, and took care of it? There was never yet one sinner who was converted by man. It is not in man's power to create, nor is it in his power to new-create. Let a man first attempt to make a fly; and if he succeeds in doing that, then let him try to make a new heart and a right spirit. Go, thou who thinkest thou canst do aught to change human nature, and change the Ethiopian's blackness into snowy whiteness, or remove the spots from the leopard's skin; -go, check Niagara in its dashing might, and make the stream leap upward, and return to its source;-go, bid the tempest, and bind the clouds, and bid the winds only howl to music, and the waves dance in chorus;-but when thou hast done all this, even then thou mayest not hope to make a new heart and a right spirit by any ministry apart from the Spirit of God.

Ah, my friends! we have had the presence of God here full often, as many of you can testify. If this were the time and place to do so, there are hundreds of you who could stand up, and say, "Here. Christ met with me, standing on you spot where the crowd is now;"-here, or there, or in the schoolroom;-ay, and behind the pillar, too! There have been many of you who have heard the Word to purpose in this place. Drunkards have strayed in here, and some arrow, from the bow drawn at a venture, has reached their heart. The harlot has come into these aisles, on the way to the bridge to destroy herself; and Christ has met with her, and she now lives to praise his name. Here the thief, the burglar, the passer of bad money, and the very worst and vilest of men have stepped in, and Christ has met with them, glory be to his holy name! No man shall stop me from this glorying as I remember how God has here plucked brands from the burning. All the philosophers in the world have never, by their philosophy, wrought such a work as the gospel has wrought here; for I can point to hundreds-I might probably with truth say thousands-of those who, having aforetime

scorned God, and scoffed at his name, now love him with all their heart, and desire to live to his glory, and who would be willing even to die for his honor. You may tell this in Gath, and publish it in the streets of Askelon; let the mighty men of Philistia tremble, and let fear take hold of the sons of Moab, for God hath made bare his arm, and smitten his' enemies, and the old gospel has proved itself worthy of its ancient prowess. God hath triumphed gloriously, and put to flight both our sins and our adversaries. But what should we do now without his presence? It is he who has accomplished all that has been done, so again we cry to him, "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence."

## **II. Secondly, consider What Our Present Removal Involves.**

We are about to remove to our new Tabernacle; we must remove. It is not even humane to continue to worship here. On the lowest ground of common humanity, it is not right that such a multitude of people should be crowded into so small a structure. With every attempt that we have made to get proper ventilation, it is not possible, in such a building as this overcrowded, as it is, that persons should be able to breathe in a healthy way. I feel it as the minister, and I am quite certain that you must feel it as the congregation. If I ever by chance see anybody asleep,-and that has occurred, I think, only twice in the last seven years,-it is no matter of astonishment to me; the wonder is, that you do not all go to sleep under the influence of such insalubrious air as is often bred here by the multitudes.

But, on far higher grounds, we must go hence. Here, every Sabbath night, there are crowds in the streets. Let the faintest gleam of sunshine come out, and there are many more obliged to go away than are able to enter this building. It is a pleasing thing that so many are willing to listen to the same minister for seven years right on. The glory must be given to God; the responsibility is with us. If people will come to hear, the least thing that the Church of God can do is to find accommodation for them. The time was when many of us would almost have plucked out our right eye to get them to come. When they are anxious to come, it is but a small thing that we should provide a suitable structure where they may be housed. The theater services are, no doubt, a great blessing. To my mind, however, they lack one great essential for permanent success; not being connected with any distinct place of worship, whatever good may be done is scarcely heard of; great efforts are put forth with small apparent results. In the theater, the seed is sown; but there is no barn provided in which the harvest can be housed. If some two or three men could be found constantly to preach, and if endeavors could be made to induce the people to advance from what is, after all, an irregular form of worship, to some place which should be their own spiritual home, where they could worship God constantly, more permanent good to the Church of Christ at large would certainly result. We pray God to speed every effort for the proclamation of the gospel; but we are most glad when there seems the greatest prospect of permanent success.

