

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

G R E A T S P O I L .

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 22ND, 1882, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.”—Psalm cxix. 162.

IN the preceding verse David had avowed his reverence for God's word in the following language: “My heart standeth in awe of thy word.” It is clear that holy awe is perfectly consistent with intense delight. Fear seems to stand far apart from joy, and yet in the experience of the child of God they are next of kin. We are familiar with combinations such as this: “They returned from the sepulchre with fear and great joy.” “Happy is the man that feareth always.” “Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.” These two emotions are like two notes which are widely different apart, but yet sound harmoniously together: the one is far down and the other is high up in the scale, but they melt into one with sweet accord in the experience of God's people. It is a blessed thing both to reverence the word and to have an intense joy in it. May we all know what the mixed emotion means.

More than this, I will go the length of saying that unless we do have deep awe of the word we shall never have high joy over it. Our rejoicing will be measured by our reverencing. If I think upon the Bible, as some seem to do, as though it were an ordinary piece of literature, I shall have no very special joy in it; or if I rise no higher than many critics of the present day, and conceive the holy book to be in a certain sense inspired, but still to be marred with imperfection and open to rectification by the growing intelligence of the age,—if I have such small reverence for the word I shall have a correspondently little joy in it. A man rejoices in gold rather than in clay because the gold is more precious, and as the treasure rises in valuation so his delight in it will rise. The more, then, we think of the Scriptures, the greater will be our delight in them if we see that they relate to us. “Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.” If they become to us the infallible voice of truth, that pure light which never misleads, that metal which is entirely free from alloy; then will our joy in Holy Writ overflow as we read in it the mind and will of our Father in heaven; and then shall we borrow the language of the Psalmist, saying first, “My heart standeth

in awe of thy word," and next, "I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil."

Observe, dear friends, concerning this joy of David in the word which he revered, that he expresses it with a martial figure. My text is quite a soldierly verse: "I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil." It is a figure taken from men of war, who after they have overcome their enemy divide the plunder among them. This expression is most natural as coming from David. David had been a soldier from his youth up, and he knew personally and literally what it was to divide the spoil; hence he did not go far to find his metaphor, but plucked it from the garden of his own life. How I like to hear men both in prayer and praise speak like themselves! I notice that if a sailor has been converted to God, he can in cool blood utter proper sentences, such as one might borrow from collects and forms of prayer; but if his soul grows warm within him, he ceases to speak according to the books, and begins to pray like an "ancient mariner." When he breaks through the bonds of restraint and gets quite free, he takes you among the rolling billows, and many of his expressions have a salt spray upon them, possibly also a suspicion of yarn and pitch. You soon find that you have fallen in with a shipmate whose soul has done business on the great waters. So must it be with the soldier: if cold, dead propriety rules him you will not know whether he is a soldier or a citizen; but let him grow enthusiastic, let his very heart speak out, and his speech betrayeth him; wars and rumours of wars are in his utterances; he sings and prays to martial music. Hence I like to hear David saying that his heart rejoices at God's word as one that findeth great spoil, for it is his own manner of speech, and sounds fitly from a warrior. Do not cut away the naturalness of your utterances in prayer: never grow so strictly proper as to pray like somebody else. You may take a bird and teach it to pipe half-a-dozen set notes, and it will be thought to be a wonder: but no piping bullfinch in the world, to my ear, sings so sweetly as the finches in my own garden, whose wild songs are all their own. The laboured notes of the trained bird's little tune may be remarkable, but are they not also somewhat grotesque and unnatural? The notes of nature more truly reveal the bird, and are a fitter utterance for it than the ditty it has learned so painfully. It is a pity that men should speak with God in a constrained and artificial style, it far more befits them to pray in their own natural manner. If you are ploughmen, or artisans, or labourers, be not ashamed that your speech should savour of your calling. If you are soldiers, pray like soldiers: let your truest selves speak out when you speak with God, for he is truth itself, and needs not that you put on artificial manners in his presence.

