

The Forerunner

(No. 3102)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 23, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 16, 1874.

"Where the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." [Hebrews 6:20](#).

THE Jewish high priest went within the veil once a year and represented the people there, but he was never their forerunner, for no one followed him into the Most Holy Place. His entrance within the veil did not admit another human being—and when he came forth, the veil again concealed the secret glories of the Most Holy Place even from him for another year and from all others at all times—so that neither Aaron, nor any other high priest of his line could ever be called a forerunner within the veil. This is one of the many instances in which our Lord Jesus Christ, as the great Antitype, far excels all the types. They do, as it were, represent the hem of His garment, but the glorious majesty and fullness of His high priestly office, they are not able to set forth.

Moreover, this title of Forerunner is peculiar to the passage before us. The fact that Christ is the Forerunner of His people may be found in other words in the Scriptures and again and again in this Epistle. But it is only here that we have the exact expression that Jesus Christ within the veil has gone to be the Forerunner of His people.

Now, what is peculiar and unique usually excites curiosity and attention. And if it is something peculiar and unique with regard to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is Himself peculiar and unique, we should look at it as closely as we can and bend our whole minds and hearts to the consideration of it.

I. I am going to speak, first, upon THE NAME WHICH IS USED CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST AS THE FORERUNNER. Our Lord is sometimes spoken of as the Master, the Messiah, the Son of Man and so on, but here He is simply called Jesus. "Where the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus."

I do not pretend to know why this title was selected, but at least it may be suggested that Jesus is the name which His enemies despise—Jesus of Nazareth, "the Nazarene," as His fiercest foes cry to this day. About the name, Christ, there is always a measure of respect, for even those who do not believe Him to be the Christ, yet look for a Christ, a Divinely-anointed One, a Messiah sent from God. But, "Jesus," is the personal name of Him who was born at Bethlehem, the Son of Mary, to whom the angel said before His birth, "You shall call His name JESUS." It is "the Nazarene" who is "the Forerunner, even Jesus," and it is that name of Jesus that has caused His enemies to gnash their teeth and speak and act against Him, even as Paul confessed to king Agrippa, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to

do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." It is by that name which His enemies abhor that He is known within the veil! They speak of Him there as the Savior, the Joshua, the Jehovah-Jesus of His people—and by that name we know Him as our Forerunner.

Moreover, Jesus is not only the name which is hated by His foes, but it is the name which is dearest to His friends. How charming is its very sound! You know how our hymn writers have delighted to dwell upon it. Dr. Doddridge wrote—

"Jesus, I love Your charming name, 'Tis music to my ear. Gladly would I sound it out so loud That earth and Heaven could hear!"

And Charles Wesley sang—

"Jesus, the name that charms our fears,

That bids our sorrow's cease 'Tis music in the sinner's ears, 'Tis life, and health, and peace! Jesus, the name high over all, In Hell, or earth, or sky, Angels and men before it fall And devils fear, and fly."

Out of all our Savior's names—and they are all precious to us and, at certain times each one has its own peculiar charm—there is not one which rings with such sweet music as this blessed name, "Jesus." I suppose the reason of this is that it answers to our own name, the name of sinner. That name needs, to cover it, the names of Him who saves His people from their sins. The sound of this confession, "I have sinned," is like that of a funeral knell. But the music of the sentence, "Jesus saves me," is like that of a marriage peal! And, as long as I am a sinner, the name of Jesus will always be full of melody to my soul. To the Old Testament saints, it was comforting to read of Him who was to be born—"His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"—and we still delight to repeat those majestic sounds. But in our quiet and calm moments, and especially in times of despondency and depression of spirit, the music of the harp sounds most sweetly when this is the note which the minstrel evokes from it, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus." And it is very pleasant to me to think that this is the name that we shall remember best even in Heaven. He has gone there, as Jesus, to be our Forerunner, so Dr. Watts was right when he sang—

"Jesus, the Lord, their harps employ— Jesus, my Love, they sing! Jesus, the life of both our joys, Sounds sweet from every string." II. Now I want to show you IN WHAT SENSE JESUS IS OUR FORERUNNER.

