

Cheering Congratulation

(No. 3563)

A SERMON DELIVERED

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered." [Psalm 32:1](#).

MEN have, all of them, their own ideals of blessedness. Those ideals are often altogether contrary to the sayings which our Savior uttered in His Sermon on the Mount. They count those to be blessed who are strong in health, who are abundant in riches, who are honored with fame, who are entrusted with command, who exercise power—those, in fact, who are distinguished in the eyes of their fellow creatures! Yet I find not such persons called, "blessed," in God's Word, but oftentimes humble souls who might excite pity rather than envy, are congratulated upon the blessings which they are heirs to and which they shall soon enjoy. To the penitent there is no voice so pleasant as that of pardon! God, who cannot lie—who cannot err—tells us what it is to be blessed. Here He declares that, "blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered." This is an oracle not to be disputed. Forgiven sin is better than accumulated wealth. The remission of sin is infinitely to be preferred before all the glitter and the glare of this world's prosperity. The gratification of creature passions and earthly desires is illusive—a shadow and a fiction—but the blessedness of the justified, the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness is substantial and true! How apt we are to say in our hearts, "Would God Adam had never fallen, for blessed must be the man who never sinned!" Could any man have attained to a perfect life which deserved commendation at God's hands, blessedness would surely glow around him like a halo! At his feet the earth would blossom! In his nostrils the air would breathe sweet odors and his ears would be regaled with the sweet singing of birds—"content, indeed, to sojourn while he must, below the skies, but having there his home." Such a man would feel and find the beams of brightness playing over the entire expanse of life and the thrill of gladness filling his heart with unbroken peace! The mountains and hills would break forth into singing and all the trees of the field would clap their hands, to multiply his inlets to happiness. But it is not of such imaginary bliss that our sacred Psalmist loves to sing, because, however true, it would be a mere mockery to tell us, who are so deeply fallen, of sweet delights that those, alone, could know who never fell! Our time of probation is over. We of mortal race were proved, tried and condemned long ago. It is not possible, now, for us to have the blessedness of uncorrupted innocence. And yet, thank God, blessedness is still possible to us, sinners though we are! We may hear the voice of the Ever Blessed of God pronouncing us to be blessed! His mercy can secure to us what our merit could never have earned, for so it is

written, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered." May everyone of us partake of this blessedness and know and rejoice in the full assurance of it!

Now the observations I address to you shall be very simple. But if they come home to us as true, and we can grasp them with a lively faith, they will be none the less gratifying to us because they seem common.

I. EVIDENTLY THERE IS FORGIVENESS WITH GOD—TRANSGRESSION MAY BE FORGIVEN.

It is spoken of here, not as a flight of fancy, or a poetic dream. It is not an imaginary or a possible circumstance, but it is described as a fact that does occur, and has been the happy lot of some who knew its sweet relief and felt its strange felicity—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven." Do take the words with all their weight of meaning, for though taught in our catechisms, embodied in our creeds, and admitted in our ordinary conversation on religious subjects, the belief in the forgiveness of sins is not always sincere and hearty. When the guilt of sin is felt and the burden of sin grows heavy—and when the wound stinks and is corrupt, as the Psalmist says—we are very apt to doubt the possibility of pardon, or, at least, of our own pardon. Under deep conviction of sin and a sense of the peculiar heinousness of our own guilt, there is a haze and more than a haze—a thick fog which hides the light of this Doctrine from our view! We think all men pardonable except ourselves. We can believe in the Doctrine of Forgiveness of Sin for blasphemers, for thieves, for drunkards, even for murderers—but there is some particular aggravation in the sins which we have committed that appear to us to admit of no place of repentance, to find no promise of absolution. So, writing bitter things against ourselves, we become our own accusers and our own judges—and seem as if we would even become our own executioners! In our distraction we are thus prone to doubt that our transgression can be forgiven.

