

WORDS OF WARNING FOR DAILY LIFE

by C.H. Spurgeon

Spurgeon's cautionary teachings contrasting sin's bondage with Gospel liberty, warning believers against spiritual dangers while pointing them to freedom in Christ.

16 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. BOOK: Words of Warning For Daily Life
2. Chapter 1: The Great World Prison and the Liberator
3. Chapter 2: The Only Salvation
4. Chapter 3: Those Who Take Not Warning
5. Chapter 4: How To Get Saving Faith
6. Chapter 5: Running For a Purpose
7. Chapter 6: The Course of the Wicked
8. Chapter 7: Coming to Christ
9. Chapter 8: The Gospel Feast
10. Chapter 9: Warnings to Certain Sinners
11. Chapter 10: "Christ the Son of Man"
12. Chapter 11: The Great Remedy
13. Chapter 12: The Kiss of Reconciliation
14. Chapter 13: "Though One Rose from the Dead"
15. Chapter 14: The Castle of Self
16. Chapter 15: On Halting Between Two Opinions

BOOK: Words of Warning For Daily Life

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Chapter 1: The Great World Prison and the Liberator

The Great World-Prison and the Liberator When preaching in Dover, the mayor of the town lent the ancient town-hall for the service, and in passing along, I noticed a large number of grated windows upon a lower level. These belonged to the prison cells, where persons committed for offences were confined. It struck me as a singular combination, that we should be preaching the gospel of liberty in the upper chamber, while there were prisoners of the law beneath. Perhaps, when we sang praises to God, the prisoners heard us; but the free word above did not give them liberty, nor did the voice of song loose their bonds. Alas! what a picture is this of many. We preach liberty to captives; we proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord; but how many remain year after year in the bondage of Satan, slaves to sin. We send up our notes of praise right joyously to our Father who is in heaven, but our praises cannot give them joy, for alas! their hearts are unused to gratitude. Some are mourning on account of unpardoned sin, and others are deploring their blighted hopes, for they have looked for comfort where it is never to be found. The little circumstance mentioned fixed itself in my mind, and in private meditations thrust itself upon me. In my day-dream I thought that some angelic warder was leading me along the corridors of this great world-prison, and bidding me look into the various cells where the prisoners were confined, reminding me ever and anon, as I looked sorrowful, that "Jehovah looseth the prisoners." The first cell is called the common prison—the ward of sin. All the human race have been prisoners here; and those who this day are perfectly at liberty, once wore the heavy chain, and were immured within the black walls. I stepped into it, and instead of hearing notes of mourning and lament, I heard loud and repeated bursts of laughter. The mirth was boisterous and obstreperous. The profane were cursing and blaspheming; others were shouting as though they had found great spoil. I looked into the faces of some of the criminals, and saw sparkling gaiety: their aspect was rather that of wedding-guests than prisoners. Walking to and fro, I noticed captives who boasted that they were free, and when I spoke to them of their prison-house, and urged them to escape, they resented my advice, saying, "We were born free, and were never in bondage unto any man." They bade me prove my words; and when I pointed to the irons on their wrists, they laughed at me, and said that these were ornaments which gave forth music as they moved; it was only my dull and sombre mind, they said, which made me talk of clanking fetters and jingling chains. There were men fettered hard and fast to foul and evil vices, and these called themselves free-livers, while others whose very thoughts were bound, for the iron had entered into their soul, with braggart looks, cried out to me that they were freethinkers.

I had never seen such bond-slaves before, nor any so fast manacled as these; but ever did I mark as I walked this prison through and through, that the most fettered thought themselves the most free, and those who were in the darkest part of the dungeon, thought they had most light, and those whom I considered to be the most wretched, and the most to be pitied, were the very ones who laughed the most, and raved most madly and boisterously in their mirth.

I looked with sorrow; but I saw a bright spirit touch a prisoner on the shoulder, who thereon withdrew with the shining-one. He went out, and I knew, for I had read—"The Lord looseth the

prisoners," I knew that the prisoner had been loosed from the house of bondage. But as he went forth, his late bond-fellows laughed and pointed with the finger, and called him sniveller, hypocrite, mean pretender, and all ill names, until the prison walls rang and rang again with their mirthful contempt! I watched, and saw the mysterious visitant touch another, and then another, and another, and they disappeared. The common conversation of the prison said that they had gone mad; that they were become slaves, or miserable fanatics, whereas I knew that they were gone to be free for ever; emancipated from every bond. What struck me most was, that the prisoners who were touched with the finger of delivering love were frequently the worst of the whole crew. I marked one who had blasphemed, but the Divine hand touched him, and he went weeping out of the gate. I saw another who had often scoffed the loudest when he had seen others led away, but he went out as quietly as a lamb. I observed some, whom I thought to be the least depraved of them all, but they were left, and oftentimes the blackest sinners of the whole company were first taken, and I remembered that I had read these words—"The publicans and the harlots enter into the kingdom of God before you." As I gazed intently, I saw some of those men who had once been prisoners come back again into the prison—not in the same dress which they had worn before, but arrayed in white robes, looking like new creatures. They began to talk with their fellow-prisoners; and, oh! how sweetly did they speak! They told them there was liberty to be had; that yonder door would open, and that they might escape. They pleaded with their fellow-men, even unto tears. I saw them sit down and talk with them till they wept upon their necks, urging them to escape, pleading as though it were their own life that was at stake. At first I hoped within myself that all the company of prisoners would rise and cry, "Let us be free." But no; the more these men pleaded, the harder the others seemed to grow, and, indeed, I found it so when I sought myself to be an ambassador to these slaves of sin.

I asked the guide where those were led who were released from the common ward. He told me that they were taken away to be free, perfectly free; but that before their complete gaol deliverance it was necessary that they should visit a house of detention which he would show me. He led me thither. It was called the solitary cell. I had heard much of the solitary system, and I wished to look inside this cell, supposing that it would be a dreadful place. Over the door was written this word—"Penitence," and when I opened it I found it so clean and white, and withal so sweet and full of light, that I said this place was fitter to be a house of prayer than a prison, and my guide told me that indeed so it was originally intended, and that nothing but that iron door of unbelief which the prisoners would persist in shutting fast made it a prison at all. When once that door was open, the place became so dear an oratory, that those who were once prisoners therein were wont to come back to the cell of their own accord, and begged leave to use it, not as a prison, but as a closet for prayer all their lives long. He even told me that one was heard to say, when he was dying, that his only regret in dying was, that in heaven there would be no cell of penitence. Here David wrote seven of his sweetest Psalms; Peter also wept bitterly; and the woman who was a sinner washed the feet of her Lord. But this time I was regarding it as a prison, and I perceived that the person in the cell did so consider it. I found that every prisoner in this cell must be there alone. He had been accustomed to mix with the crowd, and find his comfort in the belief that he was a Christian because born in a Christian nation; but he learned that he must be saved alone if saved at all. He had been accustomed aforetime to go up to the house of God in company, and thought that going there was enough; but now every sermon seemed to be aimed at him, and every threatening smote his conscience. I remember to have read in the Old Book I quoted just now—"I will pour

upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart." I noticed that the penitent, while thus alone and apart in his cell, sighed and groaned full oft, and now and then mingled with his penitential utterances some words of unbelief. Alas! were it not for these, that heavy door would long ago have been taken from its hinges. 'Twas unbelief that shut the prisoners in, and if unbelief had been removed from this cell, I say it had been an oratory for heaven, and not a place for disconsolate mourning and lamentation. As the prisoner wept for the past, he prophesied for the future, and groaned that he should never come out of this confinement, because sin had ruined him utterly, and destroyed his soul eternally. How foolish his fears were all men might see, for as I looked round upon this clean and white cell, I saw that the door had a knocker inside, and that if the man had but the courage to lift it, there was a shining one standing ready outside who would open the door at once; yea, more, I perceived that there was a secret spring called faith, and if the man could but touch it, though it were but with a trembling finger, it would make the door fly open. Then I noticed that this door had on the lintel and on the two side posts thereof the marks of blood, and any man who looked on that blood, or lifted that knocker, or touched that spring, found the door of unbelief fly open, and he came out from the cell of his solitary penitence to rejoice in the Lord who had put away his sin, and cleansed him for ever from all iniquity. So I spoke to this penitent, and bade him trust in the blood, and it may be that through my words the Lord afterwards loosed the prisoner; but this I learned, that no words of mine alone could do it, for in this case, even where repentance was mingled with but a little unbelief, 'tis the Lord, the Lord alone, who can loose the prisoners.

I passed away from that cell, and halted at another; this, also, had an iron gate of unbelief, as heavy and as ponderous as the former. I heard the warder coming, and when he opened the door for me it grated horribly upon its hinges, and disturbed the silence, for this time I was come into the silent cell. The wretch confined here was one who said he could not pray. If he could pray, he would be free. He was groaning, crying, sighing, weeping because he could not pray. All he could tell me, as his eye-balls rolled in agony, was this:—"I would, but cannot, pray; I would plead with God, but I cannot find a word, my guilt has smitten me dumb." Back he went, and refused to speak again, but he kept up a melancholy roaring all the day long. In this place no sound was heard but that of wailing; all was hushed except the dropping of his tears upon the cold stone, and his dreary miserere of sighs and groans. But do you know, there was a little table in this cell, and on the table lay a key of promise, inscribed with choice words:—"The Lord looked down from the height of His sanctuary: from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death." Now, thought I, if this man cannot speak, yet God hears his groans; if he cannot plead, God listens to his sighs, and beholds him all the way from heaven, with this purpose, that He may catch even the faintest whisper of this poor man's broken heart and set him free; for though the soul feels it can neither plead nor pray, yet it has prayed, and it shall prevail. I tried to catch the ear of my poor friend a little while, and talked to him, though he would not speak. I reminded him that the Book in his cell contained instances of dumb men whom Jesus

had taught to speak, and I told him that Christ was able to make him speak plainly too.

I told the man that, whether he could pray or not, he was bidden to look at the blood-marks over his door; that the publican was justified by the blood, though he could only cry, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." I pleaded with him to receive the Lord's own testimony, that the Lord Jesus is "able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him," that He waited to be gracious, and was a God ready to pardon; but after all, I felt that the Lord alone must loose his prisoners. O, gracious God, loose them now!

We hastened to a fourth door. The door opened and shut behind me as I stood alone. 'Twas dark as Egypt in her plague! This was the black hole called the cell of ignorance. I groped as a blind man gropeth for the wall. I was guided by my ear by sobs and moans to a spot where there knelt a creature in an earnest agony of prayer. I asked him what made his cell so dark. I knew the door was made of unbelief, which surely shuts out all light; but I marvelled why this place should be darker than the rest, only I recollected to have read of some that sat "in darkness, and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron." I asked him if there were no windows to the cell. Yes, there were windows, many windows, so people told him; but they had been stopped up years ago, and he did not know the way to open them. He was fully convinced that they never could afford light to him. I felt for one of the ancient lightholes, but it seemed as if, instead of giving light, it emitted darkness; I touched it with my hand, and it felt to me to have once been a window such as I had gazed through with delight. He told me it was one of the doctrines of grace which had greatly perplexed him; it was called Election. The little light thus shed upon the poor man led him to seek for more. Another darkened window was called Human Depravity. The man said: "Oh, there is no hope for me, for I am totally depraved, and my nature is execrating vile; there is no hope for me." I pulled the rags out of this window, and I said to him: "Do you not see that your ruin fits you for the remedy? It is because you are lost that Christ came to save you. Physicians are for the sick, robes for the naked, cleansing for the filthy, and forgiveness for the guilty." He said but little, but he pointed to another window, which was one I had long looked through and seen my Master's glory by its means; it was the doctrine of Particular Redemption. "Ah!" said he, "suppose Christ has not redeemed me with His precious blood! Suppose He has never bought me with His death!" I knocked out some old bricks which had been put in by an unskilful hand, which yet blocked out the light, and I told him that Christ did not offer a mock redemption, but one which really did redeem, for "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

I passed on and came to another chamber. This room, marked number five, was large, and had many persons in it who were trying to walk to and fro, but every man had a chain round his ankle, and a huge cannon-ball fixed to it—a military punishment, they said, for deserters from the ranks of virtue. This clog of virtue troubled the prisoners much. I saw some of them trying to file their chains with rusty nails, and others were endeavouring to fret away the iron by dropping tears of penitence thereon; but these poor men made but little progress at their work. The warder told me that this was the chain of Habit, and that the ball which dragged behind was the old propensity to lust and sin. I asked him why they did not get the chains knocked off; and he said they had been trying a long time to be rid of them, but they never could do it in the way they went to work, since the proper way to get rid of the chain of habit was, first of all, to get out of prison; the door of unbelief must be opened, and they must trust in the one great Deliverer, the Lord Jesus, whose pierced hands could open all prison doors; after that, upon the anvil of grace with the hammer of

love, their fetters could be broken off. I saw a drunkard led out of his prison, rejoicing in pardoning grace. He had aforetime laboured to escape from his drunkenness, but some three or four times he broke his pledge, and went back to his old sin. I saw that man trust in the precious blood, and he became a Christian, and, becoming a Christian, he could no more love his cups; at one stroke of the hammer the ball was gone for ever. Another was a swearer; he knew it was wrong to blaspheme the Most High, but he did it still, till he gave his heart to Christ, and then he never blasphemed again, for that foul thing was abhorred. In almost all prisons where they do not want to make vagabonds worse than when they entered, they have hard labour for them. In the prison I went to see, there was a hard-labour room. Those who entered it were mostly very proud people; they held their heads very high, and would not bend; they were birds with fine feathers, and thought themselves quite unfit to be confined, but, being in durance vile, they resolved to work their own way out. They believed in the system of human merit, and hoped in due time to purchase their liberty. They had saved up a few old counterfeit farthings, with which they thought they could by-and-bye set themselves free, though my bright attendant plainly declared their folly and mistake. It was amusing, and yet sad, to see what different works these people were about. Some of them toiled at the tread-wheel; they were going to the stars, they said, and there they were, tread, tread, tread, with all their might; but though they had been labouring for years, and were never an inch higher, yet still they were confident that they were mounting to the skies. Others were trying to make garments out of cobwebs; they were turning wheels, and spinning at a great rate, and, though it came to nothing, they wrought on. They believed they should be free as soon as they had made a perfect garment, and I believe they will. In one place, a company laboured to build houses of sand, and when they had built up to some height, the foundations always yielded; but they renewed their efforts, for they dreamed that if a substantial edifice were finished, they would then be allowed to go free. I saw some of them, strangely enough, endeavouring to make wedding garments out of fig-leaves, by sewing them together; but the fig-leaves were of a sort that were shrivelled every night, so that they had to begin the next morning their hopeless toil. Some, I noticed, were trying to pump water out of a dry well; the veins stood out upon their brows like whipcords while they worked amain without result. As they laboured, like Samson when he was grinding at the mill, I could hear the crack of whips upon their backs. I saw one ten-thonged whip called the Law, the terrible Law—each lash being a commandment, and this was laid upon the bare backs and consciences of the prisoners; yet still they kept on work, work, work, and would not turn to the door of grace to find escape. I saw some of them fall down fainting, whereupon their friends strove to bring them water in leaking vessels, called ceremonies; and there were some men called priests, who ran about with cups which had no bottoms in them, which they held up to the lips of these poor fainting wretches to give them comfort. As these men fainted, I thought they would die; but they struggled up again to work. At last they could do no more, and fell down under their burdens utterly broken in spirit; then I saw that every prisoner, who at last so fainted as to give up all hope of his own deliverance by merit, was taken up by a shining spirit, and carried out of the prison and made free for ever.

Then I thought within myself, "Surely, surely, these are proud, self-righteous persons who will not submit to be saved by grace, 'therefore He brought down their heart with labour; they fell down and there was none to help; then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses.'" I rejoiced and blessed God that there was such a prison-house to bring them to Jesus; yet I mourned that there were so many who still loved this house of bondage and would not

escape, though there stood one with his finger always pointing to the words: "By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified;" and to these other words: "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

Chapter 2: The Only Salvation

The Only Salvation

What a great word that word "salvation" is! It includes the cleansing of our conscience from all past guilt, the delivery of our soul from all those propensities to evil which now so strongly predominate in us; it takes in, in fact, the undoing of all that Adam did. Salvation is the total restoration of man from his fallen estate; and yet it is something more than that, for God's salvation fixes our standing more secure than it was before we fell. It finds us broken in pieces by the sin of our first parent, defiled, stained, accursed: it first heals our wounds, it removes our diseases, it takes away our curse, it puts our feet upon the rock Christ Jesus, and having thus done, at last it lifts our heads far above all principalities and powers, to be crowned for ever with Jesus Christ, the king of heaven. Some people, when they use the word "salvation," understand nothing more by it than deliverance from hell and admittance into heaven. Now, that is not salvation: those two things are the effects of salvation. We are redeemed from hell because we are saved, and we enter heaven because we have been saved beforehand. Our everlasting state is the effect of salvation in this life. Salvation, it is true, includes all that, because salvation is the mother of it; but still it were wrong for us to imagine that that is all the meaning of the word. Salvation begins with us as wandering sheep; it follows us through all our mazy wanderings; it puts us on the shoulders of the shepherd; it carries us into the fold; it calls together the friends and the neighbours; it rejoices over us; it preserves us in that fold through life; and then at last it brings us to the green pastures of heaven, beside the still waters of bliss, where we lie down for ever, in the presence of the Chief Shepherd, never more to be disturbed.

"Neither is there salvation in any other." Did you ever notice the intolerance of God's religion? In olden times the heathen, who had different gods, all of them respected the gods of their neighbours. For instance, the king of Egypt would confess that the gods of Nineveh were true and real gods, and the prince of Babylon would acknowledge that the gods of the Philistines were true and real gods: but Jehovah, the God of Israel, put this as one of his first commandments, "Thou shalt have none other gods besides Me;" and He would not allow them to pay the slightest possible respect to the gods of any other nation: "Thou shalt hew them in pieces, thou shalt break down their temples, and cut down their groves." All other nations were tolerant the one to the other, but the Jew could not be so. One part of his religion was, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God;" and as the consequence of his belief that there was but one God, and that that one God was Jehovah, he felt it his bounden duty to call all pretended gods by nicknames, to spit upon them, to treat them with contumely and contempt. Now the Christian religion, you observe, is just as intolerant as this. If you apply to a Brahmin to know the way of salvation, he will very likely tell you at once, that all persons who follow out their sincere religious convictions will undoubtedly be saved. "Here," says he, "are the Mohammedans; if they obey Mohammed, and sincerely believe what he has taught, without doubt, Alla will glorify them at last." And the Brahmin turns round upon the Christian missionary, and says, "What is the use of your bringing your Christianity here to disturb us? I tell you our religion is quite capable of carrying us to heaven, if we are faithful to it."

Now just hear how intolerant is the Christian religion:—"Neither is there salvation in any other." The Brahmin may admit that there is salvation in fifty religions besides his own; but we admit no such thing. There is no true salvation out of Jesus Christ. The gods of the heathens may approach us with their mock charity, and tell us that every man may follow out his own conscientious conviction and be saved. We reply:—No such thing: there is no salvation in any other; "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Now, what do you suppose is the reason of this intolerance? I believe it is just because there is the truth both with the Jew and with the Christian. A thousand errors may live in peace with one another, but truth is the hammer that breaks them all in pieces. A hundred lying religions may sleep peaceably in one bed, but wherever the Christian religion goes as the truth, it is like a fire brand, and it abideth nothing that is not more substantial than the wood, the hay, and the stubble of carnal error. All the gods of the heathen, and all other religions, are born of hell, and therefore, being children of the same father, it would seem amiss that they should fall out, and chide, and fight; but the religion of Christ is a thing of God's—its pedigree is from on high, and, therefore, when once it is thrust into the midst of an ungodly and gainsaying generation, it hath neither peace, nor parley, nor treaty with them, for it is truth, and cannot afford to be yoked with error: it stands upon its own rights, and gives to error its due, declaring that it hath no salvation, but that in the truth, and in the truth alone, is salvation to be found.

