

The Wandering Bird

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"As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place." [Proverbs 27:8](#).

SOLOMON spoke from observation. He had seen certain persons of a vagrant kind and he perceived that they seldom or never prospered. Moreover, he spoke from Inspiration, as well as from observation, hence the wisdom of the philosopher is, in this case, supported by the austerity of the preacher. We may, therefore, take this Proverb, first, as the dictate of human wisdom gathered by long experience—and then, next, as the testimony of Divine Wisdom, commended to us by Infallible Revelation. The principle it inculcates is alike applicable to the common affairs of life and to the higher pursuits which belong to our spiritual interests.

I. THIS IS THE DICTATE OF WISDOM.

In the common affairs of life we believe Solomon to be correct in his statement that, "As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place." The unrest of that man's mind and the instability of his conduct who is constantly making a change of his position and purpose, foretells no success for any of his adventures. Unless he makes the change very wisely and has abundant reason for it, he will make a change for the worse, as the bird does that leaves her nest. Some make a change of their country and fly from their native shores. This is not an ill thing for men to do, for thereby nations have been formed and deserts have been peopled. When a man finds it impossible to provide bread for an increasing family in this country, one of the wisest things that he can do is to cross the sea and seek profitable employment in another land. But there are some spirits of such a roving caste that they seem never to be satisfied at home. They feel persuaded that if they were under other skies, they would succeed, whereas, as a matter of general fact, a man who cannot prosper in England will not prosper anywhere—and many of those who have gone abroad would be but too glad to get home again! Without taking great counsel from God and weighing the matter, long, it is not good for a man to leave the Christian privileges of this country, let alone other considerations. It is ill, I say, to turn aside from the place where sanctuaries are so numerous and where the Gospel is so clearly proclaimed, to go abroad where there may be some pecuniary advantages, but where there must be much spiritual loss. Let the man take anxious thought before he goes, or else, perhaps, when he finds himself in Australia, he will long to be in New Zealand! And when he does not prosper there he will pant for the United States, and, not getting on there, he will, perhaps, be wanting to come

back to Old England—and so he will spend the best of his days in vacillating as to where he shall spend them!

The same is also true with respect to a change of occupation. Some persons are one thing, today, but you do not know what they will be tomorrow. Evidently they were not cut out for this and, therefore, they think they must have been ordained for that, and as they have not thrived in one line of business, they feel certain that they must have made a little mistake—and that if they could get into another line, they would prosper. Well, when a man is in error about his calling, if it really is not his calling, let him leave it—but let him first be sure that it is not his calling, for otherwise he will sin against the express words of Inspiration. The Apostle Paul says, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called"—that is to say, the occupation or profession in life you were engaged in when you were converted need not be rashly abandoned! Therein you may enjoy communion with God. But if you go running before the cloud and, with presumptuous self-will, get out of the path that Providence has assigned you, you will be sure to smart for it. It is ours to follow, never to lead. Where we clearly see our way, there let us go—and unless we have that way clearly manifested to us, let us abide still in our nest.

This also applies to those who want to be always changing their situation and their acquaintance—employers never satisfied with their employees, and employees always discontented with their employers. We know many who say, "There are so many temptations in the place where I am—I will try another." Well, I do not know, dear Friends, that you are right. The temptations that trouble me I would rather endure than encounter any fresh ones. I may know something about my weakness in the present trial, but I cannot know how I might stagger under another! I would recommend you to be rather leery of changing your trials. To exchange one trial for another is all the relief you will get in this world. All is vanity under the sun! The whole Creation groans together. Amidst sorrow and sighing thus universal, our lot is cast. From the sick man's bitter experience, as Dr. Watts describes it, we cannot escape—

"We toss from side to side in pain, But 'tis a poor relief we gain To shift the place, but not the pain." You may change your position over and over again, but you will always be exposed to the temptation. Until you get beyond yonder azure sky, you will never be out of gunshot of the devil. Evil spirits molest every rank in life. The poor man is sorely beset with grievous hardships, and the rich man is encompassed with seductive snares. He who toils with his hands may have some cause to complain, but he who toils with his brain will become the victim of a sorer complaint. Should you fly to the utmost verge of the green earth, temptation would still pursue you! Everywhere, while you are in the body, you must keep guard, for temptations and trials are the common portion of all who dwell on this earth! Be not in a hurry, therefore, to fly from one scene of temptation to another. If God ordains that your lot should be altered, be it so. It is yours to accept His allotment either with resignation

or with gratitude. But be not hasty or heedless in running from one place to another, lest in yielding to the impulse of a moment, you forfeit the comfort of a lifetime.