Having thus prefaced my discourse I come to look into this joy of David over God's word, which he compares to the joy of a warrior when he finds great spoil. To such overflowing joy we are not strangers: we feel quite at home with the text.

I. Let me first observe that THIS GREAT JOY IS SOMETIMES AROUSED BY THE FACT THAT THERE IS A WORD OF GOD.

This is true if we regard the Scriptures as *a revealing of God*. After going up and down in the world searching after deity it is a great

delight to come upon a book in which the one only living and true God has unveiled himself to those who care to behold him. It is a great "find" for a man to discover that after all he is not left in a fog to grope his way, but that God has kindled a sun that honest hearts may walk in the light of it, and in that light see all things clearly. I say that a revelation of God is a great discovery over which a man rejoices "as one that findeth great spoil." For, dear friends, there can be no revealing of God except by God himself. The apostle Paul tells us very truly that the things of a man knoweth no man, but the spirit of a man that is in him. You cannot read a man until that man brings out somewhat from within, and thus reveals himself. A man must speak, or act, or we cannot know his mind. The chief means of a man's revealing himself is by his word : language is the gate of the soul. If the man be true and honest, his word will be a window through which you may see his mind. Even so, saith the apostle, as the heart of a man is only known to the man himself, so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God. The divine thought must be hidden in the heart of God for ever until the Spirit of God is pleased to tell it out to us : there is therefore an absolute necessity for a revelation, since none can by searching find out God. This written word is the revelation of God, and when the Spirit of God shines upon it, we herein see the Lord as in a mirror. Oh, but what a blessing that the Spirit of God should still be with his people, bearing witness with the word which he has of old inspired ! What a comfort that we have this sure word of testimony in which God hath spoken to us in terms so distinct, so clear, so unquestionable. He who feels the power of this revelation in his own soul may well rejoice "as one that findeth great spoil."

Nor does our valuation of Holy Scripture depend upon this one view of it, for we also prize it as *the guide of our life*. Often we come to positions in which we know not which way to take. It is a great discomfort to have to be questioning, questioning, and for ever questioning. To hear within the soul the enquiries, "How?" "What?" "Which?" "When?" and to be confused by dubious voices is a great affliction : suspense is killing. How delightful to turn over the sacred page and find therein a guidance like that of the Urim and Thummim of old. This Book tells us the right and bids us follow it ; it teaches us the way of wisdom, and the path of understanding, and supplies motives for walking therein. Submitting ourselves to the Spirit of God we hear him speak in this volume and say, "This is the way, walk ye in it." As a bewildered wanderer in a wood hails the light in a cottage window, hoping there to find a guide to set him his homeward path, so do we hail the light of holy writ which shineth in a dark place. As the mariner prizes his chart and compass, so do we welcome the law of the Lord. Tossed on the changing sea of life our eye is gladdened by the clear ray of this pole-star of heaven, the fixed light of God.

If we had been left to purblind reason we should soon have stumbled into the ditch ; but with inspiration to conduct us we have a plain path before us, and are glad. No longer in a perpetual quandary, guessing and surmising, the way of life is definitely mapped out for us, and we pursue our route with confidence, knowing that "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." This becomes our

daily song, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." O happy man that finds such sure direction as this! He can rejoice "as one that findeth great spoil."