Once I thought there was salvation in good works, and I laboured hard, and strove diligently to preserve a character for integrity and uprightness; but when the Spirit of God came into my heart, "sin revived and I died," that which I thought had been good proved to be evil; wherein I thought I had been holy I found myself to be unholy. I discovered that my very best actions were sinful, that my tears needed to be wept over, and that my very prayers needed God's forgiveness. I discovered that I was seeking after salvation by the works of the law, that I was doing all my good works from a selfish motive, namely, to save myself, and therefore they could not be acceptable to God. I found out that I could not be saved by good works for two very good reasons: first, I had not got any; and secondly, if I had any, they could not save me. After that I thought, surely salvation might be obtained, partly by reformation, and partly by trusting in Christ; so I laboured hard again, and thought if I added a few prayers here and there, a few tears of penitence, and a few vows of improvement, all would be well. But after fagging on for many a weary day, like a poor blind horse toiling round the mill, I found I had got no farther, for there was still the curse of God hanging over me: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them;" and there was still an aching void in my heart the world could never fill—a void of distress and care, for I was sorely troubled because I could not attain unto the rest which my soul desired. Have you tried those two ways of getting to heaven? If you have, I trust the Lord, the Holy Spirit, has made you heartily sick of them, for you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven by the right door, until you have first of all been led to confess that all the other doors are barred in your teeth. No man ever did come to God through the strait and narrow way until he had tried all the other ways; and when we find ourselves beaten, and foiled, and defeated, then it is that, pressed by sore necessity, we betake ourselves to the one open fountain, and there wash ourselves, and are made clean.

I could turn to you myself, and tell you that surely there must be salvation in Christ for you, since I have found salvation in Christ for myself. I will never doubt the salvation of any one, so long as I

can but know that Christ has accepted me. Oh! how dark was my despair when I first sought His mercy seat. I thought then that if He had mercy on all the world, yet He would never have mercy on me; the sins of my childhood and my youth haunted me; I sought to get rid of them one by one, but I was caught as in an iron net of evil habits, and I could not overthrow them; and even when I could renounce my sin, yet the guilt still did cling to my garments—I could not wash myself clean; I prayed for three long years, I bent my knees in vain, and sought, but found no mercy. But, at last, blessed be His name, when I had given up all hope, and thought that His swift anger would destroy me, and that the pit would open its mouth and swallow me up, then in the hour of my extremity did He manifest Himself to me, and teach me to cast myself simply and solely upon Him. So shall it be with thee, only trust Him, for there is salvation in Him—rest assured of that.

If you do not find salvation in Christ, you will never find it elsewhere. What a dreadful thing it will be for you if you should lose the salvation provided by Christ! For "how shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation?" Whether we are gross sinners or not, how fearful a thing it will be for us to die without first having found an interest in the Saviour! O sinner! this should quicken thee in going to the mercy seat; this thought, that if thou findest no mercy at the feet of Jesus, thou canst never find it anywhere else. If the gates of heaven shall never open to thee, remember there is no other gate that can ever be opened for thy salvation. If Christ refuse thee thou art refused; if His blood be not sprinkled on thee thou art lost indeed. Oh! if He keeps thee waiting a little while, still continue in prayer; it is worth waiting for, especially when thou hast this thought to keep thee waiting, namely, that there is none other, no other way, no other hope, no other ground of trust, no other refuge. There I see the gate of heaven, and if I must enter it, I must creep on my hands and knees, for it is a low gate; there I see it, it is a strait and narrow one, I must leave my sins behind me, and my proud righteousness, and I must creep in through that wicket. Come sinner, what sayest thou? Wilt thou go beyond this strait and narrow gate, or wilt thou despise eternal life and risk eternal bliss? Or wilt thou go through it humbly hoping that He who gave Himself for thee will accept thee in Himself, and save thee now, and save thee everlastingly?

Chapter 3: Those Who Take Not Warning

Those Who Take Not Warning In all worldly things men are always enough awake to understand their own interests. There is scarce a merchant who reads the paper who does not read it in some way or other with a view to his own personal concerns. If he finds that by the rise or fall of the markets he will be either a gainer or a loser, that part of the day's news will be the most important to him. In politics, in everything, in fact, that concerns temporal affairs, personal interest usually leads the way. Men will always be looking out for themselves, and personal and home interests will generally engross the major part of their thoughts. But in religion it is otherwise. In religion men love far rather to believe abstract doctrines, and to talk of general truths, than the searching inquiries which examine their own personal interest in it. You will hear many men admire the preacher who deals in generalities, but when he comes to press home searching questions, by-and-by they are offended. If we stand and declare general facts, such as the universal sinfulness of mankind, or the need of a Saviour, they will give an assent to our doctrine, and possibly they may retire greatly delighted with the discourse, because it has not affected them; but how often will our audience gnash their teeth, and go away in a rage, because, like the Pharisees with Jesus, they perceive, concerning a faithful minister, that he spoke of them. How foolish this is. If in all other matters we like personalities—if in everything else we look to our own concerns, how much more should we do so in religion? for surely every man must give an account for himself at the day of judgment. We must die alone; we must rise at the day of resurrection one by one, and each one for himself must appear before the bar of God; and each one must either have said to Him, as an individual, "Come ye blessed;" or else he must be appalled with the thundering sentence, "Depart, ye cursed." If there were such a thing as national salvation; if it could be possible that we could be saved in the gross and in the bulk, that so, like the sheaves of corn, the few weeds that may grow with the stubble would be gathered in for the sake of the wheat, then, indeed, it might not be so foolish for us to neglect our own personal interests; but if the sheep must, every one of them, pass under the hand of Him that telleth them, if every man must stand in his own person before God, to be tried for his own acts—by everything that is rational, by everything that conscience would dictate, and self-interest would command, let us each of us look to our own selves, that we be not deceived, and that we find not ourselves at last miserably cast away. A warning may be all that could be desired. When in time of war an army is attacked in the night, and cut off and destroyed whilst asleep, if it were impossible for them to be aware of the attack, and if they had used all diligence in placing their sentinels, but nevertheless the foe were so wary as to destroy them, we should weep; we should attach no blame to anyone, but should deeply regret, and should give to that host our fullest pity. But if, on the other hand, they had posted their sentinels, and the sentinels were wide awake, and gave to the sleepy soldiers every warning that could be desired, but nevertheless the army were cut off, although we might for common humanity regret the loss thereof, yet at the same time we should be obliged to say, if they were foolish enough to sleep when the sentinels had warned them; if they folded their arms in presumptuous sloth, after they had had sufficient and timely notice of the progress of their bloodthirsty enemy, then in their dying, we cannot pity them: their blood must rest upon their own

heads. So it is with you. If men perish and have not been sufficiently warned to escape from the wrath to come, the Christian may pity them even when they stand before the bar of God; although the fact of their not having been warned will not fully excuse them, yet it will go far to diminish their eternal miseries, which otherwise might have fallen upon their heads; for we know it is more tolerable for unwarned Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than it is for any city, or any nation that has had the Gospel proclaimed in its ears.

"He heard the sound of the trumpet." In far-off lands the trumpet sound of warning is not heard. Alas! there are myriads of our fellow-creatures who have never been warned by God's ambassadors, who know not that wrath abideth on them, and who do not yet understand the only way and method of salvation. The trumpet was not only heard, but its warning was understood. When the man heard the trumpet, he understood by it that the enemy was at hand, and yet he took not warning. In many of your cases the warning has been very frequent. If the man heard the trumpet sound once and did not regard it, possibly we might excuse him; but how many have heard the trumpet sound of the gospel very frequently. There you are, young man. You have had many years of a pious mother's teaching, many years of a pious minister's exhortations. Waggon loads of sermons have been exhausted upon you. You have had many sharp providences, many terrible sicknesses. Often when the death bell has tolled for your friend, your conscience has been aroused. To you warnings are not unusual things; they are very common. O my readers! if a man should hear the gospel but once, his blood would be upon his own head for rejecting it; but of how much sorer punishment shall you be thought worthy who have heard it many and many a time! Ah, I may well weep, when I think how many sermons you have listened to, many of you, how many times you have been cut to the heart. A hundred times every year you have gone up to the house of God, and far oftener than that, and you have just added a hundred billets to the eternal pile. A hundred times the trumpet has sounded in your ears, and a hundred times you have turned away to sin again, to despise Christ, to neglect your eternal interests, and to pursue the pleasures and the concerns of this world. Oh, how mad this is, how mad! if a man had but once poured out his heart before you concerning your eternal interests, and if he had spoken to you earnestly, and you had rejected his message, then, even then, ye had been guilty. But what shall we say to you upon whom the shafts of the Almighty have been exhausted? Oh, what shall be done unto this barren ground that hath been watered with shower after shower, and that hath been quickened with sunshine after sunshine? What shall be done unto him who being often rebuked, still hardeneth his neck? Shall he not be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy, and shall it not then be said, "His blood lieth at his own door, his guilt is on his own head"? And I would just have you recollect one thing more. This warning that you have had so often, has come to you in time. "Ah," said an infidel once, "God never regards man. If there be a God, he would never take notice of men." Said a Christian minister, who was sitting opposite to him in the carriage, "The day may come, sir, when you will learn the truth of what you have just said." "I do not understand your allusion, sir," said he. "Well, sir, the day may come, when you may call, and He will refuse; when you may stretch out your hands and He will not regard you, but as He has said in the Book of Proverbs, so will He do, 'Because I called, and ye refused; because I stretched out my hands, and no man regarded, I also will mock at your calamity, I will laugh when your fear cometh.'" But your warning has not come too late. You are not warned on a sick bed, at the eleventh hour, when there is but a bare possibility of salvation, but you are warned in time, you are warned to-day, you have been warned for these many years that are now past. If God should send a preacher to the damned in hell, that were an

unnecessary addition to their misery. Surely, if one could go and preach the gospel through the fields of Gehenna, and tell them of a Saviour they had despised, and of a gospel that is now beyond their reach, that were taunting poor souls with a vain attempt to increase their unutterable woe; but to preach the gospel now is to preach in a hopeful period; for "now is the accepted time: now is the day of salvation."

Warn the boatman before he enters the current, and then, if he is swept down the rapids, he destroys himself. Warn the man before he drinks the cup of poison, tell him it is deadly: and then, if he drinks it, his death lies at his own door. And so, let us warn you before you depart this life; let us preach to you while as yet your bones are full of marrow, and the sinews of your joints are not loosed. We have then warned you in time, and so much the more shall your guilt be increased, because the warning was timely; it was frequent, it was earnest, it was appropriate, it was arousing, it was continually given to you, and yet you sought not to escape from the wrath to come.

Some say, "Well, I did not attend to the warning, because I did not believe there was any necessity for it." Ah! You were told that after death there was a judgment, and you did not believe there was any necessity that you should be prepared for that judgment. You were told that by the works of the law there shall no flesh living be justified, and that only through Christ can sinners be saved; and you did not think there was any necessity for Christ. Well you ought to have thought there was a necessity. You knew there was a necessity in your inner consciousness. You talked very large things when you stood up as an unbeliever, a professed unbeliever: but you know there was a still small voice that while you spake belied your tongue. You are well aware that in the silent watches of the night you have often trembled; in a storm at sea you have been on your knees to pray to a God whom on the land you have laughed at; and when you have been sick nigh unto death, you have said, "Lord, have mercy upon me;" and so you have prayed, that you have believed it after all. But if you did not believe it, you ought to have believed it. There was enough in reason to have taught you that there was a hereafter; the Book of God's revelation was plain enough to have taught it to you, and if you have rejected God's Book, and rejected the voice of reason and of conscience, your blood is on your own head. Your excuse is idle. It is worse than that, it is profane and wicked, and still on your own head be your everlasting torment.

"But," cries another, "I did not like the trumpet. I did not like the Gospel that was preached." Says one, "I did not like certain doctrines in the Bible. I thought the minister preached too harsh doctrines sometimes; I did not agree with the Gospel; I thought the Gospel ought to have been altered, and not have been just what it was." You did not like the trumpet, did you? Well, but God made the trumpet, God made the Gospel; and inasmuch as ye did not like what God made, it is an idle excuse. What was that to you what the trumpet was, so long as it warned you? And surely, if it had been time of war, and you had heard a trumpet sounded to warn you of the coming of the enemy, you would not have sat still, and said, "Now I believe that is a brass trumpet; I would like to have had it made of silver." No, but the sound would have been enough for you, and up you would have been to escape from the danger. And so it must be now with you. It is an idle pretence that you did not like it. You ought to have liked it, for God made the Gospel what it is. But you say, "I did not like the man that blew it." Well, if you did not like one messenger of God, there are many in this city. Could you not find one you did like? You did not like one man's manner: it was too theatrical; you did not like another's: it was too doctrinal; you did not like another's: it was too

practical—there are plenty of them, you may take which you do like, but if God has sent the men, and told them how to blow, and if they blow to the best of their ability, it is all in vain for you to reject their warnings, because they do not blow the way you like. Ah, we do not find fault with the way a man speaks, if we are in a house that is on fire. If the man calls, "Fire! Fire!" we are not particular what note he takes, we do not think what a harsh voice he has got. You would think anyone a confounded fool who should lie in his bed, to be burned, because he said he did not like the way the man cried "Fire." Why his business was to have been out of bed and down the stairs at once, as soon as he heard it. But another says: "I did not like the man himself; I did not like the man that blew the trumpet; I could hear him, but I had a personal dislike to him, and so I did not take any notice of what the trumpet said." Verily, God will say to thee at last: "Thou fool, what hadst thou to do with that man; to his own master he stands or falls; thy business was with thyself." What would you think of a man who has fallen overboard from a ship, and when he is drowning, some sailor throws him a rope, and there it is. Well, he says, in the first place, "I do not like that rope; I don't think that rope was made at the best manufactory; there is some tar on it too, I do not like it;" and in the next place, "I do not like that sailor who threw the rope over, I am sure he is not a kind-hearted man, I do not like the look of him at all;" and then comes a gurgle and a groan, and down he is at the bottom of the sea; and when he was drowned, they said that it served him right, and if he would not lay hold of the rope, but would be making such foolish and absurd objections, when it was a matter of life and death, then on his own head be his blood. And so shall it be with you at last. You are so busy with criticising the minister, and his style, and his doctrine, that your own soul perishes. Remember you may get into hell by criticism, but you will never criticise your soul out of it. You may there make the most you can of it. You may be there and say: "I did not like the minister, I did not like his manner, I did not like his matter;" but all your dislikings will not get one drop of water to cool your burning tongue, nor serve to mitigate the unalleviated torments of that world of agony.

There are many other people who say, "Ah, well, I did none of those things, but I had a notion that the trumpet sound ought to be blown to everybody else, but not to me." Ah, that is a very common notion. "All men think all men mortal but themselves," said a good poet; and all men think all men need the Gospel, but not themselves. Let each of us recollect that the Gospel has a message to each one of us.

"Well," says another, "but I was so busy, I had so much to do, that I could not possibly attend to my soul's concerns." What will you say of the man who had so much to do that he could not get out of the burning house, but was burnt to ashes? What will you say of the man who had so much to do, that, when he was dying, he had not time to send for a physician? Why, you will say, "Then he ought not to have had so much to do." And if any man in the world has a business which causes him to lose his own soul for want of time, let him lay this question to his heart, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" But it is false—it is false—men have got time. It is the want of will, not want of way. You have time, sir, have you not, despite all your business, to spend in pleasure? You have time to read your newspaper—have you no time to read your Bible? You have time to sing a song—have you no time to pray a prayer? Why, you know when farmer Brown met farmer Smith in the market one day, he said to him, "Farmer Smith, I can't think how it is you find time for hunting. Why, man, what with sowing and mowing and reaping and ploughing, and all that, my time is so fully occupied on my farm, that I have no time for

hunting." "Ah," said he, "Brown, if you liked hunting as much as I do, if you could not find time, you'd make it." And so it is with religion; the reason why men cannot find time for it is, because they do not like it well enough. If they liked it, they would find time. And besides, what time does it want? What time does it require? Can I not pray to God over my ledger? Can I not snatch a text at my very breakfast, and think over it all day? May I not, even when I am busy in the affairs of the world, be thinking of my soul, and casting myself upon a Redeemer's blood and atonement? It wants no time. There may be some time required; some time for my private devotions, and for communion with Christ; but when I grow in grace, I shall think it right to have more and more time; the more I can possibly get, the happier I shall be, and I shall never make the excuse that I have no time.

"Well," says another, "but I thought I had time enough; you do not want me, sir, to be religious in my youth, do you? I am a lad, and may I not have a little frolic and sow my wild oats as well as anybody else?" "Well—yes, yes; but, at the same time, the best place for frolic that I know of, is where a Christian lives; the finest happiness in all the world is the happiness of a child of God. You may have your pleasures—oh, yes! you shall have them doubled and trebled, if you are a Christian. You shall not have things that worldlings call pleasures, but you shall have some that are a thousand times better. But only look at that sorrowful picture. There, far away in the dark gulf of woe, lies a young man, and he cries, "Ah, I meant to have repented when I was out of my apprenticeship, and I died before my time was up." "Ah!" says another by his side, "and I thought, whilst I was a journeyman, that when I came to be a master, I would then think of the things of Christ, but I died before I had got money enough to start for myself." And then a merchant behind wails with bitter woe, and says: "Ah! I thought I would be religious when I had got enough to retire on, and live in the country; then I should have time to think of God, when I had got all my children married out, and my concerns settled about me, but here I am shut up in hell; and now, what are all my delays worth, and what is all the time I gained for all the paltry pleasures in the world? Now I have lost my soul over them." We experience great vexation if we are unpunctual in many places; but we cannot conceive what must be the horror and dismay of men who find themselves too late in the next world! Ah, friends, if I knew there was one here who said, "I shall repent next Wednesday," I would have him feel in a dreadful state till that Wednesday came; for what if he should die? Oh, what if he should die? Would his promise of a Wednesday's repentance save him from a Thursday damnation?

Now, the sinner will perish—he will perish certainly; but, last of all, he will perish without excuse—his blood shall be on his own head. When a man is bankrupt, if he can say: "It is not through reckless trading—it has been entirely through the dishonesty of one I trusted that I am what I am;" he takes some consolation, and he says, "I cannot help it." But, O my readers! if you make bankrupts of your own souls, after you have been warned, then your own eternal bankruptcy shall lie at your own door. Should never so great a misfortune come upon us, if we can trace it to the providence of God, we bear it cheerfully; but if we have inflicted it upon ourselves, then how fearful is it! And let every man remember that, if he perish after having heard the Gospel, he will be his own murderer. Sinner, thou wilt drive the dagger into thine heart thyself. If thou despisest the Gospel, thou art preparing fuel for thine own bed of flames, thou art hammering out the chain for thine own everlasting binding: and when damned, thy mournful reflection will be this: "I have damned myself, I cast myself into this pit; for I rejected the Gospel; I despised the message; I trod

under foot the Son of man; I would have none of His rebukes. I despised His Sabbaths; I would not hearken to His exhortations, and now I perish by mine own hand, the miserable suicide of my own soul."

