

Our Glorious Transforming

A Sermon

(No. 3496)

Published on Thursday, January 27th, 1916.

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At [the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.](#)

On *Lord's-day Evening, September 3rd, 1871.*

"But now in Christ Jesus, ye, who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ."—[Ephesians 2:13.](#)

I DO not want you to feel at this time as if you were listening to a sermon, or to any sort of set discourse, but rather I should like, if it were possible, that you should feel as if you were alone with the Saviour, and were engaged in calm and quiet meditation; and I will try to be the prompter, standing at the elbow of your contemplation, suggesting one thought and then another; and I pray, dear brethren and sisters in, Christ, as many of you as are truly in him, that you may be able so to meditate as to be profited, and to say at the close, "My meditation on him was sweet. I will be glad in his name." There are three very simple things in the text. The first is *what we were*. Some time ago "we were far off." But secondly, *what we are*—we are "made nigh" And then there is the how, *the means of this great change*. It is "in Christ Jesus," and it is added, "by the blood of Christ." First, then, let us with humility consider, as believers:—

I. WHAT WE WERE.

There was a day when we passed from death unto life. All of us who are children of God have undergone a great and mysterious change; we have been new created, we have been born again. If any of you have not experienced this great change, I can only pray that you may, but you will not be likely to take much interest in the theme of meditation this evening. As many of you as have experienced this great change are now asked to recollect what you were. You were far off, first, in the respect that *you were aliens* from the commonwealth of Israel. The Jew was brought nigh. The Jewish people were favoured of God with light, while the rest of the world remained in darkness. "To them he gave" the oracles; with them he made a covenant; but as for the rest of the nations, they were left unclean and far off. They could not come near to God. This was our condition. We were Gentiles. We had no participation in the covenant that God had made with Abraham; we had no share in the sacrifices of Aaron or his successors. We could not come in by the way of circumcision. We were not born after the flesh, and we had no right to that fleshly covenant, however great its privileges. We are brought nigh now. All that the Jew ever had we have. We have all his privileges, and more. He had but the shadow, we have the substance. He had but the type: we have the

reality. But aforetime we had neither shadow nor substance; we were afar off, and had no participation in them.

And, beloved, when we think of our distance from God, there are three or four ways in which we may illustrate it. We were far off from God, for *a vast cloudland of ignorance hung between our souls and him*. We were lost as in a tangled wood in which there was no pathway. We were like some bird drifted out to sea that should be bereft of the instinct which guides it on its course, driven to and fro by every wind, and tossed like a wave by every tempest. We knew not God, neither did we care to know. We were in the dark with regard to him and his character; and when we did make guesses concerning God, they were very wide of the truth, and did not help to bring us at all near. He has taught us better now; he has taught us to call him Father, and to know that he is love. Since we have known God, or, rather, have been known of God, we have come nigh, but once our ignorance kept us very far off. Worse than that, there was between us and God a vast range of the *mountains of sin*. We can measure the Alps, the Andes have been sealed, but the mountains of sin no man has ever measured yet. They are very high. They pierce the clouds. Can you think of the mountains of your sin, beloved? Reckon them all up since your birth-sins of childhood, and youth, and manhood, and riper years; your sins against the gospel, and against the law; sins with the body, and sins with the mind; sins of every shape and form—ah! what a mountain range they make! And you were on one side of that mountain, and God was on the other. A holy God could not wink at sin, and you, an unholy being, could not have fellowship with the thrice Holy God. What a distance!—an impassable mountain sundered you from your God. It has all gone now. The mountains have sunk into the sea, our transgressions have all gone, but, oh! what hills they were once, and what mountains they were but a little while ago! In addition to these mountains, there was, on the other side nearest to God, *a great gulf of divine wrath*. God was angry, justly angry, with us. He could not have been God if sin had not made him angry. He that plays with sin is very far from knowing anything of the character of the Most High. There was a deep gulf. Ah! even the lost in hell know not how deep it is. They have been sinking: but this abyss hath no bottom. God's love is infinite. Who knoweth the power of shine anger, O Most High? It is all filled now, as far as we are concerned. Christ has bridged the chasm. He has taken us to the other side of it; he ho brought us nigh; but what a gulf it was! Look down and shudder. Have you ever stood on a glacier and looked down a crevasse, and taken a great stone and thrown it down, and waited till at last you heard the sound as it reached the bottom? Have not you shuddered at the thought of falling down that steep? But there you stood but a little while ago, an heir of wrath, even as others. So the Apostle puts it, "even as others." Oh! how far off you were!

