

Spurgeon's Sermons on Hebrews

RELATED RESOURCES

Hebrews Commentaries 1

Hebrews Commentaries 2

Alexander Maclaren Sermons on Hebrews - Pt
1

Alexander Maclaren Sermons on Hebrews - Pt
2

Alexander Maclaren Sermons on Hebrews - Pt
3

Alexander Maclaren Sermons on Hebrews - Pt
4

Alexander Maclaren Sermons on Hebrews - Pt
5

Alexander Maclaren Sermons on Hebrews - Pt
6

F B Meyer on Hebrews

C H Spurgeon on Hebrews Pt 1

C H Spurgeon on Hebrews Pt 2

C H Spurgeon on Hebrews Pt 3

C H Spurgeon on Hebrews Pt 4

C H Spurgeon Sermons on The Epistle to the Hebrews Part 1

Hebrews 1:2 Depths And Heights

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 13TH, 1899,

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 21ST, 1882.**

“His Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express imago of his person and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” — Hebrews 1:2

I HAVE NOTHING TO DO TONIGHT BUT TO PREACH JESUS CHRIST. THIS WAS THE OLD SUBJECT OF THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MINISTERS: “DAILY IN THE TEMPLE, AND IN EVERY HOUSE, THEY CEASED NOT TO TEACH AND PREACH JESUS CHRIST.” WHEN PHILIP WENT DOWN TO THE CITY OF SAMARIA, BE “PREACHED CHRIST UNTO THEM.” WHEN HE SAT WITH THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH IN HIS CHARIOT, HE “PREACHED UNTO HIM JESUS.” AS SOON AS PAUL WAS CONVERTED, “STRAIGHTWAY HE PREACHED CHRIST IN THE SYNAGOGUES.” FOR ONCE, WE COUNT THE VENERABLENESS OF OUR SUBJECT WELL

WORTHY OF MENTIONING. WE SHALL NOT BE ASHAMED TO PREACH WHAT THE APOSTLES PREACHED, AND WHAT MARTYRS AND CONFESSORS PREACHED. WE HOPE TO PROCLAIM THIS GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF THE BLESSED GOD AS LONG AS WE LIVE; AND WE HOPE THAT, WHEN THIS GENERATION OF PREACHERS SHALL HAVE PASSED AWAY, UNLESS THE LORD SHALL COME, THERE WILL BE EVER FOUND A SUCCESSION OF MEN WHO SHALL DETERMINE TO PREACH NOTHING "SAVE JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED."

For, after all, this is the subject which men most of all need. They may have cravings after other things, but nothing can satisfy the deep real want of their nature but Jesus Christ and salvation by his precious blood. He is the Bread of life which came down from heaven; he is the Water of life whereof, if a man drink, he shall never thirst again. Hence, it becomes us to be often dwelling upon this theme, for it is most necessary to the sons of men. This is the subject which God the Holy Ghost delights to bless. I am sure that, other things being equal, he honors preaching in proportion to the savor of Christ that is in it. I may preach a great deal about the Church, but the Holy Spirit does not take of the things of Christ to glorify the Church. I may preach doctrine or practice apart from Christ; — that would be giving the husk without the kernel; — but where Jesus Christ sweetens all, and savors all, there will the Holy Spirit delight to rest upon the ministry, and make it quick and, powerful to the conversion of men. And I am sure, dear friends, that the preaching of Christ is ever sweet in the ears of his own people. "Thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee." And this theme is most pleasing to God the Father, who loves to hear his Son extolled and exalted. He delights in his Son, and those that delight in him are friends of God. When Jesus Christ is lifted up, it is as God the Father would have it, it is as the Holy Ghost would have it; and, where this is the case, we may expect to have seals to our ministry, and souls for our hire.

I want, at this time, as it were, to let Jesus Christ speak for himself. I cannot speak for him as he can speak for himself. Shall I hold my candle to the sun, as if he needed it in order to reveal his light? No, certainly not; and, therefore, I shall, with studied plainness, try to set the text itself before you, and so to speak of it that you may not so much remember what I have said of it as that you may remember the subject itself. My theme is to be the Savior, the only Savior,— the Savior who must save you, or else you must perish, "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." I am about to speak of him, and I think that all who are aware of the necessity of being saved will only want to hear about him, and to know how they may get to him, and how he may be made their Savior; and if they can but be told this, they will be only too glad to listen.

So, first, I shall speak of *who the Savior is*. Let me read the text to you again: "His Son," — God's Son,— "whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express imago of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power." That is who Jesus is. Then, in the second place, I shall speak of *what Jesus did*: "when he had by himself purged our sins." Then, thirdly, I want to tell you *what he enjoys*. After he had finished his great work of salvation, he "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

I. It is not possible that any language can fully express WHO JESUS IS; YET, BY THE HOLY SPIRIT'S GRACIOUS TEACHING, I MUST TELL YOU WHAT I KNOW OF HIM.

First, *Jesus is God's own Son*. What do I know about that wondrous truth? If I were to try to explain it, and to talk about the eternal filiations, I should but conduct you where I should soon be entirely out of my depth, and very likely I should drown all that I could tell you in floods of words. Deity is not to be explained, but to be adored; and the Sonship of Christ is to be accepted as a truth of revelation, to be apprehended by faith, though it cannot be comprehended by the understanding. There have been many attempts made by the fathers of the Church to explain the relationship between the two Divine Persons, the Father and the Son; but the explanations had better never have been given, for the figures used are liable to lead into mistake. Suffice it for us to say that, in the most appropriate language of the Nicene Creed, Christ is "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God." He is co-equal with the Father; though how that is, we know not. He stands in the nearest possible relationship to the Father,— a relationship of intense love and delight, so that the Father says of him, "This is my beloved Son." Yes, he is one with the Father, so that there is no separating them, as he himself said, in reply to Philip's request, "Shew us the Father," "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me."

Let me just pause here, and say to everyone who is seeking salvation,— What a comfort it should be to you that he, who is come to save men, is Divine! Therefore, nothing can be impossible to him. Nay, I do not say merely that he is Divine; I will go further, and say that he is the Deity itself; Christ Jesus is God, and being God, there can be no impossibilities or even difficulties with him. He is able to save you, whoever you may be. Though you have gone to the very verge of eternal ruin, you cannot have gone beyond the range of omnipotence; and omnipotence is inherent in the Godhead. O dear friends, do rejoice in this wondrous truth, he that was a babe at Bethlehem, was God incarnate! He that, being weary, sat on the well at Sychar, was God incarnate. He that had not where to lay his head was God incarnate. And it is he who has undertaken the stupendous labor of the salvation of men; and, therefore, men may hope and trust in him. We need not wonder that, when angels heard of Christ's coming to earth, they sang, "Glory to God

in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," for God had taken upon himself human flesh that he might save the sons of men. So, the first words in our text — "His Son"— are full of good cheer.

Now notice, in the next place, that *Jesus Christ is the "Heir of all things."* Of which nature of Christ does the apostle speak in this sentence, "whom he hath appointed heir of all things"? I do not think that Paul here separates the two natures, so as to speak with absolute reference to either one or the other; but he speaks of the person of Christ, and in that person there is God, and in that same person there is most surely and most truly man. But we must take this description of Jesus Christ as appointed "Heir of all things" in his person as man, and as God and man combined; for, as God alone, Christ is necessarily "Heir of all things" without any appointment; but in his complex person as God and man conjoined, the Father has appointed him to be "Heir of all things."

Now, what does this mean but that Christ possesses all things as an heir possesses his inheritance, that Christ is Lord of all things, as an heir becomes lord and ruler among his brethren. This appointment is to be fully carried into effect by-and-by; for, "now we see not yet all things put under him." Christ is Lord of all the angels; not a seraph spreads his wing except at the bidding of the "Heir of all things." There are no bright spirits, unknown to us, that are beyond the control of the God-man, Christ Jesus; and the fallen angels, too, are obliged to bow before his omnipotence. As for all things here below, material substances, men regenerate or unregenerate, God has given him power over all flesh that he should give eternal life to as many as his Father has given him. He has put all things under his feet, "and the government shall be upon his shoulder." He is Heir, or Master, and Possessor of all things; — let me say, of all sorts of blessings, and all forms of grace, for "it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell;" and, as surely as time revolves, and you mark the fleeting minutes upon the dial's face, the hour is coming when Christ shall be universally acknowledged as King of kings and Lord of lords. Already I seem to hear the shouts go up from every part of the habitable globe, and from all heaven and all space, "Hallelujah! for the Lord God, omnipotent reigneth." All must willingly, or else unwillingly, submit to his sway, for his 'Father hath appointed him "Heir of all things."

To my mind, this is another wondrous encouragement to anyone who is seeking salvation. Christ has everything in his hand that is needed in order that he may save you, poor sinner. Sometimes, when a physician has a sick man before him,— suppose it is on board ship, — he may have to say to him, "I think I could cure your disease if I could get such-and-such a medicine; but, unfortunately, I have not the drug within my reach." Or the doctor might have to say to the sufferer, "I believe an operation would effect a cure, but I have not the instrument that is necessary for it." Never will the great Physician of souls have to talk like that, for the Father hath committed all things into his hand, Oh, have we not beheld him as the glory of the Father, full of grace and truth? You great sinner, you black sinner, Christ is not lacking in power to save you; and if you come, and trust yourself in his hands, he will never have to look about to find the balm for your wounds, or the ointments or liniments with which to bind up those putrefying sores of yours! No, he is "Heir of all things." So again I say, "Hallelujah!" as I preach him to you as the blessed Savior of sinners, the Son of God, the "Heir of all things."

Notice, next, that *Jesus Christ is the Creator: "by whom also he made the worlds."* However many worlds there are, we know not. It may be true that all those majestic orbs that stud the midnight sky are worlds filled with intelligent beings; it is much more easy to believe that they are than that they are not, for, surely, God has not built all those magnificent mansions, and left them untenanted. It were irrational to conceive of those myriads of stupendous world, vastly bigger than this poor little speck in God's great universe, all left without inhabitants. But it matters not how many worlds there are; God made them all by Jesus Christ: "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." I see him standing, as it were, at the anvil of omnipotence, hammering out the worlds that fly off, like sparks, on every side at each stroke of his majestic arm. It was Christ who was there,— "the wisdom of God and the power of God," as Paul calls him,— creating all things. I love to think that he who created all things is also our Savior, for then he can create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me; and if I need a complete new creation,— as I certainly do,— he is equal to the task. Man cannot create the tiniest midge that ever danced in the summer evening's ray; man cannot create even a single grain of dust; but Christ created all worlds, so he can make us new creatures by the wondrous power of his grace. O sinners, see what a mighty Savior has been provided for you, and never say that you cannot trust him! I agree with good Mr. Hyatt who, when he was asked on his death-bed, "Can you trust Christ with your soul?" answered, "If I had a million souls, I could trust them all with him" And so may you; if you had as many souls as God has ever created, and if you had heaped upon you all the sins that men have ever committed, you might still trust in him who is the Son of God, "whom he hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."

Now go a little further, and see what Christ is next called: *the brightness of His Father's glory*. Shade your eyes, for you cannot look upon this wondrous sight without being dazzled by it. The Revised Version renders it, "the effulgence of his glory;" but I do not see much more in that expression than in the word "brightness." Some commentators say — and it is not an ill figure, yet we must not push any figure too far,— that, as light is to the sun, so is Jesus to the glory of God. He is the brightness of that glory; that

is to say, there is not any glory in God but what is also in Christ: and when that glory reaches its climax, when God the Ever-glorious is most glorious, that greatest glory is in Christ. Oh, this wondrous Word of God,— the very climax of the Godhead,— the gathering up of every blessed attribute in all its infinity of glory! You shall find all this in the person of the God-man, Christ Jesus. There is a whole sermon in those words, “the brightness of his glory;” but I cannot preach it to-night, because then I should not get through the rest of my text.

So let us pass on to the next clause: “and the express image of his person .” I said, a minute ago, “Shade your eyes;” but I might now say, “Shut them,” as I think of the excessive brilliance described by these words: “the express image of his person.” Whatever God is, Christ is; the very likeness of God, the very Godhead of Godhead, the very Deity of Deity, is in Christ Jesus: “the express image of his person.” Dr. John Owen, who loves to explain the spiritual meaning in the Epistle to the Hebrews by the types in the Old Testament, which is evidently what Paul himself was doing, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit,— explains the brightness of the Father’s glory by a reference to the Shekinah over the mercy-seat, which was the only visible token of the presence of God there. An extraordinary brightness is said to have shone forth from between the cherubim. Now, Christ is God manifesting himself in his brightness. But, on his forehead, the high priest wore a golden plate, upon which was deeply engraven, in Hebrew letters, the inscription, “Holiness to [or of] Jehovah.” Dr. Owen thinks there is a reference, in this “express image of his person,” — this cut-out inscription of God, as it were, — to that which was on the forehead of the high priest, and which represented the glorious wholeness or holiness of Jehovah, which is his great glory. Well, whether the apostle referred to this or not, it is for you and me to take off our shoes from our feet in the presence of Christ, “the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person.” To me, these words are like the bush in which God dwelt, yet which was not consumed, they are all on fire; what more shall I say of them?

Now, Christ being all this that Paul describes, who will dare to turn his back on him? If this be the Shepherd who has come to seek the lost sheep,— O poor lost sheep, wilt thou not be found of him? If this be God’s Ambassador, who comes, clothed in the crimson robe of his own blood, to redeem the sons of men, who will refuse the peace he brings?

Note yet once again what Christ is, as I mention the sixth point in the apostle’s description: “upholding all things by the word of his power ,” Just think of it This great world of ours is upheld by Christ’s word. If he did not speak it into continued existence, it would go back into the nothingness from whence it sprang. There exists not a being who is independent of the Mediator, save only the ever-blessed Father and the Spirit. “By him all things consist,” that is, continue to hold together. Just as these pillars uphold these galleries, or as the foundations uphold a house, so does Jesus Christ “uphold all things by the word of his power.” Only think of it; those innumerable worlds of light that make illimitable space to look as though it were sprinkled over with golden dust, would all die out, like so many expiring sparks, and cease to be, if the Christ who died on Calvary did not will that they should continue to exist. I cannot bring out of my text all the wondrous truths that it contains, I only wish I could; but, surely, if Christ upholds all things, he can uphold me. If the word of his power upholds earth and heaven, surely, that same word can uphold you, poor trembling heart, if you will trust him. There need be no fear about that matter; come and prove it for yourself. May his blessed Spirit enable you to do so even now!