Chapter 4: How To Get Saving Faith

How to Get Saving Faith

"By grace are ye saved." Because God is gracious, therefore sinful men are forgiven, converted, purified, and saved. It is not because of anything in them, or that ever can be in them, that they are saved; but because of the boundless love, goodness, pity, compassion, mercy, and grace of God. Tarry a moment, then, at the well-head. Behold the pure river of water of life as it proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. What an abyss is the grace of God! Who can fathom it? Like all the rest of the divine attributes, it is infinite. God is full of love, for "God is love"; God is full of goodness, and the very name "God" is but short for "good." Unbounded goodness and love enter into the very essence of the Godhead. It is because "His mercy endureth for ever" that men are not destroyed; because "His compassions fail not" that sinners are brought to Himself and forgiven. Right well remember this, for else you may fall into error by fixing your minds so much upon the faith which is the channel of salvation as to forget the grace which is the fountain and source even of faith itself. Faith is the work of God's grace in us. No man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost. "No man cometh unto Me," saith Christ, "except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." So that faith, which is coming to Christ, is the result of divine drawing. Grace is the first and last moving cause of salvation, and faith, important as it is, is only an important part of the machinery which grace employs. We are saved "through faith," but it is "by grace." Sound forth those words as with the archangel's trumpet: "By grace are ye saved."

Faith occupies the position of a channel or conduit-pipe. Grace is the fountain and the stream: faith is the aqueduct along which the flood of mercy flows down to refresh the thirsty sons of men. It is a great pity when the aqueduct is broken. It is a sad sight to see around!

How can we obtain and increase our faith? A very earnest question this to many. They say they want to believe but cannot. A great deal of nonsense is talked upon this subject. Let us be practical in our dealing with it. "What am I to do in order to believe?" The shortest way is to believe, and if the Holy Spirit has made you honest and candid, you will believe as soon as the truth is set before you. Anyhow, the Gospel command is clear: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But still, if you have a difficulty, take it before

God in prayer. Tell the great Father exactly what it is that puzzles you, and beg Him by His Holy Spirit to solve the question. If I cannot believe a statement in a book I am glad to enquire of the author what he meant, and if he is a true man his explanation will satisfy me; much more will the divine explanation satisfy the heart of the true seeker. The Lord is willing to make Himself known; go to Him, and see if it be not so.

Furthermore, if faith seem difficult, it is possible that God the Holy Spirit will enable you to believe if you hear very frequently and earnestly that which you are commanded to believe. We believe many things because we have heard them so often. Do you not find it so in common life, that if you hear a thing fifty times a day, at last you come to believe it? Some men have come to believe that

which is false by this process: I should not wonder but what God often blesses this method in working faith concerning that which is true, for it is written, "Faith cometh by hearing." If I earnestly and attentively hear the Gospel, it may be that one of these days I shall find myself believing that which I hear, through the blessed operation of the Spirit upon my mind. The Samaritans believed because of what the woman told them concerning Jesus. Many of our beliefs arise out of the testimony of others. I believe that there is such a country as Japan: I never saw it, and yet I believe that there is such a place because others have been there. I believe I shall die: I have never died, but a great many have done so whom I once knew, and I have a conviction that I shall die also; the testimony of many convinces me of this fact. Listen, then, to those who tell you how they were saved, how they were pardoned, how they have been changed in character: if you will but listen you will find that somebody just like yourself has been saved. If you have been a thief, you will find that a thief rejoiced to wash away his sin in the fountain of Christ's blood. You that have been unchaste in life, you will find that men who have fallen that way have been cleansed and changed. If you are in despair, you have only to get among God's people, and enquire a little, and some who have been equally in despair with yourself will tell you how He saved them. As you listen to one after another of those who have tried the word of God, and proved it, the divine Spirit will lead you to believe. Have you not heard of the African who was told by the missionary that water sometimes became so hard that a man could walk on it? He declared that he believed a great many things the missionary had told him; but he never would believe that. When he came to England it came to pass that one frosty day he saw the river frozen, but he would not venture on it. He knew that it was a river, and he was certain that he would be drowned if he ventured upon it. He could not be induced to walk the ice till his friend went upon it; then he was persuaded, and trusted himself where others had ventured. So, mayhap, while you see others believe, and notice their joy and peace, you will yourself be gently led to believe. It is one of God's ways of helping us to faith. A better plan still is this,—note the authority upon which you are commanded to believe, and this will greatly help you. The authority is not mine, or you might well reject it. It is not even the Pope's, or you might even reject that. But you are commanded to believe upon the authority of God Himself. He bids you believe in Jesus Christ, and you must not refuse to obey your Maker. The foreman of a certain works in the north had often heard the Gospel, but he was troubled with the fear that he might not come to Christ. His good master one day sent a card round to the works—"Come to my house immediately after work." The foreman appeared at his master's door, and the master came out, and said, somewhat roughly, "What do you want, John, troubling me at this time? Work is done; what right have you here?" "Sir," said he, "I had a card from you saying that I was to come after work." "Do you mean to say that merely because you had a card from me you are to come up to my house and call me out after business hours?" "Well, sir," replied the foreman, "I do not understand you, but it seems to me that, as you sent for me, I had a right to come." "Come in, John," said his master, "I have another message that I want to read to you," and he sat down and read these words: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Do you think after such a message from Christ that you can be wrong in going to Him?" The poor man saw it all at once, and believed, because he saw that he had good warrant and authority for believing. So have you, poor soul; you have good authority for coming to Christ, for the Lord Himself bids you trust Him.

If that does not settle you, think over what it is that you have to believe,—that the Lord Jesus Christ suffered in the room and place and stead of men, and is able to save all who trust Him.

Why, this is the most blessed fact that ever men were told to believe: the most suitable, the most comforting, the most divine truth that ever was set before men. I advise you to think much upon it, and search out the grace and love which it contains. Study the four Evangelists, study Paul's epistles, and then see if the message is not such a credible one that you are forced to believe it.

If that does not do, then think upon the person of Jesus Christ—think of who He is and what He did, and where He is now, and what He is now; think often and deeply. When He, even such an one as He, bids you trust Him, surely then your heart will be persuaded. For how can you doubt Him?

If none of these things avail, then there is something wrong about you altogether. Submit yourself to God! May the Spirit of God take away your enmity and make you yield. You are a rebel, a proud rebel, and that is why you do not believe your God. Give up your rebellion; throw down your weapons; yield at discretion; surrender to your King. I believe that never did a soul throw up its hands in self-despair, and cry, "Lord, I yield," but what faith became easy to it before long. It is because you still have a quarrel with God, and intend to have your own will and your own way, that therefore you cannot believe. "How can ye believe," said Christ, "that have honour one of another?" Proud self creates unbelief. Yield to your God, and then shall you sweetly believe in your Saviour.

Chapter 5: Running For a Purpose

Running for a Purpose

Some people think they must be religious, in order to be respectable. There are a vast number of people in the world who go to church and to chapel, because everybody else does so. It is disreputable to waste your Sundays, not to be found going up to the house of God; therefore they take a pew and attend the services, and they think they have done their duty: they have obtained all that they sought for, when they can hear their neighbours saying, "Such and-such a man is a very respectable person; he is always very regular at his church; he is a very reputable person, and exceedingly praiseworthy." Verily, if this be what you seek after in your religion, you shall get it; for the Pharisees who sought the praise of men "had their reward." But when you have gotten it, what a poor reward it is! Is it worth the drudgery? I do not believe that the drudgery to which people submit, in order to be called respectable, is at all compensated by what they gain. I am sure, for my own part, I would not care a solitary rap what I was called, or what I was thought; nor would I perform anything that was irksome to myself for the sake of pleasing any man who ever walked beneath the stars, however great or mighty he may be. It is the sign of a fawning, cringing spirit, when people are always seeking to do that which renders them respectable. The esteem of men is not worth the looking after, and sad it is, that this should be the only prize which some men put before them in the poor religion which they undertake.

Another set of people take up with religious life for what they can get by it. I have known tradespeople attend church for the mere sake of getting the custom of those who went there. I have heard of such things as people knowing which side their bread was buttered, and going to that particular denomination, where they thought they could get the most by it. Loaves and fishes drew some of Christ's followers, and they are very attracting baits, even to this day. Men find there is something to be gotten by religion. Among the poor it is, perhaps, some little charity to be obtained, and among those who are in business, it is the custom which they think to get. "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward;" for the church is ever foolish and unsuspecting. We do not like to suspect our fellow creatures of following us from sordid motives. The church does not like to think that a man would be base enough to pretend to religion for the mere sake of what he can get; and, therefore, we let these people easily slip through, and they have their reward. But ah, at what a price they buy it! They have deceived the Lord's servants for gold, and they have entered into His church as base hypocrites for the sake of a piece of bread; and they shall be thrust out at last with the anger of God behind them, like Adam driven out of Eden, with the flaming Cherubim with a sword turning every way to keep the tree of life; and they shall for ever look back upon this as the most fearful crime they have committed—that they pretended to be God's people when they were not, and entered into the midst of the fold when they were but wolves in sheep's clothing.

There is yet another class; and when I have referred to them, I will mention no more. These are the people who take up with religion for the sake of quieting their conscience; and it is astonishing how little of religion will sometimes do that. Some people tell us that if in the time of storm men

would pour bottles of oil upon the waves, there would be a great calm at once. I have never tried it, and it is most probable I never shall, for my organ of credulity is not large enough to accept so extensive a statement. But there are some people who think that they can calm the storm of a troubled conscience by pouring a little of the oil of a profession about religion upon it; and it is amazing how wonderful an effect this really has. I have known a man who was drunk many times in a week, and who got his money dishonestly, and yet he always had an easy conscience by going to his church or chapel regularly on the Sunday. We have heard of a man who could "devour widows' houses"

—a lawyer who could swallow up everything that came in his way, and yet he would never go to bed without saying his prayers; and that stilled his conscience. We have heard of other persons, especially among the Romanists, who would not object to thieving, but who would regard eating anything but fish on a Friday as a most fearful sin, supposing that, by making a fast on the Friday, all the iniquities of all the days in the week would be put away. They want the outward forms of religion to keep the conscience quiet; for Conscience is one of the worst lodgers to have in your house when he gets quarrelsome: there is no abiding with him; he is an ill bed-fellow; ill at lying down, and equally troublesome at rising up. A guilty conscience is one of the curses of the world: it puts out the sun, and takes away the brightness from the moonbeam. A guilty conscience casts a noxious exhalation through the air, removes the beauty from the landscape, the glory from the flowing river, the majesty from the rolling floods. There is nothing beautiful to the man who has a guilty conscience. He needs no accusing; everything accuses him. Hence people take up with religion just to quiet them. They take the Sacrament sometimes; they go to a place of worship; they sing a hymn now and then; they give a guinea to a charity; they intend to leave a portion in their will to build alms-houses; and in this way conscience is lulled asleep, and they rock him to and fro with religious observances, till there he sleeps while they sing over him the lullaby of hypocrisy, and he wakes not until he shall wake with that rich man who was here clothed in purple, but in the next world did lift up his eyes in hell, being in torments, without a drop of water to cool his burning tongue. The Apostle says, "So run that ye may obtain." There are some people who certainly never will obtain the prize, because they are not even entered. Their names are not down for the race, and therefore it is quite clear that they will not run, or, if they do run, they will run without having any warrant whatever for expecting to receive the prize. There are some who will tell you themselves, "We make no profession—none whatever." It is quite as well, perhaps, that you do not; because if you did, you would be hypocrites, and it is better to make no profession at all than to be hypocrites. Still, recollect, your names are not down for the race, and therefore you cannot win. If a man tells you in business that he makes no profession of being honest, you know that he is a confirmed rogue. If a man makes no profession of being religious, you know what he is—he is irreligious—he has no fear of God before his eyes, he has no love to Christ, he has no hope of heaven. He confesses it himself. Strange that men should be so ready to confess this. You don't find persons in the street willing to acknowledge that they are confirmed drunkards. Generally, a man will repudiate it with scorn. You never find a man saying to you, "I don't profess to be a chaste living man." You don't hear another say, "I don't profess to be anything but a covetous wretch." No; people are not so fast about telling their faults: and yet you hear people confess the greatest fault to which man can be addicted: they say, "I make no profession"—which means just this—that they do not give God His due. God has made them, and yet they won't serve Him; Christ hath come into the world to save sinners, and yet they will not regard Him; the gospel

is preached, and yet they will not hear it; they have the Bible in their houses, and yet they will not attend to its admonitions; they make no profession of doing so. It will be short work with them at the last great day. There will be no need for the books to be opened, no need for a long deliberation in the verdict. They do not profess to be pardoned; their guilt is written upon their own foreheads, their brazen shameless-ness shall be seen by the whole world, as a sentence of destruction written upon their very brows. You cannot expect to win heaven unless your names are entered for the race. If there be no attempts whatever made, even at so much as a profession of religion, then of course you may just sit down and say, "Heaven is not for me; I have no part nor lot in the inheritance of Israel; I cannot say that my Redeemer liveth; and I may rest quite assured that Tophet is prepared of old for me. I must feel its pains and know its miseries; for there are but two places to dwell in hereafter, and if I am not found on the right hand of the Judge there is but one alternative—namely, to be cast away for ever into the blackness of darkness."

Then there is another class whose names are down, but they never started right. A bad start is a sad thing. If in the ancient races of Greece or Rome a man who was about to run for the race had loitered, or if he had started before the time, it would not matter how fast he ran if he did not start in order. The flag must drop before the horse starts; otherwise, even if it reach the winning post first, it shall have no reward. There is something to be noted, then, in the starting of the race. I have known men run the race of religion with all their might, and yet they have lost it because they did not start right. You say, "Well, how is that?" Why, there are some people who on a sudden leap into religion. They get it quickly, and they keep it for a time, and at last they lose it because they did not get their religion the right way. They have heard that before a man can be saved, it is necessary that, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, he should feel the weight of sin, that he should make a confession of it, that he should renounce all hope in his own works, and should look to Jesus Christ alone. They look upon all these things as unpleasant preliminaries, and therefore, before they have attended to repentance, before the Holy Spirit has wrought a good work in them, before they have been brought to give up everything and trust to Christ, they make a profession of religion. This is just setting up in business without a stock in trade, and there must be a failure. If a man has no capital to begin with, he may make a fine show for a little time, but it shall be as the crackling of thorns under a pot, a great deal of noise and much light for a little time, but it shall die out in darkness. How many there are who never think it necessary that there should be heart work within! Again, there are some runners in the heavenly race who cannot win because they carry too much weight. A light weight, of course, has the advantage. There are some people who have an immensely heavy weight to carry. "How hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven!" What is the reason? Because he carries so much weight; he has so much of the cares and pleasures of this world; he has such a burden that he is not likely to win, unless God should please to give him a mighty mass of strength to enable him to bear it. We find many men willing to be saved, as they say; they receive the Word with great joy, but by-and-bye thorns spring up and choke the Word. They have so much business to do; they say they must live; they forget they must die. They have such a deal to attend to, they cannot think of living near to Christ. They find they have little time for devotions; morning prayer must be cut short, because their business begins early; they can have no prayer at night, because business keeps them so late. How can they be expected to think of the things of God? They have so much to do to answer this question—"What shall I eat? what shall I drink? and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" It is true they read in the Bible that their Father who is in heaven will take care of them in these things if they will trust Him. But

they say, "Not so." Those are enthusiasts according to their notions who rely upon providence. They say, the best providence in all the world is hard work; and they say rightly; but they forget that into the bargain of their hard work "it is in vain to rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness; for except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." You see two men running a race. One of them as he starts, lays aside every weight; he takes off his garment and away he runs. There goes the other poor fellow; he has a whole load of gold and silver upon his back. Then around his loins he has many distrustful doubts about what shall become of him in the future, what will be his prospects when he grows old, and a hundred other things. He does not know how to roll his burden upon the Lord. See how he flags, poor fellow, and how the other distances him, leaves him far behind, has gained the corner, and is coming to the winning post. It is well for us if we can cast everything away except that one thing needful, and say, "This is my business, to serve God on earthy knowing that I shall enjoy Him in heaven." For when we leave our business to God, we leave it in better hands than if we took care of it ourselves. They who carve for themselves generally cut their fingers; but they who leave God to carve for them, shall never have an empty plate. He who will walk after the cloud shall go aright, but he who will run before it shall soon find that he has gone a fool's errand. "Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that wait upon the Lord shall not want any good thing." Our Saviour said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." "Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them; are ye not much better than they?" "Trust in the Lord and do good, and verily thou shalt be fed." "His place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Carry the weight of this world's cares about you, and it will be as much as you can do to carry them and to stand upright under them, but as to running a race with such burdens, it is just impossible.

It is very well now to be sailing over the smooth waters of life, but the rough billows of Jordan will make you want a Saviour. It is hard work to die without a hope; to take that last leap in the dark is a frightful thing indeed. I have seen the old man die when he has declared he would not die. He has stood upon the brink of death, and he has said, "All dark, dark, dark! O God, I cannot die." And his agony has been fearful when the strong hand of the destroyer has seemed to push him over the precipice. He "lingered shivering on the brink, and feared to launch away." And frightful was the moment when the foot slipped and the solid earth was left, and the soul was sinking into the depths of eternal wrath. You will want a Saviour then, when your pulse is faint and few; you will need an angel then to stand at your bedside; and when the spirit is departing, you will need a sacred convoy to pilot you through the dark clouds of death and guide you through the iron gate, and lead you to the blessed mansion in the land of the hereafter. Oh, "seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." O Lord, turn us and we shall be turned. Draw us and we will run after Thee; and Thine shall be the glory; for the crown of our race shall be cast at Thy feet, and Thou shalt have the glory for ever and ever.

