

## **Christ Loosens From Infirmities**

(No. 3195)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 1910.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over, and could in no wise lift herself up. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said unto her, Woman, you are loosened from your infirmity And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God." [Luke 13:11-13](#).

[See Sermons #1426, Volume 24—THE LIFTING UP OF THE BOWED DOWN and #2891, Volume 50—A SABBATH MIRACLE— for sermons on the same miracle.]

OUR text commences with a "behold"—"behold, there was a woman." And as it was often remarked by the Puritan writers, whenever we see the word, "behold," in Scripture, we are to regard it as a *nota bene*, as a mark in the margin calling our particular attention to what follows. Where Christ worked wonders, we should have attentive eyes and ears. When Jesus is dispensing blessings, whether to ourselves or to others, we should never be in a state of indifference!

I shall use this miracle as a type, as it were, for doubtless the miracles of Christ were so intended. Our Lord was declared to be "a Prophet mighty in deed and word." He was to be a Prophet like unto Moses and He is the only one who was like unto Moses in these two respects. Many Prophets followed Moses who were mighty in "word"—such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah, but then they were not "mighty in deed." Many, on the other hand, were "mighty in deed"—like Elijah and Elisha, but they were not "mighty in word." Our Lord was mighty in both respects and a Prophet in both respects—"a Prophet mighty in deed and word." I take it, therefore, that His miraculous deeds are parts of His prophecies. They are the illustrations of His great life-sermon. The words which fell from His lips are as the text and the letter of the Book, but the miracles are the pictures from which our childlike minds may often learn more than from the words, themselves. We shall so use the picture before us now—may the Holy Spirit give us instruction!

I. In the first place, THIS WOMAN, BOWED DOWN WITH A SPIRIT OF INFIRMITY, TYPIFIES TO US THE CASE OF VERY MANY—very many whom we have seen and some of whom are listening to these words. Oh, that the same miracle might be worked in them as in her! She typifies persons who are depressed in spirit, who cannot look up to Heaven and rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ, persons who have a hope, a good hope, too, but not a strong one—a hope which enables them to hold on as the men did in Paul's shipwreck when, on boards and broken pieces of the ship they came safe to land, but not a hope which gives them an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus

Christ. They are saved, like this woman, who was a true daughter of Abraham, notwithstanding all her infirmities. She was truly of the promised seed, notwithstanding that she could not lift herself up, so these are genuine Christians, truly saved, and yet constantly subject to infirmity.

In some, it takes this shape. They believe in Christ and rest on the precious blood, yet they are sometimes afraid that they have sinned the unpardonable sin. Though their better and more reasonable selves will do battle against the delusion, still they hug it to their hearts. Seeing that the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is a sin which is unto death—and that when a man has committed it, his spirit dies—and repentance, the desire to be saved and all good emotions cease to be when that dreadful spiritual death is ours, I say that they can thus reason with themselves in their better moments and see that their fear is a delusion, but they soon fall back again into that dreadful slough. They see no signs of Grace, but they think they see signs of reprobation.

Many have I met with—I may say that I meet with such people every week—who are afraid that they are hypocrites. When I encounter persons troubled with this fear, I cannot help smiling at them, for if they really were hypocrites, they would not be afraid of it and their fear of presumption argues very strongly that they are not living in it!

Then this infirmity will take another shape. If you drive them from the other errors, they say they are afraid that they are self-deluded. This is a very proper fear when it leads to self-examination and comes to an end. But it becomes a very improper fear when it perpetually destroys our joy, prevents our saying, "Abba, Father," with an unfaltering tongue and keeps us at a distance from the precious Savior who would have us come very near to Him and be most familiar with His brotherly heart.

