

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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DAYS OF HEAVEN UPON THE EARTH.

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## A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

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“As the days of heaven upon the earth.”—Deuteronomy xi. 21.

As this text was originally written, it referred only to the length of life and the length of endurance which God promised to his obedient Israel. If they walked in his statutes, the kingdom was to abide from generation to generation, without end, “as the days of heaven upon earth.” But it seems to me that such a phrase as this ought to mean something more, if it did not, and might be used to express, and must be used to express, many of those happy seasons which we have enjoyed when the Lord has manifested himself to us, and which have been to us “as the days of heaven upon the earth.” But is not the expression exaggeration? Is it not too strong? Brethren, I think not. There were days of heaven upon earth once. Every day upon earth was a day of heaven, before our first parent stretched out his hand and broke his Lord's command. When he walked through the garden of Eden, by the side of the rippling Hiddekel, or the streaming Euphrates, which rolled over sands of gold; as he reclined under the shadow of the trees from the heat of the sun, and plucked the generous fruit, God was with him as his companion, and manifested himself to his favourite creature. Those were, indeed, days of heaven upon earth! There was no strife, no sin, no sorrow—everything was happy. It seemed as if this world was but one chamber of God's great house, one of the many mansions in our Father's house, the vestibule of glory, the portal of the skies, the ground floor, if I may so say, of the Master's palace, which reached high up beyond the

clouds. There *were* days of heaven upon earth; and we know from the sweetest prophecies, as sure as they are sweet, that there *will* be days of heaven upon earth again, and that for a continuance. He who went up to heaven from Olivet will so come, in like manner, as we have seen him go up into heaven; and when he cometh, then will he reign in the midst of his people. And we are in the habit of speaking of that glorious reign with intense delight. No strife shall vex Messiah's reign; there shall be no sorrow then; they shall hang the useless helmet in the hall, and study war no more—halcyon days! a millennial period! peace like a river; righteousness like the waves of the sea, for he shall live; and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised. We are looking for the advent of the Lord, praying for it, desiring to be found in a working and waiting posture, whenever he may come; and when he cometh, then, to the letter, there shall be a long-continued series of days of heaven upon earth. But, dear friends, it is of little service to mourn the past; and though it may be of much benefit to expect the future, yet what shall we say about the present? I think the present is not without some happy seasons, which may be likened to the days of the text.

My first business at this time will be to mention *some of the days which are fit to be called days of heaven upon earth*; then, secondly, I shall *answer the question, why we do not have more of them*; and then, thirdly, I shall try to *show the best ways of getting more of them*. First, then, though man is born to sorrow, yet:—

I. WE HAVE MOST HAPPY AND BLESSED PERIODS—DAYS OF HEAVEN UPON EARTH; and the first I will mention is *the day in which we first look to Jesus and lose our sins*. Our Revival Hymn-book sings:—

“Happy day! happy day!  
When Jesus wash'd my sins away.”

The long time of conviction, the dolorous winter of sorrow, made the day of our release the happier and the brighter, just as the oasis is all the greener in contact with the dry, sandy region, over which the traveller has passed. The first day of our conversion, when we know Christ, and have peace through him, is a peculiarly green and happy spot in our life's pilgrimage. We can never forget it. Some of us had a very distinct time and place of conversion. To us the day when we looked to Jesus is as fresh as though it were new coined from the mint of time. Other days have lost their peculiar image and superscription. We can scarcely recollect any one of our birthdays, perhaps, unless something very remarkable has happened upon them; but that day, if we were to live to be as old as Methuselah, we should still remember, and count it to be the true day of our birth, the day when we truly began to live, for all before it was but dead. Dear friends, do you remember the excessive joy of that day? It must have been so with all of you; but with some of us the joy was more than we

could hold. We were like Simeon, when he saw the Lord, and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." We made no stipulations with God. We would have been content to rot in a dungeon, or to lie tossing on the sick bed of a hospital, now that we had found Christ; we wanted nothing beyond; we could have dared the very gates of hell in that day to stop our joy; Satan himself could not have made us cease from singing, so joyous were we. Probably others noticed it, and asked why it was; and they learned that the Lord had done great things for us, whereof we were glad. Oh! I wish this evening some of you could find the Saviour. Some of you, perhaps, did not come here to find him, but you want him. You are feeling your sins, perhaps, pressing heavily upon you; your guilt is like a burden upon your back; but I do hope you will look to the cross of Christ, and if you do, the strings will crack that bind your burden to your back, and you shall leap for joy to find that you are free. There is life for a look at the Crucified One; and with that life there comes such a flood of joy that I should not wonder if you were almost ready, when you get home, to begin singing in the house, even though there might be some there who could not sympathise with your joy. It is one of the days of heaven upon earth when a soul casts its anchor upon Christ and says, "I am at rest, at rest for ever."