And, Beloved, I am not sure that those of us who are saved do not, sometimes, have misgivings about this grand Truth of God. Although I know that I am saved in Christ, yet at times when I look back upon my life, and especially dwell upon some dark blots which God has forgiven, but for which I can never forgive myself—the question comes across me, "Is it so? Is that really blotted out? It was so, crimson, So scarlet—can it be that the spot is entirely gone?" We know that being washed in the blood of Christ, we are whiter than snow, but it is not always that our faith can realize the forgiveness of sins while our heart and conscience are revolving the flagrancy of their guilt. It should not be so! We ought to be able to bear, at one and the same time, a vision of sin in all its horror and a full view of the Sacrifice for sin in all its holiness and acceptance to God! We ought to be able to feel that we are guilty, weak, lost and ruined, yet to believe that Christ is not only able to save to the very uttermost, but that He has saved us—we ought to be able to confess our crimes while we cast ourselves without a question into His blessed arms! I trust that we can do this, but, alas, a fly may find its way into the sweetest pot of ointment! A little folly may taint a good

reputation and an unworthy doubt may tarnish the purest faith—so it may be profitable to remind even the forgiven man that forgiveness of sin is possible, that forgiveness of sin is presented in the Gospel as a Covenant Blessing, that forgiveness of sin is the possession of every Believer in Jesus, that his sin has gone entirely and irreversibly and that for him all manner of sin has been forgiven, blotted out and put away through the precious blood of Jesus, seeing that he has believed in God's great propitiatory Sacrifice!

Perhaps there has strolled into this sanctuary tonight some professing Christian who, though a true child of God, has foully stained his profession. It may be, my dear Friend, that in your weakness, and to your shame—and to your confusion of face—you have forsaken God and have fallen into sin. You knew better, you who have instructed others, you who would have denounced such conduct with great severity in your fellow creatures, have fallen into the transgression, yourself, and now you are conscious that both the sin and its results are very bitter. You are smarting under the rod, your bones have been sorely broken and, perhaps, while I am speaking, it seems as if my words were putting them out of joint again where there had been a little healing! Beloved Brother or Sister in Christ, if your sin is a public sin, a grievous sin, a black and foul sin—if it is a sin which conscience cannot for a moment tolerate, a sin which God's people must detest, even though it is in you who are dear to them, let me entreat you not to suffer the deceitfulness of sin to drive you to despair! In the anguish of remorse, do not shun the Mercy Seat! Doubt not that the Lord is still ready to pardon you. Let not Satan persuade you that you have sinned a sin which is unto death/No, come to the Cross of Christ! The blood of Jesus was real and it was really shed to wash away real sin, not sin in the abstract, as we talk of it here, but sin in the concrete as you have committed it—such sin as yours—no, yoursin, that special sin, that degrading sin, that sin which you are ashamed to mention! That sin which makes you now, even at the very thought of it, hang your head and blush. Know of a truth that your sin is pardonable! Do you ask me why I draw this inference from my text? I answer that it was penned by David when his crimes were complicated, his character corrupted and his case seemed beyond the possibility of a cure! "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God!" Whatever your sin may have been, it can scarcely have exceeded his in atrocity! You know how he added sin to sin—you know how high he stood and how low he sunk—and you know how sweetly he could sing, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered." It shines forth more clearly, now, than ever it shone before! Sin is pardonable! The Lord God is merciful and gracious! Hear the heavenly invitation, "Come, now, let us reason together; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as wool; though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow." Hear Jehovah's voice out of Heaven, "I, even I, am He that blots out your iniquities for My name's sake: I will not remember your sins."

With such a peerless proclamation of perfect pardon we leave this point. We trust, however, that you will not leave it till you have proved its preciousness and its power.