Supposing this difficulty should be met, still there are tens of thousands who are very much in doubt concerning their election. What if they should not be elect, they say? This, of course results from ignorance, for if they read the Word, they would soon discover that all those who believe in Christ may be certain of their election—faith being the public mark of God's privately chosen people! If you make your calling sure, you have made your election sure! If you know yourself now to be a lover of God, resting upon the great Propitiation which He has set forth for sin, then you may know that this is a work of Grace in your soul! God never worked a work of Grace where He had not made an election of Grace. That fear, therefore, may be easily driven away and yet thousands are in bondage to it!

Others are afflicted with the daily fear that they shall not persevere. They say, "After all our professions and prayers, we fear we shall yet be castaways." The Apostle Paul was not afflicted with this fear. He strove lest this fear should ever come near him. He so lived with holy diligence, that he might always be in a state of blessed assurance, lest, after having preached to others, he, himself, should be a castaway. But he could say, "I know that my Redeemer lives," even as Job could. And he could also say, "I know whom I have believed,

and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." Still, tens of thousands are perpetually subject to that form of bondage! They cannot reach, in fact, the full assurance of faith. They have scarcely even the glimmering of Assurance. They trust—they trust as the publican did, "standing afar off," but they have never yet come with John to lean their heads upon the bosom of the Savior! They are His disciples and His servants, but they can scarcely understand how He can call them His friends and permit them to enjoy close communion with Himself.

Now, Beloved, this woman thus bowed down was very like these persons for the following reasons—

Her infirmity much marred her beauty The beauty and dignity of the human form is to walk erect, to look the sun in the face and gaze upon the heavens. This woman could do nothing of the kind. She was, no doubt, very conscious of this and shrank from the public gaze. So unbelief, distrust, mistrust, suspicion—these direful infirmities to which some are subject, spoil their spiritual beauty. They have the Divine Grace of humility. In this respect, they very often excel others, but the other graces, the noble graces of faith and holy confidence and courage—these they cannot display. The beauty of their character is marred.

Moreover, this woman had her enjoyment spoiled. It must have been a sad thing for her to go about the world bent double. She could not gaze on the beauties of Nature as others could and all her motions must have been, if not painful, yet certainly exceedingly inconvenient. Such is the case with the doubting, distrustful soul under infirmity. He can do but little. Prayer is a painful groaning out of his soul. When he sings, it is usually in a deep bass. His harp hangs upon the willows. He feels that he is in Babylon and cannot sing the songs of Zion.

This woman, too, must have been very unfit for active service. Little of household duty could she perform, and that with pain. And as to public acts of mercy, she could take but small part in them, being subject to this constant infirmity. And so is it with you who are "Much-Afraids" or, "Fearings," you who have troubled spirits. You cannot lead the van in the day of battle. You can scarcely tell others of the Savior's preciousness. You cannot expect to be great reapers in the Master's harvest. You have to stay by the stuff while others go forth to fight. There is a special law which David made of old concerning those who tarried there, so you do get a blessing, but you miss the higher blessing of noble activity and Christian service.

I might thus enlarge and show the likeness more clearly, but I think you can draw the picture for yourselves. You see the woman come into the synagogue and your pity is at once excited. But if you love the souls of men and God has made you to be tender as a nursing mother to others, you will pity, yet more, many of the true seed of Abraham who are bowed down with infirmity.

It appears, from our Savior's words, that this woman's infirmity was coupled with Satanic influence. "Whom Satan has bound," He said, "lo, these eighteen years." We do not know how much Satan has to do with us. I do know that we often lay a great deal on his back which he does not deserve—and that we do a thousand evil things ourselves and then ascribe them to him. Still, there are gracious souls who do walk in the paths of holiness, who do hate sin, who, for all that, sometimes cannot enjoy peace. We cannot blame them. We must believe that the Satanic spirit is at work, marring their joy and spoiling their comfort. Dr. Watts says—

"He worries whom he cannot devour  
With a malicious joy"—

and doubtless that is true. He knows he cannot destroy you because you are in Christ and, therefore, if the dog cannot bite, he will at least bark. Like Mercy, in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, you will often be alarmed by the evil ones and all the more so because these evil ones know that in a little while you will be out of gunshot of all the powers of Hell, and beyond the hearing of all the bellowing of the fiends of the Pit! Satan had much to do with this poor woman's infirmity.