It must not be thought, however, that this is the only season, for often, very often, *days of calm and peace* are, to the Christian, like days of heaven upon earth. Have you not often felt a stillness in your souls, cares gone, doubts fled, troubles forgotten, all so peaceful within, that you did not seem to have a wish, nor a want, and, happy in the Saviour's love, you did not care for all the world beside—changed into a little child? You have got up in the morning, and you have felt so happy; there was no excitement, no exuberance of feeling; but still such a peaceful happiness, that you would not have changed your state with the King upon his throne; you had to go to business, and there was a good deal to try you, but you were not vexed; you seemed to put it all aside, and to go through the day talking with Christ, your hands busy below, but your heart occupied above, your treasure being in heaven, and your heart being there too, and that continued all day; and, perhaps, at night, at the family altar, they noticed how sweetly you prayed, and, if they did not, you remember what a calm there was upon you when you went upstairs, and cast yourself upon the bed and slept; and if you awoke during the night, you found that you were still with God. With some of us there have been many such periods, and they have lasted sometimes by the week together, but far oftener they have come and gone very soon, and to many they have been, like angels' visits, few and far between, yet have we had enough of them to make us have a foretaste of that happier shore where all is peace for ever, where the dove builds her nest and is never disturbed, where not a wave of trouble ever rolls across a sea of everlasting rest, where continually the

angels sing the praises of God, and there are no groans to mar the melody of their seraphic songs. Yes, those days of quiet peacefulness were as days of heaven upon earth.

And we have got beyond that. Many Christians can remember *days of praise*. Have you not had days in which your souls seemed taken up with singing God's praises? I do not mean that you went into the street or in public, but your soul kept singing—you had got the prayer answered:—

“ Oh! may my soul in tune be found,  
Like David's harp of solemn sound! ”

You wanted to tell everybody about what your God had done for you, and when you had an opportunity you told of the goodness of the Lord, and bade people to “Taste and see that the Lord is good”; you went to see the sick, and if they murmured you put aside their murmuring, for you yourself felt so happy that you could scarcely sympathise with a murmuring spirit; and when you went up to the assembly of God's house, and they sang some of their joyous songs, when, like a peal of thunder, their notes of praise went up and made the walls ring again, oh! how blessed were you! Why, I say it without exaggeration, I have sometimes in this house, when we have been singing some of God's praises, felt as though it could not be much better to be in heaven, than it was to be in the midst of God's people, singing with all their hearts his praises. We have sometimes run up the gamut until we reached the top of the scale, and seemed to have almost got to the top of Jacob's ladder, and almost ready to step into heaven. Blessed days of praise! We can never forget you, for you have been “as the days of heaven upon the earth.” Days of finding Christ, days of peace, days of praise are “as the days of heaven upon the earth.”

Among the choicest seasons in a Christian's life, however, are those in which he finds himself *honoured of God in the conversion of souls*. Those are days of heaven upon earth. I should like to know, but I suppose it is impossible to find it out—I should like to know how many of us here, who are Christians, are spiritual parents. I am afraid, if there was a stocktaking, there would not be found many diligent ones among us, and that is not to our credit. Every Christian should make it to be one of the grand aims of his life, if not the grandest, to bring others to reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. Now, as some of you may never have tried at this, I should like to encourage you by offering you the sweet reward which God gives to those who labour for him. Ah! my dear friend, the City Missionary, you need not tell me of all your toils among the poor, and the ragged, and the filthy—true every word; but there is one thing I should like you to tell me, when you have met with a poor sinner who has been plucked by you from the depths of degradation, and you have seen the tear of gratitude glistening in the eye of a convert, have

not you felt that it has made up for it all? You are no true missionary if you cannot say that. And do not tell me, my dear brother minister, of all the toils of preaching to a people who seem weary of hearing, and of endeavouring to convince those of the truth who do not care to listen to it—we know all about that; but let me ask you, when you have heard that a penitent has come to Christ, and it has been said, “Behold, he prayeth!” have not you felt that you have been rewarded for ten times more toil and trouble than you have ever put forth? If one could be cut in pieces, and every piece could be hanged or flayed alive, it were worth while to suffer all that for the bringing of one soul to Christ; because, if Jesus Christ thought it worth his while to suffer unutterable pains to redeem a soul, it would be worth the while of any one of Christ’s people to suffer the same, if that were the way to bring sinners to him. Let me tell you that there is no joy like it. When you can hear a penitent say, “Blessed be God, I was once far from him by wicked works, but I listened to the truth as you proclaimed it; I heard your prayer in the class; it touched my heart; it broke me down; and afterwards it led me out of darkness into Christ’s marvellous light, and, blessed be God, I am saved”; oh! there is no joy like it, and he that hath many souls thus given to him for his hire must enjoy many of the days of heaven upon earth.