The word used here means a person running before—a herald, a guide, one who precedes. Such terms would correctly interpret the Greek word used here, so it means, first, one who goes before to proclaim, or to declare. A battle has been fought and the victory won. A swift young man, out of the ranks of the victors, runs with all speed to the city, rushes through the gate into the marketplace, and proclaims to the assembled people the welcome news, "Our country is victorious! Our commander is crowned with laurels." That young man is the forerunner of the victorious host. The whole army will be back, by-and-by, the conquering

legions will come marching through the streets and all eyes will gaze with admiration upon the returning heroes—but this is the first man to arrive from the field of conflict to report the victory! In that sense, Jesus Christ was the Forerunner to report in Heaven His own great victory. He did much more than that, as you well know, for He fought the fight alone and of the people there were none with Him. He was the first to report in Heaven His own victory. On the Cross He had met Satan and all the powers of darkness—and there had He fought and overcome them and shouted the victor's cry—"It is finished!" Who shall report the victory in Heaven? Shall some swift-winged angel, one of the many that had hovered round the Cross and wondered what it all could mean, fly like a flame of fire, pass through the gates of pearl and say, "He has done it"? No, Jesus must Himself be the first to proclaim His own victory and the eternal safety of all for whom He died! They tell out this good news through the streets of Heaven to this day, but He it was who first certified it! When He ascended up on high leading captivity captive. When He entered within the veil and stood before His Father, the First-Begotten from the dead. When He declared by His majestic Presence that all was finished. When He proclaimed the justification of all His elect—in that proclamation He was our Forerunner—the first to proclaim that glorious Truth of God, "It is finished!"

A second meaning of the word, forerunner, will be found in this sense of possessing, for Christ has gone to Heaven not merely to proclaim that His people are saved, but to possess Heaven on their behalf. Representatively, He has taken possession of the heavenly places in the name of those for whom He died. Christ had paid the purchase price of our eternal inheritance. We as yet have not entered upon possession of it, but He has and He has taken possession of it in our names. All the elect are summed up in Him who is their Covenant Head—and He being there, they are all there in Him. As the burgesses of a town sit in the House of Commons represented by their member, so we sit in the heavenly places represented by our Leader who sits there in our name. He has taken seizin, as they used to say of old—taken possession of all the Glory of Heaven in the name of His people! Why is Heaven mine tonight? Because it is His—and all that is His is

mine! Why is eternal life yours, Beloved? Why, because "your life is hid with Christ in God" and He has in Heaven for you, eternal life, and all its accompaniments of joy and blessedness! And He is sitting there enjoying them because they are His and yours. You are one with Him, so He is your Forerunner in that sense.

Christ is also our Forerunner in the sense of preceding us. The Forerunner goes first and others must come afterwards. He is not a forerunner if there are not some to run behind him. When John the Baptist came, he was the forerunner of Christ. If Christ had not come after him, John the Baptist would have come for nothing. As Jesus is the Forerunner to Heaven, rest assured that those for whom He is the Forerunner will in due time follow Him there. The least pledge of the glories of the saints in Heaven is the Glory of Christ there. The

surest proof that they shall be there is that HE is there, for where He is, there must also His people be. I delight to think of Jesus Christ as our Forerunner because I feel sure that the mighty Grace which worked so effectually in Him, and made Him run before, will also work in all His people and make them run behind till they enter into the same rest that He now enjoys!

And once again, Christ is our Forerunner within the veil in the sense that He has gone there to prepare a place for us. I do not know what was needed to make Heaven ready for us, but whatever was needed once is not needed now, for Heaven has been ready for us ever since Christ went to prepare it. We have sometimes arrived at a house when we were not expected—our friends have been glad to see us, but we could hear the bustle of preparations and we almost wished that we had not gone, so to put them into such a flutter in getting ready for us. But no unexpected guest shall ever await at Heaven's gate! They are watching and waiting for us. They know just when we shall get there and Christ has gone to make everything ready for His long-expected and greatly-loved ones. "I go to prepare a place for you," said Christ to His disciples—and that place He has prepared. We have not to go into an undiscovered country, for however glorious the new world might be, the first man to enter it would tread its soil with trembling feet, for he would not know what he might find there. It was a brave thing to be a Columbus to discover a new world, but it is a happier thing to go to a country that has been discovered many hundreds of years, where civilization has provided for the supply of all our needs. Christ was the Columbus of Heaven and He has made it ready for us who are to follow Him there when our turn shall come to emigrate to the better land!

III. Now I want to answer this question, INTO WHAT IS CHRIST OUR FORERUNNER? He is our forerunner

within the veil. Where is that?

