

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A HIGH DAY IN HEAVEN.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 10TH, 1902,

DELIVERED BY

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“Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”—Luke xv. 10.

EARTH has engrossed our thoughts too long; it is time that we should lift our eyes, and look upward to heaven. Do you say that you cannot see so far as that? Look again, and ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes, for the Lord Jesus has set the gate wide open that you may at least get a glimpse of what is going on in the glory-land. He has plainly declared to you many of the things which he has seen and heard of the Father; and if you will only give good heed to his words, you shall be enabled, by the eye of faith, to see what to mortal eyes is invisible.

Gaze thus upon the scene depicted in our text. They have an eternal Sabbath in heaven; but the Sabbath of which our text speaks is, evidently, a specially high day. They have all holy days there; but now it is a holiday as well as a holy day, for there is some special cause for unusual joy. What is it all about? Our Lord tells us that “there is joy”—very special “joy in the presence of the angels of God,” and he tells us what is the cause of it. Let us draw near, and see for ourselves this great sight, and seek to learn its lessons. The heavenly harpers are evoking from their golden harps even sweeter music than usual, they are lifting up their voices as high as even their exalted notes can possibly rise. We will listen to them, but we will also remember the reason for their jubilation. We are told, by our Lord, the special “joy in the presence of the angels of God” is “over one sinner that repenteth.”

Now, you workers for the Master, you sweepers in the dust, looking for the lost pieces of money, you candle-holders who have been shedding your feeble rays as far as you can, and who have become somewhat weary, now come and refresh yourselves by looking upon some of the results of your service. And you who, in imitation of the great, good, chief Shepherd, have gone after the lost

sheep, and are scratched by many a briar, and tired after your many desperate leaps over hill and dale, forget your weariness for a while, and begin to share in the joy of Christ's servants as you see how, before the throne of God on high, they are making merry over the souls that are being saved. I do not think that anything can be more comforting to you who are serving the Lord than to see what comes of your service. You, who have been going forth weeping, bearing precious seed, just wipe your eyes, and look above, and begin to anticipate the time when you shall come again with rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you; for, up yonder they are shouting "Harvest home" with great delight.

And while I thus invite the working saint, I would equally invite the seeking sinner to note the cause of this special joy of heaven. It is about persons like yourselves. O ye wandering sheep, the joy is over wandering sheep that have been found by the Divine Shepherd! O prodigal sons, the merriment is over sons who were dead, but who are alive again,—wanderers who were lost, but now are found! It should, surely, encourage you to hasten home while yet the joy-bells are ringing, and the dance is going on. Get home as quickly as ever you can; for, as they are rejoicing over one brother like yourself, everything will be in readiness for welcoming you, and the Father will only need to say, "Let us keep up the feast, for here is another of my sons that I had lost, but who now is found. It is a propitious season evidently,—a time in which bright hopes ought to be kindled within you, and the birds within your soul should begin to sing in sweet anticipation of the bliss awaiting you. Arise, then, and go unto your Father; he is rejoicing over those who have come back to him, and he will equally rejoice over you.

I. In considering this passage, I shall ask you, first, to NOTE THE TERMS IN WHICH OUR LORD JESUS DESCRIBES THIS HEAVENLY JOY: "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

And notice, first, in these terms, that *this joy is over one sinner*. What the joy is over hundreds, and thousands, and millions of sinners, you can scarcely imagine; but Jesus tells us that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over *one sinner*." That one may be a poor servant-girl, or a working-man whose name will never be known to fame; and there is only one, but the angels are not so sparing of the praises of God that they will wait till there is a score of penitents. They see them gathering home one by one, and they are glad of every opportunity of expressing their special delight at the increasing number of the redeemed; so, as they come to Jesus, one by one, the blessed spirits before the throne of God begin to sing with special thanksgiving for every sinner saved. Have you taught for a long time in your Sunday-school class, and have you had only one girl saved? Do not be satisfied with that one; but, at the same time, do not forget to thank the Lord for that one. If you are not grateful to God for letting you win one soul for him, you are not likely to be allowed to win another. Remember that the conversion of one sinner is, in heaven, reckoned

to be such a marvel that it makes special joy there in the presence of the angels of God. Surely, then, the salvation of even one soul ought to make your spirit exult and rejoice with exceeding joy. If you have lived to bring one sinner to Christ, you have not lived in vain. Has not God already given to you in that one, my dear brother, my dear sister, much more than such an unworthy creature as you might ever have expected to gain? I say again, cry for more blessing, be greedy to win hundreds of souls for the Saviour; but, still, do not neglect to praise God for the one whom he has already saved.