Again, I believe there is many a family where this same joy has been felt, not by those who were the immediate instruments of conversion, but by those who have long prayed for the conversion of such. Your good mother now, John, if you were to go home to-night a saved soul, would be made unspeakably happy. The dear old soul has been praying for you these many years. She wept over you when you were in your cradle; she has often prayed for you when you have been cursing and swearing; and has she sometimes fears that she will go to her grave and never see her child brought in? but if she were to hear that you were saved, there would be a day of heaven upon earth in that family. How many households are there where the conversion of the husband has turned a little hell into a little heaven? You know who children are afraid of the father—how they run upstairs to get to bed, because the father comes home the worse for drink, and how the poor mother suffers. There may be a little furniture, but she knows at any moment it may go off to the pawnbrokers to be converted into money to get more of the accursed liquor, and she lives in perpetual bondage and fear; but one night he comes home very thoughtful—where has he been? Oh! he has been to such-and-such a place of worship. Do you know the woman cannot sleep that night for hope. She is in hopes that there may be a change come over him, and when she sees him washing himself the next morning, and she hears that he is going to the same place, how her heart beats with joy and hope, and how heartily does she pray that her husband may become a changed character! And when

he comes home, and sits down, and the tears begin to flow, and he says, "Wife, we never prayed together; you know that I could never bear the thoughts of your praying; but it is all changed now; get the Bible and let us see if we cannot pray together to-night"—that is one of the days of heaven upon earth. There is joy to the mother who finds her son saved, joy to the wife that sees her husband converted; and it is equal joy to the husband when he gets his wife converted. There are some husbands who have sore trouble with ungodly wives; and they have prayed often, and I hope they will not grow cast-down and leave off praying. The Lord who blessed them can bless their wives: wait, never give in, never give up praying, as long as they have breath in their bodies, as long as they are on praying ground, pray for them, and they may be converted; then there will be joy, joy unspeakable and full of glory even on earth, when such an one is brought to know the Lord. These are, indeed, days of heaven upon earth.

I think the Church has sometimes had them. Some of you do not know much about it; you do not work for Christ; you do not pray for souls; you do not feel for souls; but I could pick out in this assembly, if it were right, some who know a great deal about it, because the Lord has given them a yearning heart and a tender soul, so that they weep for others' sorrows and repent of others' sins. These are the persons that know, in deed and in truth, that there are days of heaven upon earth. They travail, and therefore they know the joy of her who forgets her travail, because a man-child is born into the world.

But I must hasten on. There are other days. Dear friends, a *communion with loving, Christian brethren* often brings days of heaven upon earth. I know some churches where there seem to be as many parties in the church as there are male members; where there is no love, no unity, no affection, no contention for the faith, but much contention for power and position. Now, they never have days of heaven upon earth; but where Christians love each other, there is the dew of heaven. Some Christians greatly envy you your privileges, and in belonging to a united church. Scores of times, when I have received members, who have been united aforetime with churches split up and divided, they have said:—

"Here would I find a settled rest,  
While others go and come;  
No more a stranger or a guest,  
But like a child at home."

And I know there are many of you who have found a settled rest here, and you have found in communion with God's people that you are made to lie down in green pastures, and go beside the still waters. Lonely Christians lose much comfort, and I think those Christians who are always going abroad for company lose more; but those who have a select few, whom they love, and with whom they associate, and with whom they can enjoy holy com-