Where there is so much sea-room, I might well tarry, but I must hasten on to the next point.

II. Follow me with all your ears and hearts while I now speak to you about what Jesus did.

He who is all that I have tried to describe, did what? First, he effectually purged our sins: “when he had by himself purged our sins.” Listen to those wondrous words. There was never such a task as that since time began. The old fable speaks of the Augean stable, foul enough to have poisoned a nation, which Hercules cleansed; but our sins were fouler than that. Dunghills are sweet compared with these abominations; what a degrading task it seems for Christ to undertake,— the purging of our sins! The sweepers of the streets, the scullions of the kitchen, the cleansers of the sewers, have honorable work compared with this of purging sin. Yet the holy Christ, incapable of sin, stooped to purge our sins I want you to meditate upon that wondrous work; and to remember that he did it before he went back to heaven. Is it not a wonderful thing that Christ purged our sins even before we had committed them? There they stood, before the sight of God, as already existent in all their hideousness; but Christ came, and purged them, This, surely, ought to make us sing the song of songs. Before I sinned, he purged my sins away; singular and strange as it is, yet it is so.

Then, further, the apostle says that Christ purged our sins by himself; that is, by offering himself as our Substitute. There was no purging away of sin, except by Christ bearing the burden of it, and he did bear it. He bore all that was due to guilty man on account of his violation of the law of God, and God accepted his sacrifice as a full equivalent, and so he purged our sins. He did not

come to do something by which our sins might be purged, but he purged them effectually, actually, really, completely. How did he do it? By his preaching? By his doctrine? By his Spirit? No "By himself." Oh, that is a blessed word! The Revised Version has left it out, but the doctrine is taught in the Bible over and over again. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" He gave himself for us; not only his blood, but all that constituted himself, his Godhead, and his manhood. All that he had, and all that he was, he gave as the ransom price for us; can any of you estimate the value of that price? The acts of one, Divine as he is, are Divine actions; and there is a weight and force about them that there could not be about the deeds of the best of men or even of all the holy angels: "he by himself purged our sins."

Now, let every believer, if he wants to see his sins, stand on tiptoe, and look up; will he see them there? No. If he looks down, will he see them there? No. If he looks round, will he see them there? No. If he looks within, will he see them there? No. Where shall he look, then? Where he likes, for he will never see them again, according to that ancient promise, "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve." Shall I tell you where your sins are? Christ purged them, and God said, "I will cast all their sins behind my back." Where is that? All things are before God. I do not know where behind God's back can be. It is nowhere, for God is everywhere present, seeing everything. So that is where my sins have gone; I speak with the utmost reverence when I say that they have gone where Jehovah himself can never see them. Christ has so purged them that they have ceased to be. The Messiah came to crush transgression, and try make an end of sin, and he has done it.]

O believer, if he has made an end of it, then there is an end to it, and what more can there be of it? Here is a blessed text for you; I love to meditate on it often when I am alone: "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." This he did on Calvary's cross; there effectually, finally, totally, completely, eternally, he purged all his people from their sin by taking it upon himself, bearing all its dreadful consequences, cancelling and blotting it out, casting it into the depths of the sea, and putting it away for ever: and all this he did "by himself" It was indeed amazing love that made him stoop to this purgation, this expiation, this atonement for sin; but, because he was who and what he was, he did it thoroughly, perfectly. He said, "It is finished," and I believe him. I do not — I cannot — for a moment admit that there is anything to be done by us to complete that work, or anything required of us to make the annihilation of our sins complete. Those for whom Christ died are cleansed from all their guilt, and they may go their way in peace. He was made a curse for us, and there is nothing but blessing left for us to enjoy.

III. Now, lastly, I have to speak of WHAT CHRIST NOW ENJOYS : "WHEN 'HE HAD BY HIMSELF PURGED OUR SINS, HE SAT DOWN ON THE RIGHT HAND OF THE MAJESTY ON HIGH." HERE AGAIN I SHALL HAVE TO SAY THAT I AM QUITE OUT OF MY DEPTH; I HAVE WATERS TO SWIM IN, BUT I AM NOT A GOOD SWIMMER IN SUCH BLESSED DEEPS AS THESE.

There is an allusion here, no doubt, to the high priest who, on the great day of atonement, when the sacrifice had been offered, presents himself before God. Now Christ, our great High Priest, having, once for all, offered himself as the sacrifice for sin, has now gone into the most holy place, and there he sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Notice, first, that *this implies rest* . When the high priest went within the veil, he did not sit down. He stood, with holy trembling, bearing the sacrificial blood, before the blazing mercy-seat; but our Savior now sits at his Father's right hand. The high priest of old had not finished his work; the next year, another atoning sacrifice would be needed; but our Lord has completed his atonement, and now, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin," for there remaineth no more sin to be purged. "Rut this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." There he sits, and I am sure he would not be sitting if he had not finished the salvation of his people. Isaiah long before had been inspired to record what the Messiah would say, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." But Christ is resting now; my eye, by faith, can see him sitting there, so I know that—

Love's redeeming work is done;

Fought the fight, the battle won.

Notice, next, that *Christ sits in the place of honor*: "on the right hand of the Majesty on high" Of course, we are talking figuratively now, and you must not interpret this literally. Jesus sits on the right hand of his Father, he dwells in the highest conceivable honor and dignity. All the angels worship him, and all the blood-washed host adore him day without night. The Father

delights to honor him.

The highest place that heaven affords

Is his, is his by right,

The King of kings, and Lord of lords,

And heaven's eternal light.

Not only does Jesus sit in the place of honor, but he occupies the place of safety. None can hurt him now; none can stay his purposes, or defeat his will. He is at the powerful right hand of God. In heaven above, and on the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth, and on every star, he is supreme Lord and Master; and they that will not yield to him shall be broken with a rod of iron, he shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. So his cause is safe; his kingdom is secure, for he is at the right hand of power.

And, last of all, Christ at the right hand of God signifies the eternal certainty of his reward. It is not possible that he should be robbed of the purchase of his blood. I tremble when I hear some people talk about the disappointed Christ,— or about his having died at a peradventure, to accomplish he knew not what,— dying for something which the will of man might give him if it would, but it might possibly be denied him. I buy nothing on such terms as that, I expect to have what I purchase; and Christ will have what he bought with his own blood; especially as he lives a gain to claim his purchase. He shall never be a defeated and disappointed Savior. "He loved the church, and gave himself for it;" he hath redeemed his loved ones from among men; and he shall have all those whom he has purchased. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied;" therefore, let us again say, "Hallelujah!" and fall down and worship him.

It does seem to me that there is no proof of men's natural blindness that is so conclusive as this, that men will not go and trust in Jesus. O sinners, if sin had left you sane in heart, you would come at once, and fall down at his feet! There is all power laid up in Jesus, and there is all the Father's love concentrated in Jesus; so come and trust him. If you will but trust him, you will prove that he has given himself for you. That simple trust is the secret mark that distinguishes his people from all others. "My sheep bear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." To those who rejected him when he was upon the earth, our Lord said, "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." O poor souls, do you mean for ever to wear the damning mark of unbelief? If you die with that brand upon your soul, you will be lost for ever. Oh, may you have, instead, that blessed mark of faith which is the token of the Lord's people! May you even now hang out the scarlet line as Rahab hung it out of her window,— the scarlet line of confidence in the crimson blood of Jesus! And while Jericho falls,— while all the earth shall crumble in one common ruin,— your house, though built upon the wall, shall stand securely, and not one who is within its shelter shall be touched by the devouring sword, for all who are in Christ are in everlasting safety. How can they be otherwise, since he has purged their sins? God give to every one of you to have a part and lot among this blessed company, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

><>><>><>

Hebrews 2:18 Christ's Sympathy with His People

NO. 2885

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 26TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1861-2.

"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." — Hebrews 2:18.

THAT which is the most simple lesson the gospel has to teach, is often the most difficult lesson for the Christian to learn. That simple lesson is, that we must not look to ourselves for anything good, but that we must look to the Lord alone for all our righteousness. The lesson is short, as well as simple; it is easy to repeat; but, as often as our faith is severely tried, we find how apt we are to forget that which is the very Alpha of the gospel, its rudiments, — That man, in himself, is wholly lost, and that all his hope of help and salvation must rest on Christ; — that, apart from God, there is nothing upon which faith can fasten itself; — and that, without the atoning sacrifice and justifying righteousness of Christ, the quickening and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, and the everlasting love of the Father, there is neither joy, nor peace, nor comfort, nor hope to be found anywhere. This seems to be a very

easy lesson; yet even aged believers, when their hair is getting grey, and they are about to enter the land of perfect peace and rest, still find the temptation to unbelief too much for them, and they begin to look for something good in the creature, and to seek for happiness in themselves, instead of seeking all good in God.

I want to try to teach you this lesson again, and also to learn it myself, for I need to learn it as much as you do, — the lesson of looking away from our temptations, and from our own weakness and inability to repel those temptations, to him who, having himself suffered being tempted, “is able to succor them that are tempted.” Let us fix our eye upon our great High Priest, and leave Satan and all his insinuations, his blasphemies and his temptations, out of the question. Or, rather, let us bring them to Christ, and see them all finished in him. I am going to address three separate characters that are represented here — first, the confirmed believer; secondly, the young beginner; and, thirdly, the backslider; and then, summoning the attention of the whole company here assembled, I shall try to commend the comfort and instruction of the text to you all.

I. First, let me speak To Advanced Christians.

You all have your trials, and those trials are of an advanced character. The troubles, with which the plants of God’s right-hand planting are assailed, when they are saplings, are quite inconsiderable compared with those which come upon them when they are like cedars firmly rooted. As surely as our strength increases, so will our sufferings, our trials, our labors, or our temptations. God’s power is never given to a man to be stored up unused. The heavenly food, that is sent to strengthen us, like the manna given to the Israelites in the wilderness, is intended for immediate use. If the Lord sends you much, you shall have nothing beyond what you can use for him; though, blessed be his holy name, if you have but little, you shall have no lack. When the Lord puts upon our feet the shoes of iron and brass, which he has promised us in his ancient covenant, he intends that we should wear them, and walk in them, — not that we should put them into our museum, and gaze upon them as curiosities. If he gives us a strong hand, it is because, we have a strong foe to fight with. If he gives us a great meal, — like that which he gave to Elijah, — it is in order that, in the strength of that meal, we may go for forty days, or even longer.

Perhaps, my brother or sister, you are, just now, in great trouble. You have grown in grace, and your troubles have also grown. You feel that you want someone to whom you can tell your trouble; — your trouble very likely arises from the absence, of your Lord. Let me remind you that, in this respect, you are very like the Israelites in the wilderness, when Moses had been absent from them for forty days. They said, “What shall we do? Our leader is gone; he, who was king in Jeshurun, has departed from us, and we are left like sheep without a shepherd.” So they went — I dare not say that they went for counsel, but they went — to the high priest, and you remember what they said, and what he did. Alas! he gave them no good counsel, for he was as unwise as they were, and as untried; he had always had Moses by his side ever since the day that the Lord had said, “Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother?... He shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.” Aaron had never been left without his great leader; so, in his absence, he miserably failed, and led the people in the making and worshipping of the golden calf. How different it will be with you, who mourn the loss of the light of your Lord’s countenance, if you go to our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ! He knows the meaning of your present trial, for he had once to cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? “You tell him that your “soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,” and he tells you that it was so with him also, on that night in which he was betrayed, when, “being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” No untried priest is he; he can sympathize, and he can succor.

Take another case, that of Hannah, the “woman of a sorrowful spirit.” She was in a peculiarly trying position. Her husband’s other wife had children, but she had none; though she was greatly beloved of her husband, her adversary vexed her sorely to make her fret. Day by day, this was thrown in her teeth, that, because of some sin, God had not granted her the desire of her heart. A trial in one’s own house is one of the saddest places where it can come; the saddest, perhaps, with the exception of a thorn in the flesh, which comes still closer home. So poor Hannah, having that trial at home, thought she would go up to the sanctuary in Shiloh. There, she “prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore, and she vowed a vow.” But “she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard.” So Eli, the high priest, thought that she was drunken; and, instead of comforting and consoling her, he spoke harshly to her, depressed and broken as her spirit was. You, my brethren, and you, my sisters, too, may have some trouble which you dare not tell to another, though it is sorely vexing you, and threatens even to break your heart. But when you go to the great High Priest, he will understand all about you, he will not need you to explain your sorrow to him, for he knows exactly what it is, and he will apply the healing balm to your sorrowful spirit, and send you on your way full of peace and comfort.

I offer, then, to you, who are advanced believers, this very comforting reflection, — in Christ’s sufferings, you are quite certain to find something akin to your own; and, in Christ’s heart, you are quite sure to find a deep well of divine sympathy; so you need not hesitate to go to him, or doubt that his loving heart will overflow with sympathy towards you, whatever your trial may be.

But, more than that, while I would console you by reminding you that Christ has suffered even as you have, I would also comfort you with the reflection that, this very day, he still suffers with you. Suppose, now, that a man could be so high in stature that his head

could be in heaven while his feet were on earth, yet, whenever his feet suffered, his head would suffer, too. In the Canticles, the spouse says of her Heavenly Bridegroom, "His head is as the most fine gold, . . . his legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold." As John saw him, "in the isle that is called Patmos," "his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." This suggests to me a parable; the feet of Christ, which form His Church on earth, still glow "as if they burned in a furnace." The glorious Head of the Church, up in heaven, "is as the most fine gold," but there is not the least glow of heat, in the feet on earth, which is not felt by the Head in heaven. There is not a pang, that rends your heart, which Jesus does not feel. There is not a sorrow, that cuts deeply into your soul, which does not also cut into his; so you can still sing, —

"He feels at his heart all our sighs and our groans

For we are most near him, his flesh and his bones;

In all our distresses our Head feels the pain,

They all are most needful, not one is in vain."

Does it not comfort you to know that Christ can sympathize with you, and that he must sympathize with you; can, because he has suffered; must, because he suffers still?

