

## "Better Than Wine"

(No. 2459)

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 5, 1896.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"Your love is better than wine." Song of Solomon 1:2.

THE Scriptural emblem of wine, which is intended to be the symbol of the richest earthly joy, has become desecrated in process of time by the sin of man. I suppose in the earlier ages when the Word of God was written, it would hardly have been conceivable that there could have existed on the face of the earth such a mass of drunken men and women as now pollute and defile it by their very presence. For man, nowadays, is not content with the wine that God makes, but he manufactures some for himself of which he cannot partake, at least in any abundance, without becoming drunk. Redeem the figure in our text, if you can, and go back from the drinking customs of our own day to more primitive and purer times, when the ordinary meal of a man was very similar to that which is spread upon this communion table—bread and wine—of which men might partake without fear of evil effects. But do not use the metaphor as it would now be understood among the mass of mankind, at least in countries like our own.

"Your love is better than wine." In considering these words, in the spirit in which the Inspired writer used them, I shall, first of all, try to show you that Christ's love is better than wine because of what it is not. And, secondly, that it is better than wine because of what it is. Next, we will examine the marginal reading of the text which will teach us something about Christ's love in the plural—"Your loves are better than wine." And then, lastly, we will come back to the version we have before us, in which we shall see Christ's love in the singular, for the love of Christ, even when it is described in the plural, is always one—though there are many forms of it—it is always the same love.

I. First, then, I want to prove to you that CHRIST'S LOVE IS BETTER THAN WINE BECAUSE OF WHAT IT IS NOT.

It is so, first, because it may be taken without question. There may be and there always will be in the world, questions about wine. There will be some who will say, and wisely say, "Leave it alone." There will be others who will exclaim, "Drink of it abundantly." While a third company will say, "Use it moderately." But there will be no question among upright men about partaking to the fullest of the love of Christ! There will be none of the godly who will say, "Abstain from it," and none who will say, "Use it moderately"—all true Christians will echo the words of the Heavenly Bridegroom, Himself, "Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved." The wisdom of imbibing freely of the love of Christ shall never be questioned,

even, by the pure spirits in Heaven—this is the wine which they themselves quaff in everlasting bowls at the right hand of God, and the Lord of Glory, Himself, bids them quaff it to their fill! This is the highest delight of all who know Christ and have been born again by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit! This is our greatest joy while here below and we can never have too much of it! Yes, we may even swim in this sea of bliss, and there shall be none who shall dare to ask any of us, "What are you doing there?" Many delightful things, many earthly joys, many of the pleasures of this world are very questionable enjoyments. Christians had better keep away from everything about which their consciences are not perfectly clear—but all our consciences are clear concerning the Lord Jesus and our heart's love to Him! So, in this respect, His love is better than wine.

Christ's love is also better than wine because it is to be had without money. Many a man has beggared himself and squandered his estate through his love of worldly pleasure—and especially through his fondness for wine. But the love of Christ is to be had without money. What says the Scripture? "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." The love of Christ is unpurchased and, I may add, it is unpurchaseable! Solomon says, in the eighth chapter of this

Book, "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly despised." And we may as truly say, "If a man would give all the substance of his house for the love of Christ, it would be utterly despised." The love of Jesus comes to His people freely! Not because they deserve it, or ever will deserve it—not because, by any merits of their own, they have won it, or by any prayers of their own, they have secured it—it is spontaneous love. It flows from the heart of Christ because it must come, like the a stream that leaps from an ever-flowing fountain. If you ask why Jesus loves His people, we can give no other reason than this—

"Because it seemed good in His sight." Christ's love is the freest thing in the world—free as the sunbeam, free as the mountain torrent, free as the air! It comes to the child of God without purchase and without merit and, in this respect, it is better than wine.

