



Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 16: 1870

by

Charles Spurgeon

About *Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 16: 1870* by Charles Spurgeon

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Sinners Bound with the Cords of Sin

A Sermon

(No. 915)

Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, February 13th, 1870, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.”—Proverbs 5:22.

THE first sentence has reference to a net, in which birds or beasts are taken. The ungodly man first of all finds sin to be a bait, and, charmed by its apparent pleasantness he indulges in it, and then he becomes entangled in its meshes so that he cannot escape. That which first attracted the sinner, afterwards detains him. Evil habits are soon formed, the soul readily becomes accustomed to evil, and then, even if the man should have lingering thoughts of better things, and form frail resolutions to amend, his iniquities hold him captive like a bird in the fowler's snare. You have seen the foolish fly descend into the sweet which is spread to destroy him, he sips, and sips again, and by-and-by he plunges boldly in to feast himself greedily: when satisfied, he attempts to fly, but the sweet holds him by the feet and clogs his wings; he is a victim, and the more he struggles the more surely is he held. Even so is it with the sins of ungodly men, they are at first a tempting bait, and afterwards a snare. Having sinned, they become so bewitched with sin, that the scriptural statement is no exaggeration: “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.”

The first sentence of the text also may have reference to an arrest by an officer of law. The transgressor's own sins shall take him, shall seize him; they bear a warrant for arresting him, they shall judge him, they shall even execute him. Sin, which at the first bringeth to man a specious pleasure, ere long turneth into bitterness, remorse, and fear. Sin is a dragon, with eyes like stars, but it carrieth a deadly sting in its tail. The cup of sin, with rainbow bubbles on its brim, is black with deep damnation in its dregs. O that men would consider this, and turn from their delusions. To bring torment to the guilty, there is little need that God should, literally in the world to come, pile up Tophet with its wood and much smoke, nor even that the pit should be digged for the ungodly in order to make them miserable; sin shall of itself bring forth death. Leave a man to his own sins, and hell itself surrounds him; only suffer a sinner to do what he wills, and to give his lusts unbridled headway, and you have secured him boundless misery; only allow the seething caldron of his corruptions to boil at its own pleasure, and the man must inevitably become a vessel filled with sorrow. Be assured that sin is the root of bitterness. Gild the pill as you may, iniquity is death. Sweet is an unholy morsel in the mouth, but it will be wormwood in the bowels. Let but man heartily believe this, and surely he will not so readily be led astray. “Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird,” and shall man be more foolish than the fowls of the air? will he wilfully pursue his own destruction? will he wrong his own soul? Sin, then, becomes first a net to hold the sinner by the force of custom and habit, and afterwards, a sheriffs officer to arrest him, and to scourge him with its inevitable results.

The second sentence of our text speaks of the sinner being holden with cords, and a parable may be readily fashioned out of the expression. The lifelong occupation of the ungodly man is to twist ropes of sin. All his sins are as so much twine and cord out of which ropes may be made. His thoughts and his imaginations are so much raw material, and while he thinks of evil, while he contrives transgression, while he lusts after filthiness, while he follows after evil devices, while with head, and hand, and heart he pursues eagerly after mischief, he is still twisting evermore the cords of sin which are afterwards to bind him. The binding meant is that of a culprit pinioned for execution. Iniquity pinions a man, disables him from delivering himself from its power, enchains his soul, and inflicts a bondage on the spirit far worse than chaining of the body. Sin cripples all desires after holiness, damps every aspiration after goodness, and thus, fettering the man hand and foot, delivers him over to the executioner, which executioner shall be the wrath of God, but also sin itself, in the natural consequences which in every case must flow from it. Samson could burst asunder green withes and new ropes, but when at last his darling sin had bound him to his Delilah, that bond he could not snap, though it cost him his eyes. Make a man's will a prisoner, and he is a captive indeed. Determined independence of spirit walks at freedom in a tyrant's Bastille, and defies a despot's hosts; but a mind enslaved by sin builds its own dungeon, forges its own fetters, and rivets on its chains. It is slavery indeed when the iron enters into the soul. Who would not scorn to make himself a slave to his baser passions? and yet the mass of men are such—the cords of their sins bind them.

Thus, having introduced to you the truth which this verse teaches, namely, the captivating, enslaving power of sin, I shall advance to our first point of consideration. *This is a solution to a great mystery; but then, secondly, it is itself a greater mystery;* and when we have considered these two matters it will be time for us to note what is *the practical conclusion* from this line of thought.

I. First, then, the doctrine of the text, that iniquity entraps the wicked as in a net, and binds them as with cords is A SOLUTION OF A GREAT MYSTERY.

When you and I first began to do good by telling out the gospel, we labored under the delusion that as soon as our neighbors heard of the blessed way of salvation they would joyfully receive it, and be saved in crowds. We have long ago seen that pleasant delusion dispelled; we find that our position is that of the serpent-charmer with the deaf adder, charm we ever so wisely, men will not hear so as to receive the truth. Like the ardent reformer, we have found out that old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon. We now perceive that for a sinner to receive the gospel involves a work of grace that shall change his heart and renew his nature. Yet none the less is it a great mystery that it should be so. It is one of the prodigies of the god of this world that he makes men love sin, and abide in indifference as if they were fully content to be lost. It is a marvel of marvels that man should be so base as to reject Christ, and abide in wilful and wicked unbelief. I will try and set forth this mystery, in the way in which, I dare say, it has struck many an honest hearted worker for Jesus Christ.

Is it not a mysterious thing that men should be content to abide in *a state of imminent peril*? Every unconverted man is already condemned. Our Lord has said it: "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God." Every unregenerate man is not only liable to the wrath of God in the future, but the wrath of God abideth on him. It is on him now, it always will remain upon him; as long as he is what he is, it abideth on him. And yet in this state men do not start, they are not amazed or alarmed, they are not even anxious. Sabbath after Sabbath they are reminded of their unhappy position: it makes *us* unhappy to think they should be in such a state, but they are strangely at ease. The sword of vengeance hangs over them by a single hair, yet sit they at their banquets, and they laugh and sport as though there were no God, no wrath to come, no certainty of appearing before the judgment-seat of Christ. See a number of persons in a train that has broken down. The guard has only to intimate that another train is approaching, and that it may perhaps dash into the carriages and mangle the passengers; he has only to give half a hint, and see how the carriage doors fly open, how the travelers rush up the embankment, each one so eager for his own preservation as to forget his fellow's. Yet here are men and women by hundreds and thousands, with the fast-rushing train of divine vengeance close behind them; they may almost hear the sound of its thundering wheels, and, lo, they sit in all quietness, exposed to present peril and in danger of a speedy and overwhelming destruction. "'Tis strange. 'tis passing strange, 'tis wonderful.'" Here is a mystery indeed, that can only be understood in the light of the fact that these foolish beings are taken by their sin, and bound by the cords of their iniquities.

