

TO SABBATH-SCHOOL TEACHERS AND OTHER SOUL-WINNERS

NO. 1137

A SERMON
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 THE DAY SET APART FOR SABBATH-SCHOOLS
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;
 let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way
 shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”*
James 5:19-20

JAMES is pre-eminently practical. If he were, indeed, the James who was called, “The Just,” I can understand how he earned the title, for that distinguishing trait in his character shows itself in his epistle. And if he were “the Lord’s brother,” he did well to show so close a resemblance to his great relative and Master, who commenced His ministry with the practical Sermon on the Mount.

We ought to be very grateful that in the Holy Scriptures we have food for all classes of believers, and employment for all the faculties of the saints. It was meet that the contemplative should be furnished with abundant subjects for thought—Paul has supplied them. He has given to us sound doctrine, arranged in the symmetry of exact order. He has given us deep thoughts and profound teachings. He has opened up the deep things of God.

No man who is inclined to reflection and thoughtfulness will be without food so long as the epistles of Paul are extant, for he feeds the soul with sacred manna. For those whose predominating affections and imagination incline them to more mystic themes, John has written sentences aglow with devotion and blazing with love.

We have his simple but sublime epistles, epistles which, when you glance at them, seem in their wording to be fit for children, but when examined, their sense is seen to be too sublime to be fully grasped by the most advanced of men. You have from that same eagled-eyed and eagle-winged apostle, the wondrous visions of the Revelation, where awe, devotion, and imagination may enlarge their flight, and find scope for the fullest exercise.

There will always be, however, a class of persons who are more practical than contemplative, more active than imaginative, and it was wise that there should be a James, whose main point should be to stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance, and help them to persevere in the practical graces of the Holy Spirit.

The text before me is perhaps the most practical utterance of the whole epistle. The whole epistle burns, but this ascends in flames to heaven. It is the culmination as it is the conclusion of the letter. There is not a word to spare in it. It is like a naked sword, stripped of its jeweled scabbard, and presented to us with nothing to note but its keen edge.

I wish I could preach after the fashion of the text, and if I cannot, I will at least pray that you may act after the fashion of it. Downright living for the Lord Jesus is sadly wanted in many quarters. Christian garnishing we have enough of, but solid, everyday, actual work for God is what we need. If our lives, however unornamented they may be by leaves of literary or polite attainments, shall nevertheless bring forth fruit unto God in the form of souls converted by our efforts, it will be well. They will then stand forth before the Lord with the beauty of the olive trees, which consist in its fruitfulness.

I call your attention very earnestly to three matters. First, here is *a special case dealt with*, “If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him.” While speaking of that special case, the apostle declares

a general fact, “He who converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

When I have spoken of these two points, I mean, thirdly, to make a *particular application* of the text—not at all intended by the apostle, but I believe abundantly justified—an application of the text to increased effort for the conversion of children.

I. First, then, here is A SPECIAL CASE DEALT WITH.

Read the verse, and you will see that it was that of a backslider from the visible church of God. The words, “If any of you,” must refer to a professed Christian. The erring one had been named by the name of Jesus, and for awhile had followed the truth. But in an evil hour he had been betrayed into doctrinal error, and had erred from the truth.

It was not merely that he fell into a mistake upon some lesser matter, which might be compared to the fringe of the Gospel, but he erred in some vital doctrine—he departed from the faith in its fundamentals. There are some truths which must be believed—they are essential to salvation—and if not heartily accepted, the soul will be ruined.

This man had professed orthodoxy, but he turned aside from the truth on an essential point. Now, in those days the saints did not say, as the sham saints do now, “We must be largely charitable, and leave this brother to his own opinion. He sees truth from a different standpoint, and has a rather different way of putting it, but his opinions are as good as our own, and we must not say that he is in error.”

That is at present the fashionable way of trifling with divine truth, and making things pleasant all round. Thus the Gospel is debased, and another gospel propagated. I should like to ask modern broad churchmen whether there is any doctrine of any sort for which it would be worth a man’s while to burn or to lie in prison. I do not believe they could give me an answer, for if their latitudinarianism be correct, the martyrs were fools of the first magnitude.

From their writings and their teachings, it appears to me that the modern thinkers treat the whole compass of revealed truth with entire indifference. And though perhaps they may feel sorry that wilder spirits should go too far in free thinking, and though they had rather they would be more moderate, yet upon the whole, so large is their liberality that they are not sure enough of anything to be able to condemn the reverse of it as a deadly error.

To them black and white are terms which may be applied to the same color, as you view it from different standpoints. Yea, and nay are equally true in their esteem. Their theology shifts like the Goodwin Sands, and they regard all firmness as so much bigotry. Errors and truths are equally comprehensible within the circle of their charity.