Again, Christ's love is better than wine because it is to be enjoyed without spoiling. The sweetest matter on earth which is, for a while, pleasant to the taste, sooner or later sours upon the palate. If you find honey, you can soon eat so much of it that you will no longer relish its sweetness. But the love of Jesus never yet soured upon the palate of a newborn soul. He who has had most of Christ's love has cried, "More! More! More!" If ever there was a man on earth who had Christ's love in him to the fullest, it was holy Samuel Rutherford, yet you can see in his letters how he labored for suitable expressions while trying to set forth his hungering and thirsting after the love of Christ. He says he floated upon Christ's love like a ship upon a river And then he quaintly asks that his vessel may founder, and go to the bottom, till that blessed stream shall flow right over the masthead of his ship! He wanted to

be baptized into the love of Christ, to be flung into the ocean of his Savior's love—and this is what the true Christian always longs for.

No lover of the Lord Jesus has ever said that he has had enough of Christ's love. When Madame Guyon had spent many a day and many a month in the sweet enjoyment of the love of Jesus, she penned most delicious hymns concerning it, but they are all full of craving after more—there is no indication that she wished for any change of affection to her Lord, or any change in the object of her affection. She was satisfied with Christ and longed to have more and more of His love. Ah, poor drunk, you may put away the cup of devils because you are satiated with its deadly draft, but never did he who drinks of the wine of Christ's love become satiated or even content with it! He always desires more and yet more of it.

Further, Christ's love is better than wine because it is without sediment. All wine has something in it which renders it imperfect, and liable to corruption—there is something that will have to settle, something that must be skimmed off the top, something that needs purifying. So is it with all the joys of earth—there is sure to be something in them that mars their perfection. Men have sought out many inventions of mirth and pleasure, amusement and delight, but they have always found some hitch or flaw somewhere. Solomon gathered to himself all manner of pleasant things that are the delight of kings. He gives us a list of them in the Book of Ecclesiastes—"I made me great works; I built me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that brings forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of rings and of the provinces: I got me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts." But his verdict concerning all of them was, "Behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit."

But he who delights himself in the love of Christ will tell you that he finds no vanity and vexation of spirit there, but everything to charm and rejoice and satisfy the heart! There is nothing in the Lord Jesus Christ that we could wish to have taken away from Him! There is nothing in His love that is impure, nothing that is unsatisfactory. Our precious Lord is comparable to the most fine gold! There is no alloy in Him. No, there is nothing that can be compared with Him, for, "He is altogether lovely," all perfections melted into one perfection and all beauties combined into one inconceivable beauty! Such is the Lord Jesus and such is His love to His people—without anything of imperfection needing to be removed!

The love of Christ, too, blessed be His name, is better than wine because it will never, as wine will, turn sour. In certain stages of development and under certain influences, the sweet ferments and vinegar is formed instead of wine. Oh, through what fermentations Christ's love might have passed if it had been capable of being acted upon by anything from outside! Oh, how often, Beloved, have we grieved Him! We have been cold and chill towards

Him when we ought to have been like coals of fire! We have loved the things of this world, we have been unfaithful to our Best-Beloved, we have suffered our hearts to wander to other lovers—yet never has He been soured toward us and never will He be! Many waters cannot quench His love, neither can the floods drown it. He is the same loving Savior, now, as He always was, and such He will always be. And He will bring us to the rest which remains for the people of God. Truly, in all these respects, because there are none of these imperfections in His love, it is better than wine!

Once more, Christ's love is better than wine because it produces no ill effects. Many are the mighty men who have fallen down slain by wine. Solomon says, "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has babbling? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine." But who was ever slain by the love of Christ? Who was ever made wretched by this love? We have been inebriated with it, for the love of Christ sometimes produces a holy exhilaration that makes men say, "Whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell." There is an elevation that lifts the soul above all earthly things and bears the spirit up beyond where eagles soar, even into the clear atmosphere where God communes with men! There is all that sacred exhilaration about the love of Christ, but there are no evil effects arising from it. He that will, may drink from this golden chalice, and he may drink as much as he wills, for the more he drinks the stronger and the better shall he be!

Oh, may God grant to us, dear Friends, to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge! I feel sure that while I am preaching on such a theme as this, I must seem, to some here present, to be talking arrant nonsense, for they have never tasted of the love of Jesus! But those who have tasted of it will, perhaps, by my words, have many sweet experiences called to their minds which will refresh their spirits and set them longing to have new draughts of this all-precious love which infinitely transcends all the joys of earth! This, then, is our first point—Christ's love is better than wine because of what it is not.

