

NOT BOUND YET.

NO. 1998

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds;
but the word of God is not bound.” — 2 Timothy 2:9.*

YOU will observe, if you read the verse which precedes, which indeed it would be wrong to dis sever from the text, that the doctrine of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ was the sheet-anchor of Paul's comfort, as it was the great substance of his preaching. “Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.” Perhaps we do not give sufficient prominence to the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Possibly, also, for this reason, we do not fully grasp the idea of “the power of his resurrection.” Our Lord's death was not the close of his career; he still passed onward. From the cross to the sepulcher was still forward. With weeping and mourning they laid him in the tomb: surely that was the *finis* of his course. Ah, no! he passed into the grave, it is true; but he also passed through it. The grave had hitherto seemed a *cul-de-sac*, a blind alley, from which there was no exit. All the footsteps pointed to entrance, but none to return. It looked like a dread abyss swallowing all, and offering passage-way to none. See what our Lord Jesus has done! He has made a tunnel of it for all his redeemed to pass into the kingdom: we enter at the grave to emerge in the resurrection into eternal life. In this lies part of the power of his resurrection, that he has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. It looked like an iron door or gate of death, but he has unhinged it, yea, he has taken it quite away. The grave was once “a charnel-house to fence the relics of lost innocence,” but it is so no longer, the imprisoning stone is

rolled away. By passing through death our Lord has made a thoroughfare for us. We take death and the grave in transit now: they do not hinder our advance to glory, and immortality, and eternal life. Our course is ever onward whatever may lie in the way.

In the strength of that truth, Paul, when he found himself in prison, expected to come out of it; when he saw great difficulties in the way to heaven, he expected to go through those difficulties, and to come out with gain at the further end thereof. This helped to cheer him in his darkest moments. His brave heart thus spoke within him, and said, "What if I should be even dead and buried, I shall rise again; and if the gospel should seem dead and buried, yet it will rise again; and if the particular cause which I am advocating in Rome should seem dead and buried, yet it must come to life again. I take courage from the great truth, that the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead according to my gospel."

Friends, I think we too may encourage ourselves in our hour of sorrow. From the tomb of our Lord we may gather gems of comfort. Though he died, yet is he dead no longer; and though he was buried, yet the sepulcher could not hold him; and that same victorious power which brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, will also bring all his sheep with him in due time, though they also shall descend into the same darkness of the tomb.

*"Vain the stone, the watch, the seal
Christ hath burst the gates of hell,
Death in vain forbids his rise,
Christ hath open'd paradise.
'Lives again our glorious King!
'Where, O death, is now thy sting?'
Once he died our souls to save!
'Where's thy victory, boasting grave?'
"Soar we now where Christ has led,
Following our exalted Head;
Made like him, like him we rise;
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies."*

I like much this self-forgetting sentence of the apostle, "I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound." He is shut up in the gloomy dungeon at Rome. No hideous dells could be worse than Roman dungeons usually were. No prison is a desirable place, but a Roman prison was a very vestibule of death. Paul is not only in prison, but

in bonds, his right arm is chained to the left hand of a soldier, he cannot do anything except under the inspection of his enforced companion, who, kindly as he may be disposed, cannot be so closely bound to him without causing him much discomfort. One would not like to be chained to the best man that ever lived, and much less to a rough Roman soldier. Paul is in bonds as he writes, his fetters clank, but he makes light of it, and finds more than sufficient comfort in the reflection, “I suffer as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.”

I am going to talk to you upon that point with as much brevity as I can. First, I call your attention to this grand truth, that the word of God is not bound — *in what sense is this true?* and, secondly, *for what reasons is this true?* and, thirdly, *what other facts run parallel to this fact, that though the preacher is bound, yet the word he preaches is not bound?*

I. First, then, IN WHAT SENSE IS IT TRUE, that “the word of God is not bound”? Possibly a meditation upon this text may revive the spirits of some who are cast down. May the Holy Ghost himself bless the subject to us!

