

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SILKEN CORDS.

A Sermon

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“I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.”—Hosea xi. 4.

No man ever does come to God unless he is drawn. There is no better proof that man is totally depraved than that he needs to be effectually called. Man is so utterly “dead in trespasses and sins” that the same divine power which provided a Saviour must make him willing to accept a Saviour, or else saved he never will be. You see a ship upon the stocks. She is finished and complete. She cannot, however, move herself into the water. You see a tree; it is growing; it brings forth branch, leaf, and fruit, but it cannot fashion itself into a ship. Now, if the finished ship can do nothing, much less the untouched log; and if the tree, which hath life, can do nothing, much less that piece of timber out of which the sap has long since gone. Christ’s declaration, “Without me ye can do nothing,” is true of believers; but it is just as true, and with a profounder emphasis, of those who have not believed in Jesus. They must be drawn, or else to God they never will come.

But many make a mistake about divine drawings. They seem to fancy that God takes men by the hair of their heads, and drags them to heaven, whether they will or not; and that, when the time comes, they will, by some irresistible power, without any exercise of thought or reasoning, be compelled to be saved. Such people understand neither man nor God; for man is not to be compelled in this way. He is not a being so controlled.

“Convince a man against his will.
He’s of the same opinion still.”

As the old proverb says, “One man may bring a horse to the water, but twenty men cannot make him drink;” so, a man may be brought to know what repentance is, and to understand what Christ is, but no man can make another man lay hold upon Christ. Nay, God himself doth not do it by compulsion. He hath respect

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unto man as a reasoning creature. God never acteth with men as though they were blocks of wood, or senseless stones. Having made them men, he doth not violate their manhood. Having determined by man to glorify himself, he uses means to show forth his glory,—not such as are fit for beasts, or for inanimate nature, but such as are adapted to the constitution of man. My text says as much as this, “I drew them with cords;”—not the cords that are fit for bullocks, but “with cords of a man;”—not the cart-ropes with which men would draw a cart, but the cords with which a man would draw a man; and, as if to explain himself, the Lord puts it, “I drew them with bands of love.” Love is that mighty power which acts upon man. There must be loving appeals to the different parts of his nature, and so he shall be constrained by sovereign grace.

Understand, then, it is true that no man comes to God except he is drawn; but it is equally true that God draweth no man contrary to the constitution of man, but his methods of drawing are in strict accordance with ordinary mental operations. He finds the human mind what it is, and he acts upon it, not as upon matter, but as upon mind. The compulsions, the constraints, the cords that he uses, are “cords of a man.” The bands he employs are “bands of love.”

This is clear enough. Now I am about to try—and may the Lord enable me!—to show you some of these cords, these bands, which the Lord fastens round the hearts of sinners. I may be the means in his hands of putting these cords round you, but I cannot pull them after they are on. It is one thing to put the rope on, but another thing to draw with all one's might at that rope. So it may be that I shall introduce the arguments, and, by the prayers of the faithful now present, God will be pleased, in his infinite mercy, to pull these cords, and then your soul will be sweetly drawn, with full consent, with the blessed yielding of your will, to come and lay hold upon eternal life.

First, *some are drawn to Christ by seeing the happiness of true believers.*

A true believer is the happiest being out of heaven. In some respects, he is superior to an angel, for he hath a brighter hope and a grander destiny than even cherubim and seraphim can know. He is one with Christ, which an angel never was. He is a son of God, and has the Spirit of adoption within him, which a cherub never had. There are some Christians who show this happiness in their lives. Watch them, and you will always find them cheerful. If, for a moment, a cloud should pass over their brow, it is but for a moment, and soon they rejoice again. I know such people, and glad am I to think that I ever came across their pathway. Wherever they go, they make sunshine. Into whatever company they come, it is as if an angel shook his wings. Let them talk when they may, it is always for the comfort of others, with kindness upon their lips, and the law of love within their hearts. Many a young person, watching such Christians as these, is led to say, “I wish I were as happy, I wish I were as joyful, as they are;”

they always have a smile upon their face." And I do not doubt that many have been brought to lay hold on Jesus through being drawn by that band of love.