Well, first, it is where all our hope is fixed. Our hope is fixed on things invisible, mysterious, spiritual, sublime, immutable, Divine—which are where Christ is. Paul tells us that the anchor of our soul is "within the veil, where the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus."

Within the veil is, also, the place of the greatest possible nearness to God. Under the old dispensation, it was an awfully solemn thing for a man to be allowed to enter within the veil. Anyone who ventured in there uncalled would have been instantly destroyed. To stand within the veil was a joyous, blissful privilege, yet it involved enormous responsibility. But you and I, Beloved, stand there in the closest possible nearness to God because Christ has gone there as our Forerunner. He is not merely our Forerunner so that we may enter there in 20 or 30 years' time, or whenever we die, but that we may now boldly enter into the heavenlies where He has gone! Where He is, we are bound to go. Well then, as Christ is there, at His Father's side—

"The Man of Love, the Crucified"—let us not fear to enter where we have the right to go! It is very sad that when some of us pray, we do not dare to enter within the veil. Even the outer court seems to be too holy a place for us! If we do venture into the court of the priest, we are all in a tremble. But, Brothers and Sisters, we are permitted to enter into that which is within the veil, for Jesus is there and He bids us come to Him—therefore let us come boldly. There is a measure of holy familiarity which the devout man may enjoy in the Presence of God. It is a blessed privilege to know God as your Father and to be as bold with Him as a child is with a father—with the boldness of a love which does not dare because it deserves, but dares because God loves and which, while it humbles itself into the very dust, yet grasps the feet of God even there, clings to Him and delights in its nearness to Him! Is it not a cause of untold joy to us that Jesus Christ is within the veil now as our Forerunner, that we may daily go where He always is? This is the right position for a child of God in prayer! He must not stand at the foot of Sinai. He must not stand in any unclean place, but he must go where the blood has been sprinkled on the Mercy Seat—brought near by the precious blood of Jesus!

Let us also remember that this place of nearness to God, into which Christ has gone, will mean nearness to God in a higher sense, by-and-by. You cannot conceive of anybody being nearer to God than Christ is "within the veil." In that nearness He is our Forerunner if we are truly in Him by faith. Is not that a wonderful thought? We might have thought that in that wondrous nearness to God which the Mediator enjoys, He would be alone, for He is so very near, but it is not so. He has Himself said, "To Him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me on My Throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father on His Throne." It is not only true that we are to behold Christ's Glory, but even while on earth He said, "Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory"—as if they would never fully see that Glory till they were with Him where He is. To whatever heights of Glory He has gone—to whatever raptures of joy He has ascended, He has gone there as the Forerunner of His people!

I may seem to be uttering truisms, but I cannot help it. These are the sort of Truths of God upon which one cannot give allegories, illustrations, or fine sentences. The Truths themselves are so glorious that it would be like painting the lily and gilding it with pure gold to try to adorn it. We must not attempt it, but just leave the Truths as they are for the Spirit of God to apply them to your souls—and so I mean to do after I have mentioned a few practical inferences from the Truth which I have been trying to set before you.

The first is, beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this—let us each one endeavor by faith to realize our nearness with Christ. He has entered within the veil, but He has entered as our Forerunner. Remember that although you are imperfect, feeble, sorrowing, yet you are one with Jesus Christ! You believe that as a Doctrine, but I want you to realize it now as a fact. If you had a rich friend who had given you an equal share with himself of all that

he possessed, even if you had not entered upon the possession of it, you would think, "I have not to depend upon charity for my daily bread, for my rich friend has made me as rich as he is, himself." Now, whatever joy that might give you, it ought to give you far more to think that you are one with Christ and that Christ is one with you! When you suffer, Christ is suffering in one of the members of His mystical body. And when He rejoices, it is His desire that His joy may be in you, that your joy may be full. He has married you and He means you to take His riches as well as Himself and to reckon that all He is and all He has is yours. If the Holy Spirit would cause you to realize this, it would make your soul leap within you and bless the Lord and magnify His holy name! "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine." No, more, I am a member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. Our interests are one, for we are one and Christ up there, in the heavenlies, is but myself there, for I am in Him and I shall soon be actually and literally where He is, as I now am in the Person of Him who is there as my Representative and Forerunner.