Observe now that the pardon being proved, the—

II. BLESSEDNESS MAY BE ENJOYED.

So much sadness comes from a sense of sin that it is not easy for a penitent to regard pleasure as within his reach, or for a criminal to imagine that cheerfulness can become his habitual condition. How have I heard a man say, "Were God to forgive me, I do not think I could be happy, such is my sin that though it should be put away, the memory would haunt me, the disgrace would distract me—my own conscience would confound me, I never could blend with the blessed ones." Is not this just what the prodigal said, "I am not worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired servants"? He could not think so well of his father as to suppose that he could receive him again into his affections as his child and, therefore, he would be content to take the yoke of service, and to be a hired servant of his father's. Not a servant born in the house, though these were common enough among the Jews—but a hired servant, willing to be even with the lowest class of servants—so that he might but live in his father's house! I know that this is often the feeling of humble souls, but look at the text and observe the blessed Truth of God which it teaches. You may not only be forgiven, my dear Friends, but you may enjoy, notwithstanding your past sin, blessedness on earth. Oh, look up through those tears! They can all be wiped away! Or should they continue to flow in a long life of penitence, if they do but fall upon the Savior's feet, which you would gladly wash with the tears of your affection and wipe with the hairs of your head, you shall find those tears to be precious drops! Though evangelical repentance may be compared to bitter herbs in one respect, to be eaten lamenting, yet in another respect there is no Grace as sweet as repentance! In Heaven, it is true, they do not repent, but here on earth it well becomes the saints. It is sweet here below to sit and weep one's heart away in sorrow for sin at the foot of the Cross of Christ, saying, "with my tears, His feet I bathe." And although we shall have done with it when we reach those blissful shores, until then, repentance shall be the occupation of our lives!

But, dear Friends, you may suppose that as sincere repentance always leads to great searching of heart, it cannot be blessed—yet it really is so. Repentance, as we have already said, is a sweet Grace. You remember that the prodigal shed his tears, his best tears, in his father's bosom, when he put his face, as it were, close to his father's heart, and sobbed out, "Father, I have sinned!" Oh, what a place for repentance is the bosom of God, with His love shed abroad in the heart, making you contrite and moving you to say, "How could I have sinned against so good a God? How could I be an enemy to One who is so full of Grace? How could I run away and spend my substance with harlots, when here was my Father's deep care for my welfare? How could I choose their base love, when a love so pure, so true, so constant, was waiting for me?" Oh, it is a holy sorrow that has a clear life ensuing and I tell you that, however deep your repentance may be, it shall not stand in the way of your

being blessed, but shall even prove to be one contributory stream to the blessedness of your experience!

Does the memory of your sins haunt you, and do you feel that you shall always hang your head as one whom pardon could not purge? Not thus did the Apostle Paul reflect on his many sins. Though he bewailed the wickedness of his heart, and was ashamed of the evil he had done, yet his humility after he was converted took the form of gratitude, cheering his very soul with the most lively impulse! While confessing that he was the very chief of sinners, at the same time and in the same breath he said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Conscious of his own infirmities, he could exclaim, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Yet, confident of his full redemption, he could add, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Moreover, hurling defiance at all his accusers, he asks, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" No bolder or more triumphant champion of Divine Grace than that Apostle who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious—but now rejoices to bear record, "I obtained mercy that, in me, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering as a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." What? Though your past offenses are ever so rank, and your present shame should sting you with ever so much poignant sorrow, yet with thrills of bliss you shall prove the full blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!

I think I hear one say, "Few men have fallen more deeply into sin than I have. If converted, I might be pointed out as an illustrious monument of Divine Grace. Yet, what with vanities which have matured into vices, and passing follies which have grown into positive evil habits, it is not likely I should ever attain the same eminence in Grace as those who were trained from childhood in the sanctuary and never lived a dissolute life, or risked a desperate death, as I have done." Let me assure you that this is a great fallacy! The heights of Glory are now open to those who once plunged into the depths of sin. Say not, slave of Satan, that you cannot be a soldier of the Cross! You can be a heroic soldier! You may win a crown of victory. Why need you be weak in faith? You cannot be languid in love. Great sinner as you are, you have in this, a sort of advantage—you will love much because you have had much forgiven you. Surely, if your love is warmer than that of others, you have the mainspring of zeal, the mightiest force within to mold your future course! Instead of being less than others, you should seek to outdo them all, not out of carnal emulation, but out of holy strife. I counsel you, poor Sinner, when you come to Christ, do not try to hide yourself in some obscure corner, but come to the light, that you may have near and intimate fellowship with your Lord. For the love you have to Him, show kindness to His lambs. By your generosity to His disciples, show your gratitude to the Master. Grudge no service. Be ready to spend and to be spent—yield yourself a living sacrifice to Him who redeemed you from your sins and restored you to His favor.