Be it ever remembered that before very long these unconverted men and women, many of whom are present this morning, *will be in a state whose wretchedness it is not possible for language fully to express*. Within four-and-twenty hours their spirits may be summoned before the bar of God; and, according to this book, which partially uplifts the veil of the future, the very least punishment that can fall upon an unconverted soul will cause it "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." All they had endured, of whom it is written, that they wept and gnashed their teeth, was to be shut out into outer darkness, nothing more; no stripes had then fallen, they had not yet been shut up in the prison-house of hell, only the gate of heaven was shut, only the light of glory was hid; and straightway there was weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. What, then, will be the woe of the lost when positive punishment is inflicted? As for what they will endure who have heard the gospel, but have wilfully rejected it, we have some faint notion from the Master's words: "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for them." We know that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for "our God is a consuming fire." From this platform there rings full often that question, "How shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?" And yet for all this, men are willing to pass on through time into eternity regardless of the escape which God provides, turning aside from the only salvation which can rescue them from enduring "the blackness of darkness for ever." O reason, art thou utterly fled? Is every sinner altogether brutish? If we should meet with a man condemned to die,

and tell him that pardon was to be had, would he hear us with indifference? Would he abide in the condemned cell and use no means for obtaining the boon of life and liberty? Yes, there awaits the sinner a more awful doom, and a more terrible sentence, and we are sent to publish a sure pardon from the God of heaven; and yet thousands upon thousands give us no deep heartfelt attention, but turn aside and perish in their sins. O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep for the folly of the race to which I belong, and mourn over the destruction of my fellow men!

It often strikes us with wonder that men do not receive the gospel of Jesus Christ, when we recollect that *the gospel is so plain*. If it were a great mystery one might excuse the illiterate from attending to it. If the plan of salvation could only be discovered by the attentive perusal of a long series of volumes, and if it required a classical training and a thorough education, why then the multitude of the poor and needy, whose time is taken up with earning their bread, might have some excuse; but there is under heaven no truth more plain than this, “He that believeth on the Lord Jesus hath everlasting life;” “He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved.” To believe—that is, simply to trust Christ. How plain! There is no road, though it ran straight as an arrow, that can be more plain than this. Legible only by the light they give, but all so legible that he who runs may read, stand these soul-quickenings words, “Believe and live.” Trust Christ and your sins are forgiven; you are saved. This is so plain a precept, that I may call it a very A B C for infants, yet men receive it not. Are they not indeed holden by the cords of their sins when they refuse to obey?

Moreover, brethren, there is *a wonderful attractiveness in the gospel*. If the gospel could possibly be a revelation of horrors piled on horrors, if there were something in it utterly inconsistent with reason, or something that shocked all the sensitive affections of our better part, we might excuse mankind, but the gospel is just this: man is lost, but God becomes man to save him, “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Out of infinite love to his enemies the Son of God took upon himself human flesh, that he might suffer in the room and stead of men what they ought to have suffered. The doctrine of substitution, while it wondrously magnifies the grace of God and satisfies the justice of God, methinks ought to strike you all with love because of the disinterested affection which it reveals on Jesus Christ’s part. O King of Glory, dost thou bleed for me? O Prince of Life, canst thou lie shrouded in the grave for me? Doth God stoop from his glory to be spat upon by sinful lips? Doth he stoop from the splendor of heaven to be “despised and rejected of men,” that men may be saved? Why, it ought to win every human ear, it ought to entrance every human heart. Was ever love like this? Go ye to your poets, and see if they have ever imagined anything nobler than the love of Christ the Son of God for the dying sons of men! Go to your philosophers, and see if in all their maxims they have ever taught a diviner philosophy than that of Christ’s life, or ever have imagined in their pictures of what men ought to be, an heroic love like that which Christ in very deed displayed! We lift before you no gory banner that might sicken your hearts; we bring before you no rattling chains of a tyrant’s

domination; but we lift up Jesus crucified, and “Love” is written on the banner that is waved in the forefront of our hosts; we bid you yield to the gentle sway of love, and not to the tyranny of terror. Alas! men must be bound, indeed, and fettered fast by an accursed love to sin, or else the divine attractions of a crucified Redeemer would win their hearts.

Consider, my friends, you who love the souls of your fellow men, how marvellous it is that men should not receive the gospel when *the commandment of the gospel is not burdensome!* Methinks if it had been written that no man should enter heaven except by the way of martyrdom, it had been wisdom for every one of us to give our bodies to be burned, or to be stretched upon the rack; yea, if there had been no path to escape from the wrath of God, but to be flayed alive with Bartholomew, enduring present but exquisite torture, it would have been but a cheap price for an escape from wrath, and an entrance into heaven. But I find in God’s word prescribed as the way of salvation, no such physical agonies. No austerities are commanded; not even the milder law which governed the Pharisee when he “fasted thrice in the week.” Only this is written—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;” and the precept of the Christian’s life is, “Love thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself.” Most pleasant duties these of love! What more sweet? What more delightful than to permit the soul to flow out in streams of affection? The ways of true religion are not irksome, her ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. What, heaven given for believing? What, heaven’s gate opened only for knocking, and boons all priceless bestowed for nothing but the asking? Yet they will not ask, they will not knock. Alas, my God, what creatures are men! Alas, O sin, what monsters hast thou made mankind, that they will forget their own interests, and wrong their own souls!

Further, it is clear that men must be fast held by the bondage of their sins when we recollect that, *according to the confession of the most of them, the pleasures of sin are by no means great.* I have heard them say themselves that they have been satiated after a short season of indulgence We know how true the word is, “Who hath woe? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.” No form of sin has ever been discovered yet that has yielded satisfaction. You shall look at those who have had all that heart could wish, and have without restraint indulged their passions, and you shall find them to be in their latter end amongst the most wretched rather than the most satisfied of mankind. Yet for these pleasures—I think I degrade the word when I call them pleasures—for these pleasures they are willing to pawn their souls and risk everlasting woe; and all this while, be it remembered, to add to the wonder, there are pleasures to be found in godliness; they do not deny this, they cannot without belying their own observation. We who are at least as honest as they are, bear our testimony that we never knew what true happiness was till we gave our hearts to Christ; but since then our peace has been like a river. We have had our afflictions, we have suffered grievous bodily pain, we have endured mental depression, we have been heavily burdened, we have borne many trials; but we can say—

“We would not change our blest estate

For all the world calls good or great.”

“Happy are the people whose God is the Lord!” We can set our seal to this experimentally. See ye then, my brethren, these poor souls will prefer the pleasures that mock them to the pleasures that alone can satisfy. If we had to die like dogs, it would be worth while to be a Christian. If there were no hereafter, and our only consideration were who should enjoy this life the best, it would be the wisest thing to be a servant of God and a soldier of the cross. I say not it would ensure our being rich, I say not it would ensure our being respected, I say not it would ensure our walking smoothly and free from outward trouble; but I do say that because of “the secret something which sweetens all,” because of the profound serenity which true religion brings, the Christian life out-masters every other, and there is none to be compared therewith. But think ye for awhile what the ungodly man’s life is! I can only compare it to that famous diabolical invention of the Inquisition of ancient times. They had as a fatal punishment for heretics, what they called the “Virgin’s Kiss.” There stood in a long corridor the image of the Virgin. She outstretched her arms to receive her heretic child; she looked fair, and her dress was adorned with gold and tinsel, but as soon as the poor victim came into her arms the machinery within began to work, and the arms closed and pressed the wretch closer and closer to her bosom, which was set with knives, and daggers, and lancets, and razors, and everything that could cut and tear him, till he was ground to pieces in the horrible embrace; and such is the ungodly man’s life. It standeth like a fair virgin, and with witching smile it seems to say, “Come to my bosom, no place so warm and blissful as this;” and then anon it begins to fold its arms of habit about the sinner, and he sins again and again, brings misery into his body, perhaps, if he fall into some form of sin, stings his soul, makes his thoughts a case of knives to torture him, and grinds him to powder beneath the force of his own iniquities. Men perceive this, and dare not deny it; and yet into this virgin’s bosom they still thrust themselves, and reap the deep damnation that iniquity must everywhere involve. Alas, alas, my God!