munion, will find many such days. I must confess that I have often been loth to go to bed when I have had a few beloved friends to talk about better things; and I am afraid if we had had our way, and had not had to go to work the next morning, we should have let the clock get into the small hours, for so sweet was the company and the talk, that we did not like to part. When Jesus Christ is the theme, there is no fear of weariness, and when those that know him speak about him, there is such freshness in their speech, that one likes to let them keep on, without stopping them at all. Christian fellowship, how sweet! And if you get into a Christian family and live in it, how happy and pleasant it is! Some families have a morose father who seems to think there is no one in the world to be cared for except himself, and he domineers and tyrannises. Others have a touchy, crotchety, quick-tempered mother, and very little can go right with them long together. Others have a negligent woman, perhaps, a slattern, who does not attend to the house, but is a gossip. Now, to live in such houses as those is a misery, but if you get into some houses, such as I have known, where the father endeavours, while he rules the house, to do it with love, where the mother is the very pattern of her sex, where the children are obedient, and yet happy and free; where the servants feel an interest in the master's affairs, because the master feels an interest in theirs, it is like a little heaven upon earth. It is a blessed thing to drop into such a house, for you feel there, indeed, they have days of heaven upon earth. When you young people marry, I hope you will set up just such houses, and that it will be your desire to make your homes such that people may like to live in them. I would have your houses like that of Sir Thomas Abney, where Dr. Watts went to stop a few days, and he stayed there six and twenty years. It was too good a house to leave. Let your houses be such that, when good men come, they will feel, "Here is the place where we can find rest." May you have many days of heaven upon earth in such a way!

Now, to pass on, surely the highest of all will be found in a *close communion with Christ*. There is a nearness of approach to Christ, of which to speak in the carnal ear would be to cast pearls before swine. There is a secret and mysterious intercourse carried on between earth and heaven, of which Solomon sang in mystic numbers in the Canticles, and which saints have enjoyed, but which no tongue can adequately express—a peace which is not only like to heaven, but *is* heaven; it is a piece of heaven cast down to us here; it is not a grape from some wilderness vine, but a cluster from the vine of Eshcol, and Eshcol was in Canaan itself. The Lord gives earnest of his love, pledges of joys to come, so that even here we do have, in communion with Christ, days of heaven upon earth. But I must not prolong the catalogue, for time fails me. I think I have said enough to make some feel that the Christian's life is a happy one; let me add my testimony that it is; let me add, not mine, but the testimony even of many a negro slave in the

days of slavery, who could say that, notwithstanding all suffering, and all penury, and every ill, a Christian's life was a happy one after all. Now, the second point was to be an enquiry, if there are so many days of heaven upon earth:—

## II. WHY DO WE NOT HAVE MORE OF THEM?

I think there are many reasons. *Some people think it wicked to be happy.* You smile, but I know some Christians who even seem to think that it is a sign of growth in grace when you grow to be blessedly miserable. They imagine that for anything like joy to be in a Christian is incompatible with sincerity. We have not so learned Christ. We know that through much tribulation we inherit the kingdom; but we have learned that as tribulation aboundeth, so consolation aboundeth through Jesus Christ. Let your face lack no oil, and your head no ointment; go your way, and live happily and joyfully, for if God has accepted thee, there is no flesh living that has such a right to be joyous. Accepted in the beloved! Cleansed from sin! Clothed with the righteousness of Christ! Safe for heaven! Why should you not be happy? Go to the weeping willows, and take down your harps, and begin to strike them to melodious tunes. You ought to be happy, you people of the living God. Let the righteous be glad; yea, let them shout for joy. Some Christians, perhaps, do not think it is wrong to be happy, but they will not be. Almost as a matter of principle, they will not be happy. You cannot please them. They are thorough Englishmen—they exercise the blessed prerogative of grumbling. No matter what it is, they can always see something or other to find fault with in it. If they have much, it might be more; if they have little, they are hardly treated; the blessings of the upper springs cannot content them unless the nether springs flow in as freely; and the mercies that come from heaven will not please them, unless they can have their share of the mercies of earth. Oh! dear friends, pray the Lord to give you a new heart and a right spirit. I cannot make out what such a body as you will do in heaven. Ask your Master to take away your unheavenly spirit, so that you may be able to see reasons for joy, for there are many of them. Charnock says, "He who observes providence will never be without providence to observe," and we can say, he who is willing to be made happy may never be without something to make him happy, if he chooses to look for it.

There are some of us who do not have so many days of heaven upon earth, because *we could hardly bear them.* Joy has sometimes danger with it. There are, among the flowers, poisonous asps. The Christian had need, when his cup is full, to carry it with a steady hand. Too much spiritual joy might even be too much for the physical frame, like the old Scotch divine, who called out, "Hold, Lord! hold, Lord! it is enough; remember I am but an earthen vessel; give me no more joy, lest I die of excess of it." Ay, there might be spiritual maladies, if not bodily ones—we might grow proud, self-conceited, and lifted up. If we have much sail, we