It appears, very clearly, too, from reading the passage, that the woman's weakness was beyond all human art. "She could in no wise lift herself up," which implies, I think, that she had tried all ways within her reach and knowledge. "She could in no wise." Neither by those mechanical operations which have sometimes been found effective in such diseases, nor by those medicines which were much vaunted in that age, could she receive the slightest relief. She had done her best and physicians had done their worst—and yet notwithstanding all, she could by no means lift herself up—and, truly, there are many in this condition spiritually. Have you ever been, as a Christian pastor, utterly baffled in dealing with some cases of spiritual distress? Have you ever been driven to pray, feeling the blessedness of prayer all the more because you have proved the futility of your own efforts to comfort a sin-distressed, Satan-tossed spirit? Often has that been my case. There has been the promise to meet the case, but the poor soul could not lay hold of it! There has been the cheering Word of God which has been efficient enough at other times, but it seemed to be a dead letter to this poor spirit in bondage. There has been the case, in point, and the experience of somebody else just like the case in hand, which we tried to tell with sympathy. We tried to work ourselves, as it were, into the position of the sufferer with whom we were dealing. But still, for all that, we seemed to be speaking to the winds and trying to comfort one who was so conditioned to sorrow that he felt that for him to cast off the somber weeds would be a sin, and to cease to mourn would be presumption. Many a time has such a case come before us and we have thought of this woman—and could only pray that the Master would put His hand upon the person, for our hand and our voice were utterly powerless!

Poor soul, she had been a long time in this case! Eighteen years! Eighteen years! Well, that is not very long if you are in health, strength and prosperity. How the years trip along as with wings on their heels! They are scarcely here before they are fled! But 18 years of infirmity, pain and constantly-increasing weakness! Eighteen years she dragged her chain until the iron entered into her soul. Eighteen years! Two long apprenticeships to sorrow till she had become the acquaintance of grief. Yes, and some such persons, though prisoners of hope, are kept in bondage as long as that. Their disease is like an intermittent fever which comes on, sometimes, and then is relieved. They have times when they are at their worst—the ebb tide—and then they have their floods again. Now and then they have a glimpse of summer, but soon the cold chilly winter comes on them again. Sometimes they half think they have escaped and leap like the emancipated slave when his fetters are broken, but they very soon have to go back again to the jails and the manacles, having no permanent relief, still being prisoners year after year. I know I am describing a case which is known to some of you. Perhaps I am photographing you!

Yet for all this, this woman was a daughter of Abraham. The Lord Jesus knew her pedigree and assured the ruler of the synagogue of it. She was one of the true seed of Israel notwithstanding all her failings. "Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, to be loosened even on the Sabbath?" demanded the Master. Yes, and you, poor anxious spirit, though your faith is but as a grain of mustard seed, yet, if you have a simple faith in Christ, you are safe! You, troubled and tossed one, though your boat seems ready to be swallowed up by the waves, if you have taken Jesus into the vessel, you shall come safely to the land! Poor Heart, you may be brought very low, but you shall never be brought low enough to perish, for underneath there are the everlasting arms. Like Jonah, you may go to the bottoms of the mountains and think that the earth with her bars is about you forever, but you shall yet be brought up and you shall sing Jonah's song, "Salvation is of the Lord!" God does not cast off His people because of their dark frames and feelings. He does not love them because of their high enjoyments—neither will He reject them because of their deep depressions. Christian is dear. Father Honest is dear. Valiant-for-Truth, too, is dear to the King of the pilgrims! And Ready-to-Halt, upon his

crutches, is equally dear, and Mr. Fearing and Miss Much-Afraid, though they may lie in Doubting Castle till they are almost starved, shall surely be brought out, for they are true pilgrims and shall at length safely reach the Celestial City!