And now, once more, this terrible mystery, which is only solved by men’s being held by their sins, has this added to it, that all the while in the case of most of you now present, *all that I have said is believed, and a great deal of it is felt*. I mean this: if I were talking with persons who did not believe they had a soul, or believe in the judgment to come, or believe in the penalty of sin, or believe in the reward of righteousness, I should see some reason why they rejected the great salvation; but the most of you who attend this house of prayer—I think I might say all—have scarcely ever had a doubt about these things. You would be very much horrified if any one would insinuate that you did not believe the Bible to be the word of God. You have a little Pharisaim in your soul, that you think you are not as scoffers are, nor infidels. I own you are not, but I grieve to say I think you are more inconsistent than they. If these things be a fiction, well, sirs, your course is rational; but if these things be realities, what shall I say for you when I plead with God on your behalf? What excuse can I make for you? If you profess to believe these things, act as though you believe them; if you do not, practically act so. Why do you profess to own them as the truth? The case is worse, for you not only believe these things to be true, but

some of you have felt their power. You have gone home from this place, and you could not help it, you have sought your chamber and bowed your knee in prayer; such prayer as it was, for, alas! your goodness has been like the morning cloud and the early dew. I know some of you who have had to break off some of your sins, for your conscience would not let you rest in them. Yet you are unbelievers still, still you are undecided, still you are unsaved, and at this moment, if your soul were required of you, nothing would be in prospect but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation. O my hearer, you whose conscience has been at times awakened, in whom the arrows of the great King have found a lodging place, in whom they are rankling still, yield, I pray thee, yield to the divine thrusts, and give up thy contrite spirit to thy Redeemer's hands. But if thou do not, what shall I say to thee? The kingdom of God has been thrust from you by yourselves. Be sure of this, it has come near you, and in coming near it has involved solemn responsibilities which I pray you may not have to feel the weight of in the world to come.

Here, then, stands the riddle, that man is so set against God and his Christ that he never will accept eternal salvation until the Holy Spirit, by a supernatural work, overcomes his will and turns the current of his affections; and why is this? The answer lies in the text, because his own iniquities have taken him, and he is holden with the cords of his sin. For this reason he will not come unto Christ that he may have life; for this reason he cannot come, except the Father which hath sent Christ draw him.

II. But now, secondly, I pass on to observe that though this is the solution of one mystery, IT IS IN ITSELF A GREATER MYSTERY.

It is a terrible mystery that man should be so great a fool, so mad a creature as to be held by cords apparently so feeble as the cords of his own sins. To be bound by reason is honorable; to be hold by compulsion, if you cannot resist it, is at least not discreditable; but to be held simply by sin, by sin and nothing else, is a bondage which is disgraceful to the human name. It lowers man to the last degree, to think that he should want no fetter to hold him but the fetter of his own evil lusts and desires. Let us just think of one or two cords, and you will see this.

One reason why men receive not Christ and are not saved, is because they are hampered by *the sin of forgetting God*. Think of that for a minute. Men forget God altogether. The commission of many a sin has been prevented by the presence of a child. In the presence of a fellow creature, ordinarily a man will feel himself under some degree of restraint. Yet that eye which never sleeps, the eye of the eternal God, exercises no restraint on the most of men. If there were a child in that chamber thou wouldst respect it-but God being there thou canst sin with impunity. If thy mother or thy father were there thou wouldst not dare offend, but God who made thee and whose will can crush thee, thy lawful sovereign, thou takest no more account of him than though he were a dog, yea, not so much as that. Oh, strange thing that men should thus act! And yet with many it is not because of the difficulty of thinking of God. Men of study, for instance, if they are considering the works of God, must be led up to thoughts of God. Galen was converted from being an atheist while in the process of dissecting the human body; he could not but see the finger of God in the

nerves and sinews, and all the rest of the wonderful embroidery of the human frame. There is not an emmet or an infusorial animalcule beneath the microscope but what as plainly as tongue can speak, saith, "Mortal, think of God who made thee and me." Some men travel daily over scenes that naturally suggest the Creator; they go down to the sea in ships, and do business on great waters, where they must see the works of the Lord, and yet they even manage to become the most boisterous blasphemers against the sacred majesty of the Most High, in his very temple where everything speaks of his glory. But you will tell me perhaps, some of you, that you are not engaged in such pursuits. I reply, I know it. Many of you have to labor with your hands for your daily bread, in occupations requiring but little mental exercise. So much the more guilty then are you that when your mind is not necessarily taken up with other things, you still divert it from all thoughts of God. The working man often find it very possible to spend his leisure hours in politics, and to amuse his working hours by meditating upon schemes more or less rational concerning the government of his country, and will he dare to tell me therefore that he could not during that time think of God? There is an aversion to God in your heart, my brother, or else it would not be that from Monday morning to Saturday night you forget him altogether. Even when sitting here you find it by no means a pleasant thing to be reminded of your God, and yet if I brought up the recollection of your mother, perhaps in heaven, the topic would not be displeasing to you. What owe you to your mother compared with what you owe to your God? If I spoke to you of some dear friend who has assisted you in times of distress, you would be pleased that I had touched upon such a chord; and may I not talk with you concerning your God, and ask you why do you forget him? Have you good thoughts for all but the best? Have you kind thoughts of gratitude for every friend but the best friend that man can have? My God! my God! why do men treat thee thus? Brightest, fairest, best, kindest, and most tender, and yet forgotten by the objects of thy care!

If men were far away from God, and it were a topic abstruse and altogether beyond reach, something might be said. But imagine a fish that despised the ocean and yet lived in it, a man who should be unconscious of the air he breathes! "In him we live and move and have our being; we are also his offspring." He sends the frost, and he will send the spring; he sends the seed-time and the harvest, and every shower that drops with plenty comes from him, and every wind that blows with health speeds forth from his mouth. Wherefore then is he to be forgotten when everything reminds you of him? This is a sin, a cruel sin, a cursed sin, a sin indeed that binds men hard and fast, that they will not come to Christ that they may have life; but it is strange, it is beyond all miracles a miracle, that such a folly as this should hold men from coming to Christ.