II. But, secondly, CHRIST'S LOVE IS BETTER THAN WINE BECAUSE OF WHAT IT IS.

Let me remind you of some of the uses of wine in the East. It was often used as a medicine, for it had certain healing properties. The good Samaritan, when he found the wounded man, poured into his wounds, "oil and wine." But the love of Christ is better than wine—it may not heal the wounds of the flesh, but it does heal the wounds of the spirit. Do not some of you remember when your poor heart was gashed through and through by the dagger of Moses, when you felt the wounds caused by the Law of God, the deadly wounds that could not be healed by human hands? Then, how sweetly did that wine of Christ's love come streaming into the gaping wounds!

There were such healing drops as this—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Or such as this, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses

us from all sin." Or this, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Or this, "He that believes on Him is not condemned." Or this, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." I cannot, perhaps, quote the text that dropped like wine and oil into your wounds, but I remember well the text that dropped into mine. The precious vial of wine that healed up all my wounds as in a moment and made my heart whole was that text I quoted last, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Wine made by man cannot be medicine to a broken heart, nor can it heal a wounded spirit—but the love of Jesus Christ can do this and do it to perfection!

Wine, again, was often associated by men with the giving of strength. Now, whatever strength wine may give or may not give, certainly the love of Jesus gives strength—strength mightier than the mightiest earthly force—for when the love of Jesus Christ is shed abroad in a man's heart, he can bear a heavy burden of sorrow. If he could have the load of Atlas piled upon his shoulders, and if he could have all the care of all the world pressing upon his heart, yet if he had the love of Christ in his soul, he would be able to bear the load! The love of Christ helps a man to fight the battles of life. It makes life, with all its cares and troubles, a happy one. It enables a man to do great exploits and makes him strong for suffering, strong for self-sacrifice, and strong for service. It is wonderful, in reading the history of the saints, to notice what the love of Christ has fitted them to do! I might almost say that it has plucked up mountains and cast them into the sea, for things impossible to other men have become easy enough to men on fire with the love of Christ. What the Church of Christ needs, just now, to strengthen her, is more love to her Lord and her Lord's love more fully enjoyed in the souls of her members! There is no strengthening influence like it.

Wine was also frequently used as the symbol of joy and certainly, in this respect, Christ's love is better than wine. Whatever joy there may be in the world (and it would be folly to deny that there is some sort of joy which even the basest of men know), yet the love of Christ is far superior to it! Human joy derived from earthly sources is a muddy, dirty pool,

at which men would not drink did they know there was a stream sweeter, cooler and far more refreshing. The love of Jesus brings a joy that is fit for angels, a joy that we shall have continued to us even in Heaven, itself, a joy which makes earth like Heaven! It is, therefore, far better than wine.

It is better than wine, once more, for the sacred exhilaration which it gives. I have already spoken of this—the love of Christ is the grandest stimulant of the renewed nature that can be known! It enables the fainting man to revive from his swooning. It causes the feeble man to leap up from his bed of languishing and it makes the weary man strong again. Are you weary, Brothers and Sisters, and sick of life? You only need more of Christ's love shed abroad in your heart! Are you, dear Brother, ready to faint through unbelief? You only need more of Christ's love and all shall be well with you. I would to God that we were all filled with it to the fullest, like those Believers were on the day of Pentecost, of whom the mockers said

that they were full of new wine! Peter truly said that they were not drunk, as men supposed, but that it was the Spirit of God and the love of Christ filling them with unusual power and unusual energy and, therefore, men knew not what it was! God grant to us, also, this great power, and Christ shall have all the glory of it!

III. But now, passing rapidly on, for our time is flying, the marginal reading of our text is in the plural—"Your loves are better than wine"—and this teaches us that CHRIST'S LOVE MAY BE SPOKEN OF IN THE PLURAL because it manifests itself in so many ways. I ask all renewed hearts that have been won to Jesus, the virgin souls that follow Him wherever He goes, to walk with me in imagination over the sacred tracks of the love of Christ.