I may also add, for your comfort, that all this — Christ's suffering as you do, and his suffering with you, must tend to shield you in your trials. A country minister, preaching upon the text, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there, no physician there?" made the remark that Christ is a good Physician. "Ah!" said he, "Christ is not like those doctors, who come and say they are sorry for you, whereas, in their hearts, they are glad you are ill; for, if you and others were not ill, there would be no work for them. Or else," said the preacher, "they look down upon you, and pity you, but not half as much as if they themselves had your complaint, and felt all the pains that you are feeling. "But suppose," he added, "that the doctor had all your pains himself, — suppose you had the headache, and that he looked down on you, and had your headache; suppose, when you had palpitation of the heart, he had palpitation of the heart, too; — why, he would be very quick to cure you; certainly, he would not let you lie there a moment longer than was necessary, because he himself would be suffering with you." Now, there is just one objection that may be made to the countryman's argument, — that is, that the physician might be willing to raise the patient up at once, because he was himself suffering with him; yet he might say, "Here are two of us in the same plight, but my skill fails me here. If I could deliver you, you can well imagine that I would gladly do so, for, in so doing, I should deliver myself as well; but, alas! it is beyond my power, I cannot lighten your burden, nor my own; we can only sit down together, and mingle our tears, but we cannot assist one another."

But it is not so with the good Physician, for he has both the will and the power to heal us. One motion of that eternal arm, and every cloud, that is wrapped about the sky, shall be folded up, like a worn-out vesture, and cast away. Jesus speaks, and the boisterous billows cease their raging, and the wild winds are hushed to sleep. "Let there be light," saith he; and, over the thick darkness of our affliction and adversity, comes the bright gleam of joy and prosperity. He did but lift up his voice, and "kings of armies did flee apace." O Jesus, our Lord, when thou comest forth for the deliverance of thy people, who can stand before thee? As the wax melteth before the fire, and as the fat of rams is consumed upon thine altar, so do our trials and troubles melt and vanish away when thou comest forth for the deliverance of thy people! Remember, believers, that you not only have the love of Christ's heart, but you also have the strength of Christ's arm at your disposal. He ruleth over all things, in heaven, and earth, and hell, so rest in him, for still he bears the scars of his wounds to show that he has suffered even as you do. Still doth he prove himself to be man, seeing that he suffers with you; yet is he also "very God of very God," into whose hand all power in heaven and earth is committed. He can, he must, he will deliver his people, and bring them out of all their trials into his eternal kingdom and glory.

II. Secondly, I am going to speak To Anxious Enquirers And Young Beginners.

I hear a plaintive voice, over yonder, saying to me, "I know, sir, that the precious blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin; and I know that, the moment I believe in him, I have nothing to fear concerning the past, for that sin is blotted out, once for all; but my fear is that, if I commence a Christian life, it will not last long. I am afraid I shall be like Pliable, and turn back at the Slough of Despond; or if my neighbors jeer at me, I fear that I shall be ashamed to go forward in spite of their opposition. Even if I get over that, I feel that I cannot trust my own evil heart, which is so apt to deceive me. If old temptations should be overcome, new ones will be sure to arise, and I cannot help fearing as to what will become of me. I have seen some, who made a fair show in the flesh, turn back, and go straight to perdition; and I tremble lest it should be so with me also. How can I hope to withstand the imperious lusts which were too strong for me when first they allured my simple heart? How much more shall they be too mighty for me now that sin has gathered the force of habit, and practice, like an iron net, has enfolded me in its cruel grip? When I was a youth, I could not stand against this great enemy of my soul; how then, shall I be a match for him now that I have grown old and feeble? The old Adam will be too strong for the young Melancthon.

Well, dear friends, I have seen some persons, who have been truly converted to God, who have been greatly troubled with this fear. Indeed, in some instances, I have even known of poor men kneeling down, and praying that God would let them die, there and then, sooner than that they should live to prove that their feelings were only a delusion, and that their supposed repentance was merely a passing excitement. Some of us can fully sympathize with those who pray such a prayer as that, for we have often felt that the most terrible death would be preferable to the disgrace of bringing dishonor upon the name of Jesus by turning back to the City of Destruction after we had once started for the Celestial City. But, my dear friend, if the Lord has begun a good work in thy soul, and led thee to trust in Jesus as thy Savior, my text will just meet that fear of thine, for the apostle here says that Christ "is able to succor them that are tempted." You will be tempted, — I will not delude you with the notion that you will not; — and you cannot, by yourself, stand up against, that temptation; but Christ, "in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, is able to succor them that are tempted." This truth we set before you as a shield against all these dark, mysterious thoughts; — Christ can, and he will, if you trust in him, protect you from the sin and the temptation which you rightly dread.

"But how is this to be done?" asks someone. Well, first of all, Christ can do it by the force of his own example. He can show you as he has done in his Word; but he can show you, by his Spirit that Word, how he was once subject to just the same temptation that now assails you. Are you poor, and are you tempted to use wrong means to get rich? Christ can tell you how, in the wilderness, "when he had fasted forty days, and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungred," and Satan came to him, and said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Are you a man in a high position, and are you tempted to do some daring and reckless deed? Christ can remind you how, when he was on a pinnacle of the temple, Satan said to him, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down." Or do you seem, just now, to have great power within your reach if you will but stain your hand to grasp it? Christ can tell you how Satan showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said to him, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Then he will remind you how he passed through all these ordeals without sin, for the prince of this world could find nothing in him to respond to his temptations. He was tried and tested again and again, but no trace of alloy could be discovered even by the devil himself. Though he was often shot at by his great adversary, he was never wounded by the fiery shafts; so, inspired by his glorious example, you may say, —

"Through floods and flames if

Jesus lead I'll follow where he goes."

You not only have Christ's example to keep you from sin, but you also have his presence. Do you know what this means? Let me give you an instance of it. There was a certain merchant, who had been, again and again, tempted to an act of sin. It was the usual custom in his trade, everybody else did it; but he knew that it was wrong, and his soul revolted against it. As he sat in his countinghouse, he saw, pictured before his mind's eye, his wife homeless, and his children crying for bread; and the demon whispered to him, "Do it; do it." Then another picture flitted before his eyes, — he and his wife and children were rich, their home was filled with good things, and again the adversary said, "Do it; do it." He saw the advantages that were to be gained by doing it, but he went home, and pondered the whole matter. His soul was heavy, and a stern struggle was proceeding within him. Then he went to his chamber, and shut himself in alone, and, falling upon his knees, told out all his difficulty and temptations to his Father in heaven. Then, suddenly, not before his eyes, but to faith's inner eye, there appeared a vision of the crucified Christ, who showed him his pierced hands, and feet, and side, and then said to him, "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me Thou hast not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." The merchant, fixing his tearful eyes upon his Savior, remembered Paul's words, "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds;" he came down from his bedroom, his soul was glad, for his mind was made up, and he said to himself, "I will not do it; I can be poor, but, I cannot sin." Others marked the man, and wondered at the change in his appearance. He walked erect, no longer like one bowed down beneath a heavy burden. Many men marvelled at him, and asked what had happened to him, but none could tell. The secret was, that the crucified Christ had appeared to him, and had given him the support of his divine presence. That was sufficient to succor him in the time of temptation, for Christ, having himself suffered being tempted, was able to succor his faithful follower when he also was tempted.

I know that I am addressing someone, who, says, — I will use, as far as possible, his own words, — "Look here, sir; I have always been in the habit of being a jolly fellow, meeting with a number of boon companions to drink, and chat, and sing, and so on. I do not know that we did very much amiss; but, still, I could not do it again if I became a Christian. Suppose, now, that I should be invited to join the same company to-morrow; — I am not sure what I might do, I might refuse their invitation; — but if I were asked again and again, and they jeered at me for refusing, I might give in. Suppose that I did not yield, there is another difficulty. I have been a man of such-and-such a character, and have formed such-and-such habits; now, how in the world am I to overcome those habits? How am I to become a Christian, and to continue so to the end?"

These are very proper questions, and I answer, — You are utterly helpless, apart from him who is able to succor them that are tempted; but if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, he will give you a new nature. That new nature, it is true, will not at once cast out the old nature; your old nature will still be there, but the new nature will struggle against it; and, ultimately, through the effectual

working of the Holy Spirit, the new nature will prevail over the old nature, and you will be “a new creature in Christ Jesus;” old things will have passed away, and all things will have become new. You will say, as a young convert did, when he came to join the church, “I don’t know which it is, but either everything else is changed, or else I am.” It was in himself, of course, that the great change had been wrought, but that changed the aspect of everything else.

Let me give you a little parable to illustrate this point. A lion and a tiger used, frequently, to roam the forests together, in search of prey that might satisfy their bloodthirsty appetites. But, one day, an angel came, touched the lion, and changed him into a lamb. The next day, the tiger came, and wanted the lion to go with him to his feast of blood. Do you think it was difficult for him to refuse the invitation? Oh, no! “I have no inclination to go,” said he. The tiger laughed scornfully, and said, “Aha! you have become pious, have you? Now you will go to the sheepfolds, and sneak behind the shepherds’ heels, — you that were once so brave!” And the tiger despised him, and said, “You are miserable to be thus tied up like a dog, and not to dare to come and do as we have always done.” “Nay,” said the lion, “it is not that I dare not go with you, but I have no wish to go. I am not miserable because I cannot go with you on such an errand, — I should be miserable if I did go. The fact is, I cannot now do what I once did, for I am not what I once was. My new nature has brought me new loves, new hatreds, new preferences, new pursuits, so I cannot go with you on your bloodthirsty expedition.”

If God has wrought a similar change in you, and transformed the lion into a lamb, and the raven into a dove, it will not be difficult for you to be kept from sin, for you will hate sin with, perfect hatred, and have no fellowship with it; and, besides that, as your nature will be renewed, day by day, by the Holy Spirit, with a constant infusion of everything that is good, and gracious, and Godlike, do you not see that sin shall no longer be like a strong spear to pierce you, but as a fragile reed which shall snap against the armor of proof which your soul shall wear?

Let me remind you, who are thinking of going upon pilgrimage, but are afraid of the lions and the dragons in the way, that he, unclear whose banner you hope to enlist, never suffered one soldier, who was in his service, to perish. If you become a sheep under the care of the good Shepherd, remember that —

“His honor is engaged to save

The meanest of his sheep.”

If you are a mariner, bound for the Fair Havens of eternal felicity, recollect that the Lord High Admiral of the seas of providence and grace has safely convoyed into port every vessel that has yet been committed to his charge; not one has ever been wrecked or lost in any way. Trust yourself to his protection and guidance, and he will bring you also in safely. What if your temper be, naturally, furious? What if your evil propensities have been indulged until they have become as giants holding you in cruel captivity? What if your passions boil, and burn, and blaze, like Vesuvius in eruption? What if your temptations should come upon you as the Philistines came upon Samson? He, to whom you commit the keeping of your soul, shall make you master over all; and you shall yet be, with the great multitude whom no man can number, more than conqueror through him who hath loved you. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would constrain many of you, straightway, to leave your old master, and to enter the service of the Savior! You will never find a better master than the Lord Jesus Christ.

“All!” said a sailor, seventy years of age, who had heard a sermon that had deeply affected him, and, I trust, had been the means of renewing his nature, “I am going to haul down my old flag to-day. I have sailed under the colors of the Black Prince all these years, but they are coming down to-day; and I am going to run up the blood-red cross in their place, and I hope to sail under that flag until I die.” So may it be with many of you! Say, “O Satan, we have served thee far too long! Miserable is thy service, despicable are thy ways, degrading is our position, and awful must be our end if we remain in thy power.” Then turn to the Lord, and appeal to him. Say, “O God, help us! We cry to thee. Bring us, we pray thee, from under the tyrant’s sway. Help us to yield ourselves up to thee this very hour. Take our hearts, black as they are, and wash them in the precious blood of Jesus Christ, thy well-beloved Son. Change the hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. Make us to be thy servants while we live, and to enter into thy rest and thy glory when we die.”

I have thus, I hope, spoken somewhat to the comfort of young beginners and anxious enquirers.

III. Now, in the third place, I am going to speak briefly To Backsliders.

Where art thou, backslider? I cannot pick thee out; but there is an eye that sees thee, and that weeps over thee. Ten years ago, you used to sit down at the communion table; twenty years ago, you were a reputable member of the church; but you fell, and, oh, what a fall was yours! Since that time, you have not wholly forsaken the house of God, though you have wandered hither and thither; but you have never dared to call yourself a Christian again. You lost the light of God’s countenance long ago, and you find the service of Satan very hard, yet you think you must go downward to despair. You feel that you are in the iron cage of which Bunyan wrote,

and you fear that you will never get out of it. Poor backslider, I cannot mention thy name without a tear; and if I, a fellow-creature, thus weep over thee, much more does that compassionate Savior, who suffered being tempted, and who is able to succor them that are tempted.

Hark! If you will but incline your ear, you may hear a note that will cheer your heart, and yet break it, too! 'Tis God who speaks, and he is having a controversy with himself over you. Justice says, "Destroy him;" but Mercy says, "Spare him." The very gospel, which thou hast despised, witnesses against thee; but, at the same time, pleads for thee. The Lord still says to backsliders, as he did to his ancient people when they wandered from him, "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you." "Married unto you!" This marriage bond cannot be broken; thou hast played the harlot, and gone after many lovers; but thy first husband hates putting away, and even now invites thee to return to him. So, —

"To thy Father's bosom pressed,

Once again a child confessed

From his house no more to roam,

Come, O poor backslider, come!"

I may even be addressing some, who once drank from the cup of communion, but who have turned aside to drink the cup of devils. I may be speaking to some, to whom, for years, the Sabbath has been a day for business instead of a day for worship. Yet you could never get the sound of the Sabbath bell out of your ears; and, even now, you cannot forget the profession you once made, nor the joys you once knew; and you cannot be easy in your sins. There is a spark of heavenly fire that still lingers within you, and it will not die out, even though you seek to quench it that it may not hinder you from going after your lusts. That is God's grip still upon you; oh, that I might be his ambassador of peace, to fling wide the doors of his mercy to you! Poor prodigal, thou art clad in rags; the sty is thine only sleeping-place, and the swine thine only companions; thou wouldst fain fill thy belly with the husks that they eat: but thou must not, for thou art a God-made man, and swine's food can never satisfy thee. As thou standest here, perhaps there is a tear trickling down thy cheek because of the many years that thou hast spent in sin, and thou art saying, "I would arise, and go unto my Father, but I fear that he has forgotten me." Oh, say not that! But do as the prodigal did; arise, and come unto thy Father, for he will give thee such a reception as the prodigal received. You shall have the kiss of forgiveness upon your brow, the best robe of your Savior's perfect righteousness shall be cast all around you, the ring of everlasting love shall be placed upon your finger, the shoes of peace shall be fitted to your feet, you shall eat the fat things of the promises of God, there shall be music in your ears, music in your house, music on earth, and music in heaven itself, because he that was dead is alive again, he that was lost is found.