That the word is not bound is, at this time, true in many senses; and, first, *it is not bound so that it cannot be preached.* Paul could preach it even when in bonds, and he did preach it, so that the gospel was made known throughout Caesar’s palace, and there were saints in the imperial household. Many came to and fro into the Praetorian guard-room, and heard the word from the mouth of the apostle. You may be quite sure that he never neglected to make known the message of the gospel to all that visited him in his prison, so that the word of God was not bound even with respect to himself. And, dear friends, whatever saddens us at this hour, we rejoice that the word of God still finds a tongue and a voice wherewith to speak to the multitudes. That word which, when there was nothing, spake everything into existence, would still be able to speak for itself, if not a single tongue voluntarily yielded itself to give forth speech for God; but at the same time there are many tongues which gladly proclaim the glorious grace of God, the word of God is not bound by reason of the lack of men to make it known: the true apostolical succession continues among us, and “Christ is preached.” That everlasting gospel will never be silenced. It will still be proclaimed to the ends of the earth, and to the end of time. It shall still never cease to bless the world so long as the sea pulses with tides, and time is chequered with night and day.

*“Nor shall thy spreading gospel rest,
Till through the world thy truth has run;
Till Christ has all the nations blest
That see the light, or feel the sun.”*

“The word of God is not bound.” Nineteen centuries after Paul we have still an open Bible and a free pulpit. Blessed be God for this!

There have been a great many attempts to bind the word of God, but yet it has not been bound. The preachers of the holy faith of Christ have been hunted to the death; they have “wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented,” but the word of God has not been bound. When Hamilton was burned in Scotland, there was such an impetus given to the gospel through his burning that the adversaries of the gospel were wont to say, “Let us burn no more martyrs in public, for the smoke of Hamilton’s burning has made many eyes to smart until they were opened.” So, no doubt, it always was. Persecution is a red hand which scatters the white wheat far and wide. I need not remind you how the ashes of God’s martyred servant, cast into a brook, were borne onward to a river, and afterwards to the sea, and by the sea they were carried to every shore. The word of God is not bound by the binding of the preachers; but it happeneth to the persecuted as to Israel in Egypt, “The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied.” Probably the church of God has never had better times, certainly she has never had happier times, than during periods of persecution. These were the days of her purity, and consequently her glory. When she has been in the dark, God has been her light; and when she has been driven to and fro by the cruelties of men, then has she most effectually rested under the shadow of the Almighty.

“The word of God is not bound” so as to be no longer a living, working power among men. Sometimes the enemies of truth have thought that they had silenced the last witness, and then there has been an unexpected outburst, and the old faith has been to the front again. When in Scotland, under the reign of Moderatism, the gospel seemed to have died out, one earnest man by accident fell in with a little book, Fisher’s “Marrow of Divinity,” was enlightened as to the pure truth of God, began at once to preach it, and found thousands to rejoice in it. That marrow has never been taken away from Scotland’s bones ever since, nor can it, nor shall it, let the devil do what he may. A desperate and subtle attempt is now being made, but it will be assuredly foiled through the wisdom of God. Yet, if it should come to this, that they should get rid of all the preachers of the gospel —

of the men who would thunder out God's word like Boanerges, or speak it out in tender tones as Barnabas — if the last of the faithful testifiers were consigned to the tomb, God would be sure to raise up another generation to publish his truth, so that the word of God should not lack a spokesman in the midst of the earth. The devil's work is never done: one word from the Lord, and it is all undone in a trice.

The enemies of the gospel have attempted also to bind it by the burning of books. I have in my possession an early copy of Luther's sermons, and I was told how very rare it was, because at first the circulation was forbidden, and afterwards they were bought up and burned as soon as ever they were met with. And what did they do? They only put fire into Luther when they burned his sermons; they drove him to be more outspoken than he otherwise might have been, and so they helped the cause they thought to destroy. It is impossible that truth can die; it has about it the immortality of God. It is utterly impossible that the truth of the gospel shall die, since it is wrapped up in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth for ever. He *must see* of the travail of his soul, and must be satisfied for all the scoffs and agonies he has endured; neither will less content him than a kingdom in which all others shall be merged. "The word of God is not bound;" it will still be preached despite the scoffs of philosophers and the roarings of devils. Do not, therefore, at any time sit down in despair because of evil times; for the times are always evil in one respect or another. Do not imagine that truth will become extinct, and that the simple gospel will be forgotten. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but God's word shall never pass away. If the gospel which we hold be of men, it will be overthrown — and let it be; let us see it die without regret; but if it be of God, none can overcome it; and woe unto those who set themselves to do so. If these things be so, why are we so timorous? If our gospel be, as some think, only man's voice, it shall die down into the eternal silences; but if it come from heaven, it shall increase into the everlasting chorus of heaven. Error shall be blown away like smoke from the chimney, or like March dust in the north wind; but God's own word is as eternal as God himself. As the sun is not blown out by the tempest, nor the moon quenched by the night-damps, so is not the gospel destroyed by the sophistries of perverse minds. Wherefore let us comfort one another with these words, "The word of God is not bound." It will be preached till doomsday.