Another sin binds all unregenerate hearts; it is the sin of not loving the Christ of God. I am not about to charge any person here with such sins as adultery, or theft, or blasphemy, but I will venture to say that this is a sin masterly and gigantic, which towers as high as any other—the sin of not loving the Christ of God. Think a minute. Here is one who came into the world out of pure love, for no motive but mercy, with nothing to gain, but though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor; why then

is he not loved? The other day there rode through these streets a true hero, a brave bold man who set his country free, and I do remember how I heard your shouts in yonder street, and you thronged to look into the lion-like face of Italy's liberator. I blame you not, I longed to do the same myself, he well deserved your shouts and your loudest praises. But what had he done compared with what the Christ of God has done in actually laying down his life to redeem men from bondage, yielding up himself to the accursed death of the cross that man might be saved through him? Where are your acclamations, sirs, for this greater Hero? Where are the laurels that you cast at his feet? Is it nothing to you, is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by, is it nothing to you that Jesus should die? Such a character, so inexpressibly lovely, and yet despised! Such a salvation, so inexpressibly precious, and yet rejected! Oh, mystery of iniquity! indeed, the depths of sin are almost as fathomless as the depths of God, and the transgressions of the wicked all but as infinite in infamy as God is infinite in love.

I might also speak of sins against the Holy Ghost that men commit, in that they live and even die without reverential thoughts of him or care about him; but I shall speak of one sin, and that is the mystery that men should be held by *the sin of neglecting their souls*. You meet with a person who neglects his body, you call him fool, if, knowing that there is a disease, he will not seek a remedy. If, suffering, from some fatal malady, he never attempts to find a cure, you think the man is fit only for a lunatic asylum. But a person who neglects his soul, he is but one of so numerous a class, that we overlook the madness. Your body will soon die, it is but as it were the garment of yourself and will be worn out; but you yourself are better than your body as a man is better than the dress he wears. Why spend you then all thoughts about this present life and give none to the life to come?

It has long been a mystery who was the man in the iron mask. We believe that the mystery was solved some years ago, by the conjecture that he was the twin brother of Louis XIV., King of France, who, fearful lest he might have his throne disturbed by his twin brother, whose features were extremely like his own, encased his face in a mask of iron and shut him up in the Bastille for life. Your body and your soul are twin brothers. Your body, as though it were jealous of your soul, encases it as in an iron mask of spiritual ignorance, lest its true lineaments, its immortal lineage should be discovered, and shuts it up within the Bastille of sin, lest getting liberty and discovering its royalty, it should win the mastery over the baser nature. But what a wretch was that Louis XIV., to do such a thing to his own brother! How brutal, how worse than the beasts that perish! But, sir, what art thou if thou doest thus to thine own soul, merely that thy body may be satisfied, and thy earthly nature may have a present gratification? O sirs, be not so unkind, so cruel to yourselves. But yet this sin of living for the mouth and living for the eye, this sin of living for what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink, and wherewithal ye shall be clothed, this sin of living by the clock within the narrow limits of the time that ticks by the pendulum, this sin of living as if this earth were all and there were nought beyond—this is the sin that holds this City of London, and holds the world, and binds it like a martyr to the stake to perish, unless it be set free.

Generally, however, there also lies some distinct form of actual sin at the bottom of most men's impenitence. I will not attempt to make a guess, my dear hearer, as to what it may be that keeps thee from Christ, but without difficulty I could, I think, state what these sins generally are. Some men would fain be saved, but they would not like to take up the cross and be despised as Christians. Some would fain follow Christ, but they will not give up their self-righteous pride; they want to have a part of the glory of salvation. Some men have a temper, which they do not intend to try to restrain. Others have a secret sin, too sweet for them to give it up; it is like a right arm, and they cannot come to the cutting of it off. Some enjoy company which is attractive, but destructive, and from that company they cannot fly. Men one way or another are held fast like birds with birdlime, till the fowler comes and takes them to their destruction. O that they were wise, for then they might be awakened out of this folly! But this still remaineth the mystery of mysteries, that those sins absurd and deadly, bind men as with cords, and hold them fast like a bull in a net.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER IS THIS, a message sinner to thee, and saint, to thee.

Sinner, to thee. Thou art held fast by thy sins, and I fear me much thou wilt be held so till thou perish, perish everlastingly. Man, does not this concern you? I lay last night by the hour together on my bed awake, tossing with a burden on my heart, and I tell thee that only burden that I had was thy soul. I cannot endure it, man, that thou shouldst be cast into the "lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." I believe that book as thou dost; believing it, I am alarmed at the prospect which awaits the unconverted. The more I look into the subject of the world to come, the more I am impressed that all those who would lessen our ideas of the judgment that God will bring upon the wicked, are waging war against God and against virtue and the best interests of men. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Do not try it, my friend, I pray thee do not try it. Run not this risk, this certainty of endless misery, I beseech thee, dare it not! What sayest thou, "What then should I do?" I venture to reply in the words of one of old, "Break off thy sins by righteousness, for it is time to seek the Lord." But thou repliest, "How can I break them off? they are like cords and bonds." Ah, soul, here is another part of thy misery, that thou hast destroyed thyself, but thou canst not save thyself; thou hast woven the net, thou hast made it fast and firm, but thou canst not tear it in pieces. But there is One who can, there is One upon whom the Spirit of the Lord descended that he might loose the prisoner. There is a heart that feels for thee in heaven, and there is One mighty to save, who can rescue thee. Breathe that prayer, "O set me free, thou Liberator of captive souls;" breathe the prayer now, and believe that he can deliver thee, and thou shalt yet, captive as thou art, go free, and this shall be thy ransom price, his precious blood; and this shall be the privilege of thy ransomed life, to love and praise him who hath redeemed thee from going down into the pit.

But I said the conclusion of the whole matter had something to do with the child of God. It has this to do with him. Dear brother and sister in Christ, by the love you bear to your fellow sinners, never help to make the bonds of their sins stronger than they are—you will do so if you are inconsistent. They will say, "Why, such a one

professes to be a saved man, and yet see how he lives!" Will you make excuses for sinners? It was said of Judah, by the prophet, that she had become a comfort to Sodom and Gomorrah. O never do this; never let the ungodly have to say, "There is nothing in it; it is all a lie; it is all a mere pretense; we may as well continue in sin, for see how these Christians act!" No, brethren, they have bonds enough without your tightening them or adding to them.

In the next place, never cease to warn sinners. Do not stand by and see them die without lifting up a warning note. A house on fire, and you see it as you go to your morning's labor, and yet never lift up the cry of "Fire!" a man perishing, and yet no tears for him! Can it be so? At the foot of Mr. Richard Knill's likeness I notice these words, "Brethren, the heathen are perishing, will you let them perish?" I would like to have each of you apply to your own conscience the question, "Sinners are perishing, will you let them perish without giving them at least, a warning of what the result of sin must be?" My brethren, I earnestly entreat you who know the gospel to tell it out to others. It is God's way of cutting the bonds which confine men's souls; be instant, in season and out of season, in publishing the good news of liberty to the captives through the redeeming Christ.