It may be that these remarks are peculiarly applicable to some people here present. I cannot tell. When talking about such homely things, our words have sometimes proved to be like an oracle for the guidance of those who have come up to God's House to enquire in His Temple. At any rate, dear Friends, when the mind is unhinged, or the feelings chafed, it is not easy to exercise a wise discretion. Wait upon God for guidance as to any change in life you may determine, and if the two things are equal—to remain where you are, or to move elsewhere—choose to stay where you are, for the chances are, speaking according to man's judgment, in its favor. Reason seems to say that as it is unwise for the bird to wander from her nest, so it is not desirable for you to wander from your place.

Still keeping to the common use of these words, let us now turn them to another account. This is most certainly true in changing one's religious service in the cause of God. We have a niche, perhaps, in which God has placed us, and we have had some little honor in filling it, but, by-and-by, another sphere of labor opens up before us and, like children easily charmed with novelty, we think we could be more useful in doing something else and leaving our old work. Let us be very careful in this matter, for, "as a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place." I admired one thing greatly in our deceased friend, Mr. Worcester, who for so long a time kept the gate outside. When I once asked him whether he could not be serviceable to the church as an Elder, he said that if he were elected to it he would decline the office, "Because," he said, "I can do my work as a gatekeeper, but I do not know what I could do as an Elder." So he resolved to stick to the work in which he was acknowledged to do good service. I would have each Christian do the same!

Some Brothers we know have such an itching to get into the pulpit that they are impatient of any other office than the preacher's. But there are many in the pulpit, now-a-days, who had been better for all concerned if kept out of it. They were excellent people at Prayer Meetings. They were very serviceable, indeed, to give a little address, now and then, at a cottage meeting. They would have been useful deacons, exemplary visitors of the sick and, perhaps, good city missionaries. But they thought within themselves that the pulpit ought to be blessed by their distinguished abilities, and so they crept up the pulpit stairs as little to their own comfort as to the church's edification! And now, had they but the wisdom and the humility to come down, again, never more to mount them, it would be well! If you are really called to the ministry, then, in God's name, do not stand back from it! And if a new sphere of labor opens to you, accept it, resting on your God who can make His strength perfect in your weakness. But be not forever panting after the highest seats in the synagogue—do not always want the uppermost place at the feast, lest, when the King comes in, you should have, with shame, to take a lower place! Wait till the King says, "Friend, come up higher." Never go up higher till you have the King's friendly admonition that the higher

place is yours by a call other than your own choice, remembering that "as a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place"—from his place, from his proper place in the Church of God, his proper position in the ranks of the Lord's hosts!

Again, I will use it as a proverb very often applicable to ministers. There may be some here to whom this may come as a powerful rebuke. It is a crying evil just now, especially in our own denomination, that ministers are changing their places. The good old ministers used to occupy one charge for 50 years—and the people used to love them and to hold fast to them. They did not think of moving, they never spoke of resigning any more than fathers speak of resigning their fa-

therhood because their boys and girls are sometimes disobedient! They weathered the storm. They knew that all parts of the sea are rough, so they did not need to get out of one bay into another as soon as a little storm came on. I do not know but that some preachers are better moving—and probably they would be better if they were moved off altogether. I think when a man remains in service at one place for only about two years, he has need to question whether he was called into the ministry at all. God does not generally plant trees in His vineyard that need shifting every two years. God's trees are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which He has planted. They can stand on the bare mountain's brow and see the ages of mortals swept away into the tomb. And so a God-sent minister may stand many years in one place and see man-made ministers swept away like generations of lichens and mosses, because they have no Divine Life in them.

I love to see a Christian minister, I must say, standing fast in his place. We are not to get into a great pet because there was a little disagreement at a church meeting, or turn round offended because some deacon will not be quite as pliable as we wish, or because the neighborhood does not seem to increase, or because there are not quite so many conversions as we want. No, Sirs, if God shall move us, let us move—but if He does not move us, let not the devil do it! Do you know what happens when the bird wanders from her nest? Why, there are her own eggs in the nest, and there is no bird which can sit so well on the eggs as the bird that laid them! And so a Christian minister should remember that there are some young converts who are his own spiritual children. They are of his own bringing in, through Divine Graces and, ordinarily speaking, there is no man who can by any means nurture the young converts like the man who was the means of their conversion! It is well for infants to be brought up by their own mother, and it is a good thing for young converts to be fed under their own spiritual parents. I should not like to trust mine to anybody else for any great length of time. There is always a fear, when the parent bird is away, that the eggs will grow cold and addled, so that when she comes back she will find that she has lost all her trouble. And so, when the minister leaves his people and goes away to some other place, there are many of those who did seem to run well who will turn back. This is a sad result—a tale of wasted labor. Besides, the bird knows that, however uncomfortable its nest may be,