Another sense must be remembered: *the word of God is not bound so that it cannot reach the heart.* You may have perhaps, dear friend, some very obdurate relative about whose salvation you have very great concern. You have prayed long, and have used the means within your reach perseveringly; you have also used extraordinary means, and you have looked for an immediate result. But as yet the hard heart does not melt; as yet you see no tear of repentance, and hear no cry of faith: and, moreover, it may be that your friend now refuses to go and hear the gospel, and appears to be more opposed to it than before. I see that you are beginning to be bound in spirit, for the hot tears force up your eyelids, and scald their way down your cheeks while I mention the painful subject. You are hardly able to speak a good word, however much you desire it, for you have been so often repulsed. I think I hear you complaining to the Lord in prayer, and saying —

*“But feeble my compassion proves,
And can but weep where most it loves;
Thy own all-saving arm employ,
And turn these drops of grief to joy.”*

But oh! remember that “the word of God is not bound.” God has ways of reaching the hardest hearts and melting them, and he can do it at moments when such a work is least expected. He has ways of making his servants draw the bow at what to them is a venture, but to him is an absolute certainty, and between the joints of the harness the shaft of conviction finds its way. Do not give anybody up in despair: while God is almighty have hope for the chief of sinners. Hope on, hope ever, even when your last argument seems to have failed, and your last instruction has been refused. It is well that it should be so, that in the work of salvation God may have all the glory, and you may learn to love him and trust him all the better in years to come. “The word of God is not bound.”

Sometimes it happens to those whom we love that they are removed from the means of grace, but even then the word of God is not bound. We thought full surely, while we could take them to hear the minister whom God blessed to us, that they were within the reach of God’s grace; but now they have gone away, and our spirit sinks. At this hour, perhaps, they are on the sea, or you have had a letter telling you that they live in a place remote from gospel preaching. You sigh within your soul, and think, “Oh, now they cannot be saved!” But the word of God is not bound. Had we not, a little while ago, an instance of one whom we were praying for at a

prayer-meeting, and that night, while we were praying, it was a moonlight night, and as he was walking the deck of the ship, the Lord met with him? When no tongue was able to reach him, the memory of what he had heard at home came over his soul, and he was humbled before God. I was telling, just a little while ago, at our prayer-meeting, a very singular instance of how, just lately, three or four sermons on Sunday evenings have been made-most useful to a young friend. He was going away to Australia unconverted, and without God. He went on board to depart, and when the vessel steamed out of dock, it ran into another ship, and he was obliged to wait and spend almost a month here, whilst the vessel was being repaired. The Lord met with him on those Sunday nights, and he has gone now, leaving in his mother's heart the sweet persuasion that he has found his mother's God. The God of all grace has ways of getting at human hearts when to our thinking every avenue is fast closed. He can reach the poor in the slums of London, he can reach the harlot in her chambers of iniquity, he can touch the most debauched man on town in his lordly mansion. There is not a soldier who has gone into the ranks for the sake of hiding away from God, and indulging his passions, but what the Lord can conquer him. There is not a runaway thief but what the Lord can find him when the police cannot. He knows just where his fugitives are, his warrants are out against them, and when the time comes his grace will arrest them.

*“Thus the eternal counsel ran,
‘Almighty grace, arrest that man’!”*

And he was arrested, though he never thought that he should be made to turn to God, and seek eternal life. “The word of God is not bound.” It goes forth conquering and to conquer.