Think, Beloved, of Christ's Covenant love, the love he had to us before the world was! Christ is no new lover of His people's souls—He loved them before the daystar knew its place, or the planets began their mighty revolutions! Every soul whom Jesus loves now, He loved forever and ever! What a wondrous love was that—infinite, unbounded, everlasting—which led Him to enter into Covenant with God that He would bear our sins and suffer our penalties, that He might redeem us from going down into the Pit! Oh, the Covenant love of Jesus! Some dear souls are afraid to believe this Truth of God—let me persuade them to search the Scriptures till they find it, for, of all the doctrines of Holy Writ, I know of none more full of consolation to the heart, when rightly received, than the great foundation Truths of Divine Predestination and Personal Election. When we see that we were eternally chosen in Christ, eternally given to Christ by His Father, eternally accepted in the Beloved and eternally loved by Christ, then shall we say, with holy gratitude, "Such love as this is better than wines on the lees, well refined."

Think next, Beloved, of Christ's forbearing love—the love which looked upon us when we were born, saw us full of sin and yet loved us—the love which saw us when we went astray from the womb speaking lies—the love which heard us profanely speak, wickedly think and obstinately disobey, yet loved us all the while! Let the thought of it ravish your heart as you sing—

"He saw me ruined in the Fall,

Yet loved me, notwithstanding all!

He saved me from my lost estate,

His loving kindness, oh, how great!" Thus were we the subjects of Christ's electing love and forbearing love.

Yes, but the sweetness to us was when was realized Christ's personal love, when, at last, we were brought to the foot of His Cross, humbly confessing our sins. May I ask you who can do so, to go back to that happy moment? There you lay at the foot of the Cross, broken in pieces, and you thought there was no hope for you. But you looked up to the crucified Christ and those blessed wounds of His began to pour out a stream of precious blood upon you—and you saw that He was wounded for your transgressions, that He was bruised for

your iniquities, that the chastisement of your peace was upon Him—and that with His stripes you were healed! That very instant your sins were all put away! You gave one look of faith to the bleeding Savior and every spot and speck and stain of your sin were all removed—and your guilt was forever pardoned!

When you first felt Christ's forgiving love—I will not insult you by asking whether it was not better than wine. Oh, the unutterable joy, the indescribable bliss you felt when Jesus said to you, "I have borne your sins in My own body on the tree, I have carried the great load of your transgressions, I have blotted them out like a cloud, and they are gone from you forever!" That was a love that was inconceivably precious! At the very recollection, our heart leaps within us and our soul does magnify the Lord!

Since that glad hour, we have been the subjects of Christ's accepting love, for we have been "accepted in the Beloved." We have also had Christ's guiding love, providing love and instructing love. His love in all manner of ways has come to us and benefited and enriched us. And, Beloved, we have had sanctifying love—we have been helped to fight this sin and that, and to overcome them by the blood of the Lamb. The Spirit of God has been given to us so that we have been enabled to subdue this ruling passion and overcome that evil power. The Lord has also given us sustaining love under very sharp troubles. Some of us could tell many a story about the sweet upholding love of Christ—in poverty, or in bodily pain, or in deep depression of spirits, or under cruel slander, or reproach. His left hand has been under our head while His right hand has embraced us. We have almost courted suffering, itself, by reason of the richness of the consolation which suffering times have always brought with them! He has been such a precious, precious, precious Christ to us that we do not know how to speak well enough of His dear name!

Then let us reflect with shame upon Christ's enduring love to us. Why, ever since we have been converted, we have grieved Him times without number! As I have already reminded you, we have often been false to Him—we have not loved Him with the love which He might well claim from us. Yet Christ has never cast us away, but still, to this very moment He smiles upon us! He says to His own brethren whom He has bought with blood and to each one of us, "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands. I have espoused you unto Myself forever. I will never leave you, nor forsake you." He uses the most kind and endearing terms towards us to show that His love will never die! Glory be to His holy name for this! Is not His love better than wine?