It was not in this way that the apostles regarded error. They did not prescribe large-hearted charity towards falsehood, or hold up the errorist as a man of deep thought, whose views were “refreshingly original.” Far less did they utter some wicked nonsense about the probability of there living more faith in honest doubt, than in half the creeds.

They did not believe in justification by doubting, as our neologians do. They set about the conversion of the erring brother—they treated him as a person who needed conversion, and viewed him as a man who, if he were not converted, would suffer the death of his soul, and be covered with a multitude of sins.

They were not such easy-going people as our cultured friends of the school of “modern thought,” who have learned at last that the deity of Christ may be denied, the work of the Holy Spirit ignored, the inspiration of Scripture rejected, the atonement disbelieved, and regeneration dispensed with. Yet the man who does all this may be as good a Christian as the most devout believer!

O God, deliver us from this deceitful infidelity, which while it does damage to the erring man, and often prevents his being reclaimed, does yet more mischief to our own hearts by teaching us that truth is unimportant, and falsehood a trifle, and so destroys our allegiance to the God of truth, and makes us traitors instead of loyal subjects to the King of kings.

It appears from our text that this man, having erred from the truth, followed the natural logical consequence of doctrinal error, and erred in his life as well. For the twentieth verse, which must of course be read in connection with the nineteenth, speaks of him as a “sinner converted from the error of his way.”

His way went wrong after his thought had gone wrong. You cannot deviate from truth without ere long, in some measure at any rate, deviating from practical righteousness. This man had erred from right acting because he had erred from right believing.

Suppose a man shall imbibe a doctrine which leads him to think little of Christ, he will soon have little faith in Him, and become little obedient to Him, and so will wander into self-righteousness or licentiousness.

Let him think lightly of the punishment of sin, it is natural that he will commit sin with less compunction and burst through all restraints. Let him deny the need of the atonement, and the same result will follow if he acts out his belief.

Every error has its own outgrowth, as all decay has its appropriate fungus. It is in vain for us to imagine that holiness will be as readily produced from erroneous as from truthful doctrine. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? The facts of history prove the contrary.

When truth is dominant, morality and holiness are abundant. But when error comes to the front, godly living retreats in shame.

The point aimed at with regard to this sinner in thought and deed was his conversion—the turning of him round, the bringing him to right thinking, and to right acting. Alas! I fear many professed Christians do not look upon backsliders in this light—neither do they regard them as hopeful subjects for conversion.

I have known a person who has erred hunted down like a wolf. He was wrong to some degree, but that wrong has been aggravated and dwelt upon till the man has been worried into defiance. The fault has been exaggerated into a double wrong by ferocious attacks upon it. The manhood of the man has taken sides with his error because he has been so severely handled.

The man has been compelled, sinfully I admit, to take up an extreme position, and to go further into mischief, because he could not brook to be denounced instead of being reasoned with. And when a man has been blameworthy in his life, it will often happen that his fault will be blazed abroad, retailed from mouth to mouth, and magnified, until the poor erring one has felt degraded—and having lost all self-respect, has given way to far more dreadful sins.

The object of some professors seems to be to amputate the limb rather than to heal it. Justice has reigned instead of mercy. Away with him! He is too foul to be washed, too diseased to be restored. This is not according to the mind of Christ, nor after the model of apostolic churches.

In the days of James, if any erred from the truth and from holiness, there were brethren found who sought their recovery, and whose joy it was thus to save a soul from death, and to hide a multitude of sins. There is something very significant in that expression, “Brethren, if any *of you* do err from the truth.” It is akin to that other word, “Considering thyself also, lest thou also be tempted,” and that other exhortation, “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

He who has erred was one of yourselves, one who sat with you at the communion table, one with whom you took sweet counsel. He has been deceived, and by the subtlety of Satan he has been decoyed, but do not judge him harshly. Above all do not leave him to perish unpitied. If he ever was a saved man, he is your brother still, and it should be your business to bring back the prodigal, and so to make glad your Father’s heart. “Still for all slips of his,” he is one of God’s children. Follow him up, and do not rest till you lead him home again.

And if he be not a child of God, if his professed conversion was a mistake, or a pretense, if he only made a profession, but had not the possession of vital godliness, yet still follow him with sacred importunity of love, remembering how terrible will be his doom for daring to play the hypocrite, and profane holy things with his unhallowed hands.

Weep over him the more if you feel compelled to suspect that he has been a willful deceiver, for there is sevenfold cause for weeping. If you cannot resist the feeling that he never was sincere, but crept into the church under cover of a false profession, I say sorrow over him the more, for his doom must be the more terrible, and therefore the greater should be your commiseration for him. Seek his conversion still.