And let me say to you, dear friend, that this is a most fitting cord with which to draw you; for if you would know the sweets of life, if you would have peace like a river, if you would have a peace that shall be with you in the morning, and go with you into your business;—that shall be with you at night, and close your eyes in tranquil slumber;—a peace that shall enable you to live, and shall strengthen you in the prospect of death,—nay, that shall make you sing in the midst of the black and chill stream;—be a Christian. My testimony is that, if I had to die like a dog; if this life were all, and there were no hereafter; I would prefer to be a Christian for the joy and peace which, in this present life, godliness will afford. "Godliness with contentment is great gain." It hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Thou wouldst be happy, young man; then do not kill thy happiness. Thou wouldst have a bright eye; then do not put it out. Thou wouldst rejoice with joy unspeakable; then do not go into those places where sorrow is sure to follow thine every act. Wouldst thou be happy? Come to Jesus. Let this band of love sweetly draw thee.

Another band of love—it was the one which brought me to the Saviour,—is *the sense of the security of God's people, and a desire to be as secure as they are*. I do not know what may be the peculiarity of my constitution, but safe things have I always loved. I have not, that I know of, one grain of speculation in my nature. Safe things—things that I can see to be made of rock, and that will bear the test of time,—I lay hold on with avidity. I was reasoning thus in my boyish spirit:—Scripture tells me that he that believeth in Christ shall never perish. Then, if I believe in Jesus, I shall be safe for time and for eternity too. There will be no fear of my ever being in hell; I shall run no risk as to my eternal state; that will be secure for ever. I shall have the certainty that, when my eyes are closed in death, I shall see the face of Christ, and behold him in glory. Whenever I heard the doctrine of the final preservation of the saints preached, my mouth used to water, and I used to long to be a child of God. When I heard the old saints sing that hymn,—

" My name from the palms of his hands
Eternity will not erase;
Impress'd on his heart it remains
In marks of indelible grace:
Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven ;"—

my heart was as if it would leap out of this body, and I would cry to God, "Oh, that I had a part and lot in such a salvation as that!" Now, young man, what do you think of this band of love? Do you not think there is something reasonable and something powerful in it,—to secure yourself against all risk of eternal ruin,

and that, by the grace of God, in a moment? "He that believeth on him is not condemned." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." What say you to this? Doth not this truth attract you? Doth not this band draw you? Lord, draw the sinner, by the sweet allurements of security, and let him say, "I will lay hold on Christ to-night."

Certain Christians will tell you that *they were first drawn to Christ by the holiness of godly relatives*,—not so much by their happiness as by their holiness. There is an Eastern fable that a man, wishing to attract all the doves from the neighbouring dovecotes into his own, took a dove, and smeared her wings with sweet perfume. Away she flew, and all her fellow-doves observed her, and, attracted by the sweet incense, flew after her, and the dovecote was soon full. There are some Christians of that sort. They have had their wings smeared with the precious ointment of likeness to Jesus, and wherever they go, such is their kindness and their consistency, their gentleness and yet their honesty, their lovely spirit and yet their boldness for Jesus, that others take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus, and they say, "Where does he dwell, for I would fain see him, and love him too?" I am afraid I cannot attract you, sinner, in such a charming way as that, but I would have you read the lives of godly men. Study the actions, perhaps, of your own mother. Is she dead? Then remember what she used to be,—what her life of devotedness to God was; and I charge you, by the love of God, by her many prayers and tears, by the pity of her soul, and the yearning of her bowels towards you, let your mother's example be one of the bands of love to draw you towards God. Lord, pull at that cord! Lord, pull at that cord! If the cord be round about you, and the Lord will pull at it, I shall have good hope that you will close with Christ to-night.

You see, I only show you the cord, and then leave it, hoping that perhaps one or another may be taken by its power. Now for another. I believe that *not a few are brought to Christ by gratitude for mercies received*. The sailor has escaped from shipwreck, or, perhaps, even in the River Thames, he has had many a narrow escape for his life. The sportsman has had his gun burst in his hand, and yet he has been himself unharmed. The traveller has escaped from a terrific railway accident, himself picked out of the *débris* of the broken carriages unhurt. The parent has seen his children, one after another, laid upon a bed of sickness with fever, but yet they have all been spared; or he himself has had loss upon loss in business, till at last it seemed as if a crash must come; but, just then, God interposed in a gracious providence, and forthwith a strong tide of prosperity set in. Some have thought over these things, and said, "Is God so good to us, and shall we not love him? Shall we live every day despising him who thus tenderly watches over us, and graciously provides for our wants?" O sirs, methinks this band of love ought to fall about some of you! How good God