II. But we must pass on to our second point, namely that THE EXAMPLE OF THIS WOMAN IS INSTRUCTIVE TO ALL IN HER CASE.

Observe that she did not tamely yield to her infirmity without effort. The expression, "She could in no wise lift herself up"—an old Saxon form of saying, "She could in no ways lift herself up"—shows, as I have said before, that she had tried her best. I believe some of you might stand upright if you liked. I am quite certain that in some cases, people get into

the way of surrendering to depression until at last they become powerless against it. Some stimulant is given them in the form of a sick husband, or a dying child and they grow quite cheerful. Under some real trouble, they become patient, but when this real trouble is taken away, they begin manufacturing troubles of their own. They are never happy, I might almost say, except when they are miserable—and never cheerful except when they have something to cast them down! If they have a real trouble, they get strength to bear it, but at other times, they are morbidly troubled in spirit. Now, let us imitate this woman and shake off our doubts and our unbelief as much as possible. Let us strike up the hymn—

"Begone, unbelief, my Savior is near! And for my relief will surely appear. By prayer let me wrestle, and He will perform, With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm!" Let us say, with David, "Why are you cast down, O my Soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him." Do not so soon yield to the shafts of unbelief. Hold up the shield of faith and say to your soul, "No, as the Lord lives, who is the Rock of my salvation, my castle and my high tower, my weapon of defense and my glory, I will not yield to unbelief. Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. And though all things go against me, yet will I stay myself upon the mighty God of Jacob, and I will not fear." The woman, then, had done her best.

Note next, that although bent double and, therefore, having an excellent excuse for staying at home, yet she was found at the synagogue. I believe she was always found there from the fact that the length of time during which she had been sick was well known—not merely known to Christ because of His Godhead, but known as a matter of common talk and common knowledge in the synagogue, probably, during the whole of the 18 years she had been an attendant there. "Ah," she thought, "if I miss the blessing of health, yet I will not be absent from the place where God's people meet together for worship. I have had sweet enjoyments in the singing of the Psalms and in listening to the Word—and I will not be away when such Divine Grace is being dispensed."

mourners, never let Satan prevail upon you to "forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." If you cannot get comfort, still go to the sanctuary. It is the most likely place for you to get it. One of the sweet traits of character in mourners is that they love to go to the assemblies of God's people. I knew one aged woman who had year after year been in this mournful state, and after trying long to comfort her, but in vain, I said to her, "Well, what do you go to the House of Prayer for? Why don't you stay at home?" "Why, that is my only comfort!" she said. "I thought you told me you were a hypocrite," I answered, "and that you had no right to the promises or any of the good things?" "Ah, but I could not stay away from the place where my best friends, my kindred, dwell," she replied. "And do you read your Bible?" I asked her. "I suppose you have burned that." "Burned my Bible!" she said in horror. "I'd sooner be burned myself!" "But do you read it? You say there is nothing there for you—if you were to lay hold upon the promises, it would be presump-

tion—you are afraid to grasp any one of the good things of the Covenant!" "Ah, but I could not do without reading my Bible. That is my daily bread. It is my constant food," she responded. "But do you pray?" "Pray! Oh yes, I shall die praying!" "But you told me that you had no faith at all, that you were not one of God's people, that you were a deceiver and I know not what besides!" "Yes, I am afraid, sometimes, that I am. I am afraid now that I am, but as long as I live I'll pray." All the marks of the child of God were in her private character—and could be seen in her walk and conversation—and yet she was always bowed down and could by no means lift herself up!

I remember a Brother minister who was the means, in God's hands, of comforting a woman when she lay dying in this plight. He said to her, "Well, Sarah, you tell me you do not love Christ at all. Are you sure you do not?" "Yes, Sir. I am sure I do not." He went up to the window and wrote on a piece of paper, "I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ." "Now, Sarah," he said "just put your name at the bottom of that." "What is it, Sir? I do not know what it is." When she read it, she said, "No, I'd rather be torn in pieces than I'd put my name to such a thing as that!" "Well," he said, "but if

it is true, you may as well write it as say it." And this was the means of convincing and persuading her that there really was love to Christ in her soul, after all! But in many cases you cannot comfort these poor souls at all. They will still say that they are not the Lord's people, yet they cling to the means of Grace and, by-and-by, we trust they will get deliverance.