I like to dwell upon the thought that the person who caused this melody in heaven was "one sinner." I do not know what sort of a sinner that one was; but I should not wonder if the conversion of special sinners makes special joy up there. Was that "one sinner" a publican, a hard-hearted Jewish taxgatherer? Was that "one sinner" a harlot, lost even to society as well as to her God? We do not know; but we do know that, as they would rejoice in heaven over one king, or one prince, or one senator, or one philosopher, who repented, so they would over one publican or one harlot. The angels and the redeemed in glory know that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" they know that the precious blood of Christ was shed to cleanse sinners from every stain of sin; they know that the sweetest singers, throughout eternity, will be those who once were sinners, so they rejoice over any and every sinner who is saved. Out of a certain company of a hundred, there were ninety-nine people who had not gone astray—according to their notions; but the spirits in heaven did not rejoice over them. No, you mere moralists, you people who are so excellent in your own esteem, who reckon that you will gain admission to heaven by your own good deeds, you will never make the angels sing until you repent; but the poor lost sinner, however deeply he has plunged into crime, when he becomes a monument of the saving and renewing grace of God, sets all the golden harps ringing with the melodious music of praise and thanksgiving unto the Most High.

Notice, next, that the rejoicing is "*over one sinner that repenteth.*" To repent is to be sorry for sin,—to undergo a complete change of mind, and heart, and life,—to turn away from self to Christ; in a word, to be converted, that is, turned completely round. Yet many people, nowadays, think very little of repentance. Some ministers, whom I know, scarcely even mention it in their preaching, so that their hearers may well imagine that it is out of date; they seem to believe in a kind of faith that ignores repentance. Well, they differ very much in their estimate from that of the angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, for they rejoice "*over one sinner that repenteth.*" The poor sinner has not yet the faith that moves mountains, or the heroism that takes lions by their beards, and slays them. The poor sinner has not yet preached a sermon, or even sung a hymn to the praise of God. He has simply sat down in some obscure corner, and wept over his sin; he has returned to his God, and said, "Father, I have sinned;" but that was sufficient to

make the angels sing. I want you to remember this, you who are just beginning to come to Christ,—you who have only a little grace,—the very faintest evidence of the work of God's Spirit in your soul. You are believers, or else you would not be penitents, for there is no true repentance but that which is accompanied by faith; but the most prominent thing is not so much your faith as your holy mourning and moaning over sin, your sincere desire after holiness; this is the proof of that change of mind which is the essence of true repentance, and this is such a work of grace that there is joy over you in the presence of the angels of God.

I want you also to notice, with regard to the terms used by our Lord, that he says, "*There is joy in the presence of the angels of God.*" Is there not always joy there? Certainly. Is there ever any sorrow, up yonder, in the courts of the Most High? Do cherubim and seraphim ever pine, and cry, and sigh in agony? Never; then, what can this joy be which makes heaven even more joyous than it usually is? I do not know whether you or I can conceive what it must be; what I may call the ordinary, every-day joy of heaven is perfect, yet there is something over and above that in this rejoicing over penitents. It is a bliss above bliss; a joy that rises out of joy like some huge Atlantic billow that towers above all the rest of the waves. They have a special, extra, doubly-distilled joy in heaven sometimes, and that comes to them whenever one sinner repents. I think I can explain it a little by an expression of Rutherford's, in which he says, "God is my witness that my own heaven would be seven heavens if I could but see you saved. If I could but see souls brought to Christ, my own bliss would be sevenfold bliss." Yes, and so it is with the spirits before the throne. They are always happy; but, sometimes, the joy that is always full begins to overflow, and down from the celestial hills there rushes a sacred torrent that carries all before it, and this unusual delight of those who are in the presence of God is caused by one sinner repenting, and returning unto the Lord.