There is one word I must not leave out and that is, Christ's chastening love. I know that many of you who belong to Him have often smarted under His chastening hand, but Christ never smote you in anger. Whenever He has laid a cross on your back, it has been because He loved you so much that He could not keep it off. He never took away a joy without meaning, thereby, to increase your joy, and it was always done for your good. Perhaps we cannot, at present, say that the Lord's chastising love has always been sweet to us, but we

shall say it, one day, and I think I must say it now! I bless my dear Master for everything He has done to me and I can never tell all that I owe to the anvil, the hammer, the fire and the file! Blessed be His name, for many of us can say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word." Therefore will we put in Christ's chastising love among the rest of His loves and say of it, "This love, also, is better than wine." We would sooner have the chastisements of God than the pleasures of the world! We would rather have God's cup full of gall than the devil's cup full of the sweetest wine he ever made! We prefer to take God's left hand instead of the world's right hand—and would sooner walk with God in the dark than walk with the world in the light! Will not every Christian say that?

Beloved, there are other forms of Christ's love yet to be manifested to you. Do you not, sometimes, tremble at the thought of dying? Oh, you shall have—and you ought to think of it now—you shall have special revelations of Christ's love in your dying moments! Then shall you say, like the governor of the marriage feast at Cana, "You have kept the good wine until now." I believe we have hardly any conception of what comfort the Lord pours into His people's souls in their dying moments. We do not need those comforts, yet—we could not bear them now—but they are laid up in store and when we need them, they will be brought out. And then shall our spirits find that the Lord's promise is fulfilled, "As your days, so shall your strength be."

And then—but perhaps I had better be silent upon such a theme—when the veil is drawn and the spirit has left the body, what will be the bliss of Christ's love to the spirits gathered with Him in Glory?—

"Oh, for the bliss of flying,

My risen Lord to meet!

Oh, for the rest of lying

Forever at His feet!

Oh, for the hour of seeing

My Savior face to face!

The hope of always being

In that sweet meeting place!"

Or, as Dr. Watts puts it—

"Millions of years my wondering eyes Shall over Your beauties rove

And endless ages I'll adore The glories of Your love."

Then think of the love of the day of our resurrection, for Christ loves our bodies as well as our souls and, arrayed in glory, these mortal bodies shall rise from the tomb! Oh, the bliss of being like our Lord and being with Him when He comes in all the splendor of the Second Advent—sitting as assessors with Him to judge the world and to judge even the angels! And then to be in His triumphal procession when He shall ascend to God and deliver up the Kingdom to the Father and the Mediatorial system shall be ended, and God shall be All in



All! And then to be forever, forever, forever, "forever with the Lord," with no fear of the soul dying out, with no dread of the false doctrine of annihilation, like a grim specter always crossing our blissful pathway! With a life coeval with the life of God and an immortality divinely given, we shall outlast the sun! And when the moon grows pale and wanes forever, and this old earth and all that is therein shall be burned up, yet shall we be forever with Him! Truly, His love is better than wine! It is the very essence of Heaven! It is better than anything that we can conceive!

God grant us foretastes of the loves of Heaven in the present realization of the love of Jesus, which is the same love, and through which Heaven, itself, shall come to us!

IV. Now, I must have just a few minutes for my last point, and that is, CHRIST'S LOVE IN THE SINGULAR—a theme which might well suffice for half a dozen sermons at the very least! Look at the text as it stands—"Your love is better than wine."

Think, first, of the love of Christ in the cluster. That is where the wine is first. We talk of the grapes of Eshcol, but these are not worthy to be mentioned in comparison with the love of Jesus Christ as it is seen, in old eternity, in the purpose of God, in the Covenant of Grace and, afterwards, in the promises of the Word, and in the various Revelations of Christ in the types and symbols of the Ceremonial Law. There I see the love of Christ in the cluster. When I hear God threatening the serpent that the Seed of the woman would bruise his head, and when, later on, I find many prophecies concerning Him who is mighty to save, I see the wine in the cluster, the love of Christ that is really there, but not yet enjoyed! What delight it gives us to even look at the love of Christ in the cluster!