More than this, if you think of it, dear friends, a word from God apprehended in the soul is *a sure pledge of mercy*. Consider what words those words of God are; how full of love, and grace, and tenderness. I will not stay to quote the exceeding great and precious promises, for they are, I hope, your daily food. You know what great things the Lord has spoken concerning you. But here is a thought worth pondering,—these promises are backed by the word of God; nay, they are each one the word of God. When a man has given his word, if he be an upright, honourable man, there is an end to further question: he has pledged his word, and that is enough. Now the Lord hath given to his people his word, his right honourable word that cannot be broken, which must stand fast for ever and ever. Happy are those who are willing to take God at his word, and accept his promise as the equivalent for the thing promised; for what the Lord hath promised he will surely perform. When a man grasps a promise of forgiveness, of acceptance in prayer, of sanctifying grace, of daily providence, of divine anointing, of comfort in death, or of eternal glory, he may well rejoice "as one that findeth great spoil." Within the word of promise there lieth the blessing itself: the word is to the apprehension of faith the substance of the thing hoped for. That which is guaranteed by God—that cannot lie—is already ours. Well may he rejoice that findeth it.

Notice still further, that Holy Scripture, when it comes to us with power as the word of God, is *the beginning of communion with God*. It will strike you in a moment that when the Lord speaks to a man communion has in a measure begun. It may be that God speaketh to a deaf ear, but even then it sheweth great goodness and condescension on God's part that he should speak to men at all, and especially to those who refuse to hear him; but oh, if you actually hear the voice of God in his word, if it sinks into your soul by the accompanying power of the Holy Ghost, what remaineth then but for you to answer the Lord, and to let him speak again? This Bible talks: "When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." This is God's side of a heavenly conversation, which ought to be kept up throughout all the days of our pilgrimage. God saith this and that in the word, and we in prayer, in faith, in holy action reply to him; and then he speaks again, and we again answer him. When you are alone, and wish to have communion with God, you probably begin with prayer. Do so. But sometimes you feel that you cannot pray. Very well; do not try. Say, "I desire to converse with God, and if *I* cannot speak I will hear *him* speak." Get down the Bible; read a Psalm, or some precious portion of Holy Writ, and after God has thus spoken to you the conversation has begun. God's words will suggest heart-words with which you can speak to the Most High. If it does not, do so read again, till at last within your spirit there is communion with the Eternal One. Oh, what a bliss it is that God does speak to any one of us: to me, a poor, worthless, sinful creature! How highly favoured is man to have a word from the great King! Many would give their eyes to be spoken to by a monarch, but here are we spoken to daily by the King of kings if we are but willing to incline

our ear to his sweet voice : and this is the commencement of a communion which may continue throughout life and consummate itself in glory everlasting.

Personally I can sometimes realise my text in a peculiar sense, when the word of God becomes to me *the instrument of usefulness*. How often do I look around me anxiously for the next theme of discourse ! My mind enquires, What shall I preach to the people ? What shall be my message ? Wherewith shall I feed my church ? This is a trying question after twenty-eight years preaching to one congregation. At last a passage comes home to my soul with power. I have found it. What joy fills the preacher's heart ! No warrior was ever gladder when he heaped up the mountains of prey.

You meet with a person who is anxious : you want to say the right word to him, and therefore you look all around prayerfully, until a text suggests itself, which proves to be the exact word for the person whose good you are seeking. Have you not felt great joy in handling such a passage as the instrument of usefulness ? Have you not been ready to cry like the old Greek philosopher, " I have found it ; I have found it " ? Have you not wanted to be off to tell it not only to the one person you are anxious about, but to fifty thousand more ? Ah, yes, you have rejoiced as one that findeth great spoil.

You see then that there is distinctly a joy which cometh to the man who getteth God's word into his soul,—a joy which arises out of the fact that there is a word of God which comes to us as the revelation of God, as an infallible guide through life, as the pledge of divine mercy, the beginning of divine communion, and the instrument of usefulness. Upon all those things we might profitably enlarge, but time would not allow it, so I beg you to follow me to the next point. May the Holy Spirit lead our minds.

II. Secondly, let us remark that FREQUENTLY THE JOY OF THE BELIEVER IN THE WORD ARISES OUT OF HIS HAVING HAD TO BATTLE TO OBTAIN A GRASP OF IT. Read the text again : " I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil." Covered with sweat, begrimed with dust, bleeding from many a wound, wearied and faint, the fighting man has smitten the enemy, and now he staggers forward to seize his portion of the prey, finding new strength in the joy of victory. Did you ever have to do that with God's word, for I have had to do so many times, and I will try to describe the battling as I know it. " O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength."