But sometimes we are apt to think a case is more hopeless still, when, in addition to natural depravity, and the absence of the means of grace, there springs up a scepticism, perhaps a downright derision of the word of God, and of things sacred. One is apt to think then, “It is all over now; it is of no further use praying for such an one.” I am not so sure that the case is any the worse for being openly declared, and honestly described. Nothing is more deadly than absolute indifference; and sometimes, when a man begins to avow himself an infidel, it is only that his conscience is troubling him, and he is obliged to take some drug wherewith to stifle it: no drug is more handy for his use than avowed infidelity. A profession of scepticism is often nothing more than the whistling of the boy as he goes through the

churchyard, and is afraid of ghosts, and therefore “whistles hard to keep his courage up.” They try to get rid of the thought of God, because of that ghost of conscience which makes cowards of them all. They might have professed to be believers if it had not become too barefaced an inconsistency to live as they do, and yet own a God. I think it would be a good rule for all Christians immediately to pray whenever they hear a man swear. Pray for that particular man, and keep him in your mind’s eye as far as you can, hoping that he may be converted to God. “The word of God is not bound.” Even blasphemy and infidelity yield to the conquering touch of sovereign grace. I knew a man who had lived a life of carelessness and indifference, with occasional outbursts of drunkenness and other vices. This man happened one day, on Peckham Rye, to hear a preacher say that if any man would ask anything of God, he would give it to him. The assertion was much too broad, and might have done harm; but this man accepted it as a test, and resolved that he would ask, and thus would see if there was a God. On the Saturday morning of that week, when he was going early to his work, the thought came upon him, “Perhaps there is a God after all.” He was ready to swoon as the possibility struck him, and there and then he offered the test petition, concerning a matter which concerned himself and his fellow-workmen. His prayer was granted in a remarkable manner, and he came then to be a believer in God. He is more than that now, and has found his way to be a believer in all that God has spoken, and has found peace through believing in Jesus Christ. It struck me as wonderful that this man, who never had any religious care at all before, should, on a sudden, be turned to serve the living God. The preacher on Peckham Rye never had a more unlikely hearer, and yet he succeeded with him. Oh, pray for them, pray for them till the doors of death enclose them, till the bolts of the gates of eternal destiny are driven home! Pray for them! Pray for them! Never cease to cry to God for those who go to the utmost extremity of sin, for though you cannot reach them, “the word of God is not bound.” It is not bound, then, as to the preaching of it, nor as to its power to reach the heart.

Still further, *it is not bound as to its power to comfort the soul*. I have — perhaps you have in your measure — to deal with persons under conviction of sin, with others who are suffering through ill-health, or mental decline, with some who groan under Satanic temptation, and various forms of mental trial causing awful depression of spirits. We have spoken to certain of them many times without being able to bring them

light and comfort. We put the gospel very plainly to them, and try to place it in different lights, hoping that somehow or other they may see hope. Alas! we are often unable to touch the wound of their spirit. But, oh, how they baffle us! How frequently have we had to cry out, "O God, help us!" We cannot comfort these poor people. The man in the iron cage, described by Bunyan, is repeated many times over in our observation. We bring the promises, we bring the doctrines, we bring our own experience to bear upon such persons, but their despair defies our consolation. The darkness is too dense for our poor rushlight to remove it. The captive is too closely shut up in prison for us to set him free. But here is a blessed truth: "The word of God is not bound." By-and-by that blessed word will break into the midnight darkness. Let us, therefore, continue to ply the afflicted with the word of God, searching out its most cheering assurances, and giving them full and free scope. Perhaps we put too much of our own explanation with the Lord's own word; perhaps we have thought that clever illustrations were needful, and so have overlaid the truth with our poor imagination. When we have come to the end of our explanations and our illustrations, it may be that the word which is not bound will come in, and give liberty to the captives. Wonderful cases have we seen of persons driven to despair, and ready to lay violent hands upon themselves, who have been raised up, and set at joyful liberty by the word of God, of itself alone. Oh, that some may prove its divine power to-night! One Scripture has set many at liberty: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Hear it, think of it, believe it, and be at peace. A second passage has been fruitful above all other texts, I think: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Let a man muse on that verse till he sees his fetters turn to cobwebs, and his prison walls dissolve like dreams. Thou art bound, poor sinner, but the word of God is not bound! Thou art bound, poor preacher, but the word of God is not bound! Thou art bound, dear mother, dear father, bound up in thy weakness, and unable to do anything for thy wayward child; but the word of God is not bound! It wears no bonds itself, and it is able to take them from all who groan under them.