Nor was this all, for there was another division between you and God. When, dear friends, we were brought to feel our state, and to have some longings after the Most High, had the mountains of sin been moved and the chasm of wrath been filled, yet there remained

another distance of our own making. There was *a sea of fear* rolling between us and God. We dare not come to him. He told us he would forgive, but we could not think it true. He said that the blood would cleanse us—the precious blood of the atoning sacrifice—but we thought our stains too crimson to be removed. We dared not believe in the infinite compassion of our Father. We ran from him; we could not trust him. Do you not remember those times when to believe seemed an impossibility, and salvation by faith appeared to be as difficult a thing as salvation by the works of the law? That sea has gone away now. We have been ferried o'er its streams. We have no fear of God now in the form of trembling, slavish fear; we are brought nigh and say, "Abba Father," with an untrembling tongue. You see then something of the distance there was between us and God, but I will illustrate it in another way. Think of God a moment. Your thoughts cannot reach him: he is infinitely pure; the heavens are not clean in his sight; and he charges his angels with folly. That is one side of the picture. Now look at yourself, a worm that has rebelled against its Creator, loathsome with sin, through and through defiled. When I see a beggar and a prince stand together I see a distance, but ah! it is but an inch, a span, compared with the infinite leagues of distance in character and nature between God and the fallen man. Who but Christ could have lifted up from so low an estate to so high a condition—from fellowship with devils unto communion with Jehovah himself? The distance was inconceivable. We were lost in wonder at the greatness of the love that made it all to vanish. We were afar off.

Now I have stated that very simply. Think it over a minute. And what do you feel as the result of your thought? Why, humility rises. Suppose you are a very experienced Christian, and a very intelligent reader of the Bible; suppose that for many years you have been able to maintain a consistent character. Ah! my dear brother, my dear sister, you have nothing whereof glory when you recollect what you were, and what you would have been still if it had not been for sovereign grace. You, perhaps, have forgotten a little that you were just what the Bible says. You have been so contemplating your present privileges that you have for a while failed to remember that it is only by the grace of God that you are what you are. Let these considerations bring you back to your true condition. And now with lowly reverence at the cross-foot bow down your soul and say, "My Lord, between me and the greatest reprobate there is no difference but what thy grace has made; between me and lost souls in hell there is no difference except what shine infinite compassion has deigned to make. I humbly bless thee, and adore thee, and love thee, because thou hast brought me nigh."

And now we shall continue our contemplation, but take the second point. We have a bitter pill in this first one, but the next consideration kills it, takes the bitterness away, and sweetens it. It is:

II. WHAT WE ARE—WHAT WE ARE

"We are made nigh through the blood of Christ." You will please to observe that the Apostle does not say, "We hope we are"; he speaks positively, as every believer should. Nor