We have had to fight over certain *doctrines* before we could really come at them. Learning doctrines out of books, or merely learning them as matters of catechism, is never enough. Such teaching is all very useful and helpful, but the sure way to learn a doctrine is to have it burned into your soul as with a hot iron. " Oh," they say of me, " that man speaks so dogmatically." I cannot help it. Why should I speak with bated breath when I feel absolutely certain of what I say ? If I were not certain I would hold my tongue until I was. I could not dare to come here to talk of matters which may or may not be true : I dare not thus waste your time and thought. I have not only found the doctrines of the gospel in God's word, but I have tested and tried them in my own experience, and they have been so powerfully operative upon

my own soul that I must speak as I find. To me the things I preach are as assured as my existence; in fact they are a part of my existence, since they are my life, my hope, my joy, and strength. I am positive in speech because I am assured in mind. Nor can I see the gain which would accrue from the opposite style of speech. Of what avail is this cloudy doubt? Unless a man speaks up to the best of his knowledge and belief, most positively, who is likely to believe him? Wise men will bid the speaker make up his own mind before he can hope to influence other minds. I have no doubt about the existence of a God. Have you? If you have, do not set up to be a minister for God by any manner of means. I have no doubt about the mediatorial power of his precious blood. Have you? If you have, do not pretend to be a Christian teacher, for your whole weight will be on the wrong side. Faith receives more stabs from waverers than from avowed sceptics. Sowers of doubt are no friends to the gospel, for men are saved by faith, but nobody was ever saved by unbelief. "We know and have believed the love which God hath towards us." "I believed, therefore have I spoken." But how do we get to this assurance? Why, by fighting our way to it. A doctrine of God's word comes before us: our heart exclaims, "Yes, this seems to be the teaching of Scripture, and therefore I must believe it." But carnal reason rebels, and conjures up a phalanx of difficulties, while our proud human nature revolts from a truth which is so little to its taste. These things have to be battled with. Faith has to bring all the faculties of the child of God upon their knees, and to say to them, "Be quiet; listen while God speaks: let God be true and every man a liar, and every faculty in the man a liar too, sooner than God be distrusted." This is the victory we have to strive after the triumph of a firm belief in the veracity of God. A doubt rises, and then another, and another, like a flight of bats when a dark cave is startled by the blaze of torches. Away they fly, and light seizes on their dreary realm.

Some minds have for a time to contend with doubts, army after army. Do not wonder if you have to strive even unto blood, till your very soul bleeds over the doctrine; but rejoice that when once you thus win it you will doubt no more, and the truth will become doubly precious to you ever afterwards. You have gained the truth by fighting for it, and therefore you cry, "This is my spoil, and none shall rob me of it." Take away the giant's head from David? He is not to be so defrauded. Did he not cut it off himself? Did he not throw the stone which sank into the Philistine's forehead? So when a man has slain a thousand doubts in conflict over a doctrine, and has at last come to assured belief, straightway he rejoices "as one that has found great spoil."

What a fight there is sometimes over a *promise*. Have you never entered into such a contest? O gracious promise, most suitable to my case! How it would comfort my soul! But may I appropriate it? The devil says, "Certainly not." He pushes us back from it. Our feeble hope assures us that it is too good to be true to us. A thousand doubtful suggestions assail us, till at last the soul, by a desperate effort, seizes the portion and holds it against all comers. We drive out the Canaanites, though they have chariots of iron, and take possession of their strongholds. Then does a man rejoice over a promise when he has believed it in the teeth of a thousand improbabilities, and proved it

to be true. He feels that he took the blessing out of the hand of the Amorite with his sword and with his bow, and henceforth it is a peculiar portion to his soul, and he rejoices over it "as one that findeth great spoil." It is a good thing to mark your Bibles when you have received a promise. Mark the margin with T and P, and let it stand for "tried and proved." Mark the passage which the Lord fulfils to you with some private seal, bearing witness to its truth. David set his own hand to the margin in many places; as, for instance, when he exhorted us to wait on the Lord, and then added, "Wait, *I say*, on the Lord." May that which is written with ink in the Bible be written with grace on our hearts. May the public promise become a private promise to each one of us by the living experience of our own soul.