This should be your consolation: "In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Did I hear you say, "But I cannot see how Christ was ever in the same position that I am in, for he was never a backslider"? That is quite true; but what are your trials? First, you are tried by the burden of sin that is resting upon you; and Christ had the sins of all his people resting upon him, so he knows what that burden means. Next, you are tried by the loss of the light of God's countenance; so was he, for he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Then, you say that you have lost all your friends; so had he, for, in his time of trial, "they all forsook him, and fled." You say, also, that you are despised, that you are the subject of the song of the drunkard and the mirth of the mocker; so was he, for he could truly say, "Reproach hath broken mine heart." So Christ can sympathize — not with your sin, for he never had any of his own, — but with your sorrow, which is the consequence of sin, for he had to bear all that before you did.

IV. Now I have to close by speaking To The Whole Assembly.

I think I might liken you, on a large scale, to that little band of pilgrims, — Christiana, and Mercy, and Matthew, and James, and the rest of them who started from the City of Destruction, — who, when they came to the Interpreter's House, were put under the escort of Mr. Greatheart. I am not Mr. Greatheart; — I am but one of the children; — but our great Savior is Mr. Greatheart, and he is going with us all the way to the Celestial City. We are but like those boys and girls, and we are afraid of what we may meet on the road. There are lions in the way; but Mr. Greatheart can kill them, or restrain them from hurting us. There is Apollyon in the valley, but our Greatheart is more than a match for the arch-fiend. We shall have to go through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, yet each one of us shall be able to say, "I will fear no evil, for thou art, with me." We shall have to go through the Enchanted Ground; but, as Christ will be with us, we shall not fall asleep there to our grievous hurt. We shall have to go through Vanity Fair, and to bear the jeer and the jibe of the mocking mob, but we can bear all that, for we shall have our great Captain with us. But, — and here comes the dark thought to some, — we shall at last come to the dark river without a bridge. Mr. Greatheart — whom Bunyan meant to be the minister, had to go through the stream with the rest; but when we come to the river, our Mr. Greatheart, Christ himself, — will go through the river with each one of us. He will put his almighty arm around us; and when we get where our feet cannot feel the bottom, he will say to each one of us, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall

not overflow thee." To die with Jesus is better even than living with him except that higher style of living with him beyond the river of death, for —

"Jesus can make a dying bed

Feel soft as downy pillows are,

While on his breast I lean my head

And breathe my life out sweetly there."

In this sense, our text shines like a cluster of stars. Jesus died, Jesus rose again; in that he died, he can sympathize; in that he rose again, he can succor. Lay hold of this text whenever you think of death with any gloomy cast in your mind; and let us go on our way, each one singing, —

"Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing

But gladly put off this garment of clay;

To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing,

Since Jesus to glory through death led the way."

><><><>

Hebrews 2:18 The Suffering Savior's Sympathy

NO. 1974

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." — Hebrews 2:18.

WE are told by the apostle in the fifth chapter that one special requisite in a high priest was that he could have compassion upon men. "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." You see God did not choose angels to be made high priests; because, however benevolent they might be in their wishes, they could not be sympathetic. They could not understand the peculiar wants and trials of the men with whom they had to deal. Ministers who of God are made to be a flame of fire could scarce commune familiarly with those who confess themselves to be as dust and ashes. But the high priest was one of themselves. However dignified his office, he was still a man. He was one of whom we read that he could lose his wife, that he could lose his sons. He had to eat and to drink, to be sick and to suffer, just as the rest of the people did. And all this was necessary that he might be able to enter into their feelings and represent those feelings before God, and that he might, when speaking to them for God, not speak as a superior, looking down upon them, but as one who sat by their side, "a brother born for adversity," bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh.

Now this is peculiarly so in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is sympathetic above all. There is none so tender as he. He has learnt it by his sufferings; but he proves it by his continual condescension towards his suffering people. My brethren, we that preach the gospel, you that teach it in the Sabbath-school — you will always find your greatest power to lie in love. There is more eloquence in love than in all the words that the most clever rhetorician can ever put together. We win upon men not so much by poetry and by artistic wording of sentences, as by the pouring out of a heart's love that makes them feel that we would save them, that we would bless them, that we would, because we belong to them, regard them as brethren, and play a brother's part, and lay ourselves out to benefit them. Now, as it should be in the under-shepherds, so is it in that Great Shepherd of the sheep. He abounds in tenderness, and though he has every other quality to make up a perfect high priest, though he is complete, and in nothing lacking, yet if I must mention one thing in which he far outshines us all, but in which we should all try to imitate him, it would be in his tender sympathy to those who are ignorant and out of the way, and to all those who are suffering and sorely distressed.

It is in the spirit of brotherly sympathy that I would endeavor to preach on this occasion as the Good Spirit shall help me. May I ask my brethren whose hearts are full of joy at this hour to be praying for others who have not that joy, and to be helping me in my endeavor now to speak words of consolation to them? May the Holy Spirit, in answer to your prayers, make every sentence to be as wine and oil to the wounds of those who are left half dead in the King's highway! We have not to look far for "them that are tempted," for they are all around us, and deserve the thoughtful regard of each one of us. Do not overlook them, my more happy brother, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

In my text I think I see two things very clearly. Jesus suffering: "He himself hath suffered being tempted." Jesus succoring: "He is able to succor them that are tempted." And then I think I see a third thing most certainly there, namely, Jesus sought after: because in the word which is translated "succor" there is a latent meaning of crying. He is able to hear the cry of them that are tempted. It is a word that signifies a mother's quickness to answer her child's cry; and Jesus is able to answer to our cry, therefore we ought to lift up that cry when our soul is in distress. It shall be the best thing seen in this Tabernacle to-night if the third thing be seen, namely, Jesus sought after by every weary, heavy-laden spirit. Why should it not be? Come, Holy Spirit, and create in each mourner the spirit of prayer and the grace of supplication!

I. First, then, and to begin, here is Jesus Suffering.

I call your attention, first, to the feeling that is here expressed: "in that he himself hath suffered being tempted." Many persons are tempted, but do not suffer in being tempted. When ungodly men are tempted, the bait is to their taste, and they swallow it greedily. Temptation is a pleasure to them; indeed, they sometimes tempt the devil to tempt them. They are drawn aside of their own lusts and enticed; so that temptation, instead of being suffering to them, becomes a horrible source of pleasure. But good men suffer when they are tempted, and the better they are the more they suffer. I know some children of God to whom temptation is their constant misery day and night. If it took the form of external affliction, they would bravely bear it; but it takes the shape of evil suggestions and profane insinuations, which leap into their minds without their will, and though they hate them with their whole heart. These suggestions continue to annoy some dear saints whom I know, not only daily, but nightly, and that month after month. These thoughts beset them as a man may be surrounded by swarms of midges or flies, from which he cannot get away. Such brethren are tempted, and they suffer being tempted. Our Lord Jesus Christ enters into this trying experience very fully; because his suffering through being tempted must have been much greater than any suffering that the purest-hearted believer can know, seeing that he is more pure than any one of us.

It was a trying thing to the Blessed Christ even to dwell here among men. He behaved himself with most condescending familiarity, but he must have been greatly sickened and saddened by what he saw in this world of sinners. They were no fit company for him, for their views of things and his were as different as possible, and they had no points of agreement in character with him. They were as much company for him as a patient may be to a surgeon; nay, not so much as an imbecile may be to his teacher, or as a madman to his keeper: they could not come much closer until his grace changed and renewed them. Our Lord and Master had such a delicate sensitiveness of soul with regard to holiness, that the sight of sin must have torn him as a naked man would be torn by thorns, and thistles, and briers. There was no callousness about his nature. He had not made himself familiar with sin by the practice of it, as many have done; neither had he so associated with those who indulge in evil as to become himself lenient towards it. We inherit the customs of our ancestors, and do not raise questions about that which has been commonly done: we begin at an evil point, and start from a wrong point in morals; but it was not so with our Lord; he had no original, or inherited, or birth sin; neither did he learn evil in his bringing up. We also commit sin through a comparative ignorance of its evil, but he knew the horror of it: he felt within his soul the shame, the wrong, the inherent baseness of sin against a holy law and a loving God. His infinite knowledge helped him to understand and measure the heinousness and hell-desert of it; and hence, to be in contact with it must have been a perpetual sorrow to him. He suffered in being placed where he could be tempted.

When sin actually assailed him, and he was bidden to prove his Sonship by working a miracle to feed himself, thus anticipating his Father's providence by a hasty act of self-seeking, how he must have loathed the suggestion! When Satan bade him presumptuously cast himself down from the temple's pinnacle, how he must have smarted at the horrible proposal! When the tempter hissed into his ear that abominable offer, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me," it must have grieved the holy heart of Jesus most intensely. He could not yield to temptation, but he did suffer from it. He did not suffer from it morally, he was too pure for that; but he did suffer from it mentally because of his purity. His mind was grieved, and vexed, and troubled by the temptation that he had to bear. We specially see this when we find him in the garden. There he showed his grief when he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. In many other ways he endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, such multiplied temptations, that it is said, and truly said, by the Holy Ghost in this verse; that he "suffered being tempted."

Now, then, you poor creatures who can scarcely lift up your heads because of shame as you tremble at the memory of your own thoughts, come hither, and meet with One who suffered being tempted! He knows how you are hunted by hell-dogs, go where you may: he knows that you cannot escape the presence of the tempter, and from his own experience he enters into your feelings to the full. He gives you a flood of sympathy in these deep distresses of your spirit, as you fight against Apollyon and agonize against temptation, for he suffered being tempted.

"Exposed to wounds most deep and sore,

**The great Redeemer stood
While Satan's fiery darts he bore,
And did resist to blood."**

Let us meditate for a while upon the fact that our Lord was tempted, tempted up to the suffering point. I must not omit to mention the particular use here made by the Spirit of that word himself. It is not only in that he suffered being tempted, but you see that he himself hath suffered being tempted. That word is sometimes used to make passages emphatic. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." We read again and again of Jesus Christ himself, as if to show that the matters referred to were really, truly, personally, actually his. He himself hath suffered. All that there was in him, that made up himself, suffered being tempted. Survey this fact carefully. Our Lord was tempted by his circumstances, just as you are; yea, more than many of you are; for he felt the woes of poverty, and poverty at times carried to the extreme. "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." You are sometimes tempted with the thought that you will be out of house and home before long. Where will you find a nightly shelter? Jesus can sympathize with you. He also was weary with incessant labors. "Being wearied, he sat thus on the well." Weariness has its temptations. He that is weary is hardly in the condition to judge rightly of things. When we are weary, we are apt to be impatient, complaining, hasty. If you are weary, and can scarcely keep your eyelids from dropping down, remember before you quite yield to fatigue that your Lord was weary too. Once "they took him even as he was into the ship"; and I think it must mean that he was too weary to go into the ship himself, so that they took him in his absolute exhaustion, and gently laid him down, in the hinder part of the ship, placing his head upon a pillow. Do not blame yourself for feeling tired in the house of prayer, if after long watching or hard working you feel more fit for a sleep than for a sermon. I shall not blame you, certainly, for I remember how little my Lord blamed the disciples when they fell asleep in the garden during his agony. He said, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak"; and he never would have thought of so tender an excuse for their untender slumbers if his own flesh had not also been weak when he, too, was weary. So you see that the Lord knows from his own circumstances what are the temptations of poverty and of weariness. He himself was an hungered. He himself said, "I thirst." Everything round about him contributed to fulfill the tale of his trials. He himself was, above us all, "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

And then he himself suffered from temptations arising from men. He endured sadly much from good men. It would seem that even his beloved mother tried him. His mother was with his brethren when we read that they were without, desiring to speak with him. Was it not at that time that they desired to take him, for they said, "He is beside himself"? The men of his own kindred thought that surely he was a man distraught, who ought to be put under restraint. "Neither did his brethren believe in him."

His disciples, though he loved them so intensely, yet each one tried him. Even John, the dearest of them all, must needs ask for places at the right and the left hand of his throne for himself and his brother James. Even Peter "took him and rebuked him." All the disciples were much of Peter's mind when he described himself as about to be crucified and slain. Their spirit was often so worldly, so selfish, so foolish, as greatly to grieve their Lord and Leader. While he was the Servant of all, they were seeking who should have the pre-eminence. While he was seeking the lost, they were for calling fire from heaven upon rebels. They spake unadvisedly with their lips, and committed their Master by their words. And you know how, worst of all, he had to complain in utmost bitterness of spirit, "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." So that from the circle of his own favored ones he gathered more thorns than roses. He received wounds in the house of his friends, even as you may have done. Herein you see his power to exhibit sympathy with us. He suffered just as we do. He "suffered being tempted" even by the failures of those whom he loved.

**"If wounded love my bosom swell,
Deceived by those I prized so well,
He shall his pitying aid bestow,
Who felt on earth severer woe;
At once betrayed, denied, or fled
By those who shared his daily bread."**

As for his enemies, need I speak about them? Did they not all tempt him? Herodians and Sadducees — the openly sceptical; Pharisees and Scribes — the professedly religious, were equally his fierce foes. Those to whom he was a benefactor took up stones again to stone him; and Jerusalem, over which he had wept, cried, "Crucify him, crucify him," and would not rest till he was slain. Ah, Lord! we have none of us such foes as thou hadst. However cruel our adversaries, they are not so numerous or so fierce as thine. Besides, they have some cause to hate us; but of thine enemies it is true that they hated thee without a cause. They could bring no true charge against him, and therefore they forged the cruellest of falsehoods, until their reproaches broke his heart. So

you see how he was tempted, and how he suffered.

Moreover, it is a very wonderful fact — one could scarcely have imagined it — but the record is most clear — he was tempted of the devil: he was tempted of the devil. He in whom all evil is personified dared to stand foot to foot in single duel with him in whom all goodness is concentrated. The fiend infernal dared to face the God incarnate. God in our mortal flesh encountered the devil in the wilderness of temptation. How could the fiend have ventured to assail our Lord? Truly Lucifer was lifted up to the extreme of pride when he dared thus to confront his Lord. But Christ was tempted of the devil early in his public career, and again near its close he exclaimed, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." He seemed to hear the dragon's wings as they beat the midnight air; and he cried, "The prince of this world cometh."