Chapter 6: The Course of the Wicked

The Course of the Wicked

It is quite certain that there are immense benefits attending our present mode of burial in extra mural cemeteries. It was high time that the dead should be removed from the midst of the living—that we should not worship in the midst of corpses, and sit in the Lord's house on the Sabbath, breathing the noxious effluvia of decaying bodies. But when we have said this, we must remember that there are some advantages which we have lost by the removal of the dead, and more especially by the wholesale mode of burial which now seems very likely to become general. We are not so often met by the array of dead. In the midst of our crowded cities we sometimes see the sable hearse bearing the relics of men to their last homes, but the funeral ceremonies are now mostly confined to those sweet sleeping places beyond our walks, where rest the bodies of those who are very dear to us. Now, I believe the sight of a funeral is a very healthful thing for the soul. Whatever harm may come to the body by walking through the vault and the catacomb, the soul can there find much food for contemplation, and much excitement for thought. In the great villages, where some of us were wont to dwell, we remember how, when the funeral came now and then, the tolling of the bell preached to all the villagers a better sermon than they had heard in the church for many a day; and we recollect how, as children, we used to cluster around the grave, and look at that which was not so frequent an occurrence in the midst of a rare and spare population; and we remember the solemn thoughts which used to arise even in our young hearts when we heard the words uttered, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." The solemn falling of the few grains of ashes upon the coffin-lid was the sowing of good seed in our hearts. And afterwards, when we have in our childish play climbed over those nettle-bound graves, and seated ourselves upon those moss-grown tombstones, we have had many a lesson preached to us by the dull, cold tongue of death, more eloquent than aught we have heard from the lip of living man, and more likely to abide with us. in after years; but now we see little of death. We have fulfilled Abraham's wish beyond what he desired—we "bury the dead out of our sight;" it is rarely that we see them, and a stranger passing through our streets might say, "Do these live always? for I see no funerals amongst the millions of this city; I see no signs of death." Shall we just take the wicked man's arm and walk with him to the house of God? When he begins to go, if he be one who has neglected going in his childhood, which perhaps is not extremely likely; when he begins to go even in his childhood, or whenever you choose to mention, you will notice that he is not often affected by the sound of the ministry. He goes up to the chapel with flippancy and mirth. He goes to it as he would to a theatre or any other place of amusement, as a means of passing away his Sabbath and killing time. Merrily he trippeth in there; but I have seen the wicked man when he went away look far differently from what he did when he entered. His plumes had been trailed in the dust. As he walks home there is no more flippancy and lightness, for he says, "Surely the Lord God has been in that place and I have been compelled to tremble. I went to scoff, but I was obliged, in coming away, to confess that there is a power in religion, and the services of God's house are not all dulness after all." Perhaps you have hoped good of this man. But, alas! he forgot

it all, and cast away all his impressions. And he came again the next Sunday, and that time he felt again. Again the arrow of the Lord seemed to stick fast in his heart. But, alas! it was like the rushing of water. There was a mark for a moment, but his heart was soon healed, he felt not the blow; and as for persuading him to salvation, he was like the deaf adder: "charm we never so wisely," he would not regard us so as to turn from his ways. And I have seen him come and go till years have rolled over his head, and he has still filled his seat, and the minister is still preaching, but in his case preaching in vain. Still are the tears of mercy flowing for him; still are the thunders of justice launched against him; but he abideth just as he was. In him there is no change except this, that now he groweth hard and callous. You do not now hear him say that he trembles under the Word—not he. He is like a horse that hath been in the battle, he feareth not the noise of the drum nor the rolling of the smoke, and careth not for the din of the cannon. He cometh up, he heareth a faithful warning, and he saith, "What of it? this is for the wicked." He heareth an affectionate invitation, and he saith, "Go thy way, when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." And so he comes and goes up to the house of God and back again. Like the door upon its hinges he turns into the sanctuary to-day, and out of it tomorrow. "He comes and goes from the place of the holy." It may be, however, he goes even further. Almost persuaded to be a Christian by some sermon from a Paul, he trembles at his feet. He thinks he really repents; he unites himself with the Christian Church: he makes a profession of religion; but, alas! his heart has never been changed. The sow is washed, but it is the sow still. The dog has been driven from its vomit, but its doggish nature is there the same. The Ethiopian is clothed in a white garment, but he hath not changed his skin. The leopard hath been covered all over, but he hath not washed his spots away. He is the same as ever he was. He goes to the baptismal pool a black sinner, and he comes out of it the same. He goes to the table of the Lord a deceiver; he eats the bread and drinks the wine, and he returns the same. Sacrament after Sacrament passes away. The Holy Eucharist is broken in his presence; he receives it, but he comes and he goes, for he receives it not in the love of it. He is a stranger to vital godliness, and as a wicked man "he comes and he goes from the place of the holy." But is it not a marvellous thing that men should be able to do this? I have sometimes heard a preacher so earnestly put the matter of salvation before men, that I have said, "Surely they must see this." I have heard him plead as though he pleaded for his own life, and I have said, "Surely they must feel this." And I have turned round, and I have seen the handkerchief used to brush away the tear, and I have said, "Good must follow this." You have brought your own friends under the sound of the Word, and you have prayed the whole sermon through that the arrow may reach the white and penetrate the centre of the mark, and you said to yourself, "What an appropriate discourse." Still you kept on praying, and you were pleased to see that there was some emotion, You said, "Oh, it will touch his heart at last!" But is it not strange that, though wooed by love divine, man will not melt; though thundered at by Sinai's own terrific thunderbolts, they will not tremble; yea, though Christ Himself incarnate in the flesh should preach again, yet would they not regard Him, and mayhap would treat Him to-day as their parents did but yesterday, when they dragged Him out of the city and would have cast Him headlong from the summit of the mount on which the city was builded. I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy till his conscience was seared, as with a hot iron. I have seen him come and go from the place of the holy till he had become harder than the nether millstone, till he was past feeling, given up "to work all manner of uncleanness with greediness." But now we are going to change our journey. Instead of going to the house of God we will go another way. I have seen the wicked go to the

place of the holy, that is to the judgment bench. We have had glaring instances even in the criminal calendar of men who have been seen sitting on a judgment bench one day, and in a short time they have been standing at the dock themselves. I have wondered what must be the peculiar feelings of a man who officiates as a judge, knowing that he who judges has been a law-breaker himself. A wicked man, a greedy, lustful, drunken man—you know such are to be discovered among petty magistrates. We have known these sit and condemn the drunkard, when, had the world known how they went to bed the night before, they would have said of them, "Thou that judgest another doest the same things thyself." There have been instances known of men who have condemned a poor wretch for shooting a rabbit or stealing a few pheasants' eggs or some enormous crime like that, and they themselves have been robbing the coffers of the bank, embezzling funds to an immense extent, and cheating everybody. How singular they must feel! One would think it must be a very strange emotion that passes over a man when he executes the law upon one which he knows ought to be executed upon himself. And yet, I have seen the wicked come and go from the holy place, until he came to think that his sins were no sins, that the poor must be severely upbraided for their iniquities, that what he called the lower classes must be kept in check, not thinking that there are none so low as those who condemn others whilst they do the same things themselves; speaking about checks and barriers, when neither check nor barrier were of any use to himself; talking of curbing others and of judging righteous judgment, when had righteous judgment been carried out to the letter, he would himself have been the prisoner, and not have been honoured with a commission from Government.

I may have seen the wicked man buried in a quiet way. He is taken quietly to his tomb with as little pomp as possible, and he is with all decency and solemnity interred in the grave. And now listen to the minister. If he is a man of God, when he buries such a man as he ought to be buried, you do not hear a solitary word about the character of the deceased; you hear nothing at all about any hopes of everlasting life. He is put into his grave. The minister well remembers how he did "come and go from the place of the holy;" he recollects full well how he used to sit in the gallery and listen to his discourse. And there is one who weeps; and the minister stands there and weeps, too, to think how all his labour has been lost, and one of his hearers has been destroyed, and that without hope. But note how cautiously he speaks, even to the wife. He would give her all the hope he could, poor widow as she is, and he speaks very gently. She says, "I hope my husband is in heaven." He holds his tongue; he is very silent; if he is of a sympathetic nature he will be quiet. And when he speaks about the deceased in his next Sunday's sermon, if he mentions him at all, he refers to him as a doubtful case; he uses him rather as a beacon than as an example, and bids other men beware how they presume to waste their opportunities, and let the golden hours of their Sabbath-day roll by disregarded. "I have seen the wicked buried who have come and gone from the place of the holy." As for the pompous funeral, that was ludicrous. A man might almost laugh to see the folly of honouring the man who deserved to be dishonoured, but as for the still and silent and truthful funeral, how sad it is! But after all, we ought to judge ourselves very much in the light of our funerals. That is the way we judge other things. Look at your fields to-morrow. There is a flaunting poppy, and there by the hedge-rows are many flowers that lift their heads to the sun. Judging them by their leaf, you might prefer them to the sober coloured wheat. But wait until the funeral, when the poppy shall be gathered and the weeds shall be bound up in a bundle to be burned—gathered into a heap in the field to be consumed, to be made into manure for the soil. But see the funeral of the wheat. What a magnificent funeral has the wheat-sheaf. "Harvest home!" is

shouted as it is carried to the garner, for it is a precious thing. Even so let each of us so live, as considering that we must die. Oh, I would desire to live that when I leave this mortal state, men may say, "There is one gone who sought to make the world better! However rough his efforts might have been, he was an honest man; he sought to serve God, and there lies he who feared not the face of man." I would have every Christian seek to win such a funeral as this—a funeral like Stephen's: "And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him."

Every man likes to live a little longer than his life—Englishmen especially—for there is scarcely to be found a rock in all England up which even a goat might scarcely climb, where there may not be discovered the initials of the names of men, who never had any other mode of attaining to fame, and therefore thought they would inscribe their names there. Go where you will, you find men attempting to be known; and this is the reason why many people write in newspapers, else they never would be known. A hundred little inventions we all of us have for keeping our names going after we are dead. But with the wicked man it is all in vain; he shall be forgotten. He has done nothing to make anybody remember him. Ask the poor: "Do you remember So-and-so?" "Hard master, sir, very. He always cut us down to the last sixpence; and we do not wish to recollect him." Their children will not hear his name; they will forget him entirely. Ask the church, "Do you remember So-and-so? he was a member." "Well," says one, "I remember him certainly, his name was on the books, but we never had his heart. He used to come and go, but I never could talk with him. There was nothing spiritual in him. There was a great deal of sounding bell-metal and brass, but no gold. I never could discover that he had the 'root of the matter' in him." No one thinks of him, and he will soon be forgotten. The chapel grows old, there comes up another congregation, and somehow or other they talk about the old deacons who used to be there, who were good and holy men, and about the old lady who used to be so eminently useful in visiting the sick; about the young man who rose out of that church, who was so useful in the cause of God; but you never hear mention made of his name; he is quite forgotten. When he died his name was struck out of the books; he was reported as being dead, and all remembrance of him died with him. I have often noticed how soon wicked things die when the man dies who originated them. Look at Voltaire's philosophy; with all the noise it made in his time—where is it now? There is just a little of it lingering, but it seems to have gone. And there was Tom Paine, who did his best to write his name in letters of damnation, and one would think he might have been remembered. But who cares for him now? Except amongst a few, here and there, his name has passed away. And all the names of error, and heresy, and schism, where do they go? You hear about St. Austin to this day, but you never hear about the heretics he attacked. Everybody knows about Athanasius, and how he stood up for the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ; but we have almost forgotten the life of Arius, and scarcely ever think of those men who aided and abetted him in his folly. Bad men die out quickly, for the world feels it is a good thing to be rid of them; they are not worth remembering.

Chapter 7: Coming to Christ

Coming to Christ

"Coming to Christ" is a very common phrase in Holy Scripture. It is used to express those acts of the soul wherein, leaving at once our self-righteousness, and our sins, we fly unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive His righteousness to be our covering, and His blood to be our atonement. Coming to Christ, then, embraces in it repentance, self-negation, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it sums within itself all those things which are the necessary attendants of these great states of heart, such as the belief of the truth, earnestness of prayer to God, the submission of the soul to the precepts of God's gospel, and all those things which accompany the dawn of salvation in the soul. Coming to Christ is just the one essential thing for a sinner's salvation. He that cometh not to Christ, do what he may, or think what he may, is yet in "the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." Coming to Christ is the very first effect of regeneration. No sooner is the soul quickened than it at once discovers its lost estate, is horrified thereat, looks out for a refuge, and believing Christ to be a suitable one, flies to Him and reposes in Him. Where there is not this coming to Christ, it is certain that there is as yet no quickening: where there is no quickening, the soul is dead in trespasses and sins, and being dead it cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." Wherein does this inability lie?

First, it does not lie in any physical defect. If in coming to Christ, moving the body or walking with the feet should be of any assistance, certainly man has all physical power to come to Christ in that sense. I remember to have heard a very foolish Antinomian declare, that he did not believe any man had the power to walk to the house of God unless the Father drew him. Now, the man was plainly foolish, because he must have seen that as long as a man was alive and had legs, it was as easy for him to walk to the house of God as to the house of Satan. If coming to Christ includes the utterance of a prayer, man has no physical defect in that respect; if he be not dumb, he can say a prayer as easily as he can utter blasphemy. It is as easy for a man to sing one of the songs of Zion as to sing a profane and libidinous song. There is no lack of physical power in coming to Christ. All that can be wanted with regard to the bodily strength man most assuredly has, and any part of salvation which consists in that is totally and entirely in the power of man without any assistance from the Spirit of God. Nor, again, does this inability lie in any mental lack. I can believe the Bible to be true just as easily as I can believe any other book to be true. So far as believing on Christ is an act of the mind, I am just as able to believe on Christ as I am able to believe on anybody else. Let his statement be but true, it is idle to tell me I cannot believe it. I can believe the statement that Christ makes as well as I can believe the statement of any other person. There is no deficiency of faculty in the mind: it is as capable of appreciating as a mere mental act the guilt of sin, as it is of appreciating the guilt of assassination. It is just as possible for me to exercise the mental idea of seeking God, as it is to exercise the thought of ambition. I have all the mental strength and power that can possibly be needed, so far as mental power is needed in salvation at all. Nay, there is not any man so ignorant that he can plead a lack of intellect as an excuse for

rejecting the Gospel. The defect, then, does not lie either in the body, or, what we are bound to call, speaking theologically, the mind. It is not any lack or deficiency there, although it is the vitiation of the mind, the corruption or the ruin of it, which, after all, is the very essence of man's inability.

Through the fall, and through our own sin, the nature of man has become so debased, and depraved, and corrupt, that it is impossible for him to come to Christ without the assistance of God the Holy Spirit. Now, in trying to exhibit how the nature of man thus renders him unable to come to Christ, take this figure. You see a sheep; how willingly it feeds upon the herbage! You never knew a sheep sigh after carrion; it could not live on lion's food. Now bring me a wolf; and you ask me whether a wolf cannot eat grass, whether it cannot be just as docile and as domesticated as the sheep. I answer, no; because its nature is contrary thereunto. You say, "Well, it has ears and legs; can it not hear the shepherd's voice, and follow him whithersoever he leadeth it?" I answer, certainly; there is no physical cause why it cannot do so, but its nature forbids, and therefore I say it cannot do so. Can it not be tamed? Cannot its ferocity be removed? Probably it may so far be subdued that it may become apparently tame; but there will always be a marked distinction between it and the sheep, because there is a distinction in nature. Now, the reason why man cannot come to Christ, is not because he cannot come, so far as his body or his mere power of mind is concerned, but because his nature is so corrupt that he has neither the will nor the power to come to Christ unless drawn by the Spirit. But let me give you a better illustration. You see a mother with her babe in her arms. You put a knife into her hand, and tell her to stab that babe to the heart. She replies, and very truthfully, "I cannot." Now, so far as her bodily power is concerned, she can, if she pleases; there is the knife, and there is the child. The child cannot resist, and she has quite sufficient strength in her hand immediately to stab it to its heart. But she is quite correct when she says she cannot do it. As a mere act of the mind, it is quite possible she might think of such a thing as killing the child, and yet she says she cannot think of such a thing as killing the child; and she does not say falsely, for her nature as a mother forbids her doing a thing from which her soul revolts. Simply because she is that child's parent she feels she cannot kill it.

It is even so with a sinner. Coming to Christ is so obnoxious to human nature that, although, so far as physical and mental forces are concerned (and these have but a very narrow sphere in salvation), men could come if they would: it is strictly correct to say that they cannot and will not unless the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them.

Man is by nature blind within. The Cross of Christ, so laden with glories, and glittering with attractions, never attracts him, because he is blind and cannot see its beauties. Talk to him of the wonders of the creation, show to him the many-coloured arch that spans the sky, let him behold the glories of a landscape, he is well able to see all these things; but talk to him of the wonders of the covenant of grace, speak to him of the security of the believer in Christ, tell him of the beauties of the Person of the Redeemer, he is quite deaf to all your description; you are as one that playeth a goodly tune, it is true; but he regards not, he is deaf, he has no comprehension. I ask, do you find your power equal to your will. You could say, even at the bar of God Himself, that you are sure you are not mistaken in your willingness; you are willing to be wrapt up in devotion, it is your will that your soul should not wander from a pure contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but you find that you cannot do that, even when you are willing, without the help of the Spirit. Now, if the quickened child of God finds a spiritual inability, how much more the sinner who is dead in

trespasses and sin? If even the advanced Christian, after thirty or forty years, finds himself sometimes willing and yet powerless—if such be his experience,—does it not seem more than likely that the poor sinner who has not yet believed, should find a need of strength as well as a want of will?

But, again, there is another argument. If the sinner has strength to come to Christ, I should like to know how we are to understand those continual descriptions of the sinner's state which we meet with in God's holy Word? Now, a sinner is said to be dead in trespasses and sins. Will you affirm that death implies nothing more than the absence of a will? "Surely a corpse is quite as unable as unwilling?" says one. "Well then, if I cannot save myself, and cannot come to Christ, I must sit still and do nothing." If men do say so, on their own heads shall be their doom. There are many things you can do. To be found continually in the house of God is in your power; to study the Word of God with diligence is in your power; to renounce your outward sin, to forsake the vices in which you indulge, to make your life honest, sober, and righteous, is in your power. For this you need no help from the Holy Spirit; all this you can do yourself; but to come to Christ truly is not in your power, until you are renewed by the Holy Ghost. But mark you, your want of power is no excuse, seeing that you have no desire to come, and are living in wilful rebellion against God. Your want of power lies mainly in the obstinacy of nature. Suppose a liar says that it is not in his power to speak the truth, that he has been a liar so long that he cannot leave it off; is that an excuse for him? Suppose a man who has long indulged in lust should tell you that he finds his lusts have so girt about him like a great iron net that he cannot get rid of them, would you take that as an excuse? Truly it is none at all. If a drunkard has become so foully a drunkard, that he finds it impossible to pass a public-house without stepping in, do you therefore excuse him? No, because his inability to reform lies in his nature, which he has no desire to restrain or conquer. The thing that is done, and the thing that causes the thing that is done, being both from the root of sin, are two evils which cannot excuse each other. What though the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots? It is because you have learned to do evil that you cannot now learn to do well; and instead, therefore, of letting you sit down to excuse yourselves, let me put a thunderbolt beneath the seat of your sloth, that you may be startled by it and aroused. Remember, that to sit still is to be damned to all eternity.

And, now, we gather up our ends, and conclude by trying to make a practical application of the doctrine; and we trust a comfortable one. "Well," says one, "if what this man teaches be true, what is to become of my religion? for do you know, I have been a long while trying, and I do not like to hear you say a man cannot save himself. I believe he can, and I mean to persevere; but if I am to believe what you say, I must give it all up and begin again." It will be a very happy thing if you do. Remember, what you are doing is building your house upon the sand, and it is but an act of charity if I can shake it a little for you. Let me assure you, in God's name, if your religion has no better foundation than your own strength, it will not stand you at the bar of God. Nothing will last to eternity, but that which came from eternity. Unless the everlasting God has done a good work in your heart, all you may have done must be unravelled at the last day of account. It is all in vain for you to be a church-goer or chapel-goer, a good keeper of the Sabbath, an observer of your prayers: it is all in vain for you to be honest to your neighbours and reputable in your conversation; if you hope to be saved by these things, it is all in vain for you to trust in them. Go on; be as honest as you like, keep the Sabbath perpetually, be as holy as you can. I would not dissuade you from

these things. God forbid! Grow in them, but oh, do not trust in them, for if you rely upon these things you will find they will fail you when most you need them. And if there be anything else that you have found yourself able to do unassisted by divine grace, the sooner you can get rid of the hope that has been engendered by it the better for you, for it is a foul delusion to rely upon anything that flesh can do. A spiritual heaven must be inhabited by spiritual men, and preparation for it must be wrought by the Spirit of God.

"Well," cries another, "I have been sitting under a ministry where I have been told that I could, at my own option, repent and believe, and the consequence is that I have been putting it off from day to day. I thought I could come one day as well as another; that I had only to say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' and believe, and then I should be saved. Now you have taken all this hope away for me. I feel amazement and horror taking hold upon me." I am very glad of it. This was the effect which I hoped to produce I pray that you may feel this a great deal more. When you have no hope of saving yourself, I shall have hope that God has begun to save you. As soon as you say, "Oh, I cannot come to Christ. Lord, draw me, help me," I shall rejoice over you. He who has got a will, though he has not power, has grace begun in his heart, and God will not leave him until the work is finished. But, careless sinner, learn that thy salvation now hangs in God's hand. Oh, remember thou art entirely in the hand of God! Thou hast sinned against Him, and if He wills to damn thee, damned thou art. Thou canst not resist His will nor thwart His purpose. Thou has deserved His wrath, and if He chooses to pour the full shower of that wrath upon thy head, thou canst do nothing to avert it.

If, on the other hand, He chooses to save thee, He is able to save thee to the very uttermost. But thou liest as much in His hand as the summer's moth beneath thine own finger. He is the God whom thou art grieving every day. Doth it not make thee tremble to think that thy eternal destiny now hangs upon the will of Him whom thou hast angered and incensed? Dost not this make thy knees knock together, and thy blood curdle? If it does so, I rejoice, inasmuch as this may be the first effect of the Spirit's drawing in thy soul. Oh, tremble to think that the God whom thou hast angered, is the God upon whom thy salvation or thy condemnation entirely depends! Tremble, and "kiss the Son lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way while His wrath is kindled but a little."