Sometimes the hardest fight is round *a precept*. God has bidden us do this and that, but carnal ease cries, "Let the precept alone," and love of self says, "That command is too humbling; pass it by." But oh, when you can battle with yourself and win the victory till your heart cries, "I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved," then your rejoicing will be great indeed! What a joy to conquer yourself! What bliss to master your surroundings, and all the peculiarities of your disposition and temperament, so as to come to love the self-same precept which a little while ago was irksome. How the believer loves the law when he has fought down his rebellious will, vanquished his obstinacy, crushed his pride, fettered his levity, and yielded himself wholly to the word of the Lord. Holy Spirit, vouchsafe us this joy.

A sharp warfare often goes on over *the threatenings*. I have had many a wrestling match over them. A voice whispers in my ear, "that threatening of God is too severe: that sentence of Scripture is too harsh." Certain of my brethren carry a bit of pumice-stone with them, and rub down the rough texts. Whenever they find God speaking in wrathful indignation against sinners, they meet his terrors with a "larger hope." Things that are revealed belong to me, but things that are not revealed seem to belong to them. They have many learned ways of softening down disagreeable truth. Now, if I find my mind quarrelling with any line of Scripture I say to my soul, "You are wrong, or else you would be in accord with every word of the Judge of all the earth." If I cannot yield unfeigned assent, and consent to the justice of God, it does not occur to me to alter the Scripture, but to school my own heart till it bows before the thunder of divine judgment. I try to get my heart into such a state that I can say, "If my soul were in God's stead, this is exactly what I would say to the ungodly; this is precisely the measure I would deal out. For it must be right, it must be just or Jehovah would not so deal with men." When you are thus agreed with God you will rejoice as one that findeth great spoil; for you will be confident that to the sternest problems there is a gracious answer, and for the direst difficulties a sweet solution. It is hazardous to take the soul out of texts of Scripture, and to attempt to give them souls of our own invention. Let us learn God's meaning, and then become friends with it. Grow accustomed to the terrible texts till like Daniel you feel safe even in the lions' den. The doctrine of eternal punishment is no longer difficult of belief to me since I am confident that it is taught in the Scriptures: the difficulties of it are for God to

solve, and there I leave them, being well assured that in some way or other all that he does will be consistent with his justice and his love. Not without a battle does one consent unto the darker side of sacred writ, but that once fought there is rest.

Yet, once more, this is true about *the word which reveals Christ*. We know not Christ aright till we are conformed to what we know of him. If Christ be lovely we shall not understand that loveliness till we are in a measure lovely ourselves. The pure in heart see the pure and holy God because every man sees what he is. When the lady said to Mr. Turner, "Sir, I have seen that spot many times, but I never saw that which you have pictured." "No, ma'am," he replied, "I dare say you have not; but don't you wish you could." Just so, the artist's eye sees what another eye cannot, and the pure in heart see in God what nobody else can see, because they are like to God. When our minds become moulded like the mind of Christ then we understand Christ. If there be aught about the character of our divine exemplar which staggers us, let us pray our way into it. We must get to be like him; and oh, when we do, then every lineament of that dear face will be conspicuously and transcendently charming to us, because we have come to it through suffering.