I have only one more remark to make under this first head, and it is this; our Lord does not say that the angels rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, but that "*there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.*" Who, then, has the joy? The angels, of course, first; they must be included, because the previous parable says that, when the Shepherd cometh home, "he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." The redeemed from among men and the holy angels are the friends and neighbours of Christ, and they all rejoice over every sinner that repenteth. But, first of all, this joy is the joy of God himself. The angels and the redeemed stand in his presence, they are his courtiers; but he himself is the centre, and glory, and Lord of all, and it is God himself who rejoices "over one sinner that repenteth." God the Father rejoices, for hath he not found his child whom he had lost, the child whom he loved, before the foundation of the world, with all the love of his infinite heart? God the Son rejoices, for has he not found the sheep which the Father gave him,—the

sheep which he was pledged to bring safely home,—the sheep for which he paid the purchase price in his own heart's blood,—the sheep which, though it had wandered far away from him, he had brought home? God the Spirit also rejoices, for did he not see, in the soul's repentance, the fruit of his working, the result of his enlightenment, the consequence of his convicting, and the commencement of the whole work of sanctification? Yes, dear brethren and sisters, Father, Son, and Spirit, the one God of the spiritual Israel—rejoices greatly “over one sinner that repenteth.” I can hardly convey to you the delight that I have in this thought. God is always full of joy, he is rightly called “the happy God,” yet even he describes himself as being, in some mysterious manner, more happy at one season than at another. I am, of course, speaking after the manner of men; but, then, we are only men, and we can only speak after our own manner; as the prophet Zephaniah does when he says, “He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.” So that repentance of one sinner gives joy to the Eternal himself; who would not, then, repent of sin, and so give joy to God, and, at the same time, find the highest joy for himself?

Thus I have noticed the terms in which our Lord Jesus describes this heavenly joy.

II. Now, secondly, I want you, very briefly, to CONSIDER THE REASONS WHY THERE IS THIS JOY IN HEAVEN.

First, God rejoices over every sinner who repents, *because he then sees one of his creatures delivered from the horrible power of sin.* God is full of benevolence toward men; he willeth not the death of the sinner, and he is delighted when the creature, whom he has made, becomes happy because he has become holy. He is glad when those, whom he has fashioned, enjoy the delights which he intended for them.

God rejoices, too, when a sinner repents, *because he then sees, not only one of his creatures, but a new creature in Christ Jesus.* He sees his own handiwork in that heart. We all like to see our own work when it is well done. Nobody wants to see bad work, but every worker rejoices in good work; and God rejoices in the good work of regeneration, the good work of the renewal of the heart, restoration from death, and rescue from hell.

Especially does God delight in every sinner who repents, *because he then sees his own child restored to him.* He who has the heart of a true father knows what joy he has when he sees his boy, who has gone astray, coming back again,—when he returns from the distant land, to which he went in an ill humour, and comes home weeping and mourning, but loving and gentle, and anxious to be better. Thus God rejoices over his returning children. There is no earthly father who can love as God loves, and if all the love of all the fathers in the world were made into one, it would not equal the love which God has for every one of his children; so he rejoices with peculiar joy when he sees any one of his children repenting, and returning to him.

Moreover, *God always rejoices in everything that is holy and good,*

and therefore he rejoices in a sinner's repentance. It is a right and holy thing that a sinner should repent of doing wrong; it is the beginning of something higher, and nobler, and better, when a soul comes to the turning-point, confesses its lost condition, and seeks to be set right; and, therefore, because the Lord is good and righteous, will he teach transgressors his way, and when he sees them walking in that way, he will rejoice and be glad concerning them.

III. I will not remind you of all the reasons for the great Father's joy over returning sinners, because you can all think them out for yourselves; but I will, instead, say a little about THE JOY OF THE ANGELS OVER REPENTING SINNERS. Why is it that they, who are the friends, and neighbours, and servants of Christ, are so glad when sinners repent? They are not themselves sinners; they are not even men; they have no part in the great redemption of Christ. "For verily he took not up angels, but he took up the seed of Abraham." Why, then, do the angels rejoice over repenting sinners?

Well it is, first, *because they are so fully in sympathy with God.* Whatever pleases God, pleases them. The growth of holiness delights the Most High, and therefore it delights his loyal courtiers. The coming back of Jehovah's wandering children gladdens him, and it therefore gladdens every servant in the family. You can see, in the parable, that the servant, who went out to speak to the elder brother, had his measure of joy over the prodigal's return, he speaks in happy and grateful tones; and the spirits before the throne cannot help being glad when God is glad. Will loyal subjects be sighing and crying when their king has a day of special rejoicing, and is peculiarly honoured? It cannot be; and the angels would not be what they are—the true and faithful servitors of God,—if they were not glad when God is glad.