does he say, "We shall be." There are privileges reserved for the future, but here he is speaking of a present blessing, which may be now the object of distinct definite knowledge, which ought to be, indeed, a matter of present experimental enjoyment. We are brought nigh. What means he by this? Does not he mean, first, what I have already said, that as we were far off, being Gentiles, and not of the favoured commonwealth of Israel, we are now brought nigh, that is to say, *we have all the privileges of the once favoured race*. Are they the seed of Abraham? So, are we. for he was the Father of the faithful, and we, having believed, have become his spiritual children. Had they an altar? We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. Had they any high priest? We have an high priest we have one who has entered into the heavenly. Had they a sacrifice and paschal supper? We have Christ Jesus, who, by his one offering, hath for ever put away our sin, and who is to-day the spiritual meat on which we feed. All that they had we have, only we have it in a fuller and clearer sense. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," and they have come to us. But we are brought a great deal nearer than the Jew—than most of the Jews were, for you know, brethren, the most devout Jew could not offer sacrifice to God; I mean, as a rule. Prophets were exceptions. They could not offer sacrifices themselves; they could bring the victim, but there were some special persons who must act as priests. The priest came nigh to God on the behalf of the people. Listen, O ye children of God, who were once afar off! It is the song of heaven. Let it be your song on earth—"Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood, and hath made us priests and kings." *We are all priests* if we love the Saviour. Every believer is a priest. It is for him to bring his sacrifice of prayer, and thanksgiving, and come in, even into the holy place in the presence of the Most High. And I might say more, for no priest went into the most holy place of all, save one, the high priest, and he once in the year, not without blood and not without smoke and of incense, ventured into the most holy place. Be we, brethren, see the veil taken right away, and we come up to the mercy-seat without the trembling which the high priest felt of old, for we see the blood of Jesus on the mercy-seat and the veil rent, and we come, boldly to the throne of heavenly grace to obtain grace to help in time of need. Oh! how near we are; nearer than the ordinary Jew; nearer than the priest; as near as the high priest himself, for in the person of Christ we are where he is, that is, at the throne of God. Let me say, dear brethren, that we are near to God today, for *all that divides us from God is gone*. The moment a sinner believes, all that mountain of sin ceases to be. Can you see those hills—those towering Andes? Who shall climb them? But lo! I see one come who has the soar of one that has died upon a cross. I see him hold up his pierced hand, and one drop of blood falls on the hills, and they smoke; they dissolve like the fat of rams; they burn to vapour, and they are gone. There is not so much as a vestige of them left. Oh! glory be to God, there is no sin in God's book against the believer; there is no record remaining; he hath taken it away and nailed it to his cross, and triumphed in the deed. As the Egyptians were all drowned in the

sea, and Israel said, "The depths have covered them; there was not one of them left," so may every believer say, "All sin is gone, and we are pure, accepted in the Beloved, justified through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ." Oh! how glorious this nearness is when all distance is gone!

And now, brethren, we are near to God, for *we are his friends*. He is our mighty friend, and we love him in return. Better than that, *we are his children*. A friend might be forgotten, but a child—a father's bowels yearn towards him. We are his children. He has chosen us that we may approach unto him, that we may dwell in his courts and abide, and go no more out for ever." The servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the son abideth ever." And this is our privilege. And yet even more than that. Can anybody here imagine how near Jesus Christ is to God, So near are we, for that is truth which the little verse sings:—

"So near—so very near to God,
More near I cannot be;
For in the person of his Son
I am as near as he."

If we are, indeed, in Christ, we are one with him: we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; and he has said, "Where I am, there shall also my servants be," and he has declared that we shall receive the glory—the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. What nearness is this!

Now I have stated that truth, I want you now to feed on it for a minute, and draw the natural conclusions, and feel the fit emotion. Beloved, if you are brought so near to God, what manner of lives ought you to lead? Common subjects ought never to speak traitorous word, but a member of the Privy Council, one who is admitted to the Court, should certainly be loyal through and through. Oh! how we ought to love God, who has made us nigh!—a people near unto him. How ought heavenly things and holy things to engross our attention! How joyously we ought to live too, for with such high favours as these it would be ungrateful to be unhappy! We are near to God, brethren. Then God sees us in all things—our heavenly Father knows what we have need of; he is always watching over us for good. We are near to him—let us pray as if we were near God. There are some prayers that are dreadful from the distance there is evidently in the mind of the offerer. Too generally liturgies are addresses to a God too far off to be reached, but the humble familiarity which boldly comes trembling with fear, but rejoicing with faith, into the presence of God—this becomes those who are made nigh. When a man is near a neighbour whom he trusts he tells him his griefs, he asks his help. Deal thus with God; live on him, live for him, live in him. Be never distant from a God who has made you nigh unto himself. Our life ought to be a heavenly one, seeing that we are brought nigh to God—the God of heaven. Brethren, how assured every one of us may be of our safety if we are, indeed, believers in Christ, for if we are made nigh by love and friendship to our God, he cannot leave us. If, when we were enemies, he brought us

nigh, will he not keep us now he has made us friends? He loved us so as to bring us up from the depths of sin, when we had no thoughts, nor desires towards good, and now he has taught us to love him and to long for him, will he forsake us? Impossible! What confidence this doctrine gives!