Chapter 8: The Gospel Feast

The Gospel Feast The plan of salvation is simply declared—"Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." For you who have violated all the precepts of God, and have disdained His mercy and dared His vengeance, there is yet mercy proclaimed, for "Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "For this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief;" "Whosoever cometh unto Him He will in no wise cast out, for He is able also to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Now all that God asks of you—and this He gives you—is that you will simply look at His bleeding Dying Son, and trust your souls in the hands of Him whose name alone can save from death and hell. Is it not a marvellous thing, that the proclamation of this gospel does not receive the unanimous consent of men? One would think that as soon as ever this was preached, "That whoso-ever believeth shall have eternal life," every one, "casting away every man his sins and his iniquities," would lay hold on Jesus Christ, and look alone to His cross. But alas! such is the desperate evil of our nature, such the pernicious depravity of our character, that this message is despised, the invitation to the Gospel feast is rejected, and there are many who are enemies of God by wicked works, enemies to the God who preaches Christ, enemies to Him who sent His Son to give His life a ransom for many. Strange, I say, it is that it should be so, yet nevertheless it is the fact, and hence the necessity for the command—"Compel them to come in."

You are poor in circumstances, but this is no barrier to the kingdom of heaven, for God hath not exempted from His grace the man who shivers in rags, and who is destitute of bread. In fact, if there be any distinction made, the distinction is on your side, and for your benefit—"Unto you is the word of salvation sent;" "For the poor have the Gospel preached unto them." You have no faith, you have no virtue, you have no good work, you have no grace, and what is poverty worse still, you have no hope. Come and welcome to the marriage feast of His love. "Whosoever will, let Him come and take of the waters of life freely."

You are not only poor, but you are maimed. There was a time when you thought you could work out your own salvation without God's help, when you could perform good works, attend to ceremonies, and get to heaven by yourselves; but now you are maimed, the sword of the law has cut off your hands, and now you can work no longer; you say, with bitter sorrow—

"The best performance of my hands, Dares not appear before Thy throne."

You have lost all power now to obey the law; you feel that when you would do good, evil is present with you. You are maimed; you have given up, as a forlorn hope, all attempt to save yourself, because you are maimed and your arms are gone. But you are worse off than that, for if you could not work your way to heaven, yet you could walk your way there along the road by faith; but you are maimed in the feet as well as in the hands; you feel that you cannot believe, that you cannot repent, that you cannot obey the stipulations of the Gospel. You feel that you are utterly undone, powerless in every respect to do anything that can be pleasing to God. Before you am I to lift up

the blood-stained banner of the cross, "Whoso calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;" and unto you I cry "Whosoever will let him come and take of the water of life freely."

There is yet another class. You are halt. You are halting between two opinions. You are sometimes seriously inclined, and at another time worldly gaiety calls you away. What little progress you do make in religion is but a limp. You have a little strength, but that is so little that you make but painful progress. To you also is the word of this salvation sent. Though you halt between two opinions, the Master sends you this message: "How long halt ye between two opinions? if God be God, serve Him; if Baal be God, serve him." Consider thy ways: set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live. Because I will do this, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel! Halt no longer, but decide for God and His truth. And yet I see another class,—the blind. Yes, you that cannot see yourselves, that think yourselves good when you are full of evil, that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness. You, blind souls that cannot see your lost estate, that do not believe that sin is so exceedingly sinful as it is, and who will not be persuaded to think that God is a just and righteous God, to you am I sent. To you too that cannot see the Saviour, that see no beauty in Him that you should desire Him; who see no excellence in virtue, no glories in religion, no happiness in serving God, no delight in being His children; to you, also, I speak. "Go into the highways and hedges." Here we bring in all ranks and conditions of men—my lord upon his horse in the highway, and the woman trudging about her business, the thief waylaying the traveller—all these are in the highway, and they are all to be compelled to come in, and there away in the hedges there lie some poor souls whose refuges of lies are swept away, and who are seeking now to find some little shelter for their weary heads. This is the universal command—compel them to come in.

Well did Melanchthon say, "Old Adam is too strong for young Melanchthon." As well might a little child seek to compel Sampson, as I seek to lead a sinner to the cross of Christ. Lo, I see the great mountain of human depravity and stolid indifference, but by faith I cry, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."

Unconverted, unreconciled, unregenerate men and women, I am to compel you to come in. Permit me first of all to accost you in the highways of sin and tell you over again my errand. The King of Heaven sends a gracious invitation to you. He says, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live:" "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow." Permit me to tell you what the King has done for you. He knew your guilt, He foresaw that you would ruin yourself. He knew that His justice would demand your blood, and in order that this difficulty might be escaped, that His justice might have its full due, and that you might yet be saved, Jesus Christ hath died. Will you just for a moment glance at this picture. You see that man there on His knees in the garden of Gethsemane, sweating drops of blood. You see this next; you see that miserable sufferer tied to a pillar and lashed with terrible scourges, till the shoulder bones are seen like white islands in the midst of a sea of blood. Again you see this third picture; it is the same man hanging on the cross with hands extended, and with feet nailed fast, dying, groaning, bleeding; methought the picture spoke and said, "It is finished." Now all this hath Jesus Christ of Nazareth done, in order that God might consistently with His justice pardon sin; and the message to you is this—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." That is, trust Him, renounce thy works, and thy ways, and

set thine heart alone on this man, who gave Himself for sinners. Do you turn away? You tell me it is nothing to you; you cannot listen to it; that you will hear me by-and-bye; but you will go your ways and attend to your farm and merchandize. Stop, I was not told merely to tell you and then go about my business. No; I am told to compel you to come in; and permit me to observe that there is one thing I can say—and to which God is my witness—that I am in earnest with you in my desire that you should comply with this command of God. But do you spurn it? Do you still refuse it? Then I must change my tone a minute. I will not merely tell you the message, and invite you as I do with all earnestness, and sincere affection—I will go further. Sinner, in God's name I command you to repent and believe. Do you ask me whence my authority? I am an ambassador of heaven. I command you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; not on my own authority, but on the authority of Him who said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature;" and then annexed this solemn sanction, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." But do you turn away and say you will not be commanded? Then again will I change my note. Let me tell thee from my own soul what I know of Him. I, too, once despised Him. He knocked at the door of my heart and I refused to open it. He came to me, times without number, morning by morning, and night by night; He checked me in my conscience and spoke to me by His Spirit, and when, at last, the thunders of the law prevailed in my conscience, I thought that Christ was cruel and unkind. Oh, I can never forgive myself that I should have thought so ill of Him. But what a loving reception did I have when I went to Him. I thought He would smite me, but His hand was not clenched in anger but opened wide in mercy. I thought full sure that His eyes would dart lightning-flashes of wrath upon me; but, instead thereof, they were full of tears. He fell upon my neck and kissed me; He took off my rags and did clothe me with His righteousness, and caused my soul to sing aloud for joy; while in the house of my heart and in the house of His church there was music and dancing, because His son that He had lost was found, and he that was dead was made alive. I exhort you, then, to look to Jesus Christ and to be lightened. Sinner, you will never regret,—I will be bondsman for my Master that you will never regret it,—you will have no sigh to go back to your state of condemnation; you shall go out of Egypt and shall go into the Promised Land and shall find it flowing with milk and honey. The trials of Christian life you shall find heavy, but you will find grace will make them light. And as for the joys and delights of being a child of God, if I lie you shall charge me with it in days to come. If you will taste and see that the Lord is good, I am not afraid but that you shall find that He is not only good, but better than human lips ever can describe.

I know not what arguments to use with you. I appeal to your own self-interests. Would it not be better for you to be reconciled to the God of heaven than to be His enemy? What are you getting by opposing God? Are you the happier for being his enemy? Answer, pleasure seeker: hast thou found delights in that cup? Answer me, self-righteous man: hast thou found rest for the sole of thy foot in all thy works? Oh, thou that goest about to establish thine own righteousness, I charge thee let conscience speak. Hast thou found it to be a happy path? Ah, my friend, "Wherefore dost thou spend thy money for that which is not bread, and thy labour for that which satisfieth not; hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." I exhort you by everything that is sacred and solemn, everything that is important and eternal, flee for your lives, look not behind you, stay not in all the plain, stay not until you have proved, and found an interest in the blood of Jesus Christ, that blood which cleanseth us from all sin. Are you still cold and indifferent? Will not the blind man permit me to lead him to the feast? Will not the poor man

allow me to walk side-by-side with him? Must I use some stronger words. Must I use some other compulsion to compel you to come in? Ye, from the grey-headed down to the tender age of childhood, if ye lay not hold on Christ, your blood shall be on your own head. If there be power in man to bring his fellow (as there is when man is helped by the Holy Spirit), that power shall be exercised. I ENTREAT you, I entreat you stop and consider. Do you know what it is you are rejecting? You are rejecting Christ, your only Saviour. "Other foundation can no man lay;" "There is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved." I cannot bear that ye should do this, for I remember what you are forgetting: the day is coming when you will want a Saviour. It is not long ere weary months shall have ended, and your strength begin to decline; your pulse shall fail you, your strength shall depart, and you and the grim monster—death, must face each other. What will you do in the swelling of Jordan without a Saviour? Death-beds are stony things without the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an awful thing to die anyhow; he that hath the best hope, and the most triumphant faith, finds that death is not a thing to laugh at. It is a terrible thing to pass from the seen to the unseen, from the mortal to the immortal, from time to eternity, and you will find it hard to go through the iron gates of death without the sweet wings of angels to conduct you to the portals of the skies. It will be a hard thing to die without Christ. I cannot help thinking of you. I see you acting the suicide and I picture myself standing at your bedside and hearing your cries, and knowing that you are dying without hope. I cannot bear that. I think I am standing by your coffin now, and looking into your clay-cold face, and saying, "This man despised Christ and neglected the great salvation." I think what bitter tears I shall weep then, if I think that I have been unfaithful to you, and how those eyes fast closed in death, shall seem to chide me and say, "Minister, you were not in earnest with me; you amused me, you preached to me, but you did not plead with me. You did not know what Paul meant when he said, 'As though God did beseech you by us we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.'"

I picture myself standing at the bar of God. As the Lord liveth, the day of judgment is coming. You believe that? You are not an infidel; your conscience would not permit you to doubt the Scripture. Perhaps you may have pretended to do so, but you cannot. You feel there must be a day when God shall judge the world in righteousness. I see you standing in the midst of that throng, and the eye of God is fixed on you. It seems to you that He is not looking anywhere else, but only upon you, and He summons you before Him; and He reads your sins, and He cries, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire in hell!" I cannot bear to think of you in that position; it seems as if every hair on my head must stand on end to think of any being damned. As I must stand before my Judge at last, I feel that I shall not make full proof of my ministry unless I entreat with many tears that ye would be saved, that ye would look unto Jesus Christ and receive His glorious salvation. But does not this avail? Are all our entreaties lost upon you; do you turn a deaf ear? Then again I change my note. Sinner, I have pleaded with you as a man pleadeth with his friend, and were it for my own life I could not speak more earnestly than I do speak concerning yours. And therefore, if ye put away these entreaties I have something else;—I must threaten you. You shall not always have such warnings as these. A day is coming, when hushed shall be the voice of every Gospel minister, at least for you; for your ear shall be cold in death. It shall not be any more threatening; it shall be the fulfilment of the threatening. There shall be no promise, no proclamations of pardon and of mercy; no peace-speaking blood, but you shall be in the land where the preachings of the Gospel are forbidden because they would be unavailing. I charge you then, listen to this voice that now addresses your conscience; for if not, God shall speak to you in His wrath, and say unto you

in His hot displeasure, "I called and ye refused; I stretched out My hand and no man regarded; therefore will I mock at your calamity; I will laugh when your fear cometh." Sinner, I threaten you again. Remember, it is but a short time you may have to hear these warnings. Come, then, let the threatening have power with you. I do not threaten because I would alarm without cause, but in hopes that threatening may drive you to the place where God hath prepared the feast of the Gospel. Have I exhausted all that I can say? No, I will come to you again. Tell me what it is, that keeps you from Christ. I hear one say, "Oh, sir, it is because I feel myself too guilty." That cannot be, my friend, that cannot be. "But, sir, I am the chief of sinners." Friend, you are not. The chief of sinners died and went to heaven many years ago; his name was Saul of Tarsus, afterwards called Paul the apostle. He was the chief of sinners, I know he spoke the truth. "No," but you say still, "I am too vile." You cannot be viler than the chief of sinners. You must, at least, be second worst. Even supposing you are the worst now alive, you are second worst, for he was chief. But suppose you are the worst, is not that the very reason why you should come to Christ? The worse a man is, the more reason he should go to the hospital or physician. The more poor you are, the more reason you should accept the charity of another. Now, Christ does not want any merits of yours. He gives freely. The worse you are, the more welcome you are. But let me ask you a question: Do you think you will ever get better by stopping away from Christ? If so, you know very little as yet of the way of salvation at all. No, sir, the longer you stay the worse you will grow; your hope will grow weaker, your despair will become stronger; the nail with which Satan has fastened you down will be more firmly clenched, and you will be less hopeful than ever. Come; I beseech you, recollect there is nothing to be gained by delay, but by delay everything may be lost. "But," cries another, "I feel I cannot believe." No, my friend, and you never will believe if you look first at your believing. Remember, I am not to invite you to faith, but to invite you to Christ. But you say, "What is the difference?" Why, just this. If you first of all say, "I want to believe a thing," you never do it. But your first inquiry must be, "What is this thing that I am to believe?" Then will faith come as the consequence of that search. Our first business has not to do with faith, but with Christ. Come, I beseech you, on Calvary's mount, and see the cross. Behold the Son of God, He who made the heavens and the earth, dying for your sins. Look to Him, is there not power in Him to save? Look at His face so full of pity. Is there not love in His heart to prove Him willing to save? Sure sinner, the sight of Christ will help thee to believe. Do not believe first, and then go to Christ, or else thy faith will be a worthless thing; go to Christ without any faith, and cast thyself upon Him, sink or swim. But I hear another cry, "Oh sir, you do not know how often I have been invited, how long I have rejected the Lord." I do not know, and I do not want to know; all I know is that my Master has sent me, to compel you to come in; so come along with me now. You may have rejected a thousand invitations; don't make this the thousandth-and-one. You have been up to the house of God, and you have only been Gospel-hardened.

I cannot let you go on such idle excuses as that; if you have lived so many years slighting Christ, there are so many reasons why now you should not slight him. But did I hear you whisper that this was not a convenient time? Then what must I say to you? When will that convenient time come? Shall it come when you are in hell? Will that time be convenient? Shall it come when you are on your dying bed, and the death-rattle is in your throat—shall it come then? Or when the burning sweat is scalding your brow; and then again, when the cold clammy sweat is there, shall those be convenient times? When pains are racking you, and you are on the borders of the tomb? Remember, I have no authority to ask you to come to Christ to-morrow. The invitation is, "Today if

ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation," for the Spirit saith "to-day." "Come now and let us reason together;" why should you put it off? It may be the last warning you shall ever have. You may never have so earnest a discourse addressed to you. You may not be pleaded with as I would plead with you now. You may go away, and God may say, "He is given unto idols, let him alone." He shall throw the reins upon your neck; and then, mark—your course is sure, but it is sure damnation and swift destruction. Is it all in vain? Will you not now come to Christ? Then what more can I do? I have but one more resort, and that shall be tried. I can be permitted to weep for you; I can be allowed to pray for you. You shall scorn the address if you like; you shall laugh at the preacher; you shall call him fanatic if you will; he will not chide you, he will bring no accusation against you to the great Judge. Your offence, so far as he is concerned, is forgiven before it is committed; but you will remember that the message that you are rejecting is a message from One who loves you, and it is given to you also by the lips of one who loves you. You will recollect that you may play your soul away with the devil, that you may listlessly think it a matter of no importance; but there is at least one who is in earnest about your soul. I say again, when words fail us we can give tears—for words and tears are the arms with which Gospel ministers compel men to come in. I heard but the other day of a young man, and his father's hope was that he would be brought to Christ. He became acquainted, however, with an infidel; and now he neglects his business, and lives in a daily course of sin. I saw his father's poor wan face; I did not ask him to tell me the story himself, for I felt it was raking up a trouble and opening a sore; I fear, sometimes, that good man's grey hairs may be brought with sorrow to the grave. Young men, you do not pray for yourselves, but your mothers wrestle for you. You will not think of your own souls, but your father's anxiety is exercised for you. I have been at prayer-meetings, when I have heard children of God pray there, and they could not have prayed with more earnestness and more intensity of anguish if they had been each of them seeking their own soul's salvation. And is it not strange that we should be ready to move heaven and earth for your salvation, and that still you should have no thought for yourself, no regard to eternal things?

Chapter 9: Warnings to Certain Sinners

Warnings to Certain Sinners

Cain was of the wicked one and slew his brother. "The way of Cain" is not hard to describe. He is too proud to offer atonement for his sin; he prefers his own way of sacrifice; he presents a bloodless oblation; he hates the obedience of faith; he smites the faithful Abel. See ye the way of Cain, and beware, Oh, proud self-righteous ones, lest ye run therein, for the steps are few from self-righteous pride to hatred of true believers, and murder is not far in advance. There is the seed of every infamy in the proud spirit of self-justification, and it is a great mercy that it does not oftener show itself in all its terrific ripeness. Look ye, bold boasters of your own merits, at the mangled body of the first martyr, for this is the full-blown development of your rebellious self-conceit. From all pride and vain-glory, from all self-righteousness and hatred of the cross of Christ, good Lord deliver us.

There are many persons whose brother's blood cries to God from the ground. There is the seducer; he spake with honeyed words, and talked of love, but the poison of asps was under his tongue, for lust was in his heart. He came to a fair temple as a worshipper, but he committed infamous sacrilege, and left that to be the haunt of demons which once was the palace of purity. Such men are received into society; they are looked upon as gentlemen, while the fallen woman, the harlot-sister, she may hide herself beneath the shadow of night. None wilt make excuse for her sin; but the man, the criminal—he is called a respectable and reputable man—he may fill places of trust, and posts of honour, and there are none who point the finger of scorn at him. Sir, the voice of that poor fallen sister's blood crieth to heaven against thee, and in the day of judgment her damnation shall be on thy skirts; all the infamy into which thou hast plunged her shall lie at thy door; and among the dreadful sights of hell, two eyes shall glare at thee through the murky darkness like the eyes of serpents, burning their way into thine inmost soul. "Thou didst deceive, and decoy me to the pit," saith she; "thine arms dragged me down to hell, and here I lie to curse thee for ever and ever as the author of my eternal ruin."

Oh! there is one sinner who can look upon this in a solemn light! Who is it that has gone down to the pit? You man yonder—who is it that died but a few days ago? The woman who loved you as she loved her own soul; who idolized you; who thought you an angel. Shall I say it before God and to your face?—you ruined her. And what next, sir? You cast her off as though she were but dirt, and threw her into the kennel with a broken heart. And being there, her god having cast her off—for you were her god—she fell into despair, and despair led to dreadful consequences, and to direr ruin still. She has gone, and you are glad of it; glad of it, for you will hear no more of her now, you say. Sir, you shall hear of it; you shall hear of it; you shall hear of it! As long as you live her spirit shall haunt you; track you to the filthy joy which you have planned for a future day; and on your death-bed she shall be there to twist her fingers in your hair, to tear your soul out of your body, and drag it down to the hell appointed for such fiends as you; for you spilt her blood, the blood of her who trusted you—a fair, frail thing, worthy to be an angel's sister, and you pulled her

down, and made her a devil's tool! God save you! for if He does not, your damnation shall be sevenfold. Oh! thou son of Belial, what shall be thy doom when God dealeth with thee as thou deservest? Are these hot words? Not half so hot as I would make them. I would send them hissing into your souls if I were able; not so much to condemn you as with the hope that though you cannot make good the mischief you have done, you may yet turn from the error of your ways to seek a Saviour's blood, and find pardon for this great iniquity.