The inner experience of many a child of God lies much in conflict and contention, and scarcely an inch of Scripture is truly gained without fighting for it foot to foot with those who would rob us of our inheritance. Canaan was given to Israel by the Lord himself by a covenant of salt, but we all remember the long list of enemies that already occupied it. What is the name of them? Hivites, Hittites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Jebusites—I will not trouble you with more, so many and so ugly are the names of those who would keep back the believer from his portion in the covenant. One of old said, "They compassed me about like bees: like bees they compassed me about"; and yet he added, "But in the name of the Lord will I destroy them." May it be our resolve that we will take every part of the word to be our heritage, and rejoice over it "as one that findeth great spoil."

III. We shall now tarry a moment upon a third thought, which is altogether different from that which has gone before. AT TIMES THE JOY OF THE BELIEVER LIES IN ENJOYING GOD'S WORD WITHOUT ANY FIGHTING AT ALL. In the text I am not sure that fighting is certainly mentioned or necessarily implied, though it is highly probable. David says, "I rejoice at thy word, as one that *findeth* great spoil," as if he fell upon it all on a sudden, like the lepers at the gate of Samaria, who to their surprise found all the way they traversed covered with garments, and gold and silver vessels. They had not lifted a finger in war, yet they found great spoil; like the man in the parable who, when he was ploughing, found a treasure hid in the field. He had never looked for it, but he had great joy in discovering it. In infinite mercy the Lord makes his word open up before his people when they are not seeking it, according to the promise, "I am found of them that sought me not." Have you never experienced what this means, and have you not rejoiced as one that suddenly finds a spoil?

The word of the Lord is often as spoil *found*, not fought for. The promise lies before me on the way, and I find it, and by the law of the

kingdom of grace it becomes mine for the finding. There it is, and the Spirit of God reveals it to me, and I take it, asking no leave whatever, since all covenant blessings are free to us when we are free to take them. Our warrant for feeding at the banquet of love is the fact that God has set before us an open door, and we are invited to enter in. What joy is this!

This spoil, however, must have cost somebody else most dear, though it has cost us nothing. If *we* did not fight for it somebody else fought for it once. Ah, what a fight was that! Let Gethsemane and Calvary tell. What joy there is in seizing the spoil which Jesus has left us as the result of his life's warfare! We have not trodden the wine-press, but yet we drink the wine. The blessing is free to us, but it cost him groans and tears, and bloody sweat, and death. "This is David's spoil." Look down and see the mark of the victor's feet! See you not where the nails went in? The Crucified One has been here and smitten all our adversaries, and left this spoil for us poor creatures to divide among ourselves.

Great is the spoil: all the spoils of death and hell; all that father Adam was robbed of is recovered from the robbers. Life, light, peace, joy, holiness, immortality, heaven,—all these are brought back by our great Conqueror who has taken the prey from the mighty, and brought back the lawful captives, leading captivity captive. O, brethren, we do rejoice when we get a hold of the precious treasures of the word as Jesus Christ's spoil, fought for by himself, and then distributed to us.

What a joy there is in our heart when we recollect what foes our Lord overcame to gain for us all this spoil; sin has been routed, death has been slain, and hell has been stripped of its prey: our direst enemies are broken in pieces, and the crown of their head is crushed by him who is the seed of the woman, the Messiah of God.

Whenever a passage of Scripture sings to you of itself sing with it before the Lord: whenever in reading the verse seems to leap out of the page into your bosom there let it lodge for ever. Whenever in hearing the word it darts into your heart, then will you understand what David meant when he said that his soul rejoiced over God's word "as one who," by a happy, blessed find, "findeth great spoil."

IV. My fourth head is the principal one, and I want all your attention while I dwell on it for a short time. THERE IS A JOY ARISING OUT OF THE VERY FACT THAT HOLY SCRIPTURE MAY BE CONSIDERED TO BE A SPOIL. I will show you that in five particulars.