I liked what one said to me today when I was seeing enquirers who are seeking membership with us. "By God's Grace," he said, "I will try to make up for lost time." Let this be your resolve, dear Friends! If you are called by Grace when the day is far spent and the time in which you can hope to serve your Lord is getting brief, do not waste an opportunity, but engage with all your heart and soul in the work of faith and labor of love for the Lord Jesus! Some of us were called at the first or second hour of the day and while we were yet children, we found some employment in the vineyard. Still, we cannot serve Christ as we would. Oh I wish I had a thousand tongues that I might proclaim His love, and could live a thousand lives to proclaim His Grace among the sons of men! But as for you, whose time must, in the course of nature, be so short—you who have given so much of your lives to Satan—do not let Christ now be put off with the little end, but give him the very best of your love, the fat of your sacrifice, the strength and soul of your being!

And as to the matter of enjoyment, I cannot believe for a moment that when a great sinner is blessed with a great pardon, he should fail to have the fullness of joy which so Divine a benefit must properly excite. My observation has been that the joy of those who have been graciously forgiven after having greatly transgressed, rather exceeds than falls short of the joy of such as are more gradually brought into Gospel liberty! Oh, no, my Master will not adjudge you to take a second rank!

He who was by birth an alien, and in open rebellion an enemy to God, shall have all the rights of citizenship and partake of all the privileges of the saints! Not he who, like Samuel, was lighted on his couch in childhood by the lamps of the sanctuary, is more welcome at the Father's board than the returning prodigal! Such blessedness is in store for some of you. You have fallen. You have lost your character. You have stifled the voice of your own conscience. You have forfeited all title to self-respect. But by Christ, redeemed, in Christ, restored, this infinite blessedness shall be your portion! Have you been put out of the Church? Have your Brothers and Sisters been compelled to withdraw from fellowship with you because of your flagrant sin? Have you been convicted of a crime and suffered a term of imprisonment? There is yet a blessedness possible to you! There may have strayed in here one who from the fold has wandered very far. Though you have forfeited your good name, I simply and sincerely point out to you the means whereby you may yet transform your blighted life into a blessed life! Glory to God and peace to your own soul shall immediately follow your trust in the Sacrifice of Christ! "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." Seems it not to you that this is the very fountain of all blessings? You come here to the stream head, to the source of the great wide river of mercies! Those of you, therefore, who believe in the forgiveness of sins should not be satisfied till you have the title deeds, enjoy the possession, and revel in the blessedness of this reconciliation to God! "If am a Christian," said a Sister to me hesitantly. "But I do not like that ugly 'if,'" she added—"I must get rid of it." So she prayed the Lord, "Let there be no 'if' between me and You." I would have

you pray in like manner. Oh, those horrible, "ifs"! They are spiritual mosquitoes that sting and harass us—they are like stones in our shoes—you cannot travel with them. Hear what David says—"Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."

Still enlarging upon our last point, rather than venturing on to anything fresh, observe—