has been to you, dear hearer! I will not tell your case out in public; but when you have sometimes talked with a friend, you have said, "How graciously has providence dealt with me!" Give the Lord thy heart, young man; surely thou canst do no less for such favour as he has shown thee. Mother, give Jesus thy heart; he well deserves it, for he has spared it from being broken. Woman, consecrate—may the Lord help thee to do it!—consecrate thy heart's warmest affections to him who hath thus generously dealt with thee in providence. He deserves it, doth he not? Wilt thou be guilty of ingratitude? Is there not something within thee that says, "Stay no longer an enemy to so kind a Friend, but be reconciled to him; be reconciled to God by the death of his Son"? May that cord lay hold of some of you, and may God draw it, and so attract you to himself!

Persons whose characteristic is thinking rather than loving are often caught by another cord. I do not know what may be your mode of thinking of things; but it strikes me that, if I had not laid hold of Christ now, if anybody should meet me, and say, "*The religion of Christ is the most reasonable religion in the world,*" I should lend him my ear for a little time, and ask him to prove it to me. I have frequently caught the ears of travellers, and held them fast bound, when I have tried to show the entire reasonableness of the plan of salvation. God is just; that is taken for granted. If God be just, sin must be punished; that is clear. Then, how can God be just, and yet not punish the sinner? That is the question, and the gospel answers that question. It declares that Christ, the Son of God, became a man; that he stood in the room, place, and stead of such men as were chosen of God to be saved. These men may be known by their believing in Christ. Christ stood, then, in the place and stead of those whom I will now call believers. He suffered at God's hand everything that was due to God from them. Nay, he did more. Inasmuch as they were bound to keep God's law, but could not do it, Christ kept it for them; and now, what Christ did becomes theirs by an act of faith. They trust Christ to save them. Christ's sufferings are put in the stead of their being sent to hell, and they are justly delivered from their sins. Christ's righteousness is put in the stead of their keeping the law of God, and they are justly rewarded with a place in paradise, as if they had themselves been perfectly holy.

Now, it strikes me that this looks reasonable enough. In everyday life, we see the same thing done. A man is drawn for the militia; he pays for a substitute, and he himself goes free. A man owes a debt; some friend comes in, and discharges the bill for him, and he himself is clear. The ends of justice are answered through substitution. There seems to me to be something so unique about the whole affair of God taking the place of man, and God's suffering in man's form for man that justice may by no means be marred, that my reason falls down at the feet of this great mystery, and cries, "I would have an interest in it; Lord, let me be one of those for whom Jesus died; let me have the peace which springs from a complete atonement wrought out by Jesus Christ."

My brother, I wish I could draw thee with this cord; but I cannot. I can only show thee this cord, and tell thee how well it would draw thee. If thou rejectest it, thy blood shall be upon thine own head. I know too well thou wilt reject it, unless the mighty hand of God shall begin to tug at that band of love, and draw thee to Jesus.

Far larger numbers, however, are doubtless *attracted to Jesus by a sense of his exceeding great love*. It is not so much the reasonableness of the atonement as the love of God which shines in it which seems to attract many souls. There once lived, in the city of London, a rich merchant, a man of generous spirit, a Lollard, one of those who were subjected to fine, and imprisonment, and even death for the truth's sake. Near him there lived a miserable cobbler,—a poor, mean, despicable creature. The merchant, for some reason unknown, had taken a very great liking to the poor cobbler, and was in the habit of giving him all his work to do, and recommending him to many friends, and as this man would not always work as he should, when the merchant saw his family in any need, he would send them meat from his own table, and frequently he clothed his children. Well, notwithstanding that he had acted thus, had often advanced him sums of money, and had acted with great kindness, a reward was offered to anyone who would betray a Lollard, or would discover such person or persons as read the Bible, to the magistrates. The cobbler, to obtain this reward, went to the magistrates, and betrayed the merchant. As God would have it, however, through some skilful advocate, the merchant escaped. He forgave—freely forgave—the cobbler, and never said a word to him about it; but, in the streets, the cobbler would always turn his head the other way, and try to get out of the way of the man whom he felt he had so grievously ill-treated. Still, the merchant never altered his treatment of him, but sent him meat as usual, and attended to his wife and children if they were sick, the same as before; but he never could get the cobbler to give him a good word. If he did speak, it was to abuse him. One day, in a very narrow lane in the city,—for the streets were narrow, and narrower still were the lanes,—the merchant saw the cobbler coming, and he thought, “Now is my time; he cannot pass me now without facing me.” Of course, the cobbler grew very red in the face, and made up his mind that, if the merchant should begin to upbraid him, he would answer him in as saucy a manner as possible. But when the merchant came close to him, he said, “I am very sorry that you shun me; I have no ill-will towards you; I would do anything for you or for your family, and nothing would give me greater pleasure than to be friends with you.” The cobbler stopped, and presently a moisture suffused his eyes; and, anon, a flood of tears poured down his cheeks, and he said, “I have been such a base wretch to you that I hated you, for I thought that you would never forgive me. I have always shunned you; but when you talk to me like this, I cannot be your enemy any longer. Pray, sir, assure me of your forgiveness.” Forthwith, he began to fall upon his knees. That was the way to draw him with the cords