Then there are men who educate youth in sin. Satan's captains and marshals; strong men with corrupt hearts, who are never better pleased than when they see the buds of evil swelling and ripening into crime. We have known some such; men of an evil eye, who not only loved sin themselves, but delighted in it in others; patted the boy on his back when he uttered his first oath; rewarded him when he committed his first theft. Satan has his Sunday-school teachers; hell has its missionaries who compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and make him tenfold more a child of hell than they are themselves. Most of our villages are cursed with one such wretch, and is there a street in London which is not the haunt of one such fiend, or more? Wretch, hast thou sought to entangle them in thy net? Hast thou, like the spider, thrown first one film about them and then another, till thou hast them safely in thy coils to drag them down to the den of Beelzebub? Then the voice of thy brother's blood crieth from the ground, and at the judgment this shall be a witness which thou shalt not be able to confute, the witness of the blood of souls ruined by thy foul and evil training. Beware ye who hunt for the precious life!

Ay, and some base men who, if they see young converts, will take a pride in putting stumbling-blocks in their way. They no sooner discover that there is some little working of conscience, than they laugh, they sneer, they point the finger. How often have I seen this in the husband who seeks to prevent the wife's attendance at the house of God; in the young man who jeers at his companion because he felt something of the power of religion! Is not this too frequent in our great establishments in London; where one young man kneels to pray and many are found to laugh at him and hurl some foul term at his head; not content to perish themselves. Like dogs pursuing a hart so will the wicked haunt the godly. Oh! you who are the enlisting-sergeants for the Black Prince of Darkness, you who seem never so happy as when you set traps for souls to inveigle them to destruction, solemnly do I warn you. Oh! take the warning, lest God's avenging angel, without warning, should soon overtake you with the dividing-sword which shall smite you even to the neck, and make you feel how terrible a thing it is to have tried to ruin the servants of the living God.

Then there is the infidel, the man who is not content to keep his sin in his own breast, but must needs publish his villainy; he ascends the platform and blasphemes the Almighty to his face; defies the Eternal; takes Scripture to make it the subject of unhallowed jest; and makes religion a theme for comedy. Take heed, sir, there will be a tragedy by-and-bye, in which you shall be the chief sufferer! What shall I say of those men who are more diligent by far than half God's ministers are, whose names we see placarded on every wall, who will go from town to town, especially where in greatest numbers artisans are dwelling, and never seem content unless they are preaching against something that is pure, and lovely, and of good report; uttering things which would make your cheeks blanch if you heard them, and at the very reading of which the marrow of your bones might melt—dreadful things against the Most High, such as David heard when he said, "Horror hath taken hold of me because of the wicked that keep not thy law." Should I address

such, the voice of your brother's blood crieth to Jehovah. The young men you have deluded, the working men you have led astray, the sinners whose lullaby you have sung, the souls you have poisoned with your foul draughts, the multitudes that you have deceived—all these shall stand up at the last, an exceeding great army, and pointing their fingers at you, shall demand your swift destruction, because you decoyed them to their doom. And what shall I say of the unfaithful preacher; the slumbering watchman of souls, the man who swore at God's altar that he was called of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word of God; the man upon whose lips men's ears waited with attention while he stood like a priest at God's altar to teach Israel God's laws; the man who performed his duties half-asleep, in a dull and careless manner, until men slept too and thought religion but a dream? What shall I say of the minister of unholy life, whose corrupt practice out of the pulpit has made the most telling things in the pulpit to be of no avail, has blunted the edge of the sword of the Spirit, and turned the back of God's army in the day of battle? Ay, what shall I say of the man who has amused his audience with pretty things when he ought to have roused their consciences, who has been rounding periods when he ought to have been denouncing the judgment of God; who has been preaching a dead morality when he ought to have lifted Christ on high as Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness? What shall I say of those who have dwindled away their congregations, who have sown strife and schism in Churches of Christ once happy, peaceful, and prosperous? What shall I say of the men who, out of the pulpit, have made a jest of the most solemn things, whose life has been so devoid of holy passion and devout enthusiasm that men have thought truth to be a fiction, religion a stage play, prayer a nullity, the Spirit of God a phantom, and eternity a joke? Among all who will need eternal compassion, surely the unfaithful, unholy, unearnest minister of Christ will be the most pitiable! What did I say? Nay, rather the most contemptible, the most despicable, the most accursed! Surely, every thunderbolt shall make his brow its target, and every arrow of God shall seek his conscience as its mark. If I must perish, let me suffer anyhow but as a minister who has desecrated the pulpit by a slumbering style of ministry, by a want of passion for souls. How shall such men answer for it at the bar of God—the smooth things, the polite and honeyed words, the daubing of men with the untempered mortar of peace, peace, when they should have dealt with them honestly as in God's name? Oh, sirs, if we never play the Boanerges, we shall hear God's thunders in our ears, and that for ever and ever, and cursed of men, and cursed of the Most High, shall we be without end. In Tophet we shall have this wail peculiar to ourselves, "We preached what we did not feel; we testified of what we did not know; men received not our witness, for we were hypocrites and deceivers, and now we go down, richly deserving it, to the very lowest depths of perdition." But the voice of your brother's blood crieth to God from the ground, even though you be no infidel lecturer, though you have never been debauched, though you have taught no heresy, though you have spread no schism. If your life is unholy your brother's blood is on your skirts. "Oh," saith one, "if I sin I sin to myself." Impossible! As well might the miasma say, "I am deadly to myself alone;" as well might the cholera say "My deadly breath is for myself only." Your example spreads; you, like the leper, leave uncleanness on everything you touch. The very atmosphere which surrounds you breeds contagion. What others see you do, they learn to do. Some may rival you, and exceed you, but if you taught them their letters, and they learn to read in hell's book better than you, all that they learn afterwards will come to your door, because the elements of sin they learned from your practice. I am afraid many people never look at their transgressions in this light. Why, you cannot help being leaders and teachers. If in your own house you are a drunkard, your boys will be drunkards too! I have heard of

a man who flogged his boy for swearing, swearing at him all the time he did it. We know instances of men who feel as if they would sooner bury their children than see them grow up such as they are themselves, but yet how can it be helped? Your practice must and will influence your children; nay, not your children only, but all with whom you come into connection in the mercantile world. Do not think, sir, if you are a great employer, that your men can know what your life is without being affected by that knowledge. There may be some among them who have an inward principle which will not yield to temptation, but I know of hardly anything more dangerous than for a number of operatives to come constantly into contact with one whom they look up to as a master, who is also a master of the arts of sin, and a doctor of damnation to their souls. Oh! take care, if not for yourselves yet for others, or else, as sure as you live, the voice of your brother's blood will cry unto God from the ground.

What shall the cry be against open sinners and infidels? It would be an awful thing to pray for a man's damnation; but there are some people I know of who while they live do so much mischief, that if they were dead, men would breathe more freely. I know a village where there lives a man who contaminates half the population. There is a leer upon his face at which virtue blushes; there is a sneer at which even courage quails. He is a wretch so well taught and so deeply instructed in the highest science of iniquity, that wherever he may go he finds none a match for him, either in his reasoning or in the infamous conclusions which he draws; a man who is a deadly Upas-tree, dropping black poison upon all beneath his shadow. I did think once I would half pray that the man might die and go to his doom, but one must not; and yet, were he gone, the saints might say, "'Tis well," and as over Babylon when she is destroyed and the smoke of her torment goeth up for ever, the saints will say "Hallelujah!" so have I thought that over these against whom the blood of many young people cries to God from the ground, when they go at last to their doom, men might almost say, "Hallelujah! for God hath judged the great sinner who did make the people of the earth drunk with the wine of his fornication."

What shall we do to be rid of the past? Can tears of repentance do it? No. Can promises of amendment make a blank page where there are so many blots and blurs? Ah, no! Nothing that we can do can put away our sin. But may not the future atone? May not future zeal wipe out past carelessness? May not the endeavour of our life that is yet to come, make amends for the indolence or vice of the life that is past? No. The blood of our brethren has been shed, and we cannot gather it up. The mischief we have done is not to be retrieved! O God! souls that are lost through us cannot be saved now; the gates of hell are so shut that they can never be opened. No restitution can we make. The redemption of the soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever; the sin is not to be washed away by repentance, nor retrieved by reformation. What then? Hopeless despair for every one of us, were it not that there is another blood, the blood of One called Jesus, that crieth from the ground too, and the voice of that blood is "Father, forgive them; Father, forgive them." I hear a voice that says, "Vengeance, vengeance, vengeance," like the voice of Jonah in Nineveh, enough to make every man clothe himself in sackcloth. But a sweeter and a louder cry comes up—"Mercy, mercy, mercy;" and the Father bows His head and says, "Whose blood is that?" and the voice replies, "It is the blood of Thine only-begotten, shed on Calvary for sin." The Father lays His thunders by, sheathes His sword, stretches out His hand, and crieth to you, the sons of men, "Come unto Me, and I will have mercy upon you; turn ye, turn ye; I will pour out My Spirit upon you and ye shall live." "Repent and believe the Gospel." Hate the sin that is past, and,

trust in Jesus for the future. He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him; for the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Flee, sinner, flee! The avenger of the blood that thou hast shed pursues thee with hot haste; with feet that are winged, with a heart that is athirst for blood, he pursues thee. Run, man, run! The refuge city is before thee. It is there along the narrow way of faith. Fly, fly, for unless thou reach that city ere he overtake thee he shall smite thee, and one blow shall be thine everlasting ruin. For God's sake do not loiter! Those flowers on the left-hand side—care not for them; thou wilt dye that field with thy blood if thou lingerest there! That ale-house on the right hand? Stay for none of these things, He comes! Hark to his footsteps on the hard highway! He comes, he comes, he comes now! Oh, that now thou mayest pass the portals of the refuge-city! Trust the Son of God, and sin is forgiven, and you have entered into everlasting life.

Chapter 10: "Christ the Son of Man"

"Christ the Son of Man"

How fond our Master was of the sweet title, the "Son of man!" If He had chosen, He might always have spoken of Himself as the Son of God, the Everlasting Father, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Prince of Peace. He hath a thousand gorgeous titles, resplendent as the throne of heaven; but He careth not to use them; to express His humility and let us see the lowliness of Him whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light, He calls not himself the Son of God, but He speaks of Himself evermore as the Son of man who came down from heaven. Let us learn a lesson of humility from our Saviour; let us never court great titles nor proud degrees. What are they, after all, but beggarly distinctions whereby one worm is known from another? He that hath the most of them is a worm still, and is in nature no greater than his fellows. If Jesus called Himself the Son of man, when He had far greater names, let us learn to humble ourselves unto men of low estate, knowing that he that humbleth himself shall in due time be exalted. Methinks, however, there is a sweeter thought than this in the name, Son of man. It seems to me that Christ loved manhood so much, that He always desired to honour it; and since it is a high honour, and indeed the greatest dignity of manhood, that Jesus Christ was the Son of man, He is wont to display this name, that He may, as it were, put rich stars upon the breast of manhood, and put a crown upon its head. Son of man—whenever He said that word He seemed to put a halo round the head of Adam's children. Yet there is perhaps a more lovely thought still. Jesus Christ called Himself the Son of man, because He loved to be a man. It was a great stoop for Him to come from heaven and to be incarnate. It was a mighty stoop of condescension when He left the harps of angels and the songs of cherubims to mingle with the vulgar herd of His own creatures. But condescension though it was, He loved it. You will remember that when He became incarnate He did not become so in the dark. When He bringeth forth the only begotten into the world, He saith, "Let all the angels of God worship Him." It was told in heaven; it was not done as a dark secret which Jesus Christ would do in the night that none might know it; but all the angels of God were brought to witness the advent of a Saviour a span long, sleeping upon a Virgin's breast, and lying in a manger. And ever afterwards, and even now, he never blushed to confess that He was man; never looked back upon His incarnation with the slightest regret; but always regarded it with a joyous recollection, thinking Himself thrice happy that He had ever become the Son of man. All hail, thou blessed Jesus! we know how much Thou lovest our race; we can well understand the greatness of Thy mercy towards Thy chosen ones, inasmuch as Thou art evermore using the sweet name which acknowledges that they are bone of Thy bone and flesh of Thy flesh, and Thou art one of them, a brother and a near kinsman.

I will tell you the people whom Christ will save—they are those who are lost to themselves. Just imagine a ship at sea passing through a storm: the ship leaks, and the captain tells the passengers he fears they are lost. If they are far away from the shore, and have sprung a leak, they pump with all their might as long as they have any strength remaining; they seek to keep down the devouring element, they still think that they are not quite lost while they have power to

use the pumps. At last they see the ship cannot be saved; they give it up for lost, and leap into the boats. The boats are floating for many a day, full of men who have but little food to eat. "They are lost," we say, "lost out at sea." But they do not think so; they still cherish a hope that perhaps some stray ship may pass that way and pick them up. There is a ship on the horizon; they strain their eyes to look at her; they lift each other up; they wave a flag; they rend their garments to make something which shall attract attention; but she passes away; black night comes, and they are forgotten. At length the very last mouthful of food has been consumed; strength fails them, and they lay down their oars in the boat, and lay themselves down to die. You can imagine then how well they understand the awful meaning of the term—"lost." As long as they had any strength left they felt they were not lost; as long as they could see a sail they felt there was yet hope; while there was yet a mouldy biscuit left, or a drop of water, they did not give up all for lost. Now the biscuit is gone, and the water is gone; now strength has departed, and the oar lies still: they lie down to die by each other's side, mere skeletons; things that should have been dead days ago, if they had died when all enjoyment of life had ceased. Now they know, I say, what it is to be lost, and across the shoreless waters they seem to hear their death-knell pealing forth that awful word, Lost! lost! lost!

Now, in a spiritual sense, these are the people Christ came to save. Sinner, thou too art condemned. Our father Adam steered the ship awry and she split upon a rock, and she is filling even to her bulwarks now; and pump as philosophy may, it can never keep the waters of her depravity so low as to prevent the ship from sinking. Seeing that human nature is of itself lost, it hath taken to the boat. She is a fair boat, called the boat of Good Endeavour, and in her you are striving to row with all your might, to reach the shore; but your strength fails you. You say, "Oh, I cannot keep God's law. The more I strive to keep it, the more I find it to be impossible for me to do so. I climb; but the higher I climb the higher is the top above me. When I was in the plains, I thought the mountain was but a moderate hill; but now I seem to have ascended half-way up its steeps,—there it is, higher than the clouds, and I cannot discern the summit." However, you gather up your strength, you try again, you row once more, and at last, unable to do anything, you lay down your oars, feeling that if you are saved, it cannot be by your own works. Still you have a little hope left. There are a few small pieces of mouldy biscuit remaining. You have heard that by attention to certain ceremonies you may be saved, and you munch your dry biscuit; but at last that fails you, and you find that neither baptism, nor the Lord's supper, nor any other outward rites, can make you clean, for the leprosy lies deep within. That done, you still look out. You are in hopes that there may be a sail coming, and while floating upon that deep of despair, you think you detect in the distance some new dogma, some fresh doctrine that may comfort you. It passes, however, like the wild phantom ship—it is gone, and you are left at last, with the burning sky of God's vengeance above you, with the deep waters of a bottomless hell beneath you, fire in your heart and emptiness in that ship which once was so full of hope, you lie down despairing, and you cry,—"Lord save me, or I perish!" Is that your condition, my friend, or has that ever been your condition? If so, Christ came into the world to seek and to save you; and you He will save, and no one else. He will save only those who can claim this for their title,—"Lost;" who have understood in their own souls what it is to be lost, as to all self-trust, all self-reliance, and all self-hope.

I can look back to the time when I knew myself to be lost. I thought that God meant to destroy me. I imagined that because I felt myself to be lost, I was the special victim of Almighty vengeance; for

I said unto the Lord, "Hast Thou set me as the target of all Thine arrows? Am I a sea or a whale, that Thou hast set a mark upon me? Hast thou sewed up mine iniquities in a bag, and sealed my transgressions with a seal? Wilt Thou never be gracious? Hast Thou made me to be the centre of all sorrow, the chosen one of heaven to be cursed for ever?" Ah! fool that I was! I little knew then, that those who have the curse in themselves are the men whom God will bless—that we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in Him who died for us and rose again. Can you say that you are lost? Was there a time when you travelled with the caravan through this wild wilderness world? Have you left the caravan with your companions, and you are left in the midst of a sea of sand—a hopeless arid waste? And do you look around you, and see no helper; and do you cast your eyes around and see no trust? Is the death-bird wheeling in the sky, screaming with delight because he hopes soon to feed upon your flesh and bones? Is the water-bottle dry, and doth the bread fail you? Have you consumed the last of your dry dates, and drunk the last of that brackish water from the bottle; and are you now without hope, without trust in yourself; ready to lie down in despair? Hark thee! The Lord thy God loveth thee; Jesus Christ has bought thee with His blood; thou art, thou shalt be His. He has been seeking thee all this time, and He has found thee at last, in the vast howling wilderness, and now He will take thee upon His shoulders and carry thee to His house rejoicing, and the angels shall be glad over thy salvation. Now, such people must and shall be saved; and this is the description of those whom Jesus Christ came to save. Whom He came to save He will save; you, ye lost ones—lost to all hope and self confidence, shall be saved. Though death and hell should stand in the way, Christ wilt perform His vow, and accomplish His design. But for the most part Christ finds His people in His own house; but He finds them often in the worst of tempers, in the most hardened conditions; and He softens their hearts, awakens their consciences, subdues their pride and takes them to Himself; but never would they come to Him unless He came to them. Sheep go astray, but they do not come back again of themselves. Ask the shepherd whether his sheep come back, and he will tell you, "No, sir, they will wander, but they never return." When you find a sheep that ever came back of itself, then you may hope to find a sinner who will come to Christ of himself. No; it must be sovereign grace that must seek the sinner and bring him home. And when Christ seeks him He saves him. Having caught him at last, like the ram of old, in the thorns of conviction, He does not take a knife and slay him as the sinner expects, but He takes him by the hand of mercy and begins to comfort and to save. The Christ who seeks you to-day, and who has sought you many a day by His providence, will save you. He will first find you when you are emptied of self, and then He will save you. When you are stripped He will bring forth the best robe and put it on you. When you are dying He will breathe life in your nostrils. When you feel yourselves condemned He will come and blot out your iniquities like a cloudy and your transgressions like a thick cloud. Fear not, ye hopeless and helpless souls, Christ seeks you to-day, and seeking, He will save you—save you here, save you living, save you dying, save you in time, save you in eternity, and give you, even you, the lost ones, a portion among them that are sanctified.

Chapter 11: The Great Remedy

The Great Remedy

We can learn nothing of the Gospel, except by feeling its truths—no one truth of the Gospel is ever truly known and really learned, until we have tested and tried and proved it, and its power has been exercised upon us. I have heard of a naturalist, who thought himself exceedingly wise with regard to the natural history of birds, and yet he had learned all he knew in his study, and had never so much as seen a bird either flying through the air or sitting upon its perch. He was but a fool, although he thought himself exceedingly wise. And there are some men who, like him, think themselves great theologians; they might even pretend to take a doctor's degree in divinity; and yet, if we came to the root of the matter, and asked them whether they ever saw or felt any of these things of which they talked, they would have to say, "No; I know these things in the letter, but not in the spirit; I understand them as a matter of theory, but not as things of my own consciousness and experience." Be assured, that as the naturalist who was merely the student of other men's observations knew nothing, so the man who pretends to religion, but has never entered into the depths and power of its doctrines, or felt the influence of them upon his heart, knows nothing whatever, and all the knowledge he pretendeth to is but varnished ignorance. There are some sciences that may be learned by the head, but the science of Christ crucified can only be learned by the heart. No man can know the greatness of sin till he has felt it, for there is no measuring-rod for sin, except its condemnation in our own conscience, when the law of God speaks to us with a terror that may be felt.