And lastly, as you and I cannot set these captives free, let us look to him who can. O let our prayers go up and let our tears drop down for sinners. Let it come to an agony, for I am persuaded we shall never get much from God by way of conversion till we feel we must have it, until our soul breaketh for the longing that it hath for the salvation of souls: when your cry is like that of Rachel, "Give me children or I die I" you shall not long be spiritually barren. When you must have converts, or your heart will break, God will hear you and send you an answer. The Lord bless you! May none of you be held by the cords of your sins, but may ye be bound with cords to the horns of God's altar as a happy and willing sacrifice to him that loved you. The Lord bless you for Jesus' sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Proverbs 3.

Jesus Only

A Sermon

(No. 924)

Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, April 3rd, 1870, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.”—Matthew 17:8.

The last words will suffice us for a text, “Jesus only.” When Peter saw our Lord with Moses and Elias, he exclaimed, “Master, it is good to be here,” as if he implied that it was better to be with Jesus, and Moses, and Elias, than to be with Jesus only. Now it was certainly good that for once in his life he should see Christ transfigured with the representatives of the law and the prophets; it might be for that particular occasion the best sight that he could see, but as an ordinary thing an ecstasy so sublime would not have been good for the disciples; and Peter himself very soon found this out, for when the luminous cloud overshadowed him, and the voice was heard out of heaven, we find that he with the rest became sore afraid. The best thing after all for Peter, was not the excessive strain of the transfiguration, nor the delectable company of the two great spirits who appeared with Jesus, but the equally glorious, but less exciting society of “Jesus only.” Depend on it, brethren, that ravishing and exciting experiences and transporting enjoyments, though they may be useful as occasional refreshments, would not be so good for every day as that quiet but delightful ordinary fellowship with “Jesus only,” which ought to be the distinguishing mark of all Christian life. As the disciples ascended the mountain side with Jesus only, and as they went back again to the multitude with Jesus only, they were in as good company as when they were on the mountain summit, Moses and Elias being there also; and although Jesus Christ in his common habiliments and in his ordinary attire might not so dazzle their eyes as when they saw his raiment bright as the light, and his face shining as the sun, yet he really was quite as glorious, and his company quite as beneficial. When they saw him in his everyday attire, his presence was quite as useful to them as when he robed himself in splendor. “Jesus only,” is after all upon the whole a better thing than Jesus, Moses, and Elias. “Jesus only,” as the common Jesus, the Christ of every day, the man walking among men, communing in secret with his disciples, is a better thing for a continuance while we are in this body, than the sight even of Jesus himself in the excellence of his majesty.

This morning, in trying to dwell upon the simple sight of “Jesus only,” we shall hold it up as beyond measure important and delightful, and shall bear our witness that as it was said of Goliath's sword, “there is none like it,” so may it be said of fellowship with “Jesus only.” We shall first notice *what might have happened to the disciples after the transfiguration*; we shall then dwell on *what did happen*; and

then, thirdly, we shall speak on *what we anxiously desire may happen to those who hear us this day*.

I. First, then, WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED to the three disciples after they had seen the transfiguration.

There were four things, either of which might have occurred. As a first supposition, *they might have seen nobody* with them on the holy mount; they might have found all gone but themselves. When the cloud had overshadowed them, and they were sore afraid, they might have lifted up their eyes and found the entire vision melted into thin air; no Moses, no Elias, and no Jesus. In such a case they would have been in a sorry plight, like those who having begun to taste of a banquet, suddenly find all the viands swept away; like thirsty men who have tasted the cooling crystal drops, and then seen the fountain dried up before their eyes. They would not have gone down the mountain side that day asking questions and receiving instruction, for they would have had no teacher left them. They would have descended to face a multitude and to contend with a demon; not to conquer Satan, but to stand defeated by him before the crowd; for they would have had no champion to espouse their cause and drive out the evil spirit. They would have gone down among Scribes and Pharisees to be baffled with their knotty questions, and to be defeated by their sophistries, for they would have had no wise man, who spake as never man spake, to untie the knots and disentangle the snarls of controversy. They would have been like sheep without a shepherd, like orphan children left alone in the world. They would henceforth have reckoned it an unhappy day on which they saw the transfiguration; because having seen it, having been led to high thoughts by it, and excited to great expectations, all had disappeared like the foam upon the waters, and left no solid residuum behind. Alas! For those who have seen the image of the spirits of just men made perfect, and beheld the great Lord of all such spirits, and then have found themselves alone, and all the high companionship forever gone.

My dear brethren and sisters, there are some in this world and we ourselves have been among them, to whom something like this has actually occurred. You have been under a sermon, or at a gospel ordinance, or in reading the word of God, for a while delighted, exhilarated, lifted up to the sublimer regions, and then afterwards when it has all been over, there has been nothing left of joy or benefit, nothing left of all that was preached and for the moment enjoyed, nothing, at any rate, that you could take with you into the conflicts of every-day life. The whole has been a splendid vision and nothing more. There has been neither Moses nor Elias, nor Jesus left. You did remember what you saw, but only with regret, because nothing remained with you. And, indeed, this which happens sometimes to us, is a general habit of that portion of this ungodly world which hears the gospel and perceives not its reality; it listens with respect to gospel histories as to legends of ancient times; it hears with reverence the stories of the days of miracles; it venerates the far-off ages and their heroic deeds, but it does not believe that anything is left of all the vision, any thing for to-day, for common life, and for common men. Moses it knows, and Elias it knows, and Christ it knows, as shadows that have passed across the scene and have disappeared, but it knows nothing of any one of these as abiding in

permanent influence over the mind and the spirit of the present. All come and all gone, all to be revered, all to be respected, but nothing more; there is nothing left, so far as they are concerned, to influence or bless the present hour. Jesus and his gospel have come and gone, and we may very properly recollect the fact, but according to certain sages there is nothing in the New Testament to affect this advanced age, this enlightened nineteenth century; we have got beyond all that. Ah! Brethren, let those who can be content to do so, put up with this worship of moral relics and spiritual phantoms; to us it would be wretchedness itself. We, on the other hand, say, blessing the name of the Lord that we can say it, that there abides with us our Lord Jesus. At this day he is with us, and will be with us even to the end of the world. Christ's existence is not a fact confined to antiquity or to remote distance. By his Spirit he is actually in his church; we have seen him, though not with eyes; we have heard him, though not with ears; we have grasped him, though not with hands; and we feed upon his flesh, which is meat indeed, and his blood, which is drink indeed. We have with us at this very day Jesus our friend, to whom we make known our secrets, and who beareth all our sorrows. We have Jesus our interpreting instructor, who still reveals his secrets to us, and leads us into the mind and name of God. We have Jesus still with us to supply us with strength, and in his power we still are mighty. We confess his reigning sovereignty in the church, and we receive his all-sufficient succors. The church is not decapitated, her Head abides in vital union with her; Jesus is no myth to us, whatever he may be to others; he is no departed shade, he is no heroic personification: in very deed there is a Christ, and though others see him not, and even we with these eyes see him not, yet in him believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Oh, I trust it will never be so with us, that as we go about our life work our religion shall melt into fiction and become nothing but mere sentiment, nothing but thought, and dream, and vision; but may our religion be a matter of fact, a walking with the living and abiding Saviour. Though Moses may be gone, and Elias may be gone, yet Jesus Christ abideth with us and in us, and we in him, and so shall it be evermore.