want much ballast; and, perhaps, the furnace is as good a place for us as any place on earth until we get to heaven. If we had so many of these days of heaven upon earth, we might never long to go to heaven at all; we might say, "This is a place happy enough for us"; but the Lord will not let us do so; he will make the wilderness to be a wilderness still, that we may be willing to go on to Canaan. He would not have the sailor so content with the vessel as not to desire the port, and so he sendeth us rough days and stiff breezes, that we may be disturbed and long for our desired haven. There is one thing more: if we had so many of these days and no troubles, *we should not be like Christ*—we should lack one point of conformity to him, for he was "a man of sorrows." We are to have fellowship with him in his sufferings, and if our path were always smooth, and our sky always bright, we might not know so well as we know now what the sufferings of Jesus Christ meant. We might be losers in heaven, if we were not sufferers here; for I suppose it will be a part of the joy in heaven to remember the sorrow through which we came, to recollect the difficulties which we overcame; and if we have not sorrows or difficulties, we shall not have so sweet a song. Rest is all the sweeter to the labouring man, and so shall the rest of heaven be all the better, because of the days of grief and sorrow which we had on earth. But now, lastly:—

### III. WHAT CAN WE DO TO GET MORE OF THE DAYS OF HEAVEN UPON EARTH?

Well, we cannot build a city with streets of gold; we cannot find chrysolites and pearls with which to build a Jerusalem the Golden; we must take the place as we find it, and this world of ours, though a very fair earth, is not all we should like it to be; but we cannot alter it. It is very much like a convict settlement, a prison-house to Christians. This is not our rest; and as we look abroad upon it, we feel it is not a proper place for the spirit to dwell in. It wants a better land in which to develop itself. But how, then, are we to get heaven upon earth? I think there are three things we can do, and the first is, we can get it, if we cannot alter the place, *by being more like the persons*. They are happy in heaven, not only because it is heaven, but because they are heavenly. They could not be otherwise than happy. If those blessed spirits were on earth, so perfectly pure as they are, they would be perfectly happy. It is not, I say, so much the place that makes their heaven, as their state of mind. They are completely conformed to the will of God; they delight themselves intensely in the Most High; they have been freed from their earthly grossness, and they are now like the pure gold that has passed through the furnace. Let us pray for holiness, and we shall get happiness; let us ask to be heavenly-minded, and we shall get heaven. There is no fear about our joy, if we can get holiness. Very much in proportion as we shall become fit for heaven shall we have days of heaven upon earth.

And then a second thing we can do: if we cannot get the place, *we can get the object that makes the place such a place as it is*—that is to say, if we cannot get heaven, we can get days of heaven upon earth by getting Christ, for it is Christ that makes heaven, as the sun makes the day. Christ is the flower in that garden that makes all the rest sweet; Christ is heaven's crown and glory, its brightest jewel and diadem; and he that getteth his heart set upon Christ gets the better part of heaven; at any rate, he can do without the angels and without the harps of gold for a time. When he getteth Christ in his heart, the hope of glory; when the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, and he can say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his," he has got the major part of heaven, and may have days of heaven upon earth.

There is a third thing that we can do to get heaven, and that is, to follow the occupation of those who are in heaven. A man's joy or sorrow comes very much from what he has to do. In heaven they are always serving and praising. If we get the same work to do, if we enter into the same happy choir, and sing praises to our Heavenly King, and try to serve him without weariness, why, then, we shall get, again, the better part of heaven by getting the occupation of it. Holy men with Christ in their hearts, and with Christ's work in their hands, spend many days of heaven upon earth. We do not find Mr. Whitfield and Mr. Wesley very often troubled with doubts and fears, and I believe the reason was because their tenour of life was on high, their communion with Jesus was very close, and, above all, because they were so hard at work for their Master, that they had not time to sit down and begin raking in the mire for doubts and fears. May we be just such men as they were, and we shall have days of heaven upon earth.

Now, alas! alas! alas! there are many to whom I am now speaking who will have no days of heaven upon earth, but they will have their poor unsatisfactory days to drag their weary length along, and then at last will come the days of death. Ah! then, there are some that have had days of hell upon earth—some that have made the nurse declare that they would never nurse such a man again for all the world—some who have made their very parents start from their bedside to hear their cries, as they lay there suffering from the rod of Almighty wrath. Take care, take care that such be not your end, and if you would escape from it, remember the door of heaven is Christ; the door is wide open; only come to it, trust Christ, and you shall have days of heaven upon earth, and afterwards heaven itself shall be your portion. God grant that it shall be so, for his name's sake. Amen.

### Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

#### DEUTERONOMY VI. 1—23.

Verses 1, 2. *Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to*