Next, look at the love of Christ in the basket, for the grapes must be gathered and cast into the basket before the wine can be made. I see Jesus Christ living here on earth among the sons of men—gathered, as it were, from the sacred vine and, like a cluster thrown into the basket. Oh, the love of Jesus Christ in the manger of Bethlehem, the love of Jesus in the workshop of Nazareth, the love of Jesus in His holy ministry, the love of Jesus in the temptation in the wilderness, the love of Jesus in His miracles, the love of Jesus in His communion with His disciples, the love of Jesus in bearing shame and reproach for our sakes, the love of Jesus in being so poor that He had not where to lay His head, the love of Jesus in enduring such contradiction of sinners against Himself! I cannot hope to enter into this great subject! I can only point it out to you and pass on.

There is, first, Christ's love in the cluster, and next, there is Christ's love in the basket. Think of it and, as you think of it, say, "It is better than wine."

But oh, if your hearts have any tenderness towards Him, think of the love of Christ in the winepress. Look at Him there, when the cluster in the basket begins to be crushed! Oh, what a crushing was that under the foot of the treader of grapes when Christ sweat, as it were, great drops of blood! And how terribly did the great press come down, again, and again when He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the

hair! And He hid not His face from shame and spitting! But oh, how the red wine flowed from the winepress—what fountains there were of this precious sweetness when Jesus was nailed to the Cross—suffering in body, depressed in spirit and forsaken of His God! "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani?" These are the sounds that issue from the winepress and how terrible and yet how sweet they are! Stand there and believe that all your sins were borne by Him—and that He suffered what you ought to have suffered—and, as your Substitute, was crushed for you—

"He bore, that you might never bear, His Father's righteous ire." Yes, Beloved, Christ's love in the winepress is better than wine!

Now I want you to think of the love of Christ in the flagon, where His precious love is stored up for His people—the love of His promises, given to you. The love of His Providence, for He rules for you. The love of His intercession, for He pleads for you. The love of His representation, for He stands at the right hand of the Father as the Representative of His people. The love of His union with His people, for you are one with Him—He is the Head and you are the members of His body—the love of all that He is, all that He was and all that He ever shall be, for in every capacity and under all circumstances He loves you and will love you without end! Think of His rich love, His abundant love towards His people! I call it love in the flagon, this love of His to all the saints which He has stored up for them.

And then, Beloved, not only think of but enjoy the love of Christ in the cup, by which I mean His love to you. I always feel, when I get to this topic, as if I would rather sit down and ask you to think it over, than try to talk to you about it. This theme seems to silence me. I think, like the poet—

"Come, then, expressive silence, muse His praise." Love to me! Dear child of God, think of it in this way—let me speak for you—"He loves me! He, a King, loves me! A King? The King of Kings, HE loves me! God, very God of very God, loves me!" Strange conjunction, this, between the Infinite and a worm! We have heard and read romantic stories of the loves of emperors to poor village maidens, but what of these? Worms were never raised so high above their meaner fellow worms as the Lord Jesus is above us! If an angel loved an ant, there would be no such difference as when Jehovah-Jesus loves us! Yet there is no fact beneath Heaven, or in Heaven, that is so indisputable as this fact—that He loves us if we are His believing people! For this we have the declaration of Inspiration. No, Brothers and Sisters, we have even more than that to confirm it beyond all question, for we have His own death upon the Cross! He signed this document with His own blood in order that no Believer might ever doubt its authenticity!

"Herein is love." "Behold what manner of love" there is in the Cross! What wondrous love is there! Oh, then, let us have Christ's love in the cup, the love that we may daily drink, the love that we may personally drink just now at this moment, the love which shall be all

our own as if there were no others in the world—and yet a love in which ten thousand times ten thousand have an equal share with ourselves!

God bless you, dear Friends, and give you to drink of this wine! And if any here know not the love of Jesus Christ, I pray the Lord to bring them to know it. May He renew their heart and give them faith in Him, for whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God! "He that believes on Him is not condemned." His great Gospel Word is, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." May the Lord confirm this Word by His Spirit, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ISAIAH 26:20,21; 27:1-9.