We must move, then, to our new Tabernacle, but still the prayer recurs, "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." We are going to a place concerning which we entertain great expectations. We hope there to see vast multitudes attentively listening to the Word. We trust that many of these will be converted, that the church will be largely increased, and that out of the church there will spring up young men who will be good soldiers of Jesus Christ, men who will preach the truth, as it is in Jesus, throughout this land; and some of them, we hope, in far distant countries. But if God's presence go not with us, our expectations will be vain, we shall have flattered ourselves with a pleasing picture which shall never be completed; we shall have raised a cup to our lips, the sweet draught of which we shall never drink if God's presence go not with us.

Next, we are going to a place of great opportunities. What opportunities you will all have for doing good,-myself especially, though I certainly do not lack for opportunities; I have ever before me a wide and open door. Oh, that I had the strength to do more, and that there were more time in which I could work! Still, when some five or six thousand people are constantly being addressed, it is no small opportunity for usefulness. Who can tell how many holy thoughts may be inspired, how many wrong desires quenched, how many evil motives exposed, how many right designs prompted in human hearts? O Lord, thou hast indeed given to thy servant high opportunities; but what are these if thy presence go not with us? They are opportunities that must be wasted; they are chances of attack upon the enemy that must certainly end in our own defeat if the presence of God be not with us. It is the same with each of you in your measure; Sabbath-school teachers, I hope there will open up before you a far wider sphere. Ragged-school teachers, and you who distribute tracts, you who preach in the' streets, and all of you who feel any desire to do good to your fellow-creatures, all of you, I think, will have presented before you a golden opportunity, the like of which seldom occurs. Pray, I beseech you,-by all that is good and holy, I implore you to pray to God that his presence' may go with you; for, if not, these opportunities will all be thrown away. It would have been as well for you to have been obscure Christians in some remote hamlet of the Orkneys or Shetlands, where you could not reach a congregation without peril of your lives, as to be members of this largest of Dissenting churches, and yet not to have the presence of God with you.

There is a more solemn thought still. Our great house will involve greater responsibilities. Many persons kindly suggest to me the solemnity of my position. I know I do not feel it as I might; but I do realize it as fully as I dare. I sometimes feel, in preaching to such multitudes, as a man must feel who walked along a tightrope, and was always in danger of falling; and I shall fail if I look down. But if I look up, I can walk there even though hell itself is foaming at my feet. There is no need of fear to the man who relies upon his God, but there is every reason for fear to the man who begins to rely upon himself. The prophet Habakkuk says,

The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places." So may it be with us; but what an awful responsibility it is! You know how the Lord said to the prophet Ezekiel, "So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." I think I have chewed and masticated that text many times. My deacons know well enough how, when I first preached in Exeter Hall, there was scarcely ever an occasion, in which they left me alone for ten minutes before the service, but they would find me in a most fearful state of sickness, produced by that tremendous thought of my solemn responsibility; and, even now, if I ever sit down, and begin to turn that thought over, and forget that Christ has all power in heaven and in earth, I am always affected in the same way. I scarcely dare to look that thought in the face, and I am compelled to put my responsibilities where I put my sins, on the back of the Lord Jesus Christ, hoping, trusting, believing, knowing, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that last great day.

You also have your responsibilities; you must be a holy people. "A city set on a hill cannot be hid." I never care what is said of me, except one thing. When I hear that any member of this church has been betrayed into an unholy deed, that cuts me to the very quick. I had sooner that you should diminish by death one-half, than that there should be even one in a hundred who should fall into sin. It is sorrow enough to bury our friends, but it is a greater sorrow still to have to excommunicate them from fellowship or to censure them for misdeeds. You must be a holy people; nor less must you be an active people. If God has done so much for you, and you begin to sleep upon your oars, or to sit still, and say, "We have done enough, now we will be quiet," the curse of God will fall upon you. As surely as you are men or women, he has not brought you to this post of duty that you may cease your efforts, or stand still. He doth but put you into the middle of the battle that you may fight with sterner vigor, that you may deal your blows with both your hands, to win the battle for your Lord and Master. There are responsibilities, that lie upon you as a church, that will crush you utterly unless this prayer is answered for you, "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence."