And once more, dear brethren and sisters, if the Lord has brought us nigh, what hope we ought to have for those who are farthest off from God to-day! Never be you amongst that pharisaical crew who imagine that fallen women or degraded men cannot be uplifted again. Ye were sometimes far off, but he has made you nigh. The distance was so great in your case that surely he who met that can also meet the distance in another case. Have hope for any who can be got under the sound of the gospel, and labour on until the more hopeless, the most hopeless, are brought there. Oh! let us gird up our loins for Christian work! believing that if God has saved us, there remain no impossibles. The chief of sinners was saved years ago. Paul said so. He had no mock modesty. I believe he said the truth The chief of sinners has gone through the gate into heaven, and there is room for the second worst to get through—there is room for thee, friend, as there is room for me. The God that brought me nigh has taught me to know that no man is beyond the reach of his grace. But I must leave that with you, hoping that it will flavour all your thoughts to-night. Once more. The last thing we are to consider is:—

III. HOW THE GREAT CHANGE WAS WROUGHT.

We were put into Christ, and then through the blood we were made nigh. The doctrine of the Atonement is no novelty in this house. We have preached it often, nay, we preach it constantly, and let this mouth be dumb when it prefers any other theme to that old, old story of the passion, the substitution, and consequent redemption by blood. Beloved, it is the blood of Jesus that has done everything for us. Our debts Christ has paid; therefore, those debts have ceased to be. The punishment of our sin Christ has borne and, therefore, no punishment is due to us; substitution has met a case that is never to be met by any other means. The just has suffered for the unjust to bring us to God. We deserved the sword, but it has fallen upon him who deserved it not, who voluntarily placed himself in our room instead, that he might give compensation to justice and full liberty to mercy. It is by the blood that we are brought nigh then. Christ has suffered in our stead, and we are, therefore, forgiven. But think about that blood a minute. It means suffering; it means a life surrendered with agony. Suffering—we talk about it; ah! but when you feel it, then you think more of the Saviour. When the bones ache, when the body is racked, when sleep goes from the eyelids, when the mind is depressed, when the head turns; ah! then we say, "My Saviour, I see a little of the price that redeemed me from going down into the pit." The mental and physical suffering of Christ are both worthy of our consideration, but depend upon it his soul's sufferings were the soul of his sufferings; and when we are under deep depression, brought near even unto death with sorrow, then again we guess how the Saviour bought us. The early Church

was noted in its preaching for preaching facts. I am afraid now that we are too noted for forgetting facts and preaching doctrine. Let us have doctrine by all means, but, after all the fact is the great thing. When Paul gave a summary of the gospel which he triad preached, he said, "This is the gospel that I have preached—that Jesus Christ was crucified, died, was buried, rose again." There in Gethsemane, where bloody sweat bedews the soil; there on the pavement, where the lash tears again and again into those blessed shoulders till the purple streams gush down, and the ploughers make their furrows, and the blood fills them; there when they hurl him on his back to the ground, and fasten his hands to the wood with rough iron; there when they lift him up and dislocate his bones, when they fix the gross into the earth; there when they sit and watch him, and insult his prayers, and mock his thirst, while he hangs naked to his shame in the midst of a ribald crew; there where God himself forsakes him, where Jehovah turns his face away from him, where the sufferer shrieks in agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—there it is that we were brought nigh, even we that were far off. Adore your Saviour, my brethren—bow before him. He is not here. for he is risen; but your hearts can rise, and you can bow at his feet. Oh! kiss those wounds of his; ask that by faith you may put your finger into the print of his nails, and your hand into his side. "Be not faithless, but believing," and let all your sacred powers of mind assist your imagination and faith to realise now the price with which the Saviour brought you from a bondage intolerable. God grant you grace to feel something of this.