there is no other nest in the world so comfortable as the one which it has made itself. And the Christian minister must know that there is no other church so comfortable for him as the church which he was the means of forming! "I dwell among my own people," said the Shunamite. That is my happiness, and my joy, to dwell among my own people, and if any man should say to me, "Is there anything in life that you desire? Would you like me to put a good word in for you to the king, or to the captain of the hosts?" I would answer, No, there is nothing I desire under Heaven but to dwell among my own people! If I may but seek their good, and see the Church of God prosper here, it shall be all that I ask of my God this side of Heaven! Brothers, let us who are in the ministry, then, as far as possible, cling to our churches and to our fields of labor, remembering that "as a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place."

This is equally true of our hearers. Oh, there are some hearers who are sad, sad vagrants. We can have no objection to our hearers going to listen to other ministers, if they can be edified thereby, for the bird that sits best on the nest must come off, sometimes, especially if there is any food to be had elsewhere. Hear anybody that can profit you! I am sure nothing will make me more glad than to know that you are anywhere as long as your souls are fed. If a Church of England minister preaches the Gospel in your neighborhood better than the Baptist minister does, do not go and hear the Baptist! And if you find either Baptist or Independent treating you to free will instead of Free Grace, do not listen to them, but seek out the Presbyterian and hear him, if you find him more sound in the faith, for, after all, your souls must be fed! That is a matter of necessity. Where you can have all the points of the Truth of God, prefer it, prefer it infinitely! But if you cannot have them all, give your chief care to those which possess the greater importance. Seek first, in this case, those things which make most for your soul's prosperity. But what I do not like is this—certain people will join a church and then after about six months will join another church, and then another, and then another! They ought to have no moss on them, and I suppose they have none, for they have certainly been rolling stones! And then, if the minister should die, how many there are who are off, directly, for now that the church is in a little difficulty, they will all get out of it. Brave sailors these! They want to get into the boat when the ship is in a little bit of gale, and they leave the Church of God just when their help is most needed. Oh, they will come and join the church when the church prospers—yes, any quantity of them—but I wonder, if the pastor went away, whether we would find them all remaining faithful? Too many in our London churches are a sort of flying camp, always flying from one place to another—a set of Gypsy-Christians, who have no settled abode and no "local habitation," and are about as respectable as the Gypsies with whom I have compared them! Now, never let this be said of any of you who love your Lord and who, consequently, love His Church, but, when you are united with His people, say—

"Here would I make my settled rest, While others go and come. No more a stranger, or a guest, But like a child at home."

You shall find that, after all, your wandering shall do you but little good, while in permanent adhesion to the Church, and a diligent casting in of your whole efforts into the cause of God, shall, through the Holy Spirit, give your soul prosperity!

But now I shall take my text in another way and try to use the general principle in another sense. II. SOME MEN WANDER FROM THEIR PLACE IN SPIRITUAL THINGS.

Where is the "place" for a sinner The place for a sinner is always at the foot of the Cross, looking unto Jesus! Alas, then, the tendency in us all is to be looking for evidences, signs, marks, experiences, Divine Graces and I know not what! Having begun in the Spirit, we are so foolish and so bewitched that we try to get perfect in the flesh! We know that at the first our only comfort came from simply depending upon the finished work of Jesus, and yet we are so mad that we try to get comfort from that poor flesh of ours, which has already been our encumbrance and will be our plague till it dies! Now the moment that a Christian wanders away from his place—that is, from the simplicity of his faith in Jesus—the moment he departs from that standing upon the solid Rock of what Christ did, and what Christ is, and what Christ has prom-ised—that moment he is like a bird that wanders from her nest! The bird away from her nest has no comfort. The instincts of Nature make her feel, during her incubation, that the nest is her proper place. And when the Christian gets away from the Cross, the newborn instincts within him make him feel that he is out of his proper position. The Cross is the true rest of a Christian! We are like Noah's dove—there is no rest for the sole of our feet, except in the ark. We may search the world around and fly over the great waste of waters, but there never shall be found rest for us anywhere but at the Cross! I confess I sometimes get into that sorry state of feeling, rather as a Christian professor, or a minister, than as a sinner saved by Grace—but I find that I have to come back to that same place, and to sing the old ditty over again—

"Nothing in My hands I bring!