### **III. Thirdly, we are to consider The Sins By Which God's Presence May Be Driven Away, And The Means By Which That Presence May Be Retained.**

We can easily get rid of God's presence if we grow proud. Stand inside your new house, and say, "This great Babylon that I have builded! "and it will be a Babylon to you at once. Begin to say, "We are a great people, we can do anything that we wish; we have but to attempt, and we can accomplish;" offer incense to your own acts, bow down and worship your own sword as though it had gotten you the victory; and the Lord shall say, and the ears of Christians shall hear it as distinctly as the Jews, at the siege of Jerusalem, heard the rustling of wings, and a voice saying, "Arise, let us go hence." A proud heart is never God's palace; and a proud church will never be honored of the Lord.

Further, you can easily drive away the Holy Spirit by sloth. Be as lazy as some churches are, or do as little as they do; be as little consecrated, as sleepy, as dull, as cold, as lukewarm, as too many professing Christians are, and you shall soon find that the Lord has withdrawn himself from you. It is fire in the church that is constantly needed, divine energy to quicken the whole man into an intense activity for his Lord and Master's cause. If you, as a church, fall into sloth, you will hear him say, "This is not my rest. If it be the place of your sleep, you have polluted it, and I will depart from you."

Disunion, too, among yourselves will soon cause the Holy Spirit to remove from you. It has been constantly my joy to see union in the church. We are men; and, therefore, we do not always see eye to eye with one another. But I trust that we are also Christian men; and, therefore, that we are always willing to bear with one another's infirmities. I daresay that you have a good deal to put up with from me; I know that I have, sometimes, a good deal to put up with from some of you. Sometimes there is one person, and at other times there is another person, who would give offense; and it has been one part of my work, since I have been pastor, whenever the ship has sprung a leak, not to say much about it, but to pick the oakum myself, and to go down and drive it in, and so stop the water from coming in at that place. There are some of you who have often done similar work. This ship would have been scuttled long ago if it had not been for some loving spirits who would not let other people disagree. If any of you have disagreed, I hope you will settle your disagreements at once. If there be any dissension's, I hope you will leave them all behind at Park Street. If any of you are not perfectly at one with each other, we cannot expect God's presence. to go with us until these things are once for all forgiven and forgotten. Let us feel as perfectly one as though we were all perfect men and women, and may God grant us evermore-such a spirit of mutual forbearance! May he give to us that charity which hopeth all things, believeth all things, and endureth all things, for then we shall have the Master's presence; but without this, the Holy Spirit, who is the Dove, will never stay with us.

Furthermore, if we wish to have God's presence taken from us, there is another quick way of securing that end; that is, by getting slack and slow in prayer. The prayer-meeting is the gauge of the church's spiritual condition. You may always test our prosperity by the multitudes who assemble to pray. Ay, and if we could enter your families, and hear how you pray there;-and if my ear could be chose to your closet door, that I might hear how you pray for the church in private;-then should I know how the church will succeed. Grow lax and careless here, do but cease to entreat the Lord for a blessing, and then he will say, "I will not bless this people; I will

not give unto them, for they do not cry unto me; my door of mercy shall not be' opened to them, for they refuse to knock." O beloved, let us be instant and earnest in prayer!

And let us have more faith. I wish I could leave all my unbelief behind me, and I wish you could all do the same; it would be a blessed legacy, I am sure, to this chapel; and the next person who comes to preach here would, I trust, sweep it all out. Oh, that we could get rid of our wicked distrust of our God, and our suspicion of his faithfulness, our doubts as to his veracity, our troubles and our fears about the future! O Lord, help us to stay ourselves on thee! May we now, as a church and people, expect great things, attempt great things, do great things, and believe great things; then shall we see greater things than we have ever yet beheld. Give us more faith, Lord; and drive away our unbelief!

But how can we keep the Spirit of God with us now that we are about to go to our new Tabernacle? We can do it, by his aid, by cultivating those graces which are just the reverse of the evils' I have mentioned. First, we must be humble. Walk humbly with your God, walk humbly towards one another, be patient towards all men. Brethren, we must be willing to be nothing; we shall never be anything till we are willing to be nothing. If any man will be perfectly content to be nobody, he shall be somebody; but he who must be somebody shall be nobody. I have always noticed, in a somewhat wide observation of personal character, that the most, assuming and pretentious are the least respected, but the most humble, and disinterested, and self-denying, and even self-detracting, are those whom men delight to honor. Crown yourself, and every fool will try to knock the crown off your head; go crownless, and there will be some who will be wise enough to say, "That man deserves a crown; let us put it on his head." For Christ's sake as a church, let us be humble.