Observe another thing, that though we are not told it in so many words in the narrative, we may be sure it is true, when the Lord Jesus called her, she came at once. She was called and there was no hesitation in her answer. Such speed as she could make in her poor, pitiable plight, she made. She did not say, as another said, "Lord, if You will, you can." She did not doubt His will. Nor did she imitate another and say, "If You can do anything." She doubted not His power. She said nothing, but we know what she felt. There is not a trace of unbelief! There is every sign of obedience. Now, Soul, when Christ does call you, by His Grace, make haste to run to Him! When, under the preaching of the Lord, you feel as though the iceberg is beginning to melt, do not get away from the sunlight and go back to the old winter gloom! "Make hay while the sun shines," says the old proverb—take care that you do the same. When God gives you a little light, prize it. Thank Him for it and ask for more. If you have got starlight, ask for moonlight. When you have got moonlight, do not sit down and weep because it is only moonlight, but ask Him for more, and He will give you sunlight, and when you have got that, be grateful, and He will give you yet more! He will make your day to be as the light of seven days, and the days of your mourning shall be ended. Think much of little mercies since you deserve none. Do not throw away these pearls because they are not the greatest that were ever found, but keep them, thank God for them, and then soon He will send you the best treasures from the treasury of His Grace.

As soon as this woman was healed, she was, in another respect, an example to us, namely, that she glorified God. Her face did it. With what luster was it lit up! Her whole gait did it. How erect she stood! And then I am sure her tongue did it. The woman might well be pardoned for speaking this once in the midst of the assembly. Restored as she was, all of a sudden, she could not help telling out the joy she felt within! The bells of her heart were ringing merry peals! She must give glory to God who had worked the cure. Some of you profess to have been cured, but have you given glory to God? Some of you profess to be Christians, and yet you have never come forward to avow it! You have been afraid to unite yourselves with the Christian Church! Your Master bids you confess Him. The mode of confession which He prescribes is that you be baptized in His name—and yet, though He has saved you, you stand back and are disobedient. Take care! "That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."

I was, this week, by the bedside of a dying man, an heir of Heaven, washed in the precious blood of Jesus, I believe, and rejoicing in that fact, too, but yet he could not help saying, "I ought, years ago, to have taken my stand with God's people. You have often given me many hard blows in the Tabernacle, but never too hard. Tell the people, when you speak to them again, when they know anything is a duty, never to postpone it, for that Word of God is true, 'That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.' I am not condemned, I am not cast away, for I am in Christ. I am resting on His precious blood and I am saved. But, though saved, I am being chastened." And he was sorely chastened with many doubts, fears and troubles of soul. If you are God's child, any duty neglected will bring upon your soul some chastisement. If you are not God's child, you may do very much as you like and your punishment will, perhaps, not come upon you until the next world. But if you are one of the King's favorites, you must walk very tenderly and very attentively, or else, as surely as you are dear to the heart of God, you shall feel the rod upon you to chasten you and to bring you back into the path of obedience!

This woman glorified God. Brothers and Sisters, can we not do something more to glorify God than we have yet done? If we have done that which seemed to be our duty on certain occasions, may there not be yet more for us to do? There is very much land yet to be possessed for King Jesus! This wicked city is given over to sin and we are doing so little! Ah, some of you do what you can, but we who do what we can, might do more if we had more strength with which to do it—and more strength is to be had for the asking! Oh, that we could enlarge our desires for the glory of King Jesus! Oh, to set Him upon a glorious high throne and to crown Him with many crowns, to prostrate ourselves at His feet and to bring others, too, to lie prostrate at His feet, that He might be King in Jeshurun, King of kings and Lord of lords, reigning in our souls forever and ever! Imitate this woman. If you



have been bowed down and yet restored to comfort! See that, like she did, you instantly fall to glorifying God.