Some men imagine that the Gospel was devised, in some way or other, to soften down the harshness of God towards sin. Ah! how mistaken the idea! There is no more harsh condemnation of sin anywhere than in the Gospel.

"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." There lies the blackness; here stands the Lord Jesus Christ. What will He do with it? Will He go and speak to it, and say, "This is no great evil; this blackness is but a little spot"? Oh! no; He looks at it, and He says, "This is terrible blackness, darkness that may be felt; this is an exceeding great evil." Will He cover it up, then? Will He weave a mantle of excuse and then wrap it round about the iniquity? Ah! no; whatever covering there may have been He lifts it off, and He declares that when the spirit of truth is come He will convince the world of sin, and lay the sinner's conscience bare and probe the wound to the bottom. What then will He do? He will do a far better thing than make an excuse, or than to pretend in any way to speak lightly of it. He will cleanse it all away, remove it entirely by the power and meritorious virtue of His own blood. Nor does the Gospel in any way whatever give man a hope that the claims of the law will be in any way loosened. Some imagine that under the old dispensation God demanded great things of man—that He did bind upon man heavy burdens that were grievous to be borne—and they suppose that Christ came into the world to put upon the shoulders of men a lighter law, something which it would be more easy for them to obey—a law which they can more readily keep, or which, if they break, would not come upon them with such

terrible threatenings. Ah, not so. The Gospel came not into the world to soften down the law. Till heaven and earth shall pass away, not one jot and tittle of the law shall fail. What God hath said to the sinner in the law, He saith to the sinner in the Gospel. If He declareth that "the soul that sinneth it shall die," the testimony of the Gospel is not contrary to the testimony of the law. If He declares that whosoever breaketh the sacred law shall most assuredly be punished, the Gospel also demands blood for blood, and eye for eye, and tooth for tooth, and doth not relax a solitary jot or tittle of its demands, but is as severe and as terribly just as even the law itself. Do you reply to this, that Christ has certainly softened down the law? I reply, that ye know not, then, the mission of Christ. That is no softening of the law. It is, as it were, the grinding of the edge of the terrible sword of Divine justice, to make it sharper far than it seemed before. Christ hath not put out the furnace; He rather seemeth to heat it seven times hotter. Before Christ came sin seemed unto me to be but little; but when He came sin became exceedingly sinful, and all its dread heinousness started out before the light.

But, says one, "Surely the Gospel does in some degree remove the greatness of our sin? Does it not soften the punishment of sin?" Ah! no. Moses says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" and his sermon is dread and terrible. He sits down. And now comes Jesus Christ, the man of a loving countenance. What says He with regard to the punishment of sin? Our Lord Jesus Christ was all love, but He was all honesty too. "Never man spake like this man," when He came to speak of the punishment of the lost. What other prophet was the author of such dread expressions as these—"He shall burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire"—These shall go away into everlasting punishment;" or these—"Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." Stand at the feet of Jesus when He tells you of the punishment of sin, and the effect of iniquity, and you may tremble there far more than you would have done if Moses had been the preacher, and if Sinai had been in the background to conclude the sermon. No, the Gospel of Christ in no sense whatever helps to make sin less. The proclamation of Christ is the same as the utterance of Ezekiel of old—"The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great." Our sins are great; every sin is great; but there are some that in our apprehension seem to be greater than others. There are crimes that the lip of modesty could not mention. I might go far in describing the degradation of human nature in the sins which it has invented. It is amazing how the ingenuity of man seems to have exhausted itself in inventing fresh crimes. Surely there is not the possibility of the invention of a new sin? But if there be, ere long man will invent it, for man seemeth exceedingly cunning, and full of wisdom in the discovery of means of destroying himself and the endeavour to injure his Maker. But there are some sins that show a diabolical extent of degraded ingenuity—some sins of which it were a shame to speak, of which it were disgraceful to think. But "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." There may be some sins of which a man cannot speak, but there is no sin which the blood of Christ cannot wash away. Blasphemy, however profane; lust, however bestial; covetousness, however far it may have gone into theft and rapine; breach of the commandments of God, however much of riot it may have run, all these may be pardoned and washed away through the blood of Jesus Christ. In all the long list of human sins, though that be long as time, there standeth but one sin that is unpardonable, and that one no sinner has committed if he feels within himself a longing for mercy; for that sin once committed, the soul becomes hardened, dead, and seared, and never desireth afterwards to find peace with God. I therefore declare to thee, Oh trembling sinner, that however great thine iniquity may be, whatever sin thou mayest have committed in all the list of guilt, however far thou mayest have exceeded all

thy fellow-creatures, though thou mayest have distanced the Pauls and Magdalenes and every one of the most heinous culprits in the black race of sin, yet the blood of Christ is able now to wash thy sin away. Mark! I speak not lightly of thy sin, it is exceedingly great; but I speak still more loftily of the blood of Christ. Great as are thy sins, the blood of Christ is greater still. Thy sins are like great mountains, but the blood of Christ is like Noah's flood; twenty cubits upwards shall this blood prevail, and the top of the mountains of thy sin shall be covered.

Whatever I may not be, one thing I know I am—a sinner, guilty, consciously guilty, and often miserable on account of that guilt. Well, then, the Scripture says: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

"And when thine eye of faith is dim, Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim;

Thus, at His footstool, bow the knee, And Israel's God thy peace shall be."

Let me put my entire trust in the bloody sacrifice which He offered on my behalf. No dependence will I have in my prayings, my doings, my feelings, my weepings, my preachings, my thinkings, my Bible readings, nor all that, I would desire to have good works, and yet in my good works I will not put a shadow of trust.

"Nothing in my hands I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling."

And if there be any power in Christ to save I am saved; if there be an everlasting arm extended by Christ, and if that Saviour who hung there was "God over all, blessed for ever," and if His blood is still exhibited before the throne of God as the sacrifice for sin, then perish I cannot, till the throne of God shall break, and till the pillars of God's justice shall crumble.

Chapter 12: The Kiss of Reconciliation

The Kiss of Reconciliation The kiss is a token of enmity removed, of strife ended, and of peace established. You will remember that when Jacob met Esau, although the hearts of the brothers had been long estranged, and fear had dwelt in the breast of one, and revenge had kindled its fires in the heart of the other; when they met they were pacified towards each other, and they fell upon each other's neck, and they kissed: it was the kiss of reconciliation. Now, the very first work of grace in the heart is, for Christ to give the sinner the kiss of His affection, to prove His reconciliation to the sinner. Thus the father kissed his prodigal son when he returned. Before the feast was spread, before the music and the dance began, the father fell upon his son's neck, and kissed him. On our part, however, it is our business to return that kiss; and as Jesus gives the reconciling kiss on God's behalf, it is ours to kiss the lip of Jesus, and to prove by that deed that we are "reconciled to God by the death of His Son," Sinner, thou hast hitherto been an enemy of Christ's Gospel. Thou hast hated His Sabbaths; thou hast neglected His Word; thou hast abhorred His commandments and cast His laws behind thy back; thou hast, as much as lieth in thee, opposed His kingdom; thou hast loved the wages of sin, and the ways of iniquity better than the ways of Christ. What sayest thou? Does the Spirit now strive in thy heart? Then, I beseech thee, yield to His gracious influence, and now let thy quarrel be at an end. Cast down the weapons of thy rebellion; pull out the plumes of pride from thy helmet, and cast away the sword of thy rebellion. Be His enemy no longer; for, rest assured, He wills to be thy friend. With arms outstretched, ready to receive thee, with eyes full of tears, weeping over thine obstinacy, and with bowels moved with compassion for thee, He speaks through me and He says, "Kiss the Son;" be reconciled. This is the very message of the Gospel—"The ministry of reconciliation." Thus speak we, as God hath commanded us. "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." And is this a hard thing we ask of you, that you should be at friendship with Him who is your best friend? Is this a rigorous law, like the commands of Pharaoh to the children of Israel in Egypt, when He bids you simply shake hands with Him who shed His blood for sinners? We ask you not to be friends of death or hell; we beg you rather to dissolve your league with them; we pray that grace may lead you to forswear their company for ever, and be at peace with Him who is incarnate love and infinite mercy. Sinners, why will ye resist Him who only longs to save you? Why scorn Him who loves you? Why trample on the blood that bought you, and reject the Cross, which is the only hope of your salvation?

Man is utterly ruined and undone. He is lost in a wild waste wilderness. The skin bottle of his righteousness is all dried up, and there is not so much as a drop of water in it. The heavens refuse him rain, and the earth can yield him no moisture. Must he perish? He looks aloft, beneath, around, and he discovers no means of escape. Must he die? Must thirst devour him? Must he fall upon the desert and leave his bones to bleach under the hot sun? No; for the text declares there is a fountain of life. Ordained in old eternity by God in solemn covenant, this fountain, this divine well, takes its spring from the deep foundations of God's decrees. It gusheth up from the depth which coucheth beneath, it cometh from that place which the eagle's eye hath not seen, and which the

lion's whelp hath not passed over. The deep foundations of God's government, the depths of His own essential goodness and of His divine nature—these are the mysterious springs from which gush forth that fountain of the "water of life" which shall do good to man. The Son hath digged this well, and bored through massive rocks which prevented this living water from springing upward. Using His Cross as the grand instrument He has pierced through rocks; He has Himself descended to the lowest depth, and He hath broken a passage by which the love and grace of God, the living water which can save the soul, may well up and overflow to quench the thirst of dying men. The Son hath bidden this fountain freely flow, hath removed the stone which laid upon the mouth thereof, and now having ascended on high He standeth there to see that the fountain shall never stay its life-giving course, that its floods shall never be dry, that its depths shall never be exhausted. This sacred fountain, established according to God's good will and pleasure in the covenant, opened by Christ when he died upon the Cross, floweth this day to give life and health, and joy and peace to poor sinners dead in sin, and ruined by the fall. There is a "water of life."

Pause awhile and look at its floods as they come gushing upwards, overflowing on every side, and assuaging men's thirst. Let us look with joyous eye. It is called the "water of life," and richly doth it deserve its name. God's favour is life, and in His presence there is pleasure for evermore; but this water is God's favour, and consequently life. By this water of life is intended God's free grace, God's love for men, so that if you come and drink, you shall find this to be life indeed to your soul, for in drinking of God's grace, you inherit God's love, you are reconciled to God. God stands in a fatherly relation to you, He loves you, and His great infinite heart yearns towards you.

Again, it is living water not simply because it is love, and that is life, but it saves from impending death. The sinner knows that he must die because he is unworthy. He has committed sins so tremendous that God must punish him. God must cease to be just if He does not punish the sins of man. Man when conscious that he has been very guilty stands shivering in the presence of his Maker, feeling in his soul that his doom is signed, and sealed, and that he must certainly be cast away from all hope, and life, and joy. Come hither, then, ye sin-doomed; this water can wash away your sins, and when your sins are washed away then shall ye live; for the innocent must not be punished. Here is water that can make you whiter than driven snow. What though you be black as Kedar's smoky tents, here is water that can purge you, and wash you to the whiteness of perfection, and make you fair as the curtains of king Solomon. These waters well deserve the name of life, since pardon is a condition of life. Unpardoned we die, we perish, we sink into the depths of hell; pardoned we live, we rise, we ascend to the very heights of heaven. See here, then, this ever-gushing fountain will give to all who take thereof, life from the dead, by the pardon of their sins.

"But," saith one, "I have a longing within me which I cannot satisfy. I feel sure that if I be pardoned yet there is something which I want—which nothing I have ever heard of, or have ever seen or handled, can satisfy. I have within me an aching void which the world can never fill." "There was a time," says one, "when I was satisfied with the theatre, when the amusements, the pleasures of men of the world, were very satisfactory to me. But lo! I have pressed this olive till it yields no more the generous oil; it is but the dreggy, thick excrement thereof that now I can obtain. My joys have faded; the beauty of my fat valley hath become as a faded flower. No longer can I rejoice in the music of this world." Ah! soul, glad am I that thy cistern has become dry, for till men are dissatisfied with this world they never look out for the next; till the God of this world has utterly

deceived them they will not look to Him who is the only living and true God. But hearken! thou that art wretched and miserable, here is living water that can quench thy thirst. Come hither and drink, and thou shalt be satisfied; for he that is a believer in Christ finds enough for him in Christ now, and enough for ever. The believer is not the man who has to pace his room, saying, "I find no amusements and no delight." He is not the man whose days are weary, and whose nights are long, for he finds in religion such a spring of joy, such a fountain of consolation, that he is content and happy. Put him in a dungeon and he will find good company; place him in a barren wilderness, still he would eat the bread of heaven; drive him away from friendship, he will find the "friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Blast all his gourds, and he will find shadow beneath the Rock of Ages; sap the foundation of his earthly hopes, but since the foundation of his God standeth sure, his heart will still be fixed, trusting in the Lord. There is such a fulness in religion, that I can honestly testify I never knew what happiness was till I knew Christ; I thought I did. I warmed my hands before the fire of sin, but it was a painted fire. But oh, when once I tasted the Saviour's love, and had been washed in Jesu's blood, that was heaven begun below. Oh, if ye did but know the joys of religion, if ye did but know the sweetness of love to Christ, surely ye could not stand aloof! If ye could but catch a glimpse of the believer when he is dancing for joy, you would renounce your wildest mirth, your greatest joy, to become the meanest child in the family of God. Thus, then, it is the living water, it is the water of life, because it satisfies our thirst, and gives us the reality of life which we can never find in anything beneath the sky. In the name of Almighty God, stand back everything that keeps the willing sinner from Christ. Away with you, away with you! Christ sprinkles His blood upon the way, and cries to you, "Vanish, begone, leave the road clear; let him come; stand not in his path; make straight before him his way, level the mountains and fill up the valleys; make straight through the wilderness a highway for him to come, to drink of this Water of Life freely. 'Let him come.' "Oh, is not that a precious word of command, for it has all the might of Omnipotence in it! God said, "Let there be light: and there was light," and He says, "Let him come," and come he will and must, that is but willing to come. "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." And now, sinner, remember God says, "Come." Is there anything in thy way? Remember, He adds, "Let him come." He bids everything stand out of thy way.

Chapter 13: "Though One Rose from the Dead"

"Though One Rose from the Dead"

Man is very loath to think ill of himself. The most of mankind are very prone to indulge in apologies for sin. They say, "If we had lived in better times we had been better men; if we had been born into this world under happier auspices we should have been holier; and if we had been placed in more excellent circumstances we should have been more inclined to the right." The mass of men, when they seek the cause of their sin, seek it anywhere but in the right place. They will not blame their own nature for it; they will not find fault with their own corrupt heart, but they will lay the blame anywhere else. Some of them find fault with their peculiar position. "If," says one, "I had been born rich, instead of being poor, I should not have been dishonest." "Or if," says another, "I had been born in middle life, instead of being rich, I should not have been exposed to such temptations to lust and pride as I am now; but my very condition is so adverse to piety, that I am compelled, by the place I hold in society, to be anything but what I ought to be." Others turn round and find fault with the whole of society; they say that the whole organism of society is wrong; they tell us that everything in government, everything that concerns the state, everything which melts men into commonwealths, is all so bad that they cannot be good while things are what they are. They must have a revolution, they must upset everything; and then they think they could be holy! Many, on the other hand, throw the blame on their training. If they had not been so brought up by their parents, if they had not been so exposed in their youth, they would not have been what they are. It is their parents' fault; the sin lay at their father's or their mother's door. Or it is their constitution.

Hear them speak for themselves: "If I had such a temper as So-and-so, what a good man I would be! But with my headstrong disposition it is impossible. It is all very well to talk to me; but men have different turns of mind, and my turn of mind is such that I could not by any means be a serious character." Others go a deal farther, and throw the blame on the ministry. "If," say they, "at one time the minister had been more earnest in preaching, I should have been a better man; if it had been my privilege to sit under sounder doctrine and hear the Word more faithfully preached, I should have been better." Or else they lay it at the door of professors of religion, and say, "If the Church were more consistent, if there were no hypocrites and no formalists, then we should reform!"

Ah! you are putting the saddle on the wrong horse, you are laying the burden on the wrong back; the blame is in your heart, nowhere else. If your heart were renewed you would be better; but until that is done, if society were remodelled to perfection, if ministers were angels, and professors of religion were seraphs, you would be none the better; but having less excuse you would be doubly guilty, and perish with a more terrible destruction. But yet men will always be having it, that if things were different they would be different too; whereas, the difference must be made in themselves, if they begin in the right place.

Suppose a preacher should come from another world to preach to us, we must naturally suppose that he came from Heaven. Even the rich man did not ask that he or any of his compeers in

torment might go out of hell to preach. Spirits that are lost and given up to unutterable wickedness, could not visit this earth; and if they did they could not preach the truth, nor lead us on the road to Heaven which they had not trodden themselves. The advent of a damned spirit upon earth would be a curse, a blight, a withering blast; we need not suppose that such a thing ever did or could occur. The preacher from another world, if such could come, must come from Heaven. He must be a Lazarus who had lain in Abraham's bosom, a pure, perfect, and holy being. Now, imagine for a moment that such an one had descended upon earth; suppose that we heard that a venerable spirit, who had been a long time buried, had on a sudden burst his cerements, lifted up his coffin lid, and was now preaching the Word of Life. Oh! What a rush there would be to hear him preach! What place in this wide world would be large enough to hold his massive congregations! How many thousands of portraits would be published of him, representing him in the dread winding-sheet of death, or as an angel fresh from Heaven! Nations, far remote, would soon hear the news; and every ship would be freighted with passengers, bringing men and women to hear this wondrous preacher and traveller who had returned from the bourn unknown. And how you would listen! And how solemnly you would gaze at that unearthly spectre! And how would your ears be attent to his every word! His faintest syllable would be caught and published everywhere throughout the world—the utterances of a man who had been dead and was alive again. And we are very apt to suppose, that if such a thing should happen, there would be numberless conversions, for surely the congregations thus attracted would be immensely blest? Many hardened sinners would be led to repent; hundreds of halts would be made to decide, and great good would be done. Ah! stop; though the first part of the fairy dream should occur, yet would not the last. If some one should rise from the dead, yet would sinners no more repent through his preaching than through the preaching of any other. God might bless such preaching to salvation, if he pleased; but in itself there would be no more power in the preaching of the sheeted dead, or of the glorified spirit, than there is of feeble man to-day. "Though one should rise from the dead, they would not repent." If the testimony of one man who had been raised from the dead were of any value for the confirming of the Gospel, would not God have used it before now? It is undoubtedly true that some have risen from the dead. We find accounts in Holy Scripture of some men who by the power of Christ Jesus, or through the instrumentality of prophets, were raised from the dead; but ye will note this memorable fact, that they never any of them spoke one word which is recorded, by way of telling us what they saw while they were dead. It is memorable that there is not a record of any one of them having given any description of what they saw while they were dead. Oh, what secrets might he have told out, who had laid in his grave four days! Do ye not suppose that his sisters questioned him? Do ye not think that they asked him what he saw—whether he had stood before the burning throne of God, and been judged for the things done in his body, and whether he had entered into rest? But, however they may have asked, it is certain he gave no answer; for had he given an answer we should have known it now; tradition would have cherished the record. And do ye remember, when Paul once preached a long sermon, even until midnight, there was a young man in the third loft named Eutychus, who fell asleep, and fell down, and was taken up dead? Paul came down and prayed, and Eutychus was restored to life. But did Eutychus get up and preach after he had come from the dead? No; the thought never seems to have struck a single person in the assembly. Paul went on with his sermon, and they sat and listened to him, and did not care one fig about what Eutychus had seen; for Eutychus had nothing more to tell them than Paul had. Of all the number of those who by divine might have been