Calmly he added, "And hath nothing in me"; yet his heart grew chill in the hideous presence of the great adversary. It was nothing less than an agony in Gethsemane — a painful wrestling between Jesus and the powers of darkness. You that are tempted of the devil; you that are troubled by mysterious whisperings in your ear; you that, when you sing or pray, have a blasphemy suggested to you; you that even in your dreams start with horror at the thoughts that cross your minds, be comforted, for your Lord knows all about temptation.

Some of you do not understand this, and I hope you never may; but I am speaking with a purpose to others, to whom this is a life's gloom. To you, I say, you can enter into fellowship with your Lord in his being tempted of the devil: that which is incomprehensible to others is plain enough to you. Be of good cheer, for in this respect your Lord himself has suffered being tempted.

"If aught should tempt my soul to stray
From heavenly wisdom's narrow way
To fly the good I would pursue,
Or do the sin I would not do,
Still he, who felt temptation's power,
Shall guard me in that dangerous hour."

Once again: our Lord knew those temptations which arise out of being deserted by God. There come times to certain of us when our soul is cast down within us, when faith becomes feeble, and joy languishes, because the light of the divine countenance is withdrawn. We cannot find our God. We enter into the language of Job, "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat." We cry with David, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" Nothing chills the marrow like an eclipse of the great Sun, whose presence makes our day. If the Lord withdraws from us, then the strong helpers faint.

"He frowns, and darkness veils the moon;
The fainting sun grows dim at noon;
The pillars of heaven's starry roof
Tremble and start at his reproof."

In this great temptation our Lord has suffered his full share. He cried, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani." There was condensed into that dying cry an infinity of anguish such as we cannot conceive of. Some of us know what the surface of this Black Sea is like, but we have never descended into its utmost depths as he did; and, if we have done so, this is our comfort — that HE has been there. He has been to the very bottom of it. He has suffered being tempted even by that heaviest of all the trials which ever fall upon the sons of God. There is the fact.

I desire to go a step farther, to comfort you upon the fruit of all this; for though our Lord thus suffered being tempted, he suffered not in vain; for he was made perfect through his sufferings, and fitted for his solemn office of High Priest to his people. From that fact I want you to gather fruit, because our heavenly Father means to bless you also. We cannot comfort others if we have never been comforted ourselves.

I have heard — and I am sure that it is so — that there is no comforter for a widow like one who has lost her husband. Those who have had no children, and have never lost a child, may talk very kindly, but they cannot enter into a mother's broken heart as she bows over yonder little coffin. If you have never known what temptations mean, you make poor work when attempting to succor the tempted. Our Lord obtained a blessing from suffering temptation; and you may do the same. Brother, the Lord means to make of you a man that shall be used like Barnabas to be a "son of consolation." He means to make a mother in Israel of you, my dear sister, that when you meet with others who are sorely cast down, you may know how to drop in a sweet word by which they shall be comforted. I think you will one day say, "It was worth while to go through that sorrow to be enabled to administer relief to that wounded heart." Will you not comfort others when you are delivered? I am sure you will. You will be ready and expert in the sacred surgery of consolation. Wherefore be content to suffer being tempted, and look for the comfortable fruit which all this shall produce in you.

So you have seen the feeling, and the fact, and the fruit. Now, what are the inferences to be drawn from this part of the subject? I must be short with them.

I want you that are tempted to draw the following inferences from the suffering and temptation of the Lord Jesus: —

First, that temptation to sin is no sin. It is no sin to be tempted, for in him was no sin, and yet he was tempted. "He suffered being

tempted," but there was no sin in that, because there was no sin in himself. You may be horribly tempted, and yet no blame whatever may attach to you, for it is no fault of yours that you are tempted. You need not repent of that which has no sin in it. If you yield to the temptation, therein is sin; but the mere fact that you are tempted, however horrible the temptation, is no sin of yours.

And, in the next place, temptation does not show any displeasure on God's part. He permitted his Only-begotten Son to be tempted: he was always the Son of his love, and yet he was tried. "This is my beloved Son," said he at his baptism; and yet the next hour that Son was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. It does not even show displeasure on God's part that he permits you to be tempted; on the contrary, it may be consistent with the clearest manifestations of divine favor.

And again, temptation really implies no doubt of your being a son of God: for the Son of God was tempted, even the unquestioned Son of the Highest. The prime model and paragon of sonship, Christ himself, was tempted. Then why not you? Temptation is a mark of sonship rather than any reflection thereupon.

Note, next, that temptation need not lead to any evil consequences in any case. It did not in your Lord's case lead up to sin. The Lord Jesus was as innocent in temptation and after temptation as before it, and so may we be through his grace. It is written by the beloved John concerning the man that is born of God, that "He keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

Moreover, do not make it any cause of complaint that you are tempted. If your Lord was tempted, shall the disciple be above his Master, or the servant above his Lord? If the Perfect One must endure temptation, why not you? Accept it, therefore, at the Lord's hands, and do not think it to be a disgrace or a dishonor. It did not disgrace or dishonor your Lord, and temptation will not disgrace or dishonor you. The Lord, who sends it, sends also with it a way of escape, and it will be to your honor and profit to escape by that way.

Far from your hearts be the idea that any temptation should lead you to despair. Jesus did not despair. Jesus triumphed, and so shall you; and therefore he cries, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." You are a member of his body; and when the Head wins the victory, the whole body shares the triumph. "Because I live," said he, "ye shall live also"; and so you shall: even in the poisonous atmosphere of temptation you shall be in health. They of old overcame through the blood of the Lamb, and you shall do the like. Wherefore comfort one another with these words, "He himself hath suffered being tempted". for you who have his life in you shall first suffer with him, and then reign with him.

That is the first part of our discourse; and it is rich with comfort, if the Spirit of God shall but apply it to the tempted heart. I feel such a poor bungler: I have ointment here, and soft linen wherewith to bind on the healing ointment; but perhaps I have put it on too tightly, or too loosely, and if so, I may fail. O divine Comforter, undertake the work! It needs the pierced hand fitly to apply the sacred liniment.

II. But now I come, secondly and briefly, to notice Jesus Succoring.

Jesus suffering, is preparatory to Jesus succoring. Observe, then, "He is able to succor them that are tempted." In this we note his pity, that he should give himself up to this business of succoring them that are tempted. Have you a tempted friend living in your house? If so, you have a daily cross to carry; for when we try to comfort mourners we often become cast down ourselves; and the temptation is for us to get rid of them, or keep out of their way. Has it never occurred to any friend here to say, "That good brother, who sits in the pew near me, is rather a burden to me. I have spoken to him several times, but he is so unhappy that he drags me down. I go out of another door now to get out of his way"? So might your Lord have done to the unhappy, and to you, if he had not been your Lord; but he is such a pitiful One that he seeks out those that are cast down: he healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He lays himself out to succor them that are tempted, and therefore he does not hide himself from them, nor pass them by on the other side. What an example is this for us! He devotes himself to this divine business of comforting all such as mourn. He is Lord of all, yet makes himself the servant of the weakest. Whatever he may do with the strongest, he succours "them that are tempted." He does not throw up the business in disgust: he does not grow cross or angry with them because they are so foolish as to give way to idle fears. He does not tell them that it is all their nerves, and that they are stupid and silly, and ought to shake themselves out of such nonsense. I have often heard people talk in that fashion, and I have half wished that they had felt a little twinge of depression themselves, just to put them into a more tender humor. The Lord Jesus never overdrives a lame sheep, but he sets the bone, and carries the sheep on his shoulders, so tenderly compassionate is he. Here is his pity.

The text, however, treats of his fitness also. He is just the very person to succor them that are tempted. I have been showing you this already. He has the right, acquired by his suffering, to enter in among sufferers, and deal with them. He is free of the company of mourners.

"When our heads are bowed with woe,

**When our bitter tears o'erflow,
When we mourn the lost, the dear,
Then the Son of Man is near.
"Thou our throbbing flesh hast worn,
Thou our mortal griefs hast borne;
Thou hast shed the human tear,
Son of Man, to mourners dear."**

He has the right to succor them that are tempted, for they are his own, since he has bought them with his blood. The feeble, the weak, the trembling, the desponding, are his care, committed to him by God. He said, "Fear not, little flock"; which shows that his flock is little and timid. He says, "Fear not, little flock," because they have great tendency to fear, and because he does not like to see them thus troubled. He has bought them, and so he has the right to succor them, and preserve them to the end.

But he has also the disposition to succor them. He obtained that tender temper through suffering, by being himself tempted. The man that has seen affliction, when he is blessed of God, has the disposition to cheer those that are afflicted. I have heard speak of a lady who was out in the snow one night, and was so very cold that she cried out, "Oh, those poor people that have such a little money, how little firing they have, and how pinched they must be! I will send a hundredweight of coals to twenty families, at the least." But I have heard say that, when she reached her own parlour, there was a fine fire burning, and she sat there with her feet on the fender, and enjoyed an excellent tea, and she said to herself, "Well, it is not very cold, after all. I do not think that I shall send those coals; at any rate, not for the present." The sufferer thinks of the sufferer, even as the poor help the poor. The divine wonder is that this Lord of ours, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor," and now takes a delight in succouring the poor. Having been tempted, he helps the tempted: his own trials make him desire to bless those who are tried.

And then he has the special ability. "He is able to succor them that are tempted." I know certain good brethren whom I am very pleased to see, and I am very happy in their company, when I am perfectly well; but I do not enjoy their presence when I am ill. Thank you; no, I would rather not have their visits multiplied when I am unwell. They walk heavily across the room; they have a way of leaving doors open, or banging them; and when they talk, they talk so loudly and roughly that the poor head aches, and the sick man is worried. The things they say, though they are meant to be kind, are the sort of remarks that pour vinegar into your wounds, they do not understand the condition of a sufferer, and so they say all their words the wrong way upwards. If Christians are to be comforters, they must learn the art of comforting by being themselves tried. They cannot learn it else. Our Blessed Master, having lived a life of suffering, understands the condition of a sufferer so well that he knows how to make a bed for him. "What a strange thing to say!" cries one of my audience. Not at all. David says, "Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." He would not have said that, if the Lord did not know how to make a bed. There is a dainty way of beating up a pillow, and a peculiar art in shaking up a bed when the sick man is lifted out of it; ay, and there is a way of putting on every piece of covering, so as to make it a comfort. By this figure we are taught that the Lord Jesus Christ knows how to deal with us in the weakness and pain of our affliction. He has become so good a Nurse, so divine a Physician, so tender a Sympathizer, because he has passed through our sorrows. "In all our affliction he was afflicted." "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."

"He knows what sore temptations mean For he has felt the same."

He has a fitness for dealing with tempted ones.

Let me spend a minute or two in telling you his methods of succouring them that are tempted. He does it in many ways, and perhaps there may be many here who know more about those ways than I do.

Usually he succours the tempted by giving them a sense of his sympathy. They say, "Yes, my Lord is here. He feels for me." That is in itself a succor of no mean order.

Sometimes he succours them by suggesting to them precious truths which are the sweet antidote for the poison of sorrow. There is in the Bible a remedy exactly fitted for your grief if you could only find it. Sometimes you lose the key of a drawer, and you must have it opened, and therefore you send for the whitesmith, and he comes in with a great bunch of keys. Somewhere among them he has a key that will open your drawer. The Bible contains keys that will open the iron gates of your trouble, and give you freedom from your sorrow. The point is to find out the right promise; and the Spirit of God often helps us in that matter by bringing the words of the Lord Jesus to our remembrance. We had never known the richness of the Word of God if it had not been that in our varied distresses the Lord has shown us how he foresaw all, and provided for all in the covenant of promise.

Sometimes the Lord succours his people by inwardly strengthening them. "Oh," one has said, "I am under a heavy trouble, but I do not know how it is, I can bear it much better than I thought I should." Yes, through grace, a secret divine energy is poured into the soul. We are treated, as Mr. Bunyan puts it, by secret supplies of grace imparted in a hidden manner. We are like yonder fire. One is throwing water on it, and yet it burns on. Behind the wall another is secretly pouring oil on the fire, so that it still keeps burning.

I have known the Lord bless his people by making them very weak. The next best thing to being strong in the Lord is to be extremely weak in yourself. They go together, but sometimes they are divided in experience. It is grand to feel, "I will not struggle any more. I will give all up, and lie passive in the Lord's hand." Oh, it is the sweetest feeling, I think, outside heaven! You may think it strange for me to say so, but I believe that, as in the center of a cyclone there is a little spot where there is perfect calm, and as it is said that in the center of the greatest fire that ever burned there is a spot where no fire is raging, so there is in a deep sense of yielding up to God, in the very center of your pain, and your grief, and your misery, and your depression, a place of perfect repose when you have once yielded yourself fully up unto God. I know this to be true, even though I may not be understood.

In these ways he that was tempted himself succors those who are tempted.

III. I will close by thinking of Jesus Sought After.

Let us seek him. Come, ye weary, heavy-laden, come to him who is able to succor you. Do not stay away until you are a little comforted, but come in your despair. Do not wait until you have a little more faith, but come just as you are, and say to him, "Dear Lord, thou hast felt all this, and I lie down at thy dear feet! Do help me, I beseech thee!" Let these few thoughts help to bring you now in prayer, and trust, and hope, to the feet of this Great High Priest.

First, where else can you go? Who can help a soul like you? Come to him, then. Men are nothing: miserable comforters are they all. The cisterns are all broken: come to the fountain. Come to my Lord. Every other door is shut, but yet you may not despair, for he says, "Behold I set before you an open door."

Where better can you go? Do you want to find a friend able to help you? Do you really want a comrade that can be a brother to you? To whom should you go but unto your own Lord, the sympathizing Son of Man? To whom better can you go? Do you say that you are downcast? Do you tell me you are afraid you are no child of God? Never mind about that. Come as a sinner if you cannot come as a saint. Do you mourn that you have no good thoughts? Come and confess your bad ones. Do you lament that you are not broken-hearted for sin, as you ought to be? Come, then, to be broken-hearted. Do you mourn that you are unspeakably bad? Then, come at your worst. It is never a good thing if you want a surgeon, to say, "My bone is broken, but I shall not have it set until it begins to mend." Poor foolish thing! go while it is broken. O perishing sinner! cry to the Savior. Ask him now to save you. Are you of all men the worst? Then go to him who is the best. Remember he never did cast any one out. Never yet! Never one! I have declared this everywhere, and I have said, "If Jesus Christ casts any one of you out when you come to him, pray let me know; for I do not want to go up and down the country telling lies." Again I give the challenge. If my Lord does cast out one poor soul that comes to him, let me know it, and I will give up preaching. I should not have the face to come forward and preach Christ after that; for he himself has said it, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," and he would be a false Christ if he acted contrary to his word. He cannot cast you out; why should he? "Oh, but then I am so bad." So much the less likely is he to refuse you, for there is the more room for his grace.