III. And this brings us to the last point—THE WOMAN'S CURE IS EXCEEDINGLY INSTRUCTIVE TO PERSONS IN A LIKE CASE.

She went to the synagogue, but she did not get her cure alone by going there. Means and ordinances are nothing in themselves! They are to be used, but they are only dry skin bottles, without water, unless there is something more than these. This woman met with Christ in the synagogue—and then came the healing! May we, too, meet with Jesus! That great encounter is possible here, or anywhere, for—

"Wherever we seek Him, He is found, And everyplace is hallowed ground." The great matter is to meet with Him! And if we meet with Him, we meet with all we need!

Now, observe the woman's cure. In the first place, it was a complete cure. No part of the infirmity remained. She was not left a little crooked, but still much restored. No, "she was made straight." When Jesus heals, He heals not by halves. His works of Grace may have it said of each one of them, "It is finished." Salvation is a finished work throughout.

In the next place, the woman's cure was a perpetual and permanent one. She did not return, by-and-by, by a terrible relapse, to her former posture. Once made to walk upright, she remained so. When Jesus sheds abroad life, love and joy in the soul, it is ours for a perpetual inheritance and we may hold it till we die, nor lose it even then!

Notice, too, that the woman was healed immediately. That is a point which Luke takes care to mention. The cure did not take days, or weeks, or months, or years, as physicians cures do—but she was cured immediately! Here is encouragement for you who have been depressed for years. There is yet a possibility that you may be perfectly and speedily restored. Yet may the dust be taken from your eyes! Yet may your face be anointed with fresh oil! Yet may you glow and glisten in the light of Jesus' Countenance while you reflect the light that shines upon you from Him! It may happen tonight—at this moment! Gates may be taken from off their hinges, for the mighty Samson, whom we serve, can tear up Gaza's gates, posts and bars and all if He wills to set His captives free! If you are bound by all the fetters that self can forge, yet at one emancipating word from Christ, you shall be entirely free! Doubting Castle may be very strong, but He who comes to fight with Giant Despair is stronger, still. He who has kept you beneath his power is mighty, but the All Mighty is He who conquered at Bozrah and who will conquer everywhere else when He comes forth for the deliverance of His people! Take down your harps from the willows! Be encouraged! Jesus Christ loosens the prisoners! He is the Lord, the Liberator. He comes to set the captives free and to glorify Himself in them!

I remind you of the thought with which we commenced this third point, namely, that the woman's restoration was effected by Jesus Christ, by His laying His hands upon her. Many of His cures were worked in this way, by bringing His own Personality into contact

with human infirmity. "He laid His hands upon her." O Soul, Christ came in human flesh and that contact with humanity is the source of all salvation! If you believe in Christ, He comes a second time into contact with you! Oh, that your soul might get a touch of Him tonight! He is a Man like yourself, though He is also "very God of very God."

In order to save us, He suffered unutterable pangs. The whole weight of our sin was laid upon Him, till He was bruised as beneath the wheels of the car of vengeance. Beneath the upper and the nether millstones of Divine Vengeance, the Savior was ground like fine flour! God knows, and God alone knows, what agonies He bore. All this was substitutionary for sinners. Let not your sins, then, depress you. Had you no sin, you would not need a Savior. Come with your sin and trust in Him! Let not your weakness distress you. Had you no weakness, you would not need a mighty Savior. Come and take hold upon His strength, for all His strength is meant for the weak, the hopeless and the helpless. Sitting on the dunghill of your sin, yet trust in Jesus and you shall be lifted up to dwell among the princes of the blood-royal! There must be power to save in God when He becomes Man to bleed and die. Nothing can be impossible to Him who built the world and who bears the pillars thereof upon His shoulders—and yet gives His hands to the nails and His heart to the spear! Nothing can be impossible to Immanuel, God With Us, when He smarts, and groans, and submits to the bloody sweat, and then empties out His heart's blood that He might redeem men from their iniquities—

"O come all you in whom are fixed The deadly stains of sin!"