brought again from the shades of death, we have not one secret told; we have not one mystery unravelled by them all. But if a man should rise from his tomb, and affirm the truth of the Gospel, the infidel world would be no more near believing than now. Here comes Mr. Infidel Critic. He denies the evidences of the Bible; evidences which so clearly prove its authenticity, that we are obliged to believe him to be either blasphemous or senseless, in that he does so, and we leave him his choice between the two. But he dares to deny the truth of Holy Scripture, and will have it that all the miracles whereby it is attested are untrue and false. Do you think that one who had risen from the dead would persuade such a man as that to believe? What? when God's whole creation having been ransacked by the hand of science, has only testified to the truth of revelation—when the whole history of buried cities and departed nations has but preached out the truth that the Bible was true—when every strip of land in the far-off East has been an exposition and a confirmation of the prophecies of Scripture; if men are yet unconvinced, do ye suppose that one dead man rising from the tomb would convince them? No; I see the critical blasphemer already armed for his prey. Hark to him: "I am not quite sure that you ever were dead; sir, you profess to be risen from the dead; I do not believe you. You say you have been dead, and have gone to heaven; my dear man, you were in a trance. You must bring proof from the parish register that you were dead." The proof is brought that he was dead. "Well, now you must prove that you were buried." It is proved that he was buried, and it is proved that some sexton in old times did take up his dry bones and cast his dust in the air. "That is very good; now I want you to prove that you are the identical man that was buried." "Well I am, I know I am; I tell you as an honest man I have been to heaven, and I have come back again." "Well then," says the infidel, "it is not consistent with reason; it is ridiculous to suppose that a man who was dead and buried could ever come to life again, and so I don't believe you, I tell you so straight to your face." That is how men would answer him; and instead of having only the sin of denying many miracles, men would have to add to it the guilt of denying another; but they would not be so much as a tithe of an inch nearer to conviction; and certainly, if the wonder were done in some far-off land, and only reported to the rest of the world, I can suppose that the whole infidel world would exclaim, "Simple childish tales and such traditions have been current elsewhere; but we are sensible men, we do not believe them." Although a churchyard should start into life, and stand up before the infidel who denies the truth of Christianity, I declare I do not believe there would be enough evidence in all the churchyards in the world to convince him. Infidelity would still cry for something more. It is like the horse-leech; it crieth, "Give, give!" Prove a point to an infidel, and he wants it proved again; let it be as clear as noon-day to him from the testimony of many witnesses, yet doth he not believe it. In fact, he doth believe it; but he pretendeth not to do so, and is an infidel in spite of himself. But certainly the dead man's rising would be little worth for the conviction of such men. The most numerous class of unbelievers are people who never think at all. There are a great number in this land who eat and drink, and do everything else except think; at least, they think enough to take their shop shutters down of a morning and put them up at night; they think enough to know a little about the rising of the funds, or the rate per cent. of interest, or something like how articles are selling, or the price of bread; but their brains seem to be given them for nothing at all, except to meditate upon bread and cheese. To them religion is a matter of very small concern. They dare say the Bible is very true, they dare say religion is all right, but it does not often trouble them much. They suppose they are Christians; for were they not christened when they were babies? They must be Christians—at least they suppose so; but they never sit down to enquire what religion is.

They sometimes go to church and chapel and elsewhere; but it does not signify much to them. One minister may contradict another, but they do not know; they dare say they are both right. One minister may fall foul of another in almost every doctrine; it does not signify, and they pass over religion with a queer idea—"God Almighty will not ask us where we went to, I dare say." They do not exercise their judgments at all. Thinking is such hard work for them that they never trouble themselves at all about it. Now, if a man were to rise from the dead to-morrow these people would never be startled. Yes, yes, they would go and see him once, just as they go and see any other curiosity, the living skeleton, or Tom Thumb; they would talk about him a good deal, and say, "There's a man risen from the dead," and possibly some winter evening they might read one of his sermons; but they would never give themselves trouble to think whether his testimony was worth anything or not. No, they are such blocks they never could be stirred; and if the ghost were to come to any of their houses the most they would feel would be they were in a fearful fright; but as to what he said, that would never exercise their leaden brains, and never stir their stony senses. Though one should rise from the dead, the great mass of these people never would be affected.

Then learn this truth, that no outward means in the world can ever bring you to the footstool of divine grace and make you a Christian, if Moses and the prophets have failed. All that can be done now is this: God the Spirit must bless the Word to you, otherwise conscience cannot awaken you, reason cannot awaken you, powerful appeals cannot awaken you, persuasion cannot bring you to Christ. Nothing will ever do it except God the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 14: The Castle of Self

The Castle of Self

Strange to say, the great number of those who are saved are just the most unlikely people in the world to have been saved, while a great number of those who perish were once just the very people whom, if natural disposition had anything to do with it, we should have expected to see in Heaven. Why, there is one who in his youth was a child of many follies. Often did his mother weep over him, and cry and groan over her son's wanderings; for what with a fierce high spirit that could brook neither bit nor bridle, what with perpetual rebellions and ebullitions of hot anger, she said, "My son, my son, what wilt thou be in thy riper years? Surely thou wilt dash in pieces law and order, and be a disgrace to thy father's name." He grew up; in youth he was wild and wanton, but wonder of wonders! on a sudden he became a new man, changed, altogether changed; no more like what he was before than angels are like lost spirits. He sat at her feet, he cheered her heart, and the lost, fiery one became gentle, mild, humble as a little child, and obedient to God's commandments. You say, wonder of wonders! But there is another. He was a fair youth; when but a child he talked of Jesus; often when his mother had him on her knee he asked her questions about Heaven; he was a prodigy, a wonder of piety in his youth. As he grew up the tear rolled down his cheek under any sermon; he could scarcely bear to hear of death without a sigh; sometimes his mother caught him, as she thought, in prayer alone. And what is he now? He has just come from sin; he has become the debauched, desperate villain, has gone far into all manner of wickedness and lust, and sin, and has become more corrupt than other men could have made him; only his own evil spirit, once confined, has now developed itself, he has learned to play the lion in his manhood, as once he played the fox in his youth. It very frequently is so. Some abandoned, wicked fellow, has had his heart broken, and been led to weep and has cried to God for mercy, and renounced his vile sin; whilst some fair maiden by his side hath heard the same sermon, and if there was a tear she brushed it away; she still continues just what she was, "without God and without hope in the world." God has taken the base things of the world, and has just picked His people out of the very roughest of men, in order that He may prove that it is not natural disposition, but that "Salvation is of the Lord" alone. With sinners, this doctrine is a great battering-ram against their pride. I will give you a figure. The sinner in his natural estate reminds me of a man who has a strong and well-nigh impenetrable castle into which he has fled. There is the outer moat; there is a second moat; there are the high walls; and then afterwards there is the dungeon and keep, into which the sinner will retire. Now, the first moat that goes round the sinner's trusting place is his good works. "Ah!" he says, "I am as good as my neighbour; twenty shillings in the pound down, ready money, I have always paid; I am no sinner; 'I tithe mint and cummin;' a good respectable gentleman I am indeed." Well, when God comes to work with him, to save him, he sends his army across the first moat; and as they go through it, they cry, "Salvation is of the Lord;" and the moat is dried up, for if it be of the Lord, how can it be of good works? But when that is gone, he has a second intrenchment—ceremonies. "Well," he says, "I will not trust in my good works, but I have been baptized, I have been confirmed; do not I take the sacrament? That shall

be my trust." "Over the moat! Over the moat!" And the soldiers go over again, shouting, "Salvation is of the Lord." The second moat is dried up; it is all over with that. Now they come to the first strong wall; the sinner, looking over it, says, "I can repent, I can believe, whenever I like; I will save myself by repenting and believing." Up come the soldiers of God, His great army of conviction, and they batter this wall to the ground, crying, "Salvation is of the Lord.' Your faith and your repentance must all be given you, or else you will neither believe nor repent of sin." And now the castle is taken; the man's hopes are all cut off; he feels that it is not of self; the castle of self is overcome, and the great banner upon which is written "Salvation is of the Lord" is displayed upon the battlements. But is the battle over? Oh, no; the sinner has retired to the keep, in the centre of the castle; and now he changes his tactics. "I cannot save myself," says he, "therefore I will despair; there is no salvation for me." Now this second castle is as hard to take as the first, for the sinner sits down and says, "I can't be saved, I must perish." But God commands the soldiers to take this castle too, shouting, "Salvation is of the Lord;" though it is not of man, it is of God; "he is able to save, even to the uttermost," though you cannot save yourself. This sword, you see, cuts two ways; it cuts pride down, and then it cleaves the skull of despair. If any man say he can save himself, it halveth his pride at once; and if another man say he cannot be saved, it dasheth his despair to the earth; for it affirms that he can be saved, seeing, "Salvation is of the Lord."

What is the obverse of this truth? Salvation is of God: then damnation is of man. If any of you perish, the blame will not lie at God's door; if you are lost and cast away, you will have to bear all the blame and all the tortures of conscience yourself; you will lie for ever in perdition, and reflect, "I have destroyed myself; I have made a suicide of my soul; I have been my own destroyer; I can lay no blame to God." Remember, if saved, you must be saved by God alone, though if lost you have lost yourselves. "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die O house of Israel."

Chapter 15: On Halting Between Two Opinions

On Halting Between Two Opinions

Most of the people who were before Elijah thought that Jehovah was God, and that Baal was god too; and that for this reason the worship of both was quite consistent. The great mass of them did not reject the God of their fathers wholly, nor did they bow before Baal wholly; but as polytheists, believing in many gods, they thought both Gods might be worshipped, and each of them have a share in their hearts. "No," said the prophet when he began, "this will not do, these are two opinions; you can never make them one, they are two contradictory things which cannot be combined. I tell you that instead of combining the two, which is impossible, you are halting between the two, which makes a vast difference." "I will build in my house," said one of them, "an altar for Jehovah here, and an altar for Baal there. I am of one opinion; I believe them both to be God." "No, no," said Elijah, "it cannot be so; they are two, and must be two. These things are not one but two opinions, No, you cannot unite them." Many say, "I am worldly, but I am religious too; I can go to worship God on Sunday; I went to the Derby the other day: I go, on the one hand, to the place where I can serve my lusts; I am to be met with in every dancing room of every description, and yet at the same time I say my prayers most devoutly. May I not be a good Churchman, or a right good Dissenter, and a man of the world too? May I not, after all, hold with the hounds as well as run with the hare? May I not love God and serve the devil too—take the pleasure of each of them, and give my heart to neither?" We answer, "Not so, they are two opinions; you cannot do it, they are distinct and separate."

Mark Antony yoked two lions to his chariot; but there are two lions no man ever yoked together yet—the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the lion of the pit. These can never go together. Two opinions you may hold in politics, perhaps, but then you will be despised by everybody, unless you are of one opinion or the other, and act as an independent man. But two opinions in the matter of soul-religion you cannot hold. If God be God, serve Him, and do it thoroughly; but if this world be God, serve it, and make no profession of religion. If you think the things of the world the best, serve them; devote yourself to them, spite your conscience, and run into sin. But remember, if the Lord be your God, you cannot have Baal too; you must have one thing or else the other. "No man can serve two masters." If God be served, He will be a master; and if the devil be served he will not be long before he will be a master; and "ye cannot serve two masters."

Oh! be wise, and think not that the two can be mingled together. How many a respectable deacon thinks that he can be covetous, and grasping in business, and grind the faces of the poor, and yet be a saint! Oh! liar to God and to man! He is no saint; he is the very chief of sinners! How many a very excellent woman, who is received into Church fellowship amongst the people of God, and thinks herself one of the elect, is to be found full of wrath and bitterness—a slave of mischief and of sin, a tattler, a slanderer, a busybody; entering into other people's houses, and turning everything like comfort out of the minds of those with whom she comes in contact—and yet she is the servant of God and of the devil too! Nay, my lady, this will never answer; the two never can be

served thoroughly. Serve your master, whoever he be. If you do profess to be religious, be so thoroughly; if you make any profession to be a Christian be one; but if you are no Christian, do not pretend to be. If you love the world, then love it; but cast off the mask, and do not be a hypocrite. The double-minded man is of all men the most despicable; the follower of Janus, who wears two faces, and who can look with one eye upon the (so-called) Christian world with great delight, and give his subscription to the Tract Society, the Bible Society, and the Missionary Society, but who has another eye over there, with which he looks at the Casino, the Cole-hole, and other pleasures, which I do not care to mention, but which some may know more of than I wish to know. Such a man is worse than the most reprobate in the opinion of any one who knows how to judge. Not worse in his open character, but worse really, because he is not honest enough to go through with that he professes.

Tom Loker, in "Uncle Tom," was pretty near the mark when he shut the mouth of Haley, the slaveholder, who professed religion, with the following common sense remark:—"I can stand most any talk of yours, but your pious talk—that kills me right up. After all, what's the odds between me and you? 'Tain't that you care one bit more or have a bit more feelin'—its clean, sheer, dog meanness, wanting to cheat the devil and save your own skin; don't I see through it? And your getting religious, as you call it, after all, is a deal too mean for me, run up a bill with the devil all your life, and then sneak out when pay time comes." And how many do the same every day in London, in England; everywhere else! They try to serve both masters; but it cannot be; the two things cannot be reconciled; God and Mammon, Christ and Belial, these never can meet; there never can be an agreement between them, they never can be brought into unity, and why should you seek to do it? "Two opinions," said the prophet. He would not allow any of his hearers to profess to worship both. "No," said he, "these are two opinions, and you are halting between the two."

It was a day to be remembered when the multitudes of Israel were assembled at the foot of Carmel, and when the solitary prophet of the Lord came forth to defy the four hundred and fifty priests of the false god. We might look upon that scene with the eye of historical curiosity, and we should find it rich with interest. Instead of so doing, however, we shall look upon it with the eye of attentive consideration, and see whether we cannot improve by its teachings. We have upon that hill of Carmel and along the plain three kinds of persons. We have first the devoted servant of Jehovah, a solitary prophet; we have, on the other hand, the decided servants of the evil one, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal; but the vast mass of that day belonged to a third class—they were those who had not fully determined whether fully to worship Jehovah, the God of their fathers, or Baal, the god of Jezebel. On the one hand, their ancient traditions led them to fear Jehovah, and on the other hand, their interest at court led them to bow before Baal. Many of them, therefore, were secret and half-hearted followers of Jehovah, while they were the public worshippers of Baal. The whole of them at this juncture were halting between two opinions. Elijah does not address his sermon to the priests of Baal; he will have something to say to them by-and-by, he will preach them horrible sermons in deeds of blood. Nor has he aught to say to those who are the thorough servants of Jehovah, for they are not there; but his discourse is alone directed to those who are halting between two opinions.

"Now," says the prophet, "if the Lord be God, follow Him. Let your conduct be consistent with your opinions; if you believe the Lord to be God, carry it out in your daily life; be holy, be prayerful, trust

in Christ, be faithful, be upright, be loving; give your whole heart to God and follow Him. If Baal be God, then follow him; but do not pretend to follow the other." Let your conduct back up your opinion; if you really think that the follies of this world are the best, and believe that a fine fashionable life, a life of frivolity and gaiety, flying from flower to flower, getting honey from none, is the most desirable, carry it out. If you think the life of the debauchee is so very desirable, if you think his end is to be much wished for, if you think his pleasures are right, follow them. Go the whole way with them. If you believe that to cheat in business is right, put it up over your door—"I sell trickery goods here;" or if you do not say it to the public, tell your conscience so; but do not deceive the public. If you mean to be religious, follow out your determination thoroughly; but if you mean to be worldly, go the whole way with the world. Let your conduct follow out your opinions. Make your life tally with your profession. Carry out your opinions whatever they be. But you dare not; you are too cowardly to sin as others do, honestly before God's sun; your conscience will not let you.

"How long halt ye between two opinions?" Ye middle aged men, ye said when ye were youths, "When we are out of our apprenticeship we will become religious; let us sow our wild oats in our youth, and let us then begin to be diligent servants of the Lord." Lo! ye have come to middle age, and are waiting till that quiet villa shall be built, and ye shall retire from business, and then ye think ye will serve God. Sirs, ye said the same when ye came of age, and when your business began to increase. I therefore solemnly demand of you, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" How much time do you want? Oh! young man, thou saidst in thine early childhood, when a mother's prayer followed thee, "I will seek God when I come to manhood;" and thou hast passed that day; thou art a man, and more than that, and yet thou art halting still. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" How many of you have been churchgoers and chapel-goers for years! Ye have been impressed, too, many a time; but ye have wiped the tears from your eyes, and have said, "I will seek God and turn to Him with full purpose of heart;" and you are now just where you were. How many more sermons do you want? How many more Sundays must roll away wasted? How many warnings, how many sicknesses, how many tollings of the bell to warn you that you must die? How many graves must be dug for your family before you will be impressed? How many plagues and pestilences must ravage this city before you will turn to God in truth? "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Would God you could answer this question, and not allow the sands of life to drop, drop, drop from the glass, saying, "When the next goes I will repent," and yet that next one findeth you impenitent. You say, "When the glass is just so low, I will turn to God." No; it will not answer to talk so; for thou mayest find thy glass empty before thou thoughtest it had begun to run low, and thou mayest find thyself in eternity when thou didst but think of repenting and turning to God. The prophet cries, "If the Lord be God, follow Him; if Baal, then follow him," and in so doing, he states the ground of his practical claim. Let your conduct be consistent with your opinions. There is another objection raised by the crowd. "Prophet," says one, "thou comest to demand a practical proof of our affection; thou sayest, Follow God. Now, if I believe God to be God, and that is my opinion, yet I do not see what claim He has to my opinions." Now, mark how the prophet puts it: he says, "If God be God follow Him." The reason why I claim that you should follow out your opinion concerning God is, that God is God! God has a claim upon you, as creatures, for your devout obedience. One person replies, "What profit should I have, if I served God thoroughly? Should I be more happy? Should I get on better in this world? Should I have more peace of mind?" Nay, nay, that is a secondary consideration. The only question for you is, "If God be God follow Him," Not if it

be more advantageous to you; but "if God be God follow Him." The Secularist would plead for religion on the ground that religion might be the best for this world, and best for the world to come. Not so with the prophet; he says, "I do not put it on that ground, I insist that it is your bounden duty, if you believe in God, simply because He is God, to serve Him and obey Him. I do not tell you it is for your advantage—it may be, I believe it is—but that I put aside from the question; I demand of you that you follow God, if you believe Him to be God. If you do not think He is God; if you really think that the devil is God, then follow him; his pretended godhead shall be your plea, and you shall be consistent; but if God be God, if He made you, I demand that you serve Him; if it is He who puts the breath into your nostrils, I demand that you obey him. If God be really worthy of worship, and you really think so, I demand that you either follow Him, or else deny that He is God at all."

"How long halt ye?" I will tell them; ye will halt between two opinions, all of you who are undecided, until God shall answer by fire. Fire was not what these poor people wanted that were assembled there. When Elijah says, that "The God that answereth by fire let him be God," I fancy I hear some of them saying, "No; the God that answereth by water let him be God; we want rain badly enough." "No," said Elijah, "if rain should come, you would say that it was the common course of providence; and that would not decide you." I tell you, all the providences that befall you undecided ones will not decide you. God may surround you with providences; He may surround you with frequent warnings from the death-bed of your fellows; but providences will never decide you. It is not the God of rain, but the God of fire that will do it. There are two ways in which you undecided ones will be decided by-and-by. You that are decided for God will want no decision; you that are decided for Satan will want no decision; you are on Satan's side, and must dwell for ever in eternal burning. But these undecided ones want something to decide them, and will have either one of the two things: they will either have the fire of God's Spirit to decide them, or else the fire of eternal judgment, and that will decide them.

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