"I am lost," said Mr. Whitefield's brother to the Countess of Huntingdon. "I am delighted to hear it," said the Countess. "Oh," cried he, "what a dreadful thing to say!" "Nay," said she, "'for the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost;' therefore I know he is come to save you." O sinner, it would be unreasonable to despair. The more broken thou art, the more ruined thou art, the more vile thou art in thine own esteem, so much the more room is there for the display of infinite mercy and power.

Come, then, just as you are, saint or sinner, whoever you may be. Have done with yourself, your good self and your bad self too, and say, "If I perish I will trust in Jesus." Trust in Jesus, and you cannot perish. If you perish believing in Jesus, I must perish with you. I am in the same boat with you. You may be a very sea-sick passenger, and I may be an able-bodied seaman; but if you are drowned, I shall be, for I cannot swim any more than you can. I depend upon the seaworthiness of this vessel of free grace in which we are embarked, and we must either reach the Fair Havens together, or sink together. You and I, poor broken-down one, oh, will we not sing when we get safe to land? Will we not sing? If we once get to heaven, will we not sing aloud, and clash the high-sounding cymbals with all our might? I will contend with you as to which shall praise God most. You say that you will. I say that I shall. Will we not vie with each other, and with all the blood-redeemed ones, to sing hallelujah to God and the Lamb? If ever such sinners as you and I get inside the gates of heaven, we will give forth such outcries of holy joy and gladness as never came from angels' throats, but can only come from the lips of sinners bought with blood.

The Lord, who succoureth the tempted, himself bless and comfort you! Amen.

Hebrews 3:18, 19 An Earnest Warning Against Unbelief

NO. 3217

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29TH, 1910,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. — Hebrews 3:18, 19.

ALL the histories of Scripture are written for our ensamples, but especially the story of the Israelites in the wilderness, which is given to us at a length far exceeding the value of the narrative except it be intended for purposes of spiritual instruction; for it occupies four books of the Old Testament, and those by no means short ones. These things were written that we might see ourselves in the Israelites as in a glass, and so might be warned of dangers common to us and to them, and be guided to a worthier use of the privileges which we enjoy. Always read Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy with this view, — “This is the story of the church of God in the wilderness: I would see how God dealt with them and how they dealt with him, and from this learn lessons that may be useful to me in my own pilgrimage to the eternal rest.”

The great promise which was given to Israel was Canaan, that choice land which God had of old allotted to them. “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.” He made Palestine to be the center of worship, the joy of all lands, the seat of his oracle, and the place of his abode. In the wilderness, the tribes were journeying towards this country, and it was a very short distance from Egypt, so that, they “might almost at once have taken possession of the land, and yet it “cost them forty years’ travelling. If you trace their journeyings, you will see that they ran a perpetual zigzag, backward and forward, to the right and to the left. Sometimes they were actually journeying away from the promise’s rest, plunging into the deeps of the howling wilderness; and all, we are told, because of their unbelief.

The land itself flowed with milk and honey: it was a land of brooks and rivers, a land upon the surface of which all choice fruits would grow, and out of whose bowels they could dig copper and iron. It was the choicest of all lands, and will yet again become so when there is an end of the accursed rule which now makes it, desolate. Once more, under decent, settled rule, and properly irrigated, it will again bloom, and become such a country as all the world besides cannot match. This was the promised land, and into it they were to enter, and therein to multiply and increase as the stars of heaven, and to be a nation of kings and priests unto God. But “they could not enter in because of unbelief.” This alone; shut them out.

Brethren, Canaan is a type to us of the great and goodly things of the covenant of grace which belong to believers; but if we have no faith, we cannot possess a single covenant blessing. This day, in the proclamation of the gospel, the demand is made: of faith in God; and if there be no faith, no matter how rich the gospel, how full its provisions, and how precious the portion which God hath prepared, none of us can ever enter into the enjoyment of them.

Some of you, because of unbelief, have not entered into the rest which God giveth to his people even here below (“for we which have believed do enter into rest;”) and into the rest which remaineth, the blessed Sabbath of the skies, you will not be able to enter because of unbelief. This pains and troubles me, but so it is. Moses wrote a mournful Psalm which began, “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations,” and then he went on to weep and bewail the transitory nature of man’s estate. He wrote it while he was seeing forty funerals, at the least, every day, for it required an average of forty deaths per diem to carry off all the people that came out of Egypt in the forty years. Their days were spent in bewailing the dead so that it was true of them as it is not true of us, “All our days are passed away in thy wrath.” They had to mourn and sigh, with Canaan but a little way ahead. They might have been laughing in its glades, sunning themselves in its plains, feasting on its figs and grapes and corn; but, instead there they were pining and dying, digging graves and expiring, for they could not enter in because of unbelief.” Many, many, many this day are tormenting themselves with needless despondency, shivering in fears they need not know, and vexed with plagues they need not feel, because they fail to rest in Christ through unbelief. Alas, myriads more are descending into the lake, that burneth with fire, and know no rest, and never shall know any! For them the harps of angels never sound, for them the white robes are not prepared, because the unbelieving must have their portion in the fiery lake. Oh, that God would now deliver them from this dreadful sin of unbelief!

I have only three remarks to make, and the first is, that these were a highly-favored people, yet they could not enter in because of unbelief; secondly, that the sole and only thing, according to the text, which shut them out was unbelief; and that, thirdly, there were

other people, their own sons and daughters, who, being delivered from this unbelief, did enter in. That must have made the case more clear against them, because their little ones, who they said should be prey, were nevertheless permitted each one to stand in his lot. God's purpose was not frustrated because of man's unbelief. "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."

I. First, then, These Were A Highly-Favoured People, Yet They Could Not Enter In Because Of Unbelief.

Mark you, this was not said of Egyptians Amorites, Philistines; no, it was said of Israelites who occupied the position of those who, in the New Testament, are called the "children of the kingdom", many of whom will be cast out. These are the persons to whom it may be truly said, "Be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." The dust of the feet of God's servants will be shaken off against you, but yet you have heard the message of mercy, and you have been as highly-favored as Bethsaida and Chorazin when they heard the word which, through its rejection, wrought for them a more intolerable doom.

Now, think of it. These Israelites had seen great wonders wrought. These men were in Egypt during those marvellous plagues. What times to live in, when they heard of miracle after miracle, peals of God's great thunder when he made his storm to beat about the head of proud Pharaoh! These men had seen the waters turned into blood, and the fish floating dead upon the stream; they had seen the murrain on the cattle, and the great hailstones which destroyed the harvest. They had been in the light when all the Egyptians were in the darkness that might be felt. They had seen the plagues of locusts and of lice, and all the terrors of the Lord, when Jehovah took arrow after arrow out of his quiver, and shot them against the hard heart of Pharaoh. They had all eaten of the paschal lamb on that dread night when Egypt wept sore because the chief of all their strength had been smitten in all the dwellings of the sons of Ham. They had gone out with their kneading-troughs in haste to escape from the land of bondage, brought forth with a high hand and an outstretched arm. These very men had been with Moses when Pharaoh pursued them, and when that lifted rod affrighted the Red sea, and Israel found an open channel where of old the waves had perpetually rolled. They had marched through the depths as through the wilderness; and they had seen the eager waters leap back again into their place, and drown all Egypt's chivalry. They had heard the song of Miriam, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." Yet "they could not enter in because of unbelief."

And, oh, brethren, there are some among you who have seen great marvels wrought by God! You have known the gift of his dear Son, so as to be assured of the fact, and to see it with your mind's eye, though you have not believed unto salvation. You know what God has wrought for his people, you know how he delivered them, and saved them by the blood of his Son. You have been present when the power of the Lord has swept through the audience as the wind sweeps through the forest, and breaks the cedars of Lebanon. You have known the mighty works which God has done in the midst of the congregation, and your eyes have seen them, and your fathers have also told you of the wondrous things which he did in their day and in the old time before them; and yet, with all this before you, and your mother in heaven, and your sister in the church of God, and your friends saved, you yourselves cannot enter in because of unbelief. Ah! the Lord will not have mercy upon you because of what you have seen, for so much light is but an aggravation of the guilt of your unbelief; and, instead of pleading in your favor, it demands justice on those that believe not after all they have seen.

To these Israelites great things had been revealed, for during their sojourn in the wilderness, they had been scholars in a gracious school. You yourselves have marvelled that they did not learn more. What glorious marchings those, were through the wilderness, when the mountains saw thee, O God, and they trembled, when Sinai was altogether on a smoke! To what other people did God ever speak as he spake to them? To whom did he give the tablets of divine command, written with his own mysterious pen? Where else did he dwell between the cherubim, and shine forth with glorious majesty? Where else did he reveal himself in type and shadow, by priest and sacrifice and altar? Where else was heard so sweetly holy psalm and daily prayer? Where else smoked the morning and the evening lamb, God teaching by all these? And yet, when they heard, they did provoke; when they were taught, they refused to learn; when they were called, they went not after him. Their hearts were hardened, and they believed not the Lord their God.

We too, have enjoyed a clear revelation. We have heard the gospel more plainly than the Israelites ever did. This blessed Book has more light in it than Moses could impart, and the preaching of the gospel, where it is done affectionately and earnestly, and by the help of the Spirit of God, is a greater means of grace, to the soul than all the sacred rites of the tabernacle. Shall it be with us as with them? "They could not enter in because of unbelief; shall we labor under the same disability? Sharers in solemn feasts, and yet their carcasses fell in the wilderness! Partakers of countless blessings, favored with the light of God, and yet shut out from Jehovah's rest because they believed not! Will this be our portion also?"

Remember also, that, they were a people with whom God had great patience. Has it ever struck you — the great patience which must have been exercised in forty years of provocation? I put it to any man here who has a good temper, and is very calm and cool, and singularly forgiving; how long could you stand provocation? Brother, if they did always provoke you intentionally, wilfully, and

repeatedly, how long could you bear it? Ah, you would not be provoked one-half so long as you think you would, without, at least, coming to blows. When Jesus said to his disciples that, if a brother should trespass against them seven times in a day, and seven times in a day should turn and say, "I repent," they should forgive him. The very next thing we read is that the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith," as much as to say, "Flesh and blood can never attain to that Lord, thou must increase our faith if we are to do that." But forty years' provocation, what think you can do that? Some men bear provocation well because they cannot return it, on the principle mentioned in Cowper's ballad, —

"So stooping down, as needs he must

Who cannot sit upright."

But when a man knows his power to cud the provocation, and to deliver himself, he is not so slow to ease him of his adversary. See the gentleness of the Lord. Forty years is he provoked! One would have thought that, surely, in that time these people would turn and repent. Moses himself, I think, in the greatest agony of his prayer, could only have said, "Lord, give, them twelve months in which they may mend their ways." That gracious intercessor who is mentioned in the parable of the fig-tree only said, "Let it alone this year also." That was all. But this was forty years! A fruitless tree standing for forty years! Why cumbereth it the ground? Oh, the stupendous mercy of God! But they could not enter into his rest after all. Will it be the same with you who have heard the gospel for many years? What is to become of you? When so much patience is lost upon you, what, must happen next? I scarcely feel as if I could pity you, I seem as if I pitied God that he has borne your indifference so long as the only return for his great love. In what manner has he acted that you should so ungenerously treat him and continue still to provoke him? I fear it will ere long be said of you, "they could not enter in because of unbelief."

Once more only on this point. These people had also received great mercies. It was not merely what, they had seen, and what they had been taught, and the longsuffering they had enjoyed; but they had received very remarkable favors. They drank of the rock which followed them; and the manna, fell every morning fresh from heaven for them. Men did eat angels' food. They had a cloudy pillar to guide and shield them by day; and that same pillar at night became a light of fire, and so lit up the canvas city all night long. The Lord was a wall of fire round about them and a glory in their midst. Will you think, dear friend what God has done for you from your childhood until now? Mayhap you found yourself upon a mother's lap, and she was singing of Jesus; and as you grew up, you dwelt in a family circle where that dear name was a household word. By-and-by, you were led to a godly teacher to be taught more about Jesus; and since then, you have heard from the pastor's mouth a message which he tries to steep in love whenever he delivers it. Then think of the Lord's gracious providence. You have been fed and cared for. Perhaps you have been, brought very low, but you have had food and raiment. Others are pining in the workhouse and you have, probably, a competence, or you are in health, and are able to earn your livelihood, and in times of sickness, God hears you, and keeps you from death. You have been preserved incident, and here you are, kept alive with death so near. Will you not turn unto the Lord? For if not, he will not always spare you. Earth feels your weight too much for her, and almost asks God to let her open a grave for the wretch who refuses to love his Creator. Time itself is getting impatient of your sin, and hurrying on the hour when your allotted span will be over, and you will be forced into a dread eternity. O soul, soul, highly-favored as thou art, it seems so sad a thing that of thee it should be said, "He could not enter in," or "she could not enter in" — "because of unbelief."

II. And now a few words upon our second head. Nothing But Unbelief Shut Them Out. They could not enter in because of unbelief."

It was not through great sin in other respects although they were a sinful people. God was ready to forgive them everything else but unbelief; and had they but been willing and obedient, the times of their ignorance he would have winked at. He had provided sacrifices on purpose to take away sins of ignorance, and multitudes of sins besides; but nothing takes away the sin of unbelief, so long as it remains in the heart. Ye must be believers, or the blood of Jesus Christ itself shall never be sprinkled upon you to your cleansing. However great your sins may have been, all manner of sin and iniquity shall be forgiven unto you if you believe. The greatness of his sin shall shut no men out of heaven; unbelief alone, will stop the way.

Neither, my dear brethren, would their other evil tendencies have kept them out of Canaan. God knew what they were. They had been a race of slaves in Egypt, and it is not easy for a nation long in bondage, to rise to the dignity of freedom: the Israelites in the wilderness were people of a low type, much degraded by slavery, and God was therefore lenient with them. Many laws he did not make, because he knew they would not keep them; and there were some things which he permitted them which could not be permitted to us. "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to put away your wives," said Jesus. The Lord was very gentle towards their moral weakness, and bore with them as a nurse with her children but when it came to unbelief, — a doubt of him who was so clearly God — a denial of his power, his faithfulness, his truth, then they were shut out of Canaan as with an iron gate.