Draw near to the Crucified! Let your souls contemplate Christ. Let your faith look to Him. Let your love embrace Him. Cast away all other confidences as mere vanities that will delude you. Away with them! Trust in nothing but the Lord Jesus Christ—His Person, His work, His life, His death, His Resurrection, His Ascension, His glorious pleading before the Throne of God for sinners such as we are! Ah, when you come to die, you who are strong and you who are depressed, will be very much alike in this matter—that you will have to come back where Wesley was when he said—

"Jesus, lover of my soul,  
Let me to Your bosom flee!  
Other refuge have I none—

Hangs my helpless soul on Thee." Look to the wounds of Christ, they will heal your wounds! Look to the death of Christ, it will be the death of your doubts! Look to the life of Christ, it shall be the life of your hopes! Look to the glory of Christ, it shall be the glory of your souls here, and the glory of your souls forever and ever!

May God add His blessing and bring many of His bonded ones out of prison! This shall be to His eternal praise! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: LUKE 13:1-13.

Verse 1. There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. This was a matter of common town talk, so of course they brought the news to Jesus. Notice how wisely He used this shameful incident. You and I too often hear the news of what is happening, but we learn nothing from it—our Savior's gracious mind turned everything to good account—He was like the bee that gathers honey from every flower.

2. And Jesus answering said to them, Do you suppose that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?"Do you imagine that there was some extraordinary guilt which brought this judgment upon them, and that those who were spared may be supposed to have been more innocent than they were?"

3. I tell you, No, but except you repent, you shall all likewise perish. There would come upon them, also, because of their sin, a sudden and overwhelming calamity. When we read of the most dreadful things happening to men, we may conclude that something similar will happen to us if we are impenitent—if not in this world, yet in that which is to come!

4. 5. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, do you think that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, No, but, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish<sup>^</sup>. [See Sermon #408,

Volume 7—ACCIDENTS, NOT PUNISHMENTS.] This was a foreshadowing of the overthrow of Jerusalem and the razing of its walls and towers to the ground which happened not long after. And even that overthrow of Jerusalem was but a rehearsal of the tremendous doom that shall come upon all who remain impenitent.

6. He spoke also this parable: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. He had a right to seek fruit upon the tree, for it was planted where fruit-bearing trees were growing and where it shared in the general culture that was bestowed upon all the trees in the vineyard.

7. Then he said to the dresser of the vineyard, Behold, these three years I have been seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why let it cumber the ground? This was sound reasoning. "It yields nothing, though it draws the goodness out of the ground and so injures those trees that are producing fruit—'cut it down; why let it cumber the ground?'"

8-9. And he answering said unto him, Sir, let it alone this year, also, till I shall dig about it, and fertilize it: and if it bears fruit, well: and if not, then after that you shall cut it down. [See Sermons #650, Volume 11—judgment threatening but mercy

SPARING and #1451-A, Volume 25—"THIS YEAR ALSO."] He asks for a respite, but only a limited one. "After that, you shall cut it down." If, after the trial of another year, it shall still be fruitless, then even the pleader will not ask for any further respite.

10, 11. And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over, and could in no way straighten herself If she was there when Christ

was speaking about the fruitless fig tree, I feel pretty certain that she said "That must mean me. I am the fruitless fig tree." But the Master did not mean her—He had other words and more cheering tidings for her!

12. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman, you are loosened from your infirmity. Oh, what glad news this must have been to her! How it must have thrilled her whole body! As she learned that she was to be restored to an upright position, what delight must have filled her heart!

13. And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. What expressions of fervent gratitude! What notes of glad exultation came from that woman's joyful lips! Surely even cherubim and seraphim could not more heartily and earnestly praise God than she did when "she was made straight and glorified God."