First, a spoil is *the end of the uncertainty*. Whenever a fight begins it is questionable who will win; while it rages the result still hangs quivering in the balances; but we know who has won the battle when the victor begins to divide the spoil. No question now remains; the debate is ended. Blessed is that man who has found in Scripture a spoil in the sense that he has come to the end of uncertainty, and arrived at something like certitude. All men that think crave after certainty, and gradually settle down to one standard or another. I have heard of two brothers, equally honest and thoughtful men, who commenced life at the same point, but parted in their search after a foundation firm and strong. One of them at last gravitated to the Church of Rome, for he thought he discovered certainty in an historical church, and in one at the head

of it whose utterances are regarded as infallible. I do not envy him his ideal certainty: it seems to me to be a mass of fraud, a great historical imposture. The other brother found his resting-place in his own reason, or in the fact that he could not be sure of anything. There is a certainty in being certain that you are not certain of anything; but certainly it is not a certainty which would afford comfort to me; for my reason would be to me a sorry guide for eternal things, since even in everyday concerns it has misled me. We must find certainty somewhere, or believe that we have found it, or else we shall be of all men most miserable.

If a man has no standard of infallibility outside he tries to find it in himself, and becomes his own pope: and depend upon it a pope in England is as likely to err as a pope in Rome. I would not give twopence for the two of you, and if I threw myself in it would not add an extra farthing to the value. When a man has in experience fought up to confidence in the word of the Lord, or has had it effectually laid home by the Holy Spirit to his own soul, then he reaches the end of the controversy so far as he himself is concerned: he is dividing the spoil, for he says, "We have known and believed the love which God hath towards us." Of course, people come round and say, "You are mistaken." Our answer is, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. It may not be certainty to you, but it is to me." If a man should assert, "Oh, that medicine is all quackery," he has a right to speak his mind; but his decision is not final. "Not so," cries another, "I have been ill half-a-dozen times, and on each occasion I have speedily recovered through its use: call it quackery if you like, it is no quackery to me, at any rate, for I am certain about its good effects." So is it when a man has at last, by the application of the Spirit of God, felt the power of God's word over his soul, he says, "I am not going to fight that battle over again. I am sure of the truth of that Scripture." Such a man is restful about that matter. I would to God that all of you had this certainty as some of us have. How horrible it is to grope in the eternal fog, to flounder in primeval chaos, seeing no road or landmark; turning this way and finding it night, and the other way equally darkness; to the right disorder, to the left questioning. Oh, to get to know that God loves me, and that I love God, and Christ hath redeemed me, and my sin is put away, and to feel all this witnessed in my soul by the Holy Spirit! This is to rejoice in the end of uncertainty as one that divides the spoil.

The next idea that comes out of the figure of spoil is this. *It is the weakening of the adversary for any future attacks*; for when they divide the spoil they say to one another, "The invaders will be here again, no doubt, before long; but they will not have this great gun to turn upon us; we have spiked it. Their stock of ammunition will be somewhat diminished by the capture of their magazine, and they will not have this huge chest of gold with which to purchase more martial store; for we have taken it from them. We have weakened the adversary. Have we not entered their strongholds? Have we not captured their quadrilateral? They may again take up arms; but their force is broken." Every doubt a man conquers by resting on the infallible word has weakened the power of unbelief within him, and strengthened his faith.

Blessed is that man who has so trusted in his God that doubts now are but as the grasshopper which is only a burden to the feeble. O the joy of saying, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him"; or to cry with the once blind man, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." Tasting and handling of the good things of the kingdom, we rise into a region of fact, and leave suppositions and quibbles far below. In this lies a part of the joy of taking the spoil: we hope for less disturbance of heart, less peril of intellect, less struggle of soul from this time forth. The horns of the adversary have been broken, and they cannot harm us as aforetime.