Now, there was a second thing that might have happened to the disciples. When they lifted up their eyes *they might have seen Moses only*. It would certainly have been a very sad exchange for what they did see, to have seen Moses only. The face of Moses would have shone, his person would have awed them, and it would have been no mean thing for man of humble origin like themselves to walk down the mountain with that mighty king in Jeshurun, who had spoken with God face to face, and rested with him in solemn conclave by the space of forty days at a time. But yet who would exchange the sun for the moon? Who would exchange the cold moonbeams of Moses and the law for the sunny rays of the Saviour's divine affection? It would have been an unhappy exchange for them to have lost their Master whose name is love, and to have found a leader in the man whose name is synonymous with law. Moses, the man of God, cannot be compared with Jesus, the Son of God. Yet dear brethren, there are some who see Moses only. After all the gospel preaching that there has been in the world, and the declaration of the precious doctrines of grace every Sabbath day; after the clear revelations of Scripture, and

the work of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts; yet we have among us some who persist in seeing nothing but Moses only. I mean this, there are some who will see nothing but shadows still, mere shadows still. As I read my Bible I see there that the age of the symbolical, the typical, the pictorial, has passed away. I am glad of the symbols, and types, and pictures, for they remain instructive to me; but the age in which they were in the foreground has given way to a clearer light, and they are gone forever. There are, however, certain persons who profess to read the Bible and to see very differently, and they set up a new system of types and shadows—a system, let me say, ridiculous to men of sense, and obnoxious to men of spiritual taste. There are some who delight in outward ordinances; they must have rubric and ritual, vestments and ceremonial, and this superabundantly, morning, noon and night. They regard days, and seasons, and forms of words and postures. They consider one place holy above another. They regard a certain caste of men as being priestly above other believers, and their love of symbols is seen in season and out of season. One would think, from their teachings, that the one thing needful was not “Jesus only,” but custom, antiquity, outward performance, and correct observance! Alas! for those who talk of Jesus, but virtually see Moses, and Moses only. Ah! unhappy change for the heart if it could exchange spiritual fellowship with Jesus for outward acts and symbolical representations. It would be an unhappy thing for the Christian church if she could ever be duped out of the priceless boons which faith wins from her living Lord in his fullness of grace and truth, to return to the beggarly elements of carnal ordinances. Unhappy day, indeed, if Popish counterfeits of legal shadows should supplant gospel fact and substance. Blessed be God, we have not so learned Christ. We see something better than Moses only.

There are too many who see Moses only, inasmuch as they see nothing but law, nothing but duty and precept in the Bible. I know that some here, though we have tried to preach Christ crucified as their only hope, yet whenever they read the Bible, or hear the Gospel, feel nothing except a sense of their own sinfulness, and, arising out of that sense of sinfulness, a desire to work out a righteousness of their own. They are continually measuring themselves by the law of God, they feel their shortcomings, they mourn over their transgressions, but they go no further. I am glad that they see Moses, may the stern voice of the lawgiver drive them to the lawfiller; but I grieve that they tarry so long in legal servitude, which can only bring them sorrow and dismay. The sight of Sinai, what is it but despair? God revealed in flaming fire, and proclaiming with thunder his fiery law, what is there here to save the soul? To see the Lord who will by no means spare the guilty, but will surely visit transgression with eternal vengeance, is a sight which never should eclipse Calvary, where love makes recompense to justice. O that you may get beyond the mount that might be touched, and come to Calvary, where God in vengeance is clearly seen, but where God in mercy fills the throne. Oh how blessed is it to escape from the voice of command and threatening and come to the blood of sprinkling, where “Jesus only” speaketh better things!

Moses only, however, has become a sight very common with some of you who write bitter things against yourselves. You never read the Scriptures or hear the

gospel without feeling condemned. You know your duty, and confess how short you have fallen of it, and therefore you abide under conscious condemnation, and will not come to him who is the propitiation for your sins. Alas, that there should be so many who with strange perversity of unbelief twist every promise into a threatening, and out of every gracious word that drips with honey manage to extract gall and wormwood. They see the dark shadow of Moses only; the broken tablets of the law, the smoking mount, and the terrible trumpet are ever with them, and over all an angry God. They had a better vision once, they have it sometimes now; for now and then under the preaching of the gospel they have glimpses of hope and mercy, but they relapse into darkness, they fall again into despair, because they have chosen to see Moses only. I pray that a change may come over the spirit of their dream, and that yet like the apostles they may see “Jesus only.”

But, my brethren, there was a third alternative that might have happened to the disciples, *they might have seen Elijah only*. Instead of the gentle Saviour, they might have been standing at the side of the rough-clad and the stern-spirited Elias. Instead of the Lamb of God, there might have remained to them only the lion who roared like the voice of God’s own majesty in the midst of sinful Israel. In such a case, with such a leader, they would have gone down from the mount, and I wot that if John had said, “Command fire from heaven,” Elias would have consumed his foes; the Pharisees, like the priests of Baal, would have found a speedy end; Herod’s blood, like Ahab’s, would have been licked up by dogs; and Herodias, like another Jezebel, would have been devoured of the same. But all this power for vengeance would have been a poor exchange for the gracious omnipotence of the Friend of sinners. Who would prefer the slayer of the priests to the Saviour of men? The top of Carmel was glorious when its intercession brought the rain for Israel, but how poor it is compared with Gethsemane, whose pleadings bring eternal life to millions! In company with Jesus we are at Elim beneath the palm tree, but with Elias we are in the wilderness beneath the stunted juniper. Who would exchange the excellency of Olivet for the terrors of Horeb? Yet I fear there are many who see Elias only. Prophecies of future woe fascinate them rather than thoughts of present salvation. Elias may be taken representatively as the preparer of Christ, for our Lord interpreted the prophecy of the coming of Elias as referring to John the Baptist. There are not a few who abide in the seeking, repenting, and preparing state, and come not to “Jesus only.” I am not myself fond of even using the term “preparing for Christ,” for it seems to me that those are best prepared for Christ who most feel themselves unprepared; but there is no doubt a state of heart which prepares for faith—a sense of need, a consciousness of sin, a hatred of sin, all these are preparations for actual peace and comfort in Christ Jesus, and oh! How many there are who continue year after year merely in that preliminary condition, choosing the candle and refusing the sun. They do not become believers, but are always complaining that they do not feel as yet fit to come to Christ. They want Christ, they desire Christ, they would fain have Christ, but they stay in desire and longing and go no further. They never get so far as to behold “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” The voice from heaven to them they always interpret as crying, “The axe is laid unto the

root of the trees; bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.” Their conscience is thrilled, and thrilled again, by the voice that crieth in the wilderness, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord.” Their souls are rent and torn by Elijah’s challenge, “If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him;” but they remain still halting between two opinions, trembling before Elias and not rejoicing before the Saviour. Unhappy men and women, so near the kingdom, and yet out of it; so near the feast, and yet perishing for want of the living bread. The word is near you (ah, how near!), and yet you receive it not. Remember, I pray you, that merely to prepare for a Saviour is not to be saved; that to have a sense of sin is not the same thing as being pardoned. Your repentance, unless you also believe in Jesus, is a repentance that needs to be repented of. At the girdle of John the Baptist the keys of heaven did never hang; Elias is not the door of salvation; preparation for Christ is not Christ, despair is not regeneration, doubt is not repentance. Only by faith in Jesus can you be saved, but complaining of yourselves is not faith. “Jesus only” is the way, the truth, and the life. “Jesus only” is the sinner’s Saviour. O that your eyes may be opened, not to see Elias, not to see Moses, but to see “Jesus only.”