We will read a short passage in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, commencing with the 26th chapter, and the 20th verse.

[Isaiah 26:20](#). Come, my people, enter into your chamber, and shut your doors about you: hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. There is never a flood for the wicked without an ark for the righteous! Never shall a storm sweep over the earth till God has prepared a great rock wherein His people may be hidden.

21. For, behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain. The earth has often covered up the evidences of human guilt. Blood shed in battle has soaked into the soil and men have forgotten the violence of tyrants and conquerors, but the earth shall disclose her blood. Sin, though it is sown in the earth, shall spring up like wheat, but to a terrible harvest. "Be sure your sin will find you out."

[Isaiah 27:1](#). In that day the LORD, with His sore and great and strong sword, shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent. That is to say, He will punish those who are like leviathan—the proudest, the greatest and the most powerful sinners shall not escape Divine Justice. God's Laws are not like cobwebs, meant to catch the little flies while the great ones break through—He will strike leviathan—He will surely punish the mightiest sinners of the earth.

1. Even leviathan that crooked serpent. Hard to come at, difficult to find, he shall not escape the sword of the Lord.

1. And He shall slay the dragon that is in the sea. If men should try to hide from God in Hell, itself, yet would He find them. There is no possibility that any offender shall escape His all-seeing eyes.

2, 3. In that day sing you unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. Thus the Lord reveals the tenderness of His love to His Church. Then follows a remarkable passage in which, it seems to me, we have the plan of salvation plainly set out. First, here is man at enmity with his Maker.

4. Fury is not in Me: who would set the briars and thorns against Me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Men who are at enmity with God little know how terrific is the force of His strength. They are like dry thorns when the fire catches them and nothing burns more readily. The bush upon the common, when some wild youth sets fire to it, suddenly blazes up, crackles and is gone—so will it be with the ungodly. God has but to go through them and they shall be destroyed. But now comes a message of mercy.

5. Or let him take hold of My strength. This is what the repenting and believing sinner does—he lays hold of Christ—he takes the strength of God to be his defense and then the strong God, instead of being a terror, becomes a comfort to him.

5, 6. That he may make peace with Me and he shall make peace with Me. He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root. Taking root should be well looked after by the Christian. Some professors have no root—they are all leaf and flower, but they have no root and, consequently, they soon wither and die. Happy is that man who is rooted and grounded in the faith!

6, 7. Israel shall bloom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit. Has He struck Israel as He struck those that struck him? No. God strikes His people, but He never strikes them as He does their enemies. He strikes His people, as old Trapp says, with the palm of His hand, as a man may strike His child, but He strikes His enemies with His fist, as one would dash His foe to the ground! There is a great difference between the chastisements of God's people and the righteous judgments that fall upon the wicked.

7, 8. Or is Israel slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by Him? In measure, when it shoots forth, You will debate with it. God always chastens His people in measure. He makes a debate about it. He weighs their troubles in scales and their sorrows in balances.

8. He stays His rough wind in the day of the east wind. He never sends too many troubles at a time. If the east wind is blowing, He does not send His rough wind. We have much to thank God for, that He times our troubles. Had they come an hour before, they might have been too much for us. Had they been kept back a week longer, they might have overthrown us. God knows when to chasten His people and He will always chasten them at the right time.

9. By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin. When one of the old Puritans was afflicted with a very painful disease—perhaps the most painful to which flesh is heir—he kept crying out, "The use, Lord? The use, Lord? Show me the use of it." This should be the point at which the Christian should always aim.

9. When he makes all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up. You see, the Israelites had piled up stones and held them in veneration. But when God brought them back to Himself, they counted those stones to be but as common chalkstones of the valley. It is a good thing for us, when our

sins bring us no pleasure, when they are only like common stones of the street. When we break our images and dash down our idol gods, we show that we prize them no longer. The Lord make this to be the issue of all our trials! Then will we bless Him for our troubles as for our chief mercies.