of a man, and with the bands of love; and, in a nobler sense, this is just what Jesus Christ has done for sinners. He has offered you mercy; he has proclaimed to you eternal life; and you reject it. Every day he gives you of his bounties, makes you to feed at the table of his providence, and clothes you with the livery of his generosity. And yet, after all this, some of you curse him; you break his Sabbaths; you despise his name; you are his enemies. Yet, what does he say to you? He loves you still; he follows you, not to rebuke you, but to woo you, and to entreat you to come to him, and have him for your Friend. Can you hold out against my Master's wounds? Can you stand out against his bloody sweat? Can you resist his passion? Oh! by the name of him who bowed his head upon the tree, who cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" can you hold out against him? If he had not died for me, I think I must love him for dying for other people. But he has died for you; you may know this if you trust him now with your soul, just as you are. This is the evidence that he died for you. Oh, may God enable you to trust Jesus now, drawing you with this band of love, this cord of a man!

There are many more cords, but my strength fails me, and therefore I will mention but one more. *The privileges which a Christian enjoys ought to draw some of you to Christ.* Do you know what will take place in these aisles to-night if the Holy Spirit should lead a sinner to Christ? I will tell you. There he stands, he is as vile a sinner as walks this earth. He knows it; he is wretched; he has a burden on his back. If that man is led to look to Christ to-night, his sins will roll off from him at once; they will roll into the sepulchre of Jesus, and be buried, and never have a resurrection. In a moment, he will be clothed from head to foot with white raiment. The kiss of a Father's love shall be upon his cheek, and the seal of the Spirit's witness shall be fixed upon his brow. He shall be made, to-night, a child of God, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. His feet shall be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. He shall be clothed with the righteousness of Jesus. He shall go to his house, not wretched, but as though he could dance for joy the whole way home. And when he gets home, it may be never so poor a cottage, but it will look brighter than it ever did before. His children he will look upon as jewels entrusted to his care, instead of being burdens, as he once said they were. His very trials he will come to thank God for; while his ordinary mercies will be sweetened, and made very dear to him. The man, instead of leading a life like a hell upon earth, will live a life like heaven begun below; and all this shall take place in an instant.

Nay, that is not all; the effect of this night's work shall tell throughout his entire life. He shall be a new creature in Christ Jesus; so that, when the time shall come that his hair is grey, and he lies stretched upon his bed, and breathes out his life, he shall, in his last moments, look back upon a path that has been lit with the grace of God, and look forward across the black river to an eternity in which the glory of God shall shine forth with as great a fulness as a creature can endure. This is enough, surely, to

tempt a sinner to come to Jesus. This must be a strong cord to draw him. O man, Jesus will accept you; he will accept you now, just as you are! He has received millions like you already; let heaven's music witness to the fact. Millions more like you he is still willing to receive; some of us can bear our testimony to that. Come and welcome, then; come and welcome. Never mind thy rags, prodigal; a Father's hand will take them off; never mind thy filth; never mind having fed the swine. Come as thou art; come just now.