That is the first practical thought. And the second is this—is He your Forerunner, Beloved? Then, run after Him. There can be no forerunner, as I have said before, unless somebody follows. Jesus is our Forerunner, so let us be His after-runners. "Ah," says one, "but He is so different from us." The beauty of it is that He is not different from us, for He was a Man like ourselves. "Forasmuch then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." Though in Him was no sin, yet in all other respects He was just such as we are—and it cost Him as much to run as it will cost us to run—yes, more, for His race was more arduous than ours is. "You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin," therefore "consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds." Your road may be full of crosses, but they are not such crosses as the one He carried. You have suffered bereavements. Yes, and "Jesus wept." You have to endure poverty. And He had not where to lay His head. You are often despised. And He is still "despised and rejected of men." You are slandered. But as they called the Master of the house, Beelzebub, what wonder is it that they speak ill of those who are the members of His household? Jesus Christ ran the very race that you have to run and He ran it perfectly! And that same power which worked in Him to run until He entered within the veil, and so passed the goal, will help you to run till you reach the same spot. If He is your Forerunner and He has run the race, it is essential that you should run it, too, and should also win the prize. Courage, Brothers and Sisters—nothing is too hard for our poor manhood to accomplish through the power of the ever-blessed Spirit! As Christ has conquered, so can we. Sin's assaults can be repelled, for Christ repelled them. The Holy Spirit can lift up "poor human nature"—as we call it—into something nobler and better, transforming it into the likeness of the Human Nature of the Christ of God, till in that Human Nature, purity and holiness, shall dwell even to perfection!

Follow, Brothers and Sisters, the mighty Runner who has gone before you within the veil! And the best way to follow Him is to put your feet into His footprints. It may seem as if you might get to the goal either this way or that, but the best Christian is he who does not wish for any other path than that which his Master trod. I would like—oh, that I might realize it—to "follow the Lamb wherever He goes." Not to say, "This is not essential, and that might be dispensed with," but, like the Master, Himself, to say, "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness." Good writing, I think, depends very much upon the little letters. If you want to read a man's letter easily at the first glance, he must write legibly, and mind his Ps and Qs, and all the other letters of the alphabet, especially those that are nearly alike, such as C and E, or I and L. O Christian, there may be very little difference, to the eye of man, between this letter and that of the Believer's alphabet, but you will do best if you follow your Master exactly in all points! No hurt comes of doing that, but great hurt comes of even the least laxity. Follow closely your great Forerunner! Follow at His heels, as a dog follows his master. Just as Christ ran, so may the Holy Spirit help you to run with endurance the race set before you, "looking unto Jesus."

The next thing I have to say is this—let us love our Lord intensely. He has gone to Heaven, but He has not gone there for Himself alone. He has got so into the habit of sharing with His people all that He has that He has not left off that habit now that He has got into Glory! He says, "I am here for My people. I was on the Cross for them and I am on the Throne for them." It is marvelous that even the reward that is given to Him, He shares with His own beloved ones, for there is nothing that He has that He keeps to Himself! It was a blessed marriage day for us, His people, when He took us to be His—for with all His heavenly gifts He did us endow and now He has nothing but what He holds in common with His people. We are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Then must we not love Him much who has loved us so much that He has given us Himself and all He has? Come, my cold heart, if there is anything that can warm you, surely it is the thought of such true, fond, constant, faithful love as this! Indulge a moment's thought now. Indulge it quietly. Let your soul picture Him. Come to His feet and kiss them. And if you have an alabaster box of precious ointment, break it open and anoint Him, and fill the house with the perfume of your offering of love and gratitude.

Last of all, since Christ has gone to Heaven to be our Forerunner, let us trust Him. We could have trusted Him, I hope, while He was running His race, so surely we can trust Him now that He has won it. The saints of God who lived before Christ came to dwell upon the earth, trusted Him before He started to run. His Apostles and other disciples, in their poor feeble way, trusted Him while He was running—so shall not we trust Him now that the race is finished and He has gone into Glory on our behalf? If a man says, "I will do a thing," if he is a truthful man and he can do what he says, we depend upon him. But when he has done it, it would be a shame not to depend upon him. If Christ came here tonight, never having

died, and He said to us, "You poor lost ones, I mean to save you," ought we not to believe Him? If He said, "Dear children of Mine, I mean to come and run a race and win it for you," would we not say, "Lord Jesus, we trust You"? Well, He is not here in bodily Presence—He is up yonder. Do you not see Him with the crown upon His head? There He sits in Glory—innumerable angels are bowing before Him and cherubim and seraphim are praising Him day without night—and the redeemed from among men are singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain for us." Can you not trust Him, Sinner? "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." Can you not trust Him? He is within the veil, pleading for us, and pleading for all who come unto God by Him—and setting His people the example of coming there to plead, too.