Thus I have given you several senses of the text. There is another one. *The word of God is not bound in the sense that it cannot be fulfilled.* I now allude principally to the promises and prophecies of God's word. If there is a promise of deliverance to you, and you cannot see the way in which you are to be delivered, you may not, therefore, doubt the promise, for that

would dishonor the Lord who spake it. The word of God is not bound; the word of God will cleave its own way, and reach its own destination. Who makes a path for the lightning? The lightning burns its own instant way. Who shall make a path for the word of God? It will effect its own design. Jehovah speaks, and it is done. He said to the primeval darkness, "Let there be light!" and there was light. Now, if God has given a promise to you, he will as readily fulfill his word of promise to the least of his people, as he will make his own word effective for his own designs in nature, providence, or judgment. The word of God is not bound. Thou art come, perhaps, to thy last penny, but he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Thou hast come to thy last grain of strength, but he fainteth not, neither is he weary, and he hath said, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." And so shall it be. Oh, that we could believe the promises of God! We do not half believe them, brethren; we have never yet pressed the best of the wine out of them, because we have let them lie like uncrushed bunches of grapes. Truly they are beautiful to look upon, like the clusters of Eshcol; but that is not the way to know all that is in them. Oh, that we had but faith to tread them in the wine-vat, that the ruddy juice might run out, and we might drink and be refreshed! Remember that God has promised nothing beyond his strength, nothing beyond his will. God carries out his promise to the full: he may sometimes exceed it, but he certainly never falls short of it. Wherefore, let us be comforted to-night with the recollection that God's word is free to effect its own accomplishment. His decree is omnipotence resolving, and his providence is omnipotence acting. "The word of God is not bound."

There is yet one other sense. "*The word of God is not bound*" so that it cannot endure and prevail unto the end. I know that there are those who think it dead, and therefore they are anxious to attend its funeral, and bury it out of sight, while the new theology shall dance on its grave. They call us poor old fogies for believing in the old gospel, and tell us to go home and order our coffins, and leave the world to these wiser men. They begin to crow as if their work of defeating us had been unquestionably done. We are out of date; we are dead; we are extinct! Perhaps so! Perhaps so! But we think they will be mistaken in their imagination, for the word of God is not defeated after all. And if it were — if it were bound like the Lord Jesus, and were taken before priests and princes to be scourged and spit upon, and if it were crucified among thieves, and taken down from the cross, and laid in the tomb, and the grave were sealed, and watched by

mighty men, yet the story would not be ended. Because the Lord liveth it would live again, and its resurrection power would be testified in the midst of its adversaries. For this gospel, on which we have rested our souls, and on which our fathers rested throughout their generations, this is not bound. Who is to bind it? With what will they bind it? Green withes, and ropes, and bars of brass cannot hold this greater than Samson. It shall snap them in pieces as tow. There is no overcoming the free gospel. They dreamed that they had bound it many times before, and they cried in mockery, “The Philistines be upon thee, Samson”; but they have had to learn its might when least they expected it, and so they shall yet again. Philosophy and heresy are in league, and they gather their armies in haste. The Lord shall make them as the sheaves of the threshing-floor. Wherefore, let us be of good comfort, brothers, and rest quite sure that, though we are beaten, the word of God is not beaten, and that though we are in a minority, and our preaching at a discount, it does not matter — “The word of God is not bound.”

II. For a moment or two I have further to enquire, WHAT ARE THE REASONS WHY THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT BOUND?

It is not bound, because *it is the voice of the Almighty*. If the gospel be indeed the gospel of God, and these truths be a revelation of God, omnipotence is in them. It is not possible that the omnipotent word can be bound. Who will attempt the deed? Go bit the tempest, put a chain about the hurricane, control the winds, and bridle the raging sea, and when you have done these, you are but at the beginning of your task; you cannot even then hinder the omnipotence of God, which finds a chariot for itself in the word of God, and rideth forth conquering and to conquer.

Moreover, *the Holy Ghost puts forth his power in connection with the word of God*, and as he is divine he is unconquerable. He comes as a rushing, mighty wind, and who can stay him? He comes as fire, and who can stand before his flaming vehemence? The Holy Ghost’s being with the gospel is the reason of its great power. It is not that truth alone is mighty, and will prevail, but that the Spirit of truth works mightily by it, and causes it to subdue the minds of men. If we had no Holy Spirit, what could we do? But as he has promised to take of the things of Christ, and to show them to his people, while he reproves the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, we know that “the word of God is not bound.” The Holy Spirit manifests his own Sovereign will, doing what he pleases, even as the

wind bloweth where it listeth; and this is the surest proof that his Word “is not bound.”