You see, then, these three alternatives, but there was also another: a fourth thing might have happened when the disciples opened their eyes—*they might have seen Moses and Elias with Jesus*, even as in the transfiguration. At first sight it seems as if this would have been superior to that which they did enjoy. To walk down the mountain with that blessed trio, how great a privilege! How strong might they have been for the accomplishment of the divine purposes! Moses could preach the law and make men tremble, and then Jesus could follow with his gospel of grace and truth. Elias could flash the thunderbolt in their faces, and then Christ could have uplifted the humble spirits. Would not the contrast have been delightful, and the connection inspiring? Would not the assemblage of such divers kinds of forces have contributed to the greatest success? I think not. It is a vastly better thing to see “Jesus only,” as a matter of perpetuity, than to see Moses and Elias with Jesus. It is night, I know it, for I see the moon and stars. The morning cometh, I know it cometh, for I see no longer many stars, only one remains, and that the morning star. But the full day has arrived, I know it has, for I cannot even see the morning star; all those guardians and comforters of the night have disappeared; I see the sun only. Now, inasmuch as every man prefers the moon to midnight and to the twilight of dawn, the disappearance of Moses and Elias, indicating the full noontide of light, was the best thing that could happen. Why should we wish to see Moses? The ceremonials are all fulfilled in Jesus; the law is honored and fulfilled in him. Let Moses go, his light is already in “Jesus only.” And why should I wish to retain Elias? The prophecies are all fulfilled in Jesus, and the preparation of which Elias preached Jesus brings with himself. Let, then, Elias go, his light also is in “Jesus only.” It is better to see Moses and Elias *in* Christ, than to see Moses and Elias *with* Christ. The absence of some things betokens a higher state of things than their presence. In all my library I do not know that I have a Lennie’s English Grammar, or a Mavor’s Spelling Book, or a Henry’s First Latin Exercises, nor do I regret the absence of those valuable works, because I have got beyond the need of them. So the Christian

wants not the symbols of Moses, or the preparations of Elias, for Christ is all, and we are complete in him. He who is conversant with the higher walks of sacred literature and reads in the golden book of Christ's heart, may safely lay the legal school-book by; this was good enough for the church's infancy, but we have now put away childish things. "We, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." My brethren, the principle may be carried still further, for even the most precious things we treasure here below will disappear when fully realized in heaven. Beautiful for situation was the temple on Mount Zion, and though we believe not in the sanctity of buildings under the gospel, we love the place of solemn meeting where we are accustomed to offer prayer and praise; but when we enter into perfection we shall find no temple in heaven. We delight in our Sabbaths, and we would not give them up. O may England never lose her Sabbaths! but when we reach the Jerusalem above, we shall not observe the first day of the week above the rest, for we shall enjoy one everlasting Sabbath. No temple, because all temple; and no Sabbath day, because all Sabbath in heaven. Thus, you see, the losing of some things is gain: it proves that we have got beyond their help. Just as we get beyond the nursery and all its appurtenances, and never regret it because we have become men, so do Moses and Elias pass away, but we do not miss them, for "Jesus only" indicates our manhood. It is a sign of a higher growth when we can see Jesus only. My brethren, much of this sort of thing takes place with all Christians in their spiritual life. Do you remember when you were first of all convinced and awakened, what a great deal you thought of the preacher, and how much of the very style in which he spoke the gospel! But now, though you delight to listen to his voice, and find that God blesses you through him, yet you have sunk the thought of the preacher in the glory of the Master, you see no man save "Jesus only." And as you grow in grace you will find that many doctrines and points of church government which once appeared to you to be all important, though you will still value them, will seem but of small consequence compared with Christ himself. Like the traveller ascending the Alps to reach the summit of Mont Blanc; at first he observes that lord of the hills as one born among many, and often in the twistings of his upward path he sees other peaks which appear more elevated than that monarch of mountains; but when at last he is near the summit, he sees all the rest of the hills beneath his feet, and like a mighty wedge of alabaster Mount Blanc pierces the very clouds. So, as we grow in grace, other things sink and Jesus rises. They must decrease, but Christ must increase; until he alone fills the full horizon of your soul, and rises clear and bright and glorious up into the very heaven of God. O that we may thus see "Jesus only!"

II. Time hastens so rapidly, this morning, that I know not how I shall be able to compress the rest of my discourse into the allotted space. We must in the most rapid manner speak upon WHAT REALLY HAPPENED.

“They saw no man, save Jesus only.” This was all they wanted to see for *their comfort*. They were sore afraid: Moses was gone, and he could give them no comfort; Elias was gone, he could speak no consolatory word; yet when Jesus said, “Be not afraid,” their fears vanished. All the comfort, then, that any troubled heart wants, it can find in Christ. Go not to Moses, nor Elias, neither to the old covenant, not to prophecy: go straight away to Jesus only. He was all the *Saviour* they wanted. Those three men all needed washing from sin; all needed to be kept and held on their way, but neither Moses nor Elias could have washed them from sin, nor have kept them from returning to it. But Jesus only could cleanse them, and did; Christ could lead them on, and did. Ah! brethren, all the Saviour we want, we find in Jesus only. The priests of Rome and their Anglican mimics officiously offer us their services. How glad they would be if we would bend our necks once again to their yoke! But we thank God we have seen “Jesus only,” and if Moses has gone, and if Elias has gone, we are not likely to let the shavelings of Rome come in and fill up the vacancy. “Jesus only,” is enough for our comfort, without either Anglican, Mosaic, or Roman priestcraft.

He, again, was to them, as they went afterwards into the world, enough for a *Master*. “No man can serve two masters,” and albeit, Moses and Elias might sink into the second rank, yet might there have been some difficulty in the follower’s mind if the leadership were divided. But when they had no leader but Jesus, his guidance, his direction and command were quite sufficient. He, in the day of battle, was enough for their captain; in the day of difficulty, enough for their direction. They wanted none but Jesus. At this day, my brethren, we have no Master but Christ; we submit ourselves to no vicar of God; we bow down ourselves before no great leader of a sect, neither to Calvin, nor to Arminius, to Wesley, or Whitfield, “One is our Master,” and that one is enough, for we have learned to see the wisdom of God and the power of God in Jesus only.