My brethren, they were not unbelieving from want of evidence; yet they had not more than you have, because most of you have abundant evidence of the truth of the gospel. The Bible to you has been God's Book from your childhood and you take its inspiration for granted and you are therefore inexcusable if you do not trust Christ. If a man's scepticism includes a doubt of the existence of God, or the truth of Scripture, we will talk to him; another time; but with, most of you there are no such questionings, and the Lord Jesus might well demand of you, "If I tell you the truth, why do you not believe me? If before the judgement seat of Christ a man shall be forced to confess, "I believe the Bible to be God's Word," I cannot imagine the apology which he can frame in his heart for not having believed in Jesus Christ. To you, then, there is no lack of evidence; and if you are shut out of heaven, your own wilful unbelief must bear the blame.

The Israelites were not unbelieving from want of encouragement for as I have already shown you, the Lord sweetly encouraged them to believe in him by the great things he did for them, and by his gentle dealings day by day. Most of you have been gently persuaded and encouraged to trust in the Lord Jesus. How blessedly the word of God has worded its invitations so as to suit the timorousness of poor trembling sinners; and as a preacher I can honestly say that I lay out all my wits to think of truths which might cheer desponding souls! God, who abounded to me in all goodness and mercy is bringing me tenderly to his feet, has made me long after souls that I may bring them to him! If you have not believed, it has not been for want of invitations, and exhortations, and encouragements, and words of consolation. No, you will not be able to blame the Bible or the preacher; but unbelief of the most wanton kind will be chargeable upon you, and will shut you out of God's rest.

Nor would it have been true if the Israelites had said that they could not enter in because of difficulties. There was the Jordan before them, and when they entered the land, there were cities; walled to heaven, and giants before whom, they felt like grasshoppers. Yes, but that did not hinder, for God divided the Jordan, made the walls of Jericho to fall flat to the ground, and sent the hornets before them to chase out the giants. Israel had little more to do than to go up and take the spoil.

Now, soul, there is no difficulty between you and eternal life which Christ either has not removed already or will not remove as you believe in him. As for your iniquities, when you believe, they are gone — the Jordan is divided. As for your inbred sins, he will surely drive them out little by little, when you believe in him. As for your old habits, which are like the high walls of the Canaanitish cities, they shall fall down at the sound of the ram's horns of faith. Only believe, and thou shalt enter into rest. Trust in God, and impossibilities shall vanish, and difficulties shall become a blessing to thee. Nothing hinders thee except, that thou wilt not believe; and if thou wilt not believe, neither shalt thou be established. "If ye believe not," says Christ, "that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." This is the sin of which I pray the Spirit of God to convince you, "Of sin because they believe not on me."

III. The third head was that Some Did Enter In.

These were their own children, and I have been wondering whether, if I should preach in vain to a whole generation of those who reject Christ I might yet hope that their children would rise up to call the Redeemer blessed.

Dear young man, do not follow in your unbelieving father's footsteps. Dear girl, do not imitate the indecision, the halting between two opinions, which you have seen in your mother. If her carcass must fall in the wilderness, there is no reason why yours should. Is it not a great mercy that the Lord does not reject us "because of the sins of our fathers? Though you were a child of shame, yet you may be a child of graces; though your pedigree, were dishonorable, your end may be glorious. If the history of your ancestors is full of unbelief and rejection of the Lord, yet this need be no reason why you should perish with them.

Look at the effect of this upon the fathers, as they looked upon their sons, and said, "That, boy of mine will have a house and home in the holy land, but I must die in the desert, That girl of mine will be among the merry wives that make joy in Eshcol, and that go up to the house of the Lord in Zion; but I must be buried in this waste of sand, for the Lord has sworn in his wrath that I shall not enter into his rest." Fathers and mothers, how do these things suit you? I am sure, if it were my lot to see my boys rejoicing in the Lord while I was myself an unbeliever, and could not enter in because of unbelief, I could not bear it. I could not bear it. How I wish that your children would entice you to Christ! I have known it happen by the influence of dear departing infants. Many a time, the Lord has caught a babe away from its mother's breast, to her grief at first, but to her salvation in the end. The shepherd could not get the sheep to follow till he took up its lamb, and carried it in his bosom, and then the mother would go wherever he liked. Perhaps the Lord has done that with some of you on purpose that you may follow him. Do you want him to come, and take another little one? Ah, he may, for he loves you! If one is not enough, he may take, another, till at last you follow the Shepherd's call. If you will not follow Jesus you cannot enter where your babes have gone. Mother, you shall not see the heavenly field wherein your little lambs are resting; you are divided from them, for ever. Unbelieving father, you cannot follow your sons; your believing offspring are with God, but you must be cast out from his presence. Can you endure this?

O impenitent sinner, do you not know that God's purpose shall not be frustrated? If you will not have Christ, others will. If you will

not come to the banquet of his love, he will gather the wanderers and the outcasts, for his wedding shall be furnished with guests. As surely as the Lord liveth, Christ shall not die in vain. Heaven shall not be empty, and the sacred orchestra of the skies shall not lack musicians. If you count, yourselves unworthy, others whom you have despised shall be welcomed to the feast of love. Harlots and outcasts, his mighty grace will save, and you, the children of the kingdom, shall be cast into outer darkness, where weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth are heard. Can you bear it? Can you bear to think of it? If you can, I cannot. When I think of any of my hearers perishing I feel like, Hagar when she could not help her child, and therefore laid him under the bushes, and went away saying "Let me not see the death of the child!" One of you lost! One of you lost! It is too much for me to think of! Yet to many of you the gospel has been preached in vain, for the bearing of it has not been mixed with faith. The Lord have mercy upon you!

To me it is especially appalling that a man should perish through wilfully rejecting the divine salvation. A drowning man throwing away the lifebelt, a poisoned man pouring the antidote upon the floor a wounded man tearing open his wounds: any one of these is a sad sight, but what, shall we say of a soul putting from it the Redeemer, and choosing its own destruction? O souls, be warned and forbear from eternal suicide. There is still the way of salvation "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." To believe is to trust. I met with one the other night, who had imbibed the notion that saving faith was simply to believe that the doctrines of the Word of God and the statements therein made are true. Now faith includes that, but it is much more. You may believe all this Book to be true, and be lost notwithstanding your belief. You must so believe it as to act upon it by trusting. "Trust what?" say you. Let us alter the question before we answer it. "Trust whom?" You have to trust in a living person, in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died as the Substitute for those who trust him, and lives to see that those whom he bought with blood are also redeemed from their sins by power, and brought home to heaven. Trust Jesus Christ, soul. Have done with yourself as your confidence, and commit your soul unto the keeping of the faithful Redeemer.

Have you done so? Then, even if the clock has not ticked once since you believed in Jesus Christ, you are as surely saved as if you had been at saint these twenty years, for he that believeth in him is not condemned. This declaration makes no stipulation as to time. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." God grant that you may obey the heavenly precept, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

><>><>><>

Hebrews 5:8 The Education of Sons of God

NO. 2722

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 14TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 10TH, 1880.

"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." — Hebrews 5:8.

Were you ever in a new trouble, one which was so strange that you felt that a similar trial had never happened to you, and, moreover, you dreamt that such a temptation had never assailed anybody else? I should not wonder if that was the thought of your troubled heart. And did you ever walk out upon that lonely desert island upon which you were wrecked, and say, "I am alone, — alone, — ALONE, — nobody was ever here before me"? And did you suddenly pull up short as you noticed, in the sand, the footprints of a man? I remember right well passing through that experience; and when I looked, lo! it was not merely the footprints of a man that I saw, but I thought I knew whose feet had left those imprints; they were the marks of One who had been crucified, for there was the print of the nails. So I thought to myself, "If he has been here, it is a desert island no longer. As his blessed feet once trod this wilderness-way, it blossoms now like the rose, and it becomes to my troubled spirit as a very garden of the Lord."

My object, in this discourse, will be to try to point out the footprints of Jesus in the sands of sorrow, that others of the children of God may have their hearts lifted up within them while they observe that "though he were a Son, yet he," as well as the rest of us who are in the Lord's family, "learned obedience by the things which he suffered."

I. I ask your attention, first of all, to that which, I doubt not, you would have observed in the text without any help from me, namely, that Our Redeemer's Sonship Did Not Exempt Him From Suffering.

"Though he were a Son." It is put as if this might have been a case where the rod of the household could have been spared. That there should be suffering for enemies, that there should be sorrow for rebels against God, is natural and proper; but one might have

thought that he would have spared his own Son, and that, in his case, there would be no learning of obedience by the things which he suffered. But, according to the text, Sonship did not exempt the Lord Jesus Christ from suffering. I want you to notice that, in his case, the Sonship was very emphatic. It was a relationship which was enjoyed by him by nature. He was the Son of God or ever the worlds were made, or time began. We know not how it was, neither may we attempt to explain the doctrine of the eternal Filiation; but, assuredly, as long as there was a Father, there was a Son, and Jesus Christ has ever been "the Son of the Highest." Yet, though he were a Son, when he came and took upon himself our nature, and appeared on earth, he was not exempted from learning obedience by the things which he suffered. In person he was august; he was the Heir of all things, the King of all kings, the King's Son as well as King himself; and yet, notwithstanding the loftiness of his nature, and the unspeakable majesty of his rank, he "learned obedience by the things which he suffered." He was the Son of God in a very special sense even by his earthly birth, for the angel said to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

You and I are the children of men, but Christ was the Son of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and nothing better; and the best of parents have only fleshly, carnal children. There is not a word of Scripture to support the novel notion that some children are born so good that they do not need regeneration or conversion. I do not wonder that, to patch up the figment of infant sprinkling, that lie should have been forged, — and it is nothing but a lie, there is not an atom of truth at the back of it. Our Lord said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" and Paul reminded the Ephesian Christians that they "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Men are not the children of God by any universal fatherhood; they must come to be so by being begotten again "unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." This is not with us a matter of nature, but the gift of grace. "As many as received him, to them gave he power (the right or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." But our Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God by birth, and he is spotless in his nature. There is no corruption, no bias towards evil, no original sin, no taint of birth; nothing of the kind. He is the second Adam; but he has not participated in the evil of the first Adam. In him there was nothing that even the prince of this world could discover with the keenest glance of his malicious eyes; and yet, though he was, in this respect, God's Son above us all, born absolutely pure, "yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."

Further, Christ was always God's well-beloved Son. Let us never forget that he was always a Son without any fault, concerning whom the Father's testimony ever was, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." We who have been made by grace the sons of God, are yet, alas! forgetful children, disobedient children, naughty children that deserve the rod; but he never transgressed his Father's command at any time. The law of God was ever in his heart, and never did he turn aside from the path of right. His walk was perfect in all respects; no fault could be found with him; and yet, though he was a perfect Son, a well-beloved Son, a Son who caused his Father no anger and no anxiety by anything that he did, he did not escape the rod. He must smart, must bleed, must die; even he must endure the utmost that human nature can endure. God had one Son without sin, but he never had a son without sorrow. God had one Son without any taint in his nature, but he never had a sort without the smart which all nature feels. Even with the Son whose Sonship was of a far loftier kind than ours, the Son in whom was no imperfection whatsoever, it was still true that he "learned obedience by the things which he suffered," and we may rest assured that it will be so with us also.

Further, Christ was a Son whom God intended to honor beyond all his other sons. After he had tarried awhile here, and descended lower and lower till he came even to the cross and to the tomb, yet God had decreed to lift him up high above all the sons of men, and to give him a name which is above every name, and to set him on the throne at his own right hand, that before him principalities, and powers, and every living thing should bow. Yet, though he was destined to such a place of honor, in the meantime he must learn obedience by the things he had to suffer. Those many crowns, which were to adorn his brow, could not exempt that head from a crown of thorns, nay, they entailed it. That scepter, the emblem of his universal sovereignty, could not keep his hands from the nails. Nay, those hands must bear the print of the nails before they could finally wield that scepter. Though he lived such a life as he did, continually going about doing good, and though his life now is glorious beyond all conception, yet between those two lives he must die; and he must be able to say of himself, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

Now, as there could be, even for Christ, no exemption from suffering, I gather that there will be no exemption for any other child of God. If the Lord has been pleased, in great mercy, to make us his children, to let us know that we are his children, and to give us a sweet sense of our adoption into his family, we must not therefore conclude that we shall never suffer again. Oh, no! our adoption does not take away from us the rod of the covenant. You may not say, because you are certain that the Lord loves you, that therefore he will not allow you to be tried, because that is clearly contrary to the Scriptures. He himself says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten;" and Paul wrote to the Hebrews, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Do not go upon a wrong tack, lest, by-and-by, you have to turn back, and perhaps to pierce yourself through with many unnecessary sorrows. Do not say, "I may hope that I shall escape from trial because, through divine grace, my character has been kept clean." Dear friend, look well to your goings, for you are in a slippery path. Pray that you may be perfect in every good work to

do the Lord's will; but even if you are, do not conclude that you shall, therefore, have a life of ease. Your Master's footsteps were surer than yours are, yet the stones were sharp to his dear feet. He was purer in heart and conversation than you are, yet many arrows pierced his soul, and reproach broke his heart. God may, in his mercy, give you a long exemption from any severe affliction, but that will not be because your character is better than that of others; for it is written, "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." If there are some others that he does not prune, he is sure to deal thus with the fruit-bearing branches; so, perhaps, the more pure you are in your life, and the more you are doing for the honor of his name, the more you may feel the cutting of that sharp knife which takes away that excess of wood to which we are apt to run.

**"Did I meet no trials here,
No chastisement by the way,
Might I not, with reason, fear I should prove a castaway?"**

Do not imagine that any amount of prayer will have the effect of staving off all trouble, for surely never did anyone else pray like our Lord Jesus Christ did. He was a Son who held much communion with his Father.

**"Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of his prayer."**

His agony in Gethsemane was a time of the mightiest prayer that was ever heard in heaven, yet it was followed very closely by his death upon the cross. You may abound in prayer, and in thanksgiving, and in patience, and yet, for all that, all God's waves and billows may roll over you, and you may be brought into the depths of soul-trouble.