Then, let us be united. The apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." They were two women, and even good women will quarrel sometimes. Perhaps you ask, "What did it matter that they were not of the same mind?" Ah! but they were members of the church at Philippi, and the apostle Paul did not like for even two women to disagree if they were members of the same church. What shall I say of two male members of the church,- what shall I say of two aged members of the church,-what if I should look around me, and say, "There are some who fear, are not perfectly at one with each other"? Nay, I will not say it; I will suppose that there are none in that condition; but if there are, let me now entreat them to be of the same mind in the Lord. What if one of them has an angry temper, and the other has a hard disposition? What if one thinks he has a grievance, and the other says that he is the one who ought to complain? What if one of you has spoken ill of another, and he has spoken ill of you in return? Do not attempt to revive those old quarrels, but let them be buried. Come, let me throw the first handful of earth upon them. "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Yet I must gratefully confess that I never knew, or heard, or read of a church more thoroughly and intensely one than this church is; but it may be that we have, in our midst, some such as I have been describing; and if so, I pray that, if you would have the presence of God to go with us to our new sanctuary, you will see to it that all this evil is done away with once for all.

Next to this, my dear friends, let us go up into our new sanctuary with a mind to work. I do not think I ever have to whip you to work, but I do get a great deal of work out of you. I always seek, whenever there is anything extra to be done, to preach Christ to you in such a way that you fall in love with him over again, and you want to do something more for him than you have ever done before. You hardly know all that you have already done, and I believe you are just as ready to build another new Tabernacle now as you were when we first began. You would have more faith, I daresay, concerning building a second than you had concerning the first. Let each man, who has done nothing for the Master hitherto, now say, "I must begin to do something at once. Though I have been lazy at New Park Street, I must not be lazy in the new Tabernacle." You know that we are going near "The Elephant and Castle." Well, when we once get there, let every elephant carry his own castle; or, in other words, let every man bear his own burden, let every Christian do his own work, whether that service be the offering of prayer and praise, or the hewing of wood and the drawing of water for the house of the Lord.

Then, again, let us take care that we carry up to that new place fervent hearts, full of prayer. Come, brethren, let us fill our censers afresh ere we start; let us put in the frankincense, and all manner of precious spices, and let us plead for the sacred fire to descend; and then let us stand, as long as that house stands, or we live, waving those censers between the living and the dead, praising the Lord for his mercies, and praying to him for yet further favors. I do not know how to plead with you as fervently as I could wish to do; but I trust that I have set my text before you in such a way as to make you cry to the Lord, "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." Finally, let us ask for greater faith. When sailing in the little ship, you had the little man's faith. You are about to step on board the larger vessel, so seek to get larger faith in proportion to it. Suppose we all had three times as much faith as we now possess, might we not do three times as much work? Ay; but surely that will not be our limit, will it? No, Lord; give us ten times as much faith. Take away our unbelief, help us to believe thy Word, and teach us to act as though we believed it. Then shall we see far greater things than we have ever yet seen.

My dear friends, after all, the main object of our ministry is the winning of souls to God. Have I any here who have listened to me for these seven years, but who are still unconverted? Oh, what if this last hour in this house should be the time of your conversion? Soul, art thou willing to die' without a hope in Christ? Surely not. Thou knowest thyself to be lost, ruined, and undone. I pray thee,

just as thou art, to make a confession of thy guilt, and to come to Christ's cross. He is just as willing to receive thee now as he was when first I addressed thee, seven years ago. Though you have refused his invitation all these years, his bowels still yearn with compassion over you. He has spared your life until now; he has not cut down the old cumber-ground yet. Sinner, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. O Spirit of God, change thou the sinner's heart! Give him faith, that he may now cast himself on Christ. "Come now,"-now, this moment,-"and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." May each one of us now pray the prayer of the penitent thief upon the cross, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" Amen.

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