Next, in dividing the spoil there is always *a sense of victory*, and so there is in believing God's word. In getting firm hold upon the faithful testimony of our God, we achieve a conquest over doubts, fears, inquietudes, and all our proud judgments of God. There is a sense of conquest when we overcome our passions and propensities, and do the Lord's bidding according to his precepts and statutes. When that which at one time was difficult, if not impossible, becomes easy and delightful, then we wave the palm-branch over a defeated enemy. When the mind is brought into subjection to all and every revealed truth, then have we done more than if we had taken a strong city. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." May we have more of it, and go from strength to strength, doing valiantly in the name of the Lord.

Again, in dividing the spoil there is *profit, pleasure, and honour*. I am not about to justify the deeds of war, for these I hate: as to plunder and rapine, such as have been indulged in by the general run of conquerors, they are detestable crimes. Men have made themselves worse than devils to men. No calamities have ever befallen nations that are so much to be deplored as the atrocities of war. I use the warlike metaphor, but condemn the fact. Men conceive when they divide the spoil that there is honour in it. Look at the crowds that gathered along the *Via Sacra* when the Roman conquerors came down from the Appian Way, passed under the arch, and marched towards the Capitol. Then did the populace crowd the house roofs, and the chimney tops, that they might see a Scipio or a Cæsar expose his captives and display his spoils. They shouted till they were hoarse, and wearied themselves with applause at the sight of the *spolia opima* which were borne in the procession. Thus men judge of plunder in war. See how Napoleon thought to glorify himself by placing in Paris the works of art which he had taken from the capitals of Europe. What are most trophies but stolen goods, or that which is purchased by them? But when you and I lay hold on Holy Scripture then have we grasped a prey more precious than royal treasures, a prey which we may hold with justice and honour. When we can say that the things which God has revealed are ours, then we are rich beyond a miser's dream; and when we can hold them against all comers, then that which we believe becomes our honour and gives glory to us, and glory to faith, and chief glory to him who wrought our faith in us by his almighty Spirit.

Last of all, the spoil is *a prophecy of rest*, and so is that delightful dividing up of the word of God, and the appropriation thereof by faith.

"Ah," said the Romans when they spoiled old Carthage, "we shall never see another Hannibal at our gates, nor dread the ships of Carthage in our seas." They had overcome their most potent adversary when they utterly spoiled her, and then they looked for a long period of peace. And that is the joy of receiving the word. When we can believe that Jesus took our sins, and suffered for them on the tree, we are no more troubled as to the guilt of sin. When we believe that our heavenly Father overrules all things for the good of his people, then sorrow and sighing, fear and fretting flee away. Well may he rest who sees even evil made to work his good. When we believe that Jesus died and rose again from the dead, then the fear of death which haunts so many receives its mortal wound. Knowing the meaning of the word, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live," the dread of death has no more dominion over us.

The appropriation of the divine promise, as the soldier appropriates his share of the booty, is to us the prophecy that the war is over. We may rest now, and be quiet. And oh, what joy, what blessedness is this! How I would that all those who are here present were believers, first in Jesus the great incarnate Word, and then in this book, the written word; and that you did not only believe these things to be true, but took them to yourselves as warriors take the spoil. Happy and blessed would you be, and your rejoicing this day would be as the joy of harvest, or as the shouting of them that divide the spoil. God grant it may be so, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Psalm cxix. 145—168.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—84 (Part III.), 624, 632.

Stiff covers, 1s.; cloth, gilt edges, 2s.

JOHN PLOUGHMAN'S PICTURES;

OR,

MORE OF HIS PLAIN TALK FOR PLAIN PEOPLE.

By C. H. SPURGEON.

"This is a racy and intensely earnest book. It is written with a purpose, and hits hard at not a few sins and follies. Truth is hard-hitting, and John Ploughman speaks the truth plainly and bluntly concerning several of the ways in which men are wont to play the fool. . . . The book is cram-full of the gospel of common sense."—*The Primitive Methodist*.

PASSMORE & ALABASTER, 4, Paternoster Buildings; and all Booksellers.