Simply to Your Cross I cling.

Naked, come to You for dress,

Helpless, look to You for Grace." There is no living comfortably, there is no living with the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit in the heart if we at once wander from the simplicity of our confidence in Christ!

Further, there are many Believers who also wander out of their place. What, now, is a Believer's place? A Believer's place is on the bosom of his Lord, or at the right hand of his Master, or sitting at His feet, with Mary. Now some of us have had times in which we did come very near to the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, some of you never woke in the morning without thinking of Him, and all day long a sense of His Presence was in your heart. How you grudged the world the hours you had to give to business! And when you locked up your heart at

night, you always gave Jesus Christ the key. Oh, how sweet ordinances were to you, then, because you could see Christ through them, as through windows of agates and gates of carbuncles! How delightful were Prayer Meetings and similar gatherings, because you saw Jesus there, and talked with Him! But what about your present state? Perhaps, my dear Friend, you have wandered from your place. You are not living near to Christ as you used to do. Hence ordinances have but very little comfort in them—they are dull and tedious. And services which were once as marrow and fatness to you, have now become as dry bones. Your closet, too, is much neglected. Your Bible is not studied as it was. You have lost your first love and, I appeal to you, have you not also lost your first comfort? Are you not like a bird that has wandered from her nest? Believe me, there is no solid joy, no seraphic rapture, no hallowed peace this side of Heaven, except by living close under the shadow of the Cross, and nestling in the wounds of Jesus! Oh, that we should be so foolish! The bird does not forget her nest, but we forget our Lord! We have need to say with the Psalmist, "Return unto your rest, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you!" We have need to cry tonight—

"Return, oh heavenly Dove, return! Sweet messenger of rest, I hate the sins that made You mourn And drove You from my breast."

We have wandered from our place, you see, for our place is at Jesus' feet with Mary, or on Jesus' bosom with John, or at Jesus' lips with the spouse in the Canticles, saying, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." But roaming here and there, we are like a bird that has wandered from her nest.

And does not this wandering imply a lack of watchfulness? Do I not observe the Christian who was so jealous of himself once that he did not try to put one foot before the other for fear he should take a step awry? He would not even talk without saying, "O Lord, open You my lips!" But now he thinks that he is sure to stand—and he forgets to guard himself with jealousy. He thinks, perhaps, that his experience has made him so wise that he will not fall into his former errors, and so he gets a carnal confidence and forgets to stand upon his watchtower day and night and watch against his foes. Do you know what sometimes happens to the bird if it leaves its nest? Why, while the bird is away, the cuckoo comes and drops its egg in, and so the poor bird, when it comes back, has to hatch its enemy! And oftentimes, when we are not watchful and permit the enemy to take an advantage over us, Satan comes in and drops some foul temptation into our nest, which our hearts help to hatch and which will give us trouble all our lives! As sure as ever we wander in the matter of watchfulness, it will be for our hurt. We may sleep, but Satan does not. Never was he detected napping yet. There is slothfulness among Believers, but there is no slothfulness on the part of their adversary! He always watches, going "about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Though you should leave off watchfulness, he never will. Oh, Christian, do not leave your

nest, for you do not know what may come of it, what good things may be destroyed, or what bad things may be deposited while your heart is away!

Some Christians, too, wander in a yet more melancholy manner as to its outward effect, for we see them wander from holiness. Unhappy church that has in it many such inconsistent professors! But, alas, they are too common in the world. They "did for a time run well; what, then, did hinder them that they should not obey the truth?" The root of the matter was scarcely in them, for they brought forth fruit only for a season and, by-and-by, they withered away. Ah, well, if there is a Christian here—a real Christian—who has backslidden and gone into the world, he will never be happy in his sin! A reprobate, after making a profession, may, perhaps, go back and be comfortable, but a Christian never can! Tell me that you are happy in your sin and I tell you at once that you are dead in sin, for he who puts on guilt must cast off shame. You are in your own element—like a fish in the water, you will find it suits your constitution. As a bird could not be happy down in the depths of the sea—it would drown unless it were soon delivered—so the saint of God is wretched in the depths of iniquity—he must speedily perish unless he is brought out. If he falls into sin through infirmity, or is dragged into it through the force of sudden temptation, he yearns to be delivered and groans and cries unto God till, once more, the bones that were broken are made to rejoice! If you wander from holiness, you wander from your place.