III. THAT THE STATE OF FORGIVENESS IS EVIDENTLY A STATE OF BLESSEDNESS IF WE REMEMBER THE CONTRAST IT INVOLVES.

Ask the sinner, conscious of his guilt and its penalty, who is bemoaning himself and crying out—"God, be merciful to me a sinner!"—what would you think if your condition could be changed and your conscience cleansed by one line of the pen, or by one word of the lips that can pronounce a pardon? Would not that be blessed beyond wishful thought or wakeful dream? "Oh," you say, "I would count no penance too severe, no sacrifice too costly, if I might but get my sins cancelled, forgiven and completely obliterated!" Look at poor Christian, wringing his hands, sighing and crying. Why was it? He needed to have his burden taken off. Had you spoken to him, he would have told you he was willing to go through floods and flames if he could get relief from his burden and be clean rid of it. Seeing how every anxious soul longs for forgiveness, clearly it must be a state to be greatly desired, and those who do attain it find it to be full of gladness, delight and rejoicing! It is, indeed, blessed to have sin forgiven, but, oh, how wretched to face its infamy, to feel its malignity, to fear its terrible penalty! Witness a soul in despair—that is a dreadful sight! I think I would sooner walk 50 miles than see a despairing soul! I have seen several such shut up in the iron cage. You may talk, talk, talk and try to give some cheer, but it is of no use. No promises can comfort. The Gospel, itself, seems to have no charm. Were you to put the question to a despairing soul, "Would it be a blessed thing to have sin forgiven?" sharp, quick, and decided would the answer be. Not the lips only—the heart would express itself in every muscle of the face, in every limb of the body—the nerves all tingling with joy, the eyes shining with gleams of Heaven!

Ask dying sinners, stung with remorse at the memory of their lives, and filled with dread at the prospect of the future, whether it is not a blessed thing to have sins forgiven. Through they may have trifled up to now, the hour of death forbids dissembling. Now the vanities of time pass like a shadow and the realities of eternity come up like a spectra. "Too late!" they cry. "Too late! Had we but fled to Christ before! Had we but turned our eyes to Him in years gone by, then hope would have cheered us in this extremity!" But it is not death they dread so much as the after-death—not present dissolution, but (shall I say it?) the damnation that may follow. Unforgiven sin! Who can paint the sentence it must meet? Could we peer into that world where wicked spirits are tormented always and forever, and there ask the question, "Would it be a blessed thing to be forgiven?" Ah, you can guess the answer. I pray you, Friend, tempt not the terror for yourself. Trifle not with kind entreaty—know that 'tis

treason to do so! The pardon spurned will recoil on your own head. You will bewail in everlasting misery the mercy that, through your willfulness, was unavailing. Blessed must he be whose sins are forgiven, for it enables him to escape from the horrible doom of the impenitent!

But you shall have a witness nearer at hand. You know, as a fact recorded in the Gospels, that the Son of Man had power on earth to forgive sins. You know, too, from the testimony of the Acts of the Apostles, that His Name—by faith in His Name—is invested with the same power. By the ministry of the Holy Spirit, one may hear now, as in days of yore, a voice of Divine Authority saying, "Your sins are forgiven you; go in peace." It was only last week I met with one who had been forgiven on the previous Sunday. The sweet relief, the calm belief and the true blessedness of that man was such that you could see it flashing from his eyes and animating every faculty of his being! The whole man was so full of joy that he did not know how to contain himself! The drift of all his conversation was, "I have found Christ! I have laid hold on eternal life! I have trusted in Jesus! I am saved!" His joy, though uttered in part, was unutterable! I sympathized in his ecstasy, remembering that it was so with me. I wanted to tell everybody that Christ was precious—and was able to save! Oh, yes, the young convert is a good witness, though the old Christian is quite as good! It is a blessed thing to have had 50 years' enjoyment of the forgiveness of sin! I have half a mind to call some of our venerable friends up here to bear their witness. I am sure they would not stammer—or had they lost the power of ready speech through infirmity of this flesh, their testimony would be sound and vigorous—for they would tell you unhesitatingly how blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! I wish I had time to show you that forgiveness of sin is not only blessed of itself, but—

IV. ALL THE FORGIVEN HELP TO SWELL THE TIDE OF BLESSING.

A thousand felicities follow in its train! He who is forgiven is justified, acquitted, vindicated, sent forth without a stain or blemish on his reputation. He is regenerated, quickened, invigorated and brought into newness of life! More still, he is adopted, initiated into a Divine Family, invested with a new relationship and made heir of a heritage entailed by promise. The work of sanctification begun in him, here, will one day be completely perfected. He who is forgiven was elected from before the foundations of the world. He was redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus. For him, Christ stood as his Sponsor, Surety and Substitute at the bar of Justice. To the forgiven man all things have become new. Our Lord Jesus Christ has raised him up and made him sit in heavenly places with Him. He is even now a son and heir, a child of God, a prince of the blood imperial, a priest and a king who shall reign with Christ forever and ever! He who is washed in the precious blood is favored beyond any words that I can find to express. Ten thousand blessings are his portion. "How precious!" such a pardoned one may exclaim. "How precious are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!"