He was enough as *their power* for future life, as well as their Master. They needed not ask Moses to lend them official dignity, nor to ask Elias to bring them fire from heaven: Jesus would give them of his Holy Spirit, and they should be strong enough for every enterprise. And, brethren, all the power you and I want to preach the gospel, and to conquer souls to the truth, we can find in Jesus only. You want no sacred State prestige, no pretended apostolical succession, no prelatical unction; Jesus will anoint you with his Holy Spirit, and you shall be plenteously endowed with power from on high, so that you shall do great things and prevail. “Jesus only.” Why, they wanted no other motive to constrain them to use their power aright. It is enough incentive to a man to be allowed to live for such a one as Christ. Only let the thought of Christ fill the enlightened intellect, and it must conquer the sanctified affections. Let but Jesus be well understood as the everlasting God who bowed the heavens, and came down and suffered shame and ignominy, that he might redeem us from the wrath to come; let us get but a sight of the thorn-crowned head, and those dear eyes all red with weeping, and those sweet cheeks bruised and battered by the scoffer’s fists; let us but look into the tender heart that was broken with griefs unutterable for our sakes, and the love of Christ must constrain us, and we shall thus

“judge, that if one died for all, then were we all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.” In the point of motive, believers do not need the aid of Moses. That you ought to do such a thing because otherwise you will be punished, will but little strengthen you, nor will you be much aided by the spirit of prophecy which leads you to hope that in the millennial period you will be made a ruler over many cities. It will be enough to you that you serve the Lord Christ; it suffices you if you may be enabled to honor him, to deck his crown, to magnify his name. Here is a stimulus sufficient for martyrs and confessors, “Jesus only.” Brethren, it is all the *gospel* we have to preach—it is all the *gospel* we want to preach—it is the only ground of confidence which we have for ourselves; it is all the hope we have to set before others. I know that in this age there is an overweening desire for that which has the aspect of being intellectual, deep, and novel; and we are often informed that there are to be developments in religion, even as in science; and we are despised as being hardly men, certainly not thinking men, if we preach today what was preached two hundred years ago. Brethren, we preach to-day what was preached eighteen hundred years ago, and wherein others make alterations, they create deformities, and not improvements. We are not ashamed to avow that the old truth of Christ alone is everlasting; all else has gone or shall go, but the *gospel* towers above the wrecks of time: to us “Jesus only” remains as the sole topic of our ministry, and we want nothing else.

For “Jesus only” shall be *our reward*, to be with him where he is, to behold his glory, to be like him when we shall see him as he is, we ask no other heaven. No other bliss can our soul conceive of. The Lord grant that we may have a fullness of this, and “Jesus only” shall be throughout eternity our delight.

There was here space to have dilated at great length, but we have rather given you the heads of thought, than the thoughts themselves. Though the apostles saw “Jesus only,” they saw quite sufficient, for Jesus is enough for time and eternity, enough to live by and enough to die by.

III. I must close, though I fain would linger. Brethren, let us think of **WHAT WE DESIRE MAY HAPPEN** to all now present.

I do desire for my fellow Christians and for myself, that more and more the great object of our thoughts, motives, and acts may be “Jesus only.” I believe that whenever our religion is most vital, it is most full of Christ. Moreover, when it is most practical, downright, and common sense, it always gets nearest to Jesus. I can bear witness that whenever I am in deeps of sorrow, nothing will do for me but “Jesus only.” I can rest in some degree in the externals of religion, its outward escarpments and bulwarks, when I am in health; but I retreat to the innermost citadel of our holy faith, namely, to the very heart of Christ, when my spirit is assailed by temptation, or besieged with sorrow and anguish. What is more, my witness is that whenever I have high spiritual enjoyments, enjoyments right, rare, celestial, they are always connected with Jesus only. Other religious things may give some kind of joy, and joy that is healthy too, but the sublimest, the most inebriating, the most divine of all joys, must be found in Jesus only. In fine, I find if I want to labor much, I must

live on Jesus only; if I desire to suffer patiently, I must feed on Jesus only; if I wish to wrestle with God successfully, I must plead Jesus only; if I aspire to conquer sin, I must use the blood of Jesus only; if I pant to learn the mysteries of heaven, I must seek the teachings of Jesus only. I believe that any thing which we add to Christ lowers our position, and that the more elevated our soul becomes, the more nearly like what it is to be when it shall enter into the religion of the perfect, the more completely every thing else will sink, die out, and Jesus, Jesus, Jesus only, will be first and last, and midst and without end, the Alpha and Omega of every thought of head and pulse of heart. May it be so with every Christian.

There are others here who are not yet believers in Jesus, and our desire is that this may happen to them, that they may see "Jesus only." "Oh," saith one, "Sir, I want to see my sins. My heart is very hard, and very proud; I want to see my sins." Friend, I also desire that you should, but I desire that you may see them not on yourself, but on Jesus only. No sight of sin ever brings such true humiliation of spirit as when the soul sees its sins laid on the Saviour. Sinner, I know you have thought of sins as lying on yourself, and you have been trying to feel their weight, but there is a happier and better view still. Sin was laid on Jesus, and it made him to be covered with a bloody sweat; it nailed him to the cross; it made him cry, "Lama Sabachthani;" it bowed him into the dust of death. Why, friend, if you see sin on Jesus you will hate it, you will bemoan it, you will abhor it. You need not look evermore to sin as burdening yourself, see Jesus only, and the best kind of repentance will follow. "Ah, but," saith another, "I want to feel my need of Christ more." You will see your need all the better if you look at Jesus only. Many a time an appetite for a thing is created by the sight of it. Why, there are some of us who can hardly be trusted in a bookseller's shop, because though we might have done very well at home without a certain volume, we no sooner see it than we are in urgent need of it. So often is it with some of you about other matters, so that it becomes most dangerous to let you see, because you want as soon as you see. A sight of Jesus, of what he is to sinners, of what he makes sinners, of what he is in himself, will more tend to make you feel your need of him than all your poring over your poor miserable self. You will get no further there, look to "Jesus only." "Ay," saith another, "but I want to read my title clear, I want to know that I have an interest in Jesus." you will best read your interest in Christ, by looking at him. If I want to know whether a certain estate is mine, do I look into my own heart to see if I have a right to it? But I look into the archives of the estate, I search testaments and covenants. Now, Christ Jesus is God's covenant with the people, a leader and commander to the people. To-day, I personally can read my title clear to heaven, and shall I tell you how I read it? Not because I feel all I wish to feel, nor because I am what I hope I yet shall be, but I read in the word that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," I am a sinner, even the devil cannot tell me I am not. O precious Saviour, then thou hast come to save such as I am. Then I see it written again, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." I have believed, and have been baptized; I know I trust alone in Jesus, and that is believing. As surely then as there is a God in heaven I shall be in heaven one day. It must be so, because unless God be a liar, he that believeth must be saved.

You see it is not by looking within, it is by looking to Jesus only that you perceive at last your name graven on his hands. I wish to have Christ's name written on my heart, but if I want assurance, I have to look at his heart till I see my name written there. O turn your eye away from your sin and your emptiness to his righteousness and his fullness. See the sweat drops bloody as they fall in Gethsemane, see his heart pierced and pouring out blood and water for the sins of men upon Calvary! There is life in a look at him! O look to him, and though it be Jesus only, though Moses should condemn you, and Elias should alarm you, yet "Jesus only" shall be enough to comfort and enough to save you. May God grant us grace every one of us to take for our motto in life, for our hope in death, and for our joy in eternity, "Jesus only." May God bless you for the sake of "Jesus only." Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 17.