Neither may you conclude, because you enjoy very much of the divine favor and love, that therefore you will be screened from sorrow. You have, perhaps, dear friend, been honored in the Church of God, and there are many who love you for your works' sake; yet you may not, therefore, conclude that you will be without the rod. Nay; you may be certain that you will have it if nobody else does. You have been rendered very useful in your own family, and have seen your own children grow up in the fear of the Lord. That is a great blessing; but do not get into a fool's paradise, and suppose that God has set a hedge about you, so that the devil cannot come in to attack you. Remember that, where Satan sees the hedge, he likes to try to break it down, and the case of Job has been a type of what has happened to many others. Their children have been all round them, and God has greatly prospered them; and, therefore, for that very reason, they have been the objects of Satan's most malicious regard; and, by-and-by, they have had to feel that the Lord trieth the righteous, and that he putteth the pure gold into the furnace, that he places the wheat on the threshing-floor, and treads out the precious grain; and that he does not leave those whom he loves to suffer by perpetual prosperity, as fine silver and gold would canker and corrupt if left to themselves.

So I leave that point with you, dear friends; the Sonship of our blessed Lord and Savior did not screen him from suffering, therefore we cannot expect that our sonship, however clearly it may be proved, and whatever honor it may have brought to us, will screen us from sorrow and suffering.

II. My second thought is perhaps more pleasant than the former one, though indeed the first is like Samson's dead lion, full of honey to those who know how to get at it.

The second lesson I learn from the text is, that Christ's Suffering Does Not Mar His Sonship; for, though he learned obedience by the things which he suffered, yet he was a Son all the while. Ah! and as much a Son in his deepest sorrow as he was before the eternal throne when every angel bowed before him, and delighted to do him homage. His sufferings never affected his Sonship; he was still, always, as he must be forever and ever, the Son of God.

First, his poverty did not disprove his Sonship. Our blessed Lord was here in deep poverty. He said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Yet he was the Son of God for all that; and you, dear friend, may be poorly clad, and worn out by toil; you may not know where you will get shoes to cover your feet; you may be going home to a miserable, ill-furnished room; and as you look about you, you may feel as if you could say, with Job, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither;" for you seem to have nothing left you. But, beloved, if you are the child of God, your poverty does not affect that relationship. He who loves the Lord when in rags is as much the child of God as he will be when he shall put on the white raiment, and stand amongst the shining ones above. "The Lord knoweth them that are his" as much in their rags as in their robes.

Next, Christ's temptations did not affect his Sonship. You remember how he was tempted of the devil; I will not dwell on the other temptations he had to endure, but there were the three in the desert. Satan knows how to tempt us, and the usually begins at the

most favorable moment for his evil purpose. When our Lord was a-hungred, Satan came to him, and tempted him to turn the stones into bread. Did you ever notice that, when you are hungry, Satan comes to you? He has a way of trying to strike us when we are down; the old coward that he is! He never gives us a fair opportunity of fighting with him, he takes every mean advantage that he possibly can. So, when our Lord was faint with hunger, then Satan came to him, and had the impudence to tempt him in three several ways, each of the three comprehending various forms of temptation. In the wilderness, Christ. was tempted in all points like as we are, yet he was without sin there as well as everywhere else.

But do you think that he was not a child of God because he was tempted? I want some of you to take this thought home to yourselves. When the devil was standing there, and saying to Christ, "If thou be the Son of God," was there really any doubt about his Sonship? No; the answers which Jesus was giving to the tempter were amongst the strongest proofs that he was indeed the Son of God; for no one else could have answered the fiend as he answered him. Now, dear friend, don't you ever say, "Because I am so much tempted, I cannot be a child of God." Why! a child of God may be tempted to self-murder, for Satan said to our Lord, when he had set him on a pinnacle of the temple, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down." A child of God may be tempted even to worship the devil, for Jesus Christ was the Son of God when Satan said to him, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Yet all those temptations were in vain; for there was in his heart no tinder which the Satanic sparks could ignite. He was still the Son of God; so thou, poor tempest-tossed, devil-driven heir of heaven, needest not be dismayed, for the tempter's malice cannot destroy thy sonship any more than it destroyed thy Lord's.

Next, Christ's endurance of slander did not jeopardize his Sonship. Our Lord, in addition to being poor and tempted, was shamefully slandered. They said — only think of it, — they said that he was "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Yet this slander never made him cease to be the Son of God; all the venom that they spat from their black mouths could not affect his Sonship in the least. They went so far as to say, "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils," as if he were in league with the arch-fiend. Oh, how could their foul hearts conceive such a thing? How dared their false lips utter such a calumny? It did not, however, hurt him; he was just as much the Son of God as ever. Though they mocked him even in his dying agonies, yet their jests and jeers did not tear him from his Father's heart, nor lead him to question his Sonship. And I want you, who, perhaps, have been slandered cruelly, and have had all manner of evil spoken against you falsely for Christ's name's sake, to feel that, notwithstanding all that may be said, the Lord knoweth them that are his, and he can see their beauties through the mud with which the world bespatters them, and, in due time, he will clear their character of all that is now laid to their charge. Our Lord Jesus does not think any the worse of his people because of what is said against them; but he says to them, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Further, the desertion of all Christ's friends did not invalidate his Sonship. Our blessed Master found the man who had eaten bread with him lifting up his heel against him. Judas betrayed him, Peter denied that he knew him, John and all the rest of the apostles forsook him and fled. If we have to endure such painful experiences, we are very apt at such times to begin to say, "Have all these good men turned against me, — those who used to pray with me, who walked to the house of God with me, — do they all give me the cold shoulder, and all believe ill reports against me? Surely, then, I cannot be a child of God." Ah, my dear friend! you may be none the less dear to the heart of God, none the less accepted in the Beloved, though all this should come upon you. It is a very bitter thing to have to bear if you have walked in uprightness, and kept your footsteps from the way of the destroyer; but your Master had to bear it before you, and his Sonship was not affected by it, nor will yours be.

Even the felon's death on the cross cast no doubt upon Christ's Sonship. Crucifixion was the most shameful and disgraceful mode of execution then practiced, yet he was the Son of God even upon the cross. Did not the centurion, who was on duty there, say of him, "Truly this was the Son of God"? And you and I know that he was never more seen to be the Son of God than when he surrendered himself to his Father's will that he might bear our sins in his own body on the tree, being made a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Well, now, if it should ever come to pass that a child of God should die under reproach, if wicked men should put him to a death of shame, and his name should be cast out as evil, that will not mar his sonship in the least. No; methinks that God never had any children that were more precious in his sight than those who died at the stake or the block for him. How fair their faces must have looked to him when they were scorched with the flames! Such love as theirs, which led them cheerfully to burn to death, — and none of us can imagine what the pain of that form of martyrdom must have been; — the love which enabled them to rejoice in God, even then, must have been most acceptable to their Lord.

Do not let us think, then, that any degree of poverty, or pain, or temptation, or slander, or shame, or even death itself, can affect the sonship of one who is really a child of God. Let us lay hold of this sweet reflection, and never let it go. Thus we have seen that Christ's Sonship did not exempt him from suffering, but that his suffering did not mar his Sonship.

III. So I follow with my third observation, which is, that Obedience Is A Thing Which Has To Be Learned Even By Sons.

Though Jesus was a Son, yet he learned obedience. As God, our Savior knew everything. As God, however, he did not obey. It was in his complex character as our Mediator that he learned to obey.

Perhaps some of you are asking, "But why cannot we obey without learning obedience?" The reason is, first, because obedience has to be learned experimentally. If a man is to learn a trade thoroughly, he must be apprenticed to it. A soldier, sitting at home, and reading books, will not learn the deadly art of war. He must go to the barracks, and the camp, and the field of battle if he is to win victories, and become a veteran. The dry land sailor, who never went even in a boat, would not know much about navigation, study hard as he might; he must go to sea to be a sailor. So, obedience is a trade to which a man must be apprenticed until he has learned it, for it is not to be known in any other way. Even our blessed Lord could not have fully learned obedience by the observation in others of such an obedience as he had personally to render, for there was no one from whom he could thus learn.

"Why!" says somebody, "he might have learned obedience from the angels, who do God's commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his Word." Ah, but angels had never suffered! They have not bodies like ours, full of infirmities; and that kind of passive obedience, which our Savior had mainly to render, is not required of them. Angels could not be "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" so that our Lord Jesus could not see in them such an obedience as he had covenanted to render on behalf of his people, when he engaged to stand in their stead, and to keep the law which they could not keep. He could not learn obedience by observation; he must learn it by experience. What was to be done, what was to be suffered, he must learn by doing it, and suffering it.

It was in the doing of it that he became actually, personally, experimentally acquainted with what was meant by perfect obedience to the will of God; and he did it, brethren. He went right through with that lesson until he had learned obedience. He was getting near to the end of his great task when he said, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt;" but he had fully learned it when he said, "It is finished." He had come to the last line of his lesson; he knew it thoroughly, he had learned obedience. He had to learn obedience in order that he might save us, for it was God's "righteous Servant" who was to "justify many."

Why have you and I, dear friends, to learn obedience? Because there is no way of obtaining true happiness but by obedience. Sin always has sorrow at the tail of it. Happiness is obedience, and obedience is happiness. If we do the will of the Lord thoroughly, then are we delivered from all evil, and enter into the joy of our Lord. We have also to learn obedience because there could be no heaven without it. We hope to go on obeying our Lord forever and ever. Up yonder, in the heaven of glorified spirits, there is perfect obedience to the will of God; and you and I expect to go there, so we want to learn the music here until we know it, and can join the choirs above without creating discord. We are going through our practice and rehearsals now. It takes a great deal of time and patience to teach even some Christian people obedience, for so many of them like to be masters rather than servants. There are some bodies of professing Christians who give no heed to Paul's injunction, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." Church discipline, and the duties of the pastoral office, they ignore, though they are clearly enjoined in the New Testament. They all like to be masters, and everybody must have his say; but as to submission to authority, they will not hear of it. There are some people who would be excellent Christians if Christianity consisted in having their own way, and gaining honor for themselves; but as to making themselves the servants of others for Christ's sake, or watching over others for their good, and being content to be made of no reputation in order that other people might be uplifted, they do not go in for that sort of thing. Clearly, they have not learned obedience. I fear that we have none of us learnt it as we ought; we are too masterful, too big, too proud. We cannot say, with David, "My soul is even as a weaned child." Many of us are more like a weaning child, crying, fretting, rebelling. We have not laid all our wishes at Jesus' feet, and said to him, "Not my will, but thine be done." But it is essential that we should come to this point; we should not be fit for heaven if we did not, for all the spirits before the throne bow submissively to the will of God. They have neither wish nor desire apart from God's will; they have no wandering ambitions, no selfish aims; their every thought is brought into captivity to the will of God. Let us pray for this: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven; and let it be done in our hearts, good Lord, or else we shall never be fit to enter there."

IV. My last observation upon the text is this: The Obedience We Have Been Speaking Of Is Not To Be Learned Except By Suffering. Though Christ was the Son of God, yet even he learned obedience through suffering.

Not even through his silent studies by night, nor his active engagements by day, did he learn it; suffering had to be superadded to all this before he could become proficient in obedience. What was the reason for this?

I suppose it must be because sneering touches a man's own self. Satan thought so, for when God said of Job that he was a perfect and an upright man, Satan answered, "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." Satan was mistaken in the result, but he was wise in his suggestion that personal losses do come home to us; and the arch-enemy knew what he was at when he said to God, "Put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." He knew what is the weak point in most men. There are some

who can obey God actively; it is their delight to be almost day and night engaged in his service; but when their bone and flesh are touched, their patience is sorely tried, and it is a hard lesson for them to learn to obey God's will. Have we all, beloved, learned obedience yet? Have we not been trying to pick and choose our own way? It is not the cry of obedience to say, "Lord, give me health and strength, and I will be thy servant." But can you truly say, "Give me weakness and ill-health, and I will still be thy servant"? Have you not said, "Lord, let me run on thy errands; uphill and downhill, I will be thy servant"? And will you not as readily say, "If thou dost break all my bones, and lay me for half a century upon a bed of pain, I will still be thy servant; anywhere, everywhere, I make no reserve; I am but flesh and blood, yet do as thou wilt with me though it may mean great suffering"?

I think obedience is never fully learned until, in suffering, our graces are put into the fire, and tested. Neither love, nor faith, can very well be tried to the full until there is a bitter medicine to drink. Then we take it in love, and believe that it will work for our good; and thus we prove that our love and our faith are genuine. Suffering goes to the very root of our religion. Some people think they have a great deal of love, and joy, and spiritual-mindedness, and they look down on some of God's poor tried saints. Yes, yes; but you get where they are, and see whether you will not then look up to them, and wish you were half as good as they are. I have heard brethren talk about their own perfections, and of the tried child of God who has a hard struggle between flesh and spirit; and they have reminded me of that passage in the Book of Ezekiel where we are told that the fat cattle pushed with horns and shoulders, and hurt the weak cattle, and God said that he would judge them for this. I am glad if you, dear friend, enjoy unbroken peace. You have, however, a strong constitution, and you owe a good deal more of the sanctity you talk of to health and to prosperity in business than you imagine. Peradventure, if you were as sick, as tried, and as poor as some of your fellow-Christians, you would not find that you had any more grace than they have, peradventure you might have even less. A man, who has never been on board ship, says, "I am a splendid sailor." I have heard such boasting often; but I have seen that same gentleman, when we had started only a quarter of an hour, and he has learned that there is not so much of the sailor in him as he thought. In a similar manner, some people are fine Christians until they are tried and proved. They never have any doubt or fear whatever; but put them in the circumstances of others of God's children, and they are the very first to show signs of weakness. Peter said to his Lord, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." Bravo, Peter; but wait till you hear that cock crow! What a change between Peter weeping bitterly outside the door, and Peter bragging a little while ago! Which Peter do you prefer? I like the one with the tears in his eyes better by far than the other; there is more tender, genuine truth about him. Trials blow away the chaff and the froth. They let a man know how much of the metal is tin, and how much is gold. They reveal what is the work of God, and what is mere nature. They make a man see whether he really is all that he thinks he is. And, consequently, we shall never come to a perfect obedience until we have passed through suffering, for so only is it to be learned.

Peradventure, the last moments before our death will teach us something concerning obedience which is not to be learned in the rest of life. I know not, but it may be that those last hours before the spirit shall be severed from the body, will teach us, once for all, what is the casting of the soul on God in all its fullness, and the entering of the soul into communion with God in all its blessedness. At any rate, whatever it costs us to learn obedience, it will never cost us so much as it cost our Lord: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." Go, then, brothers and sisters, back to your school still to learn until, like your Master, you can say, "It is finished;" and bless God for every suffering that comes to you, for it will be part of your preparation for the felicities of eternity. God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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