I have known some people who, in order to avoid trouble, have committed a trespass. A Christian man, for instance, has kept his shop open on Sunday to prevent bankruptcy, and a mass of troubles rolled in upon him ten times heavier than those he had sought to avert! We have heard of some who have done violence to their conscience just once. In sheer despondency they shut their eyes and swallowed the bitter pill. It did not take five minutes to do it. Their friends said it was wise. Ill advisers told them it was necessary. They thus attempted to extricate themselves from some trying position. But the consequence was that to their dying day the worm of conscience gnawed their soul! They have made the rod wherewith God has scourged them. Mind what you are doing, then, lest in wandering from holiness, you prove yourself like a bird that wanders from her nest! Oh, how blessed it will be if you and I shall be kept by mighty Grace simply relying upon Christ, constantly communing with Him, watchful against the inroads of temptation and persevering in holiness even to the end! Without this there can be no comfort for us.

III. THE PERSUASIONS TO MAKE ALL OF US WHO ARE TRUE CHRISTIANS CLING CLOSE TO HIS NEST.

Consider, dear Friends, the joy which you and I have had when we have been clinging close to Christ. Where else can such sweetness be found as we have found in the love of Jesus? Will a man leave the cool, flowing waters from Lebanon to go and drink of the muddy river of another place? Shall a man turn away from the bubbling fountain to seek out for himself a broken cistern? Oh, let it not be! We who have fed on angels' food cannot be content with

the husks that swine eat! Let us say, with Rutherford, "Ever since I have eaten the wheaten bread of Heaven, my mouth has been out of taste for the brown bread of Earth, which is full of grit and gravel. I can no longer find sweetness in this world's joys, for I have tasted of celestial joys that are beyond all that earth can give." Let the joy we have had in Christ compel us to cling to

Him!

Think again of the sorrow we have felt whenever we have wandered. You and I have had backsliding times—let us mournfully confess it. And what wretched times they have always been! What have we ever gained by going away from our Lord, but broken bones and sorrow of heart? As we have been burned, let us dread the fire and, as we have had to smart for our wanderings when the watchmen have plucked off our veil and smitten us, let us henceforth cling close to

our Beloved. What reason has He ever given us to be discontented and go away? Has He been unfaithful to us? "Have I been a wilderness unto you?" He asks. In what respect has He grieved us? Has He ever smitten us in His wrath, or treated us harshly for our follies? Never has a friend behaved better to His friend than Christ has behaved to us and, as we can never find a better Savior, let us cling to Him all our days! Or can you think that the outlook is dreary? When we think of the joy that is yet to come, we have a yet stronger motive to cling to the Savior. We may have to walk with Him today when the snow blows in our face, but oh, what will it be to walk with Him in the sunshine? It may be hard work to keep pace with Him. Faint may be our heart and flesh and blood are frail, walking, as we now do, with Him through the mire and dirt, but what will it be to walk in silver slippers upon the golden pavement of the Celestial City? It is not so easy to stand with Him in the pillory, when the multitudes are hooting Him, but oh, how joyous it will be with Him when the angels are rending the heavens with acclamations and all the saints are casting their crowns at His feet! To be with Him in His trouble is not very sweet to our natural feelings, I know, but what will it be to be with Him in His triumph? To be partners in His Cross—from that we may shrink, but to sit with Him upon His Throne—for that we must eagerly long! Well, as we cannot be crown-bearers without being cross-bearers, let us espouse His Cross as we would enjoy His crown. Yet be it known that His Cross drops with myrrh, and that they who carry it will find it so sweetly perfumed that they shall love the very Cross, itself, because Christ has touched it! From this nest let us never wander because of the "rest" which "remains for the people of God."