But besides that, *they have also great sympathy with men.* It would be worth your while to study the subject of the friendship of angels to men,—their kindly feeling, the joy with which they have often brought God's messages to men, the delight with which they have interposed, at critical times, to accomplish the miraculous designs upon which God has sent them on behalf of men. They are, indeed, most gracious spirits. We must not worship them, we are forbidden to do that, for we must worship God alone; but we may feel an intense amity, and friendship, and respect towards those bright and blessed spirits. What we owe to them, we shall never know, I suppose, till eternity; and then we shall set it all down to the glory of their Master and ours. Still, he who thinks well of God may think well of God's holy angels on the principle of "Love me, love my servants." Does he not give them charge over us, to keep us in all our ways? Do they not bear us up in their hands, lest we should dash our foot against a stone? "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" They are not actually akin to us; but, still, they are very near neighbours to us, and they are very kind and helpful neighbours; so, when they see a soul saved, they are right glad of it.

Further, they know, better than you and I do, *what a soul is saved from when a sinner repents*. They have looked over the battlements of heaven into the dread abyss; they recollect the day when there was war in heaven, and the mighty Son of God overthrew Satan and his rebel followers, and cast them down to hell. The holy angels know that it was God's electing love that enabled them to stand fast in that evil day. They know, too, that God passed by the fallen angels, and never gave them a hope of recovery, or promised them a Mediator; yet they do not envy men because God, in the sovereignty of his grace, has provided for them a Saviour. They rejoice to know that repenting men shall never be cast into the lake of fire, the awful place prepared for the devil and his angels. They have none of the modern infidel notions, for they have seen that there is a worm that dieth not, and a fire that cannot be quenched, so they lift up their songs right gladly whenever a sinner is saved from going down into the pit.

Besides this, *the angels know what repenting sinners gain*, for they have long frequented the golden streets, and walked by the river of the water of life. They know the bliss of beholding Christ face to face; have they not done so ever since he returned to heaven to sit upon his Father's throne? When a man is very happy because he is very holy, he wants other people to be happy too, and he feels all the happier the more there are to share in his joy. Our proverb "The more, the merrier," just expresses what the angels think, so they rejoice, with the utmost gladness, over those who repent, because they know that, for them, there is laid up in heaven the triple crown of life, and glory, and righteousness, that fadeth not away.

One thought I cannot help interjecting just here. *I am sure that these holy angels all believe in the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints*. If they did not, they would be very foolish in rejoicing over repenting sinners. The old proverb bids us not to count our chickens before they are hatched; and if I were an Arminian, I should recommend the angels not to rejoice over a sinner that repenteth, for he might fall from grace, and perish, and then they would have to ring the bells of heaven backwards, or to toll them, and to recall their songs, and say, "We rejoiced too soon." But it is not so, for they know that repentance has in it the germ of perfection. Sincere repentance is the commencement of perfect sanctification, and God will make it grow to full fruition. This grain of mustard seed will become a great tree, and yonder birds of paradise shall sit in the branches thereof, and sing to God's praise for ever; so they begin to sing even now because they know what true repentance guarantees concerning the future of everyone who truly repents and believes in Christ Jesus.

Thus have I tried to give, in as brief a space as I could, the reasons for the joy of God, and the joy of God's servants, the angels, over repenting sinners. There are just two lessons I want each one of us to learn, and then I have done.

The first is a lesson of self-examination. Are you and I fit for heaven? Have we the nature which would fit us to dwell in the

presence of the angels of God? You say, "Well, you have set us a hard task now." No, I have not; or if so, I will help you through it. The angels rejoice "over one sinner that repenteth." Do you rejoice over repenting sinners? Having yourself repented, do you feel intense sympathy for other sinners? Do you dread lest they should be lost? Do you pray that they may be saved? Do you seek, by your personal testimony and entreaty, to bring them to Christ? Can you truthfully say that it would be heaven on earth to you to see your children converted,—your servants converted,—your neighbours converted? Alas! there are many professors who do not care the turn of a halfpenny whether souls are lost or saved. Their one desire is to be themselves saved; but, as to doing anything to spread the gospel of Jesus,—denying themselves that the poor and ignorant may know of Christ,—that is not in their line at all. But, sir, if thou hast no concern about another man's soul, it is time that thou shouldst have grave concern about thine own. If no joy comes to thee when another is saved, thou hast need to be saved thyself; and if the thought of the future world, and the ruin of immortal souls, never makes thee bow thy head even to the dust, thou needest to be born again, for they who are born in the likeness of Christ weep over sinners, pray for sinners, and seek the salvation of sinners. By this test, I beseech you to try yourselves. There is not one among us who may not well chide himself for some measure of hardness of heart and indifference about this matter. I often feel as if I could flog myself, and bite my tongue, to think that I preach so often with a dry eye, and with a heart that is not half as earnest as it ought to be. Yet have I heard colder sermons than I generally preach, so I suppose that my brethren must be partakers in my fault, or else their manner much belies them. And I think I know some members of the church who must make a similar confession to mine. Oh, that we were all alive to the real value of an immortal soul! Did we but believe that it is born for eternal bliss, or doomed to eternal despair, methinks that we should go about as with a sword in our bones, mourning because of the multitude of mankind rushing madly upon Jehovah's buckler, dashing themselves against the bosses of his shield, and seeming determined to commit spiritual suicide. God save them! Let us pray that prayer from our inmost souls. If we do not, how can we hope ever to enter that heaven where they rejoice over repenting sinners?