If you wanted another reason less strong than these two, I should say, “How can it be bound while *it is so needful to men?*“ There are certain things which if men want they will have. I have heard say that in the old Bread Riots, when men were actually starving for bread, no word had such a terribly threatening and alarming power about it as the word “Bread!” when shouted by a starving crowd. I have read a description by one who once heard this cry: he said he had been startled at night by a cry of “Fire!” but when he heard the cry of “Bread! Bread!” from those that were hungry, it seemed to cut him like a sword. Whatever bread had been in his possession he must at once have handed it out. So it is with the gospel; when men are once aware of their need of it, there is no monopolizing it. None can make “a ring” or “a corner” over the precious commodity of heavenly truth. Neither can any one put this candle under a bushel so as quite to conceal its light. It cannot be hid, because there are so many that want it. They are pining, these myriads of London, these myriads all over the world; and though they hardly know it, yet there is a cry coming up for ever from them for something which they can never find, except in Christ. You may depend upon it you cannot stop the gospel being preached while there is this awful hunger after it in the souls of men. They must have it: you cannot cheat them into enduring a substitute for it. You may set up your altars, and put up your gimcrackeries, but they won’t have them instead of the gospel. You may preach your speculations, and tell them “modern thought” has done away with the old gospel, but as soon as the Holy Spirit shows them their state by nature, and their future danger, they sweep all this rubbish away. As the mower lays the grass in swaths to dry in the sun when he has passed up and down the field, so will the nations of the earth sweep away the green and flowery growths of human philosophy, and either give them to beasts to eat, or cast them into the oven. When men once know what they want, they will have it, despite priests or princes, scientists or sceptics. Oh, it must be so! This dire need of men must be met: the word of the Lord cannot be bound.

I have one thing else to tell you. The word of God is not bound because, when once it gets into men’s hearts, *it works such an enthusiasm in them that you cannot bind it.* You cannot silence a lip which has been touched by a live coal from off the altar. When the humblest woman gets to know the gospel, you may say, “There, hold your tongue about it!” But you

charge her in vain. She cannot but speak of what the Lord has done for her. The converted man must talk to his work-mates about it. You may say, "It would be very irregular for you to hold a meeting; it would be out of all character for a mere working-man to stand up on the village green;" but he is very likely to do it. You let the man alone; he cannot help it. Look at the many that gathered together in the Desert in the South of France in the old persecuting times! Why did they thus risk their lives? Why did they expose themselves to be ridden down by dragoons? They could not help it; they were eager for the gospel. They were in danger of being broken on the wheel if they preached, or listened to preaching; but they could not help it, they must hear the word of the Lord. The preacher said, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." Their adversaries tortured them, and sent them to the galleys; they threatened them with banishment and death; but all in vain. You had better let them go on, for you cannot stop them. In our own land there was no binding the word of God, for those who knew it felt compelled to spread it. There is Master Bunyan; they have put him in prison, and his family is nearly starving, and they bring him up, and they say, "You shall go out of prison, John, if you won't preach. Go home, and tag your-laces, that is what you have to do, and leave the gospel alone; what have you got to do with *that*?" But honest John answers, "I cannot help it. If you let me out of prison to-day, I will preach again to-morrow, by the help of God. I will lie here till the moss grows on my eyelids, but I will never promise to cease preaching the gospel." They could sooner bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion, than govern the movements of the Spirit of God in men. The love of Christ is such that, when it once pours into a man's heart, it must run out at his lips in loving testimony. Has he not put rivers of living water into the midst of those who once drink of the life-giving stream? And they must speak of it, even till they die.

III. Now I come to the close. ONE OR TWO OTHER FACTS RUN parallel TO THE TEXT. Paul is bound, but the word of God is not bound. Read it thus: the preacher has had a bad week, he is full of aches and pains, he feels ill: *but the word of God is not ill*. Oh, what a blessing that is! We preach a healthy gospel if we are unhealthy ourselves. In this let the invalid rejoice. Dear suffering worker, your work shall not suffer, for it is a sound gospel which you preach, though you yourself are hampered by a poor, weak body!