As He is there, can we not all trust Him? The dying thief trusted Him when His hands were nailed to the Cross. Can we not trust Him now that His hand grasps the scepter of Sovereignty? The dying thief trusted Him when men ridiculed Him and thrust out their tongues, and railed at Him—can we not trust Him now that Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of His Glory? Surely we must! Jesus, Master, if we never have relied upon You before, grant us the Grace to do so now! And as for those of us who have depended on You these many years, You dear, tried, precious, faithful Lover of our souls, surely we have done with doubting! We are in Your bosom—no, more—we are inside Your very heart and, therefore, we must be safe! Who can harm us there? You did say, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish."

With this assurance let us go our way, resolving to follow our Forerunner till we get where He is, "within the veil," and then forever to follow Him "wherever He goes." Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: HEBREWS 9:24-28; 10.

Hebrews 9:24. For Christ is not entered into the Holy Place made with hands, which are the figure of the true; but into Heaven itself now to appear in the Presence of God for us. He has gone within the veil—not the veil of "blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work," but within the veil that hides "Heaven itself from our eyes. And there He is—"in the Presence of God for us."

25, 26. Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters into the Holy Place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world has He appeared to put away sin by the Sacrifice of Himself The high priest brought the blood of the animals that were slain for a sin-offering, and hence he came often. He could not bring his own blood, or he would only have come once, but our Savior has come only once, "to put away sin by the Sacrifice of Himself." [See Sermons #759, Volume 13—jesus

PUTTING AWAY SIN; #911, Volume 16—THE PUTTING AWAY OF SIN and #2283, Volume 38—CHRIST'S ONE SACRIFICE FOR SIN]

27, 28. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, that after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation. He had to suffer because of sin once, but He will never again have to do that! His Sacrifice will never need to be repeated and never can be repeated.

[Hebrews 10:1, 2](#). For the Law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect For then would they not have ceased to be offered? If the sacrifice had really put away sin, surely it would never have needed to be offered again. If one sacrifice had put away the guilt of Israel, there would have been no need to bring another.

2. Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. Once cleansed from sin, we are cleansed from sin—the great deed is done once and for all.

3-5. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Therefore when He came into the world. You know who that is, there is but one great, "HE," to us—our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the true High Priest!

5. He said, Sacrifice and offering You would not, but a body have You prepared Me. By the work of the Holy Spirit within the Virgin Mary, the blessed body of Christ was "prepared" so that He might be God and Man in one Person and so might bring an offering acceptable unto God.

6-9. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me), to do Your will, O God. Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin You would not, neither had pleasure therein; which are offered by the Law; then said He, Lo, I come to do Your will, O God. He takes away the first, that He may establish the second [See Sermon #2698, Volume 46—the first and the

SECOND] That He may bring in the real Sacrifice of which the others were but types and prefigurations.

10. By that will. The will which Christ fulfilled in life and in death—"By that will."

10. We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once. [See Sermon #1527, Volume 26—perfect

SANCTIFICATION] Only one Sacrifice was required. The key-word

here is that little word, "once." Let it not only sound in your ears, but be written in your hearts! Jesus Christ died once. He brought His Sacrifice once. He put away our sins once.

11, 12. And every priest stands daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this Man, after He had offered one Sacrifice for

sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God. Christ stands no longer to minister as a sacrificing priest. He is sitting down at the right hand of God. That is the posture of one whose work is done and who is taking his rest—"He sat down at the right hand of God." [See Sermon #91, Volume 2—christ

EXALTED]

13-18. From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us: for after that He had said before, This is the Covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put My Laws into their hearts, and in their

minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Sin itself being no longer imputed to any Believer in Christ, there is neither the occasion nor the need for the offering of another sacrifice for sin. Christ's one Sacrifice has forever put away the sins of all who believe in

Him!