Wander from this nest?—I think we cannot if the love of Christ inflames us—if our love to Christ sustains us. What? Wander from Him who died for us, that we might never die? Who lives for us, that we might always live? What base ingratitude is ours that we do not cling closer to Him! Can we give Him up? Christians, He gave you the light that cheered your darkness—and can you turn away from the brightness of His face? With pitying eyes

He saw you when you were lying in your blood, an outcast all forlorn, and He said unto you, "Live," and can you ever forsake Him? He passed by you, He looked upon you, He spread His skirt over you, He covered your nakedness, He swore unto you, He entered into a Covenant with you and can you now prove treacherous? He redeemed you, He opened His veins that He might pour forth the purple drops of His precious blood as the price for your inestimable ransom—can you turn away from Him? "Despised and rejected of men," as He was, will you hide your face from Him? And while He is still pleading for you, will you cease to plead for Him? Now that His chariots are making haste to bring Him in the glory of His Second Advent, will you turn away from Him when His Kingdom is so near? Shall the wife leave a husband who cherishes her with utmost tenderness? Shall the child neglect its parents, under whose roof his every need is supplied? Shall the limbs of one's body abhor the head? Such strange quirks were not half so unnatural as for a Christian to turn vagrant and forsake his Savior! Ah me, unnatural and brutish as it must seem, you and I would do this and more, also, did not Grace prevent! The love which has made us one with Christ must keep us one with Him, or else we shall never hold on our way. Be it, then, your constant prayer, "Hold You me up, and I shall be safe." Let this be your heart's cry, "Abide with me," for unless He abide with us, and make our hearts His nest, we shall never abide with Him, but shall be as a bird that wanders from her nest!

Perhaps I speak to some poor bird which has wandered from its nest. You are a stranger and you have strayed in here! You recollect a nest in some happy family circle, where prayer was known to be made. You remember the nest in which you were known to nestle—a little village church where you worshipped God with dear kindred. But you have wandered from your nest. You have lost your friends! You have gone into the world—you are a sinner. You are conscious that you scarcely dare to face the home of your childhood. You have gone away from your old haunts, for you are ashamed to continue in them. You have wandered from your nest. And do you mean to wander on? Is yours to be forever the flight of a bird that has no roost? "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests"—will you never have a place to lay your head? Are you condemned, like the unclean spirit, to wander through dry places, seeking rest and finding none? Are you a pilgrim who shall never have a city that has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God? Are you like the phantom ship of which the mariners talk, which flits across the sea but never reaches a port? No, Friend, you are not so to account yourself, though the devil has told you that there is no hope! Though he has driven you to desperation and persuaded you that you are given up of God and man—it is not so. It is not so! The Eternal Father, bending from high Heaven, looks down upon you and by these lips talks to you! Little as you were thinking that you would be found out, He says to you, "Return, return, return!" 'Tis He who makes you say, "I will arise and go unto my Father." He meets you, Prodigal! He falls about your neck. He gives you the kiss of reconciliation. He cries today to the messengers of mercy, "Take off his rags and bring forth

the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, and let us eat, drink and be merry, for he that was dead is alive, and he that was lost is found." The bird has come back and

has found her nest! And as the mother bird is happy when that little fledgling which she thought had fallen on the ground, or had been swallowed by the hawk, comes back, and she covers it with her feathers, and bids it nestle under her warm bosom, so is the Eternal Father happy! And as she rejoices, so, no—ininitely more—does the Eternal Father rejoice when the wanderer comes back to Him and finds comfort in His love!

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Trust in the Father's Grace as manifest in the Savior's wounds, and so you shall find an eternal nest from which you shall never wander till you shall build your nest in Heaven! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: LUKE23:13-28.

Verses 13-15, And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them, You have brought this Man unto me, as one that perverts the people: and, behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this Man touching those things whereof you accuse Him. No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him. They were judges not at all inclined to favor Him, but yet, though His accusers were mad against Him, nothing could be brought before these two judgment seats which would hold water for a single moment. Holy and harmless was Christ and, therefore, His accusers knew not what to say against Him.

16-23. I will therefore chastise Him, and release Him. (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast). And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this Man, and release unto us Barabbas! (Who for certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison). Pilate, therefore, willing to release Jesus, spoke again to them. But they cried, saying, Crucify Him! Crucify Him! And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil has He done? I have found no cause of death in Him: I will therefore chastise Him, and let Him go. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. Never did man's enmity to God become more clear than when God, in human flesh, descending upon an errand of mercy, must, nevertheless, be hunted down by these cruel cries of, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Man would be a Deicide if he could. "The fool has said in his heart, 'No God.'" To get rid of God—to get rid of God, even in human form, is the enmity of man's heart! He will have it if he can.

23-26. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will. And as they led Him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the Cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. Fit type of all

Christ's followers, who must expect to carry Christ's Cross, and who should be happy and honored in carrying it after Jesus.

27, 28. And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. He had the siege of Jerusalem before His mind and, therefore, in tender pity He bade them save their tears for other sorrows.