“What will become of the congregation when a certain minister dies?” Well, he will be dead, *but the word of God is not dead*. God buries his workmen, but his work goes on. One light goes out, but another torch flames forth. Star by star sinks beneath the horizon, but another star appears on the other side to make glad the night. The word of God is not dead when the preacher is dead.

“Oh, but the worker is so feeble!” *The word of God is not feeble*. “But the worker feels so stupid.” *But the word of God is not stupid*. “But the worker is so unfit.” *But the word of God is not unfit*. You see it all comes to this: the preacher is bound, but the word of God is not bound: the worker is feeble, but the word of God is not feeble. You are nothing and nobody, but the word of God cannot be said to be nothing and nobody: it is everything and everybody: it is girt about with all power.

But you bitterly and truthfully lament that Christian men are nowadays very devoid of zeal. “All hearts are cold in every place”; the old fire burns low. *But the word of God is not cold*, nor lukewarm, nor in any way losing its old fire. “Such and such a congregation is as frozen as the North Pole.” Yes, but the word of God is not frozen: divine truth is not turned into an iceberg. Do not fret yourself into despair as to the condition of the church, since the Lord liveth. Things are bad indeed without his power, but then in the dark hour the glory of the Lord will shine out.

“Yes,” says one, “but I am disgusted with the cases I have lately met with of false brethren.” Yes, *but the word of God is not false*. “But they walk so inconsistently.” I know they do, but *the word of God is not inconsistent*. “But they say they have disproved the faith.” Yes, they have disproved their own faith, but they have not disproved the word of God for all that. The word of God is not affected by the falsehood of men. “If we believe not, he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself;” and till he denies himself we need not make much account of who else denies him.

“Oh, but,” says one, “it is an awful thing to think of the spiritual ruin of so many that are round about us, who hear the gospel, and yet after all wilfully refuse it, and die in their sins.” Truly this is a grievous fact: they appear to be bound by their sins like beasts for the slaughter, but the word of God is not bound or injured. It was said of old that it would be a sweet savor unto God in them that are saved, and in them that perish — in the one a savor of life unto life, and in the other a savor of death unto death. Is not the fact as the Lord himself forewarned us? The ungodly reject the

gospel, but the gospel has not, therefore, failed. O sinners, you cannot overcome God's word! You have defeated its influence of love upon yourselves, but it is not defeated after all. If you will not come to Christ, others will: the Spirit of the Lord shall bring them. Christ shall see of the travail of his soul. If you turn away from his precious blood, and refuse the redemption that he has wrought, Christ shall not be disappointed as to the result of his passion: he shall see his seed, and shall prolong his days. You may bite at the gospel, but it shall be as when the viper in the fable gnawed at the file, and destroyed his teeth. You may seek to put out the gospel light, but you will be thrusting your hand into the fire, and your own flesh shall be consumed. Do not try to war against the gospel! Choose some other adversary than the Lord God Almighty and his invincible gospel. I pray you, cease to fight against the Lord; for the word of God is not bound. However much you may try to bind it, you shall find that it has its liberty, and it will in the next world have liberty to accuse and to condemn if you will not give it liberty now to persuade and to save you. God bless you, dear friends, for Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — 2 Timothy 2.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 484, 766, 478.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

BELOVED FRIENDS, — I would not have written this week, only you desire it. I have suffered much from neuralgic pain, for the weather was wet and windy. To-day a summer's sun is shining, and we hope for better things.

I rejoice to hear good news of the preachers who have favored me by filling the pulpit in my absence. May the blessing of the Lord rest upon the good seed which they have sown, and on the rest of the services which will take place before my return! I should like to be thoroughly well before I return, and that is not the case just now. Still, I am resting and hoping; and being out of the world's wars and fightings, I have a better opportunity for recovering tone and energy.

Receive my hearty Christian love, and my sincere thanks for all you do to support the work, and keep me from any anxiety about it. I am sure that

the Lord, who has provided, will provide even to the end; and bring glory to his name by the doing of it.

It is an easy matter to trust when you feel bright and joyous; but we honor the Lord most by believing in him when we feel depressed, and circumstances are saddening. God is to be trusted whatever the weather may be, inside or out. God's truth will prevail, even if every apostle should turn out to be a Judas, and every prophet a Balaam. In confidence in the unchanging God let us for ever abide.

Yours in the gospel of Jesus Christ,

Mentone, December 9th, 1887.

C. H. SPURGEON.