19-22. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance offaith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water The Jew could not personally go up to the Mercy Seat. He had to go there through his representative, the high priest, and we have Christ as our "High Priest over the house of God," so we come to God through Him. The Israelite could not pass through the veil which hid from public gaze the glory of the Shekinah, and Jesus Christ's Humanity was a veil which somewhat concealed the glory of His Deity. But the flesh of Christ having been crucified, the veil has been torn and now we may come right up to the Throne of God without trembling. No, we may come even with holy boldness and familiarity and speak to God without alarm. Having such a privilege as this, let us not neglect it. It was denied to Prophets and kings in the olden time, but now that it is vouchsafed to us, let us avail ourselves of it and constantly, "let us draw near" unto God "with a true heart in full assurance of faith."

23. Let us hold fast the profession [See Sermon #1897, Volume 32—HOLDING FAST OUR PROFESSION] of our faith without wavering, (for He is faithful that promised). As He is faithful, let us also be faithful and hold, as with a death grip, the faith which has been revealed to us and worked within us by the Holy Spirit. Yes, and the profession of that faith, too, never being ashamed to acknowledge that we are followers of the Nazarene. And let us while we are thus faithful, ourselves, endeavor to strengthen others.

24. And let us consider one another to provoke into love and to good works. The Greek is "to stir each other up to a fit of love. There is no fear that we shall ever go too far in our

love to God! Though it would cast us into a state of blessed excitement, yet would it be healthy for us to so live and to so work.

25. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. For Christian fellowship is helpful to us and we are helpful to others by it. A Christian is not meant to be a solitary being. Sheep are gregarious and so are the sheep of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us not be solitary pilgrims along the road to Heaven, but join that glorious host of God's elect who march beneath the guidance of our great Master.

25. But exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching. Does not every day bring us nearer to the coming of the Lord? Are there not many signs that these are the last days? Well then, so much the more let us stir each other up to love and to good works!

26, 27. For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the Truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. Here the Truth of God taught is that if a Christian apostatizes—if he renounces his faith and goes back to the world, it is impossible to reclaim him. A backslider may be restored, but anyone who should willfully, after receiving the Truth, reject it, has rejected the only Savior. He has rejected the only regeneration and, consequently, he is without the pale of the possibilities of restoration. The question is, "Will any true child of God so apostatize?" That question is answered in this very chapter, but the Truth here taught is that if he does, he goes into a state of absolute hopelessness.

28, 29. He that despised Moses' Law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment. Can there be any sorer punishment than to die without mercy? Yes, there is, for there is eternal punishment—"of how much sorer punishment"—

29-31. Suppose you, shall he be thought worthy who has trodden underfoot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith He was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of Grace? For we know Him who has said, Vengeance belongs unto Me, I will recompense, says the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God [See Sermon #682, Volume 12—future punishment a

FEARFUL THING] With what terrible sentences does Paul hedge up the way of the Believer! Leave that way and there is nothing for you but destruction. Reject your Savior, give up your hope in Him and there cannot be another name by which you can be saved, or another sacrifice by which you can be cleansed from sin.

32, 33. But call to remembrance thee former days, in which after you were illuminated, you endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and afflictions. Made a spectacle to be mocked at in the theater of the world.

33-35. And partly, while you became companions of them that were so used. For you had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that you have in Heaven a better and an

enduring substance. Cast not away therefore, your confidence, [See Sermon #1263, Volume 21—HOLD FAST YOUR SHIELD] which has great recompense of reward. You must push on! You have already defied the foe—to turn back is certain destruction, for you have no armor for your back. 36. For you have need of patience. Or, endurance—

36. That, after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise. To hold on, to continue to do God's will—this is the task. To start and to make a spurt now and then, is easy enough—but to keep on is trying to every spiritual muscle. And only God can enable you to do so.

37, 38. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draws back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him. If there is a drawing back from faith, God can have no pleasure in us. But shall we draw back? That is the question! And here is the answer.

39. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition. We who have believed in Jesus. We who have sincerely committed ourselves to His care. We who have been born-again of the Holy Spirit, we in whom there is the real work of Grace which God has pledged to carry on—"we are not of them who draw back unto perdition."

39. But of them that believe to the saving of the soul What a blessed Truth of God is this! O Christian, as you see the danger that lies before you if you did prove to be an apostate, bless that Sovereign Grace which will not allow you so to do, even as Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Being confident of this very thing, that He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."