But the—

V. BLESSEDNESS OF THE MAN WHOSE TRANSGRESSION IS FORGIVEN, WHOSE SIN IS COVERED,

WILL BE MAINLY SEEN IN THE NEXT STATE.

That disembodied spirit, clear of spot or blemish, washed and whitened in the blood of the Lamb, passes without fear into the invisible world. It trembles not, though it appears before the eyes of Justice. No award can come to the forgiven soul except this, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you." We commit the body of the forgiven sinner to the grave in "sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection." We give his flesh to be the food of the worms and his skin may rot to dust—but though worms destroy his body—yet in his flesh shall he see God, whom his eyes shall see for himself and not another! I was astonished some little time ago when I heard a good pastor, standing by the coffin of an honored minister, say, "There lies nothing of our Brother." Not so, I thought! The bodies of the saints were purchased by Christ—though flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, neither can corruption inherit incorruption, yet there will be such a marvelous change pass over the body of the forgiven sinner that the same body changed, but still the same body—shall be reunited with the disembodied spirit to dwell at God's right hand! Listen! Listen! The trumpet sounds! Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, we can but speak in prose. These great scenes we shall, all of us, see! We shall then think after another fashion. The trumpet sounds! The echo reaches Heaven. Hell startles at the sound to its nethermost domains. This trembling earth is all attention. The sea yields up her dead. A great white cloud comes sailing forth in awful majesty. Upon it there is a Throne, where Jesus sits in state! But his heart has no cause to quake whose sins are all forgiven! Well may the ransomed soul be calm amidst the pomp and pageantry of that tremendous day, for He who sits upon the Throne is the Son of Man, in whose blood we have been washed. Lo! This is the same Jesus who said, "I have forgiven you." He cannot condemn us! We shall find to be our Friend whom others find to be their Judge. Blessed is that man who is forgiven! See him, as with ten thousand times ten thousand others pure as himself and like to himself, who had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! He ascends to the Celestial City, a perfect man in body and in soul, to dwell forever there! Hark to the acclamations of the ten thousand times ten thousand, the sound of the harpers harping with their harps, and the song that is like great waters. Write yes, write now, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." But doubly blessed are they, then, that they rise from the dead! Once they were sinners washed in blood, but then, in body and in soul they shall have come, through the precious blood, to see Jesus face to face!

Oh, how I wish that all of us knew this blessedness! Seek it, Friends, seek it! It is to be found. "Seek you the Lord while He may be found; call you upon Him while He is near." I

am especially encouraged in preaching the Gospel this evening, because I have just been seeing some who have been recently converted. There are hearers of the Gospel among you who have been listening to me for many years. Often have I feared that, in your case, I had labored in vain. But I have great hope, now, concerning some of you. The Lord keeps bringing in the old hearers of eight, nine, and ten years' standing. Oh, I pray the Lord to save every one of you and bring you into the fold! I do long and pant that I may present you all before my Master's face with joy! Even should you go and join other churches, and serve the Lord elsewhere, that will cause me no sorrow or regret. But God forbid that any of you should despise mercy, reject the Gospel and die in your sins! May you prove the blessedness of pardon, and then shall we meet, an unbroken congregation, before the Throne of God.

The Lord grant it, for His Name's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MATTHEW 10:37-42.

37. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. Christ must be first. He herein claims the highest place in every human breast. Could He have done so had He not been Divine? No mere Prophet would talk in this fashion! Yet we are not sensible of the slightest egotism in His speech, neither does it occur to us that He goes beyond His line. We are conscious that the Son of God has a right to speak thus, and only He.