I have laid the truth before you. Now sit down and quietly turn it over in your mind. And what will strike you? Why, surely first *the heinousness of sin*. Was there nothing that could wash out sin but blood, and was there no blood that could wash it out hut the blood of the Son of God? O sin! O sin! what a black, what a damning thing thou art! Only the blood of an incarnate God can wash out the smallest stain of sin. My heart, I charge thee to hate it; my eyes, look not on it; my ears, listen not to its siren charm; my feet, run not in its paths; my hands, refuse to handle it; my soul, loathe, loathe that which murdered Christ, and thrust a spear through the tenderest heart that ever beat.

Next to that, do you not feel emotions of *intense gratitude* that, if such a price was needed, such a price was found? God had but one son, dearer to him than Isaac was to Abraham, and though there was none to command him to do it, as there was in Abraham's case, yet voluntarily the gracious Father led his son up to the cross. and it pleased the Father to bruise, him; he put him to grief; he gave him up for us. Which shall I most admire—the love of the Father, or the love of tile Son? Blessed be God, we are not asked to make distinctions, for they are one. "I and my Father are one," and in that sacred act of the sacrifice for the sins of men the Father and the Son are both to be worshipped with equal love. You see, then, the heinousness of sin in some degree, for its needing for its pardon the love of Jesus, and the love of God that gave the Saviour's blood.

But, dear friends, ere I sit down, let me remark that we learn from our text and from the whole contemplation. what it is that would bring us nearer experimentally than we are to-night. How did I get nigh first? Through the blood. Do I want to get near to God to-night? Have I been wandering? Is my heart cold? Have I got into a backsliding state? Do I want to come close now to my blessed Father, and again to look up to him, and say, " Abba," and rejoice in that filial spirit? There is no way for me to come nearer except the blood. Let me think of it then, and let me see' its infinite value; it is sufficient, let me hear its everlasting, ever-prevalent plea, and oh! then I shall feel my soul drawn; for that which draws us nearer to God, and will draw us right up to heaven, is none other than the crimson cord Of the Saviour's endless, boundless, dying, but ever-living love.

And this teaches me, and teaches you, too, and here I have done, *what it is we ought to preach and teach* if we would bring the, far-off ones in—if we would bring near to God those that now wander from him. Philosophy, bah! You will philosophize men into hell, but never into heaven. Ceremonies you can amuse children, and you can degrade men into idiots with them, but you can do nothing else. The gospel, and the essence of that gospel, which is the blood of Jesus Christ—it is this which is an omnipotent leverage to uplift the filth, debauchery, and poverty of this city into life, into light, and into holiness. There is no battering-ram that will ever shake the gates of hell except that which every time it strikes sounds this word, "Jesus, Jesus, the Crucified." "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." If it will save us, it will save others; only let us spread the good news, let us tell the good tidings. Every one of us ought to preach the gospel somehow. You that speak in common conversation forget not to speak of him. Scatter such tracts as are most full of Christ—they are the best; others will be of little use. Write letters concerning him. Remember his name is like ointment, full of sweetness, but to get the perfume you must pour it forth. Oh! that we could make fragrant all this neighbourhood with the savour of that dear name! Oh! that wherever we dwell every one of us might so think of Christ in our hearts that we could not help speaking of him with our lips! Living, may we rejoice in him; dying, may we triumph in him. May our last whisper on earth be what our first song shall be in heaven, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain and hath redeemed us unto God by his blood." Oh! I pray God to make this season of communion very sweet to you, and I think it will be if you have the key of our meditation to-night, and can unlock the door—if you know how far off you were, and see how near you are by the precious blood.

Oh! there are some far-off ones here to-night, however, to whom I must say just this word. Far-off one, God can make you nigh; you can be made nigh to-night. Whoever you may be, he is able still to save, but the blood must make you nigh—the blood of Jesus. Trust him. To believe is to live, and to believe means only and simply to trust, to depend upon. That is faith. Have confidence in Christ's sacrifice, and you are saved. God grant you may be enabled to do it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.