I hear somebody saying, "Well, I am inclined to come; but I do not know what it means to come to Christ." To come to Christ is to trust him. You have been trying to save yourself; do not try any more. You have been going to church, or going to chapel, and you have been trying to keep the commandments; but you cannot keep them. No man ever did keep them, and no man ever will keep them. You have been, in fact, like a prisoner who has been sentenced to hard labour; you have been walking upon the treadmill in order to get to the stars, and you are not an inch higher. After all you have done, you are just where you were. Now, leave this off; have done with it. Christ did keep the law; let his keeping it stand in the stead of your keeping it. Christ did suffer the anger of God; let his sufferings stand to you in the stead of your sufferings. Take him now, just as you are, and believe that he can save you,—nay, that he will save you, and trust him to do it. This is all the gospel I have to preach. Very seldom do I finish a sermon without going over this simple matter of trusting Christ. There are some, perhaps, who enquire for something new. I cannot give it to you; I have not got anything new, but only the same old story over and over again. Trust Christ, and you are saved.

We have heard, in our church-meetings, that, on several occasions, when, at the close of the sermon, I have merely said as much as that, it has been enough to lead sinners into life and peace; and, therefore, I will keep on at it. My heart yearns to bring some of you to Christ to-night, but I know not what arguments to use with you. You surely do not wish to be damned. Surely you cannot make the calculation that the short pleasures of this world are worth an eternity of torment; but damned you must be except you lay hold on Christ. Doth not this cord draw you? Surely you want to be in heaven. You have some desire toward that better land in the realms of the hereafter; but you cannot be there except you lay hold on Christ. Will not this cord of love draw you? Surely it would be a good thing to get rid of fear, and suspense, and doubt, and anxiety. It would be a good thing to be able to lay your head on your pillow, and say, "I do not care whether I wake or not;" to go to sea, and reckon it a matter of perfect indifference whether you reach land or no. Nay, sometimes the wish with us to depart preponderates over that of remaining here. Do you not wish for that? But you can never have it except by laying hold on Christ. Will not this draw you?

My dear hearers, you, whose faces I look upon every Sabbath, and into whose ears this poor, dry voice has spoken so many

hundreds of times, we do not wish to be parted. I know that, to some of you, this is the very happiest, as well as the holiest spot you ever occupied. You love to be here. I am glad you do, and I am glad to see you. I do not like to be separated from you. When any of you remove to other towns, it gives me pain to miss your faces. I hope we shall not be separated in the world to come. My beloved friends around me, who have been in Christ these many years, you also love them. We do not wish to be divided. I would like that all this ship's company should meet on the other side of the sea. I do not know one among you that I could spare. I would not like to miss any of you who sit yonder, nor any of you who sit near; neither the youngest nor the oldest of you. Well, but we cannot meet in heaven unless we meet in Jesus Christ. We cannot meet father, and mother, and pastor, and friends, unless we have a good hope through Jesus Christ our Lord. Will not that band of love draw you? Mother, from the battlements of heaven, a little angel-child is looking down to-night, beckoning with his finger. He is looking out for you, and he is saying, "Mother, follow your babe to heaven." Father, your daughter charged you, as she died, to give your heart to Christ, and from her seat in heaven her charge comes down to you with as great force as it came from her sick-bed, I trust, "Follow me, follow me to heaven." Friends who have gone before,—godly ones who have fallen asleep in Jesus,—in one chorus, say to you, "Come up hither; come up hither, for we without you cannot be made perfect." Will not this band of love draw you? Oh, will not this cord of a man lay hold upon you, and bring you to the Saviour's feet? The Lord grant that it may; but, as I have said, I can only show you the cords. It is God's work to pull them; and they will be pulled if the saints will join in earnest prayer, invoking a blessing upon sinners. The Lord grant it, for his love's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

HOSEA XI., AND XIV.

Chapter xi. Verse 1. *When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.*

God's love was very early love. He began with the nation of Israel when it was a mere handful of men in Egypt. There he multiplied them; and, in due time, he called them out from among the heathen. God's love to some of us manifested itself at a very early period of our lives, when we were yet children. It is among our most joyous memories that we have known the Lord from our youth up. Happy man, happy woman, of whom God can say, as he said concerning his ancient people, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."

2. *As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.*

The nation of Israel did not fulfil the promise of its youth; it was not faithful to God. The people heard from the lips of Moses the command, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord:" yet they turned aside continually to the idols of the nations. Have not some of us also, although we have been loved by God, been faithless to him? Can we not look back,