The other lesson is for any of you who are seeking Christ Jesus the Lord. I gave it to you at the commencement of the sermon; I want to give it to you again that you may be sure to remember it. How gladly, how heartily, how immediately ought you to hasten to seek peace with God when you know how joyously you will be welcomed! If it will make heaven all the gladder to see you come, why do you not come? I have read, sometimes, in the newspaper, an advertisement to this effect:—"A. B.," or somebody else whose initials are given, "is earnestly entreated to come back to his loving father and mother. All is forgiven. Everything is made right. Do not delay; come back to us at once." If I were to read such an advertisement as that, and it referred to me, I do not

think I could have the heart to stand out against it. I should be thinking of my father, "What! does the old man want me as much as that?" I should be thinking of my brother, "Does he want to see me?" I should think even of the old servant of the family, "Does old Mary want to see me? She who nursed me when I was a child, does she want me back? Well, with such an invitation, I will go at once." Dear heart, dost thou want to come back to God? That is a sign that the Lord wants thee back. You will be glad to get back to him, but he will be gladder to receive you than you will be to be received. And all the angels want you; they are watching and waiting for you. And those on earth, who love our Lord, are, many of them, very anxious about you. The whole Church of God, in heaven, and on earth, and the goodly fellowship of the angels, and God himself, will all be glad to receive you. Come and welcome; come and welcome; I wish I had a trumpet-tongue, that I might sound the invitation out still more loudly. Remember that verse with which we began the service,—

"From the cross uplifted high
Where the Saviour deigns to die,
What melodious sounds I hear,
Bursting on my ravish'd ear!
Love's redeeming work is done;
Come and welcome, sinner, come."

You have but to trust him, and you have come to him;—to rely upon him,—to depend upon him,—to lean upon him,—to cast yourself upon him, to believe in Christ Jesus, who died, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God; for, as soon as you do so, you are brought back to the great Father's house. May the Divine Spirit bring you there now, for his love's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE XV.

Verse 1. *Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.*

However sunken they might be, they knew their best Friend; they recognized their Benefactor, so they gathered around him. They knew who it was that smiled upon them, and who would fain uplift them; so they came clustering around him, like bees fly to the flowers: "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him."

2. *And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.*

Where bees come, wasps often come, too. This murmuring of the Pharisees and scribes was after their nature; they were so proud, so wrapped up in themselves, they thought so contemptuously of everybody else, that they dared even to despise him whose shoe's latchet they were not worthy to unloose. "This man," said they, "receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."

3. *And he spake this parable unto them, saying,*

This is really a picture in three panels,—a parable with three variations.

4—7. *What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.*

There, no doubt, the Saviour looked at the Pharisees, who, though they did need repentance, yet thought they did not. Little or no joy did they ever bring to him; his heart never leaped with delight over them. Good as they thought themselves to be, they did not yield him so much joy as these poor publicans and sinners would when he had found them; and he was bent on doing that. Now, beloved, how much is a man better than a sheep? And if a shepherd will leave all his ease and comfort, to hunt after one stray sheep, how ought you and I, after the example of the Son of man, to be ready for any service, or any self-denial, by which we, too, in our poor measure may seek and save the lost!

Now we have the second panel of the picture:—

8—10. *Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and search diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.*

Did the woman rejoice at finding her piece of silver, that she had lost, and shall not God much more rejoice over an inestimably precious human soul, which had been lost, but which, through grace, is found again? Ah, yes! there is joy in heaven, there is joy in all heavenly hearts, there is joy in all who are the friends of Christ, when lost ones are found! There was another quiet stroke at the Pharisees and scribes, who were proved not to be the friends of the soul-seeking Saviour, because they did not rejoice with him over those whom he had found. If they had been at all like the angels in heaven, as they thought they were, they would have been glad that the Lord Jesus Christ had come to seek and to find the lost.