We must earnestly beware of making idols of our dearest ones by loving them more than Jesus. We must never set them near the Throne of our King. We are not worthy to dwell with Christ, above, or even to be associated with Him here, if any earthly object is judged by us to be worthy to rival the Lord Jesus.

Father and mother, son and daughter—we would do anything to please them—but, as opposed to Jesus, they stand nowhere and cannot, for an instant, be allowed to come in the way of our supreme loyalty to our Lord.

38. And he that takes not his cross, and follows after Me, is not worthy of Me. Here our Lord, for the second time in this Gospel brings in His death. At first He spoke of being taken from them—but now of the Cross. There is a cross for each one which he may regard as "his cross." It may be that the cross will not take us up, but we must take it up, by being willing to endure anything or everything for Christ's sake. We are not to drag the cross after us, but to take it up! "Dragged crosses are heavy; carried crosses grow light." Bearing the cross, we are to follow after Jesus—to bear a cross without following Christ is a poor affair. A Christian who shuns the cross is not Christian—but a cross-bearer who does not follow Jesus equally misses the mark! Is it not singular that nothing is so essential to make a man worthy of Christ as bearing his cross in His tracks? Yet it is assuredly so. Lord, You have laid a cross upon me—do not permit me to shirk it, or shrink from it!

39. He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for My sake shall find it. If to escape from death, he gives up Christ, and so finds a continuance of this poor mortal life—by that very act he loses true life. He gains the temporal at the expense of the eternal! On the other hand, he who loses life for Christ's sake does in the highest sense find life, life eternal, life infinitely blessed! He makes the wisest choice who lays down his life for Jesus and finds life in Jesus!

40. He that receives you receives Me, and he that receives Me receives Him who sent Me. What blessed union and hallowed communion exist between the King and His servants! The words before us are especially true of the Apostles to whom they were first addressed. Apostolic teaching is Christ's teaching. To receive the 12 is to receive their Lord Jesus, and to receive the Lord Jesus is to receive God, Himself. In these days certain teachers despise the Epistles which were written by Apostles, and they are, themselves, worthy to be despised for so doing! This is one of the sure tests of soundness in the faith. "He that is of God hears us," says John. This bears hard on modern critics who in a hypocritical manner pretend to receive Christ and then reject His Inspired Apostles!

Lord, teach me to receive Your people into my heart, that thus I may receive You. And as to the Doctrine which I hold, be pleased to establish me in the Apostolic faith.

41. He that receives a Prophet in the name of a Prophet shall receive a Prophet's reward; and he that receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. Men may receive a Prophet as a patriot, or a poet—that is not the point in hand. The Prophet must be received in his highest character, "in the name of a Prophet," and for the sake of his Lord! And then the Lord, Himself, is received, and He will reward the receiver in the same way in which His Prophet is rewarded. If we cannot do all the good deeds of a righteous man, we can yet partake in his happiness by having fellowship with him, and by uniting with him in vindicating the faith and comforting his heart. To receive into our homes and our hearts God's persecuted servants is to share their reward. To maintain the cause and character of good men is to be numbered with them in God's account. This is all of Grace, since the deed is so little and the recompense so large!

1917

ANNOUNCEMENT CONCERNING THE SUSPENSION OF PUBLICATION:

It is with sincere regret that the Publishers announce the suspension of publication of C. H. Spurgeon's Sermons. This step is rendered necessary by the present shortage of paper and other difficulties due to war conditions. There are still a number of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon's Sermons which have never been issued in printed form, and it is hoped that when peace returns, it will be possible to publish these in some attractive form. The last issue of these Sermons, for the present, will be that of May 10th.

It is hoped that the suspension of publication will not in any way tend to lessen the world-wide ministry of these Sermons. Practically all the back numbers may still be obtained,

so that those who know and appreciate the blessing which has been forthcoming from these weekly messages may still provide for their needs by selecting from the earlier issues.