Then came the third most touching panel of the picture,—perhaps the best beloved of all the parables,—one which, like a key, fits the wards of the human heart, and many a time has opened the heart:—

11—13. *And he said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.*

It is clear that his heart had gone away from his father before he went away himself. He would not have wished to take from his father his portion of goods, or to be independent of his father, if he had not felt a spirit of alienation; and, therefore, what his father did developed the latent evil; just as, oftentimes, the loving mercy of God brings to the surface the concealed sin which is in man all the while; and then he sins the more openly. It is a grievous thing that even divine love should lead us to sin;—not of itself, but because of our evil nature, just as the sun shines, not that he may make the weeds to grow, or that he may help to lift into the air noxious effluvia. With goodwill itself as its only motive, ill may come even of the pure sunlight.

14, 15. *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.*

A very degrading employment for him as a Jew;—perhaps, however, the best that the citizen of that country could do for him, for there was a famine in the land; and when men are all pinched with hunger, it is not much that one can do for another. And what can one poor sinner do for another? Even though he be called a priest, and puts on fine apparel, yet what can he do for his fellow-sinner?

16, 17. *And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!*

“I, his son, perish with hunger, when there is not only enough in my father's house for his children, but for his hirelings, too; ay, and some to spare after that.” “Bread enough and to spare.” This was the thought which drew the prodigal home, and it ought to draw sinners to Christ. There is, in the gospel, “bread enough and to spare.” You know how some would, if they could, contract the provisions of grace; and make it out that there is bread enough, but they say that if there is anything to spare, it will be a waste. Why, it is that “spare” bread that is God's bait to catch poor souls with when they are cast down; “for,” say they, “if it is to spare, then, even if my father be angry with me, he will not deny me the spare bread for which there is no use, so I may well go, and ask for a portion of it.”

18—20. *I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.*

Oh, the speed of divine love! There were delays with the son, but there were no delays with the father. At the first glance, the father's heart is made up, and he runs to meet his returning child. And what a welcome he gives him! He “kissed him much,” is the right rendering. Truly, this was prodigal love for the prodigal son.

21, 22. *And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father—*

Stopping him short, and for ever obliterating the rest of the prayer, so that he never had time to utter it, seeing that it was too legal to be permitted by his father's love: “But the father”—

22—25. *Said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field:*

At work, like the good son that he was.

25. *And as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.*

Which he did not often hear, for he was of a gloomy spirit, and there had not been cause for much rejoicing lately.

26. *And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.*

“What are you all up to in making such a noise? What new thing has happened to our orderly household to make it thus full of roistering and noisy gladness?”

27, 28. *And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry,—*

It did not seem to him right that one, who had acted so badly, should be thus honoured: "He was angry,"—

28. *And would not go in :*

He did not believe in revivals, so he would not attend them; he did not believe in many being converted, especially if they had been great sinners; he would have nothing to do with them.

28. *Therefore came his father out, and intreated him.*

Oh, the goodness of the father, not only in receiving the returning prodigal, but in entreating this indignant and erring son, for he was greatly erring in this matter, and was not showing the true spirit of a son.

29, 30. *And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.*

"I am a consistent Christian; I have maintained the excellence of my moral character. I have tried to be orthodox, and attentive to all religious duties. Thou knowest that it is so; yet I seldom have any joy in my religion. 'Thou never gavest me a kid.' I go trembling and mourning all my days. I get very little delight out of my religion; yet here is one just converted, and all this fuss is made over him; and he is rejoicing, too. Thou featest him with the best fatted calf. He is as glad as glad can be, and everybody is glad about him; and nobody seems to take much notice of me. I go on my steady quiet course, and I have never caused thee such grief as this thy son has done."

31. *And he said unto him,—*

So beautifully,—

31. *Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.*

And that is what the Lord seems to say to the believer, when he gets into that naughty spirit of the elder brother, and does not like to hear of sinners of the deepest dye being brought to Christ, and who disapproves of the jubilation and excitement at revival times. The Lord says to him, "Suppose you have not had such enjoyments; you may have them if you like, for you are ever with me. There is joy enough in that fact; and all that I have is yours. You are joint-heir with me. I have given you everything; what more do you want?"

32. *And it was meet—*

"It was fitting, it was proper,"—

32. *That we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother—*

"For he is thy brother. Notwithstanding thy richer experience, and thy deeper Christian knowledge, and thy high standing in the church, this poor prodigal, who is just saved, is thy brother; so it is meet that we should make merry, and be glad, for this thy brother"—

32. *Was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.*