The text gives us clear indications as to the persons who are to aim at the conversion of erring brethren. It says, "If any of you do err from the truth, and *one* convert him." One what? One minister? No, any one among the brethren. If the minister shall be the means of the restoration of a backslider, he is a happy man, and a good deed has been done.

But there is nothing said here concerning preachers or pastors, not even a hint is given—it is left open to any one member of the church. And the plain inference, I think, is this—that every church member seeing his brother err from the truth, or else in practice, should set himself, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to this business of converting this special sinner from the error of his way.

Look after strangers by all means, but neglect not your brethren. It is the business, not of certain officers appointed by the vote of the church thereunto, but of every member of the body of Jesus Christ, to seek the good of all the other members.

Still there are certain members upon whom in any one case this may be more imperative. For instance, in the case of a young believer, his father and his mother, if they are believers, are called upon by a sevenfold obligation to seek the conversion of their backsliding child. In the case of a husband, none should be as earnest for his restoration as his wife—and the same rule holds good with regard to the wife.

So, also if the connection be that of friendship, he with whom you have had the most acquaintance should lie nearest to your heart—and when you perceive that he has gone aside, you should, above all others, act the shepherd towards him with kindly zeal.

You are bound to do this to all your fellow Christians, but doubly bound to do it to those over whom you possess an influence, which has been gained by former intimacy, by relationship, or by any other means. I beseech you, therefore, watch over one another in the Lord, and when you see a brother overtaken in a fault, "Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." You see your duty—do not neglect it.

Brethren, it ought to cheer us to know that the attempt to convert a man who has erred from the truth is a hopeful one. It is one in which success may be looked for, and when the success comes it will be of the most joyful character. Verily it is a great joy to capture the wild, wandering sinner, but the joy of joys is to find the lost sheep which was once really in the fold, and has sadly gone astray.

It is a great thing to transmute a piece of brass into silver, but to the poor woman it was joy enough to find the piece of silver which was silver already, and had the king's stamp on it, though for awhile it was lost. To bring in a stranger and an alien, and to adopt him as a son, suggests a festival—but the most joyous feasting and the loudest music are for the son who was always a son, but had played the prodigal—and yet after being lost was found, and after being dead was made alive again.

I say, ring the bells twice for the reclaimed backslider. Ring them till the steeple rocks and reels. Rejoice doubly over that which had gone astray, and was ready to perish, but has now been restored. John was glad when he found poor backsliding, but weeping Peter, who had denied his Master, and cheered and comforted him, and consorted with him, till the Lord Himself had said, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

It may not appear so brilliant a thing to bring back a backslider as to reclaim a harlot or a drunkard, but in the sight of God it is no small miracle of grace, and to the instrument who has performed it, it shall yield no small comfort.

Seek you, then, my brethren, those who were of us but have gone from us. Seek you those who linger still in the congregation but have disgraced the church, and are put away from us, and rightly so,

because we cannot countenance their uncleanness. Seek them with prayers, and tears, and entreaties, if peradventure God may grant them repentance that they may be saved.

Here I would say to any backsliders who are present, let this text cheer you if you have a desire to turn to God. Return, you backsliding children, for the Lord has bidden His people seek you. If He had not cared for you, He would not have spoken of our search after you, but having put it so, and made it the duty of all His people to seek those who err from the faith—there is an open door before you—and there are hundreds who sit waiting like porters at the gate to welcome you.

Come back to the God whom you have forsaken, or if you never did know Him, O that this day His Spirit may break your hearts, and lead you to true repentance, that you may in real truth be saved! God bless you, poor backsliders! If He do not save you, a multitude of sins will be upon you, and you must die eternally. God have mercy upon you, for Christ's sake.

II. We have opened up the special case, and we have now to dwell upon a GENERAL FACT.

This general fact is important, and we are bound to give it special attention, since it is prefaced with the words, "Let him know." If any one of you has been the means of bringing back a backslider, it is said, "Let him know." That is, let him think of it, be sure of it, be comforted by it, be inspirited by it. "Let him know" it, and never doubt it.

Do not merely hear it this morning, beloved fellow laborer, but let it sink deep into your heart. When an apostle inspired of the Holy Ghost, says, "Let him know," I conjure you, do not let any indolence of spirit forbid your ascertaining the full weight of the truth. What is it that you are to know? To know that he who converts a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death.

This is something worth knowing, is it not? To save a soul from death is no small matter. Why, we have men among us whom we honor every time we cast our eyes upon them, for they have saved many precious lives. They have manned the lifeboat, or they have plunged into the river to rescue the drowning.

They have been ready to risk their own lives amid burning timbers, that they might snatch the perishing from the devouring flames. True heroes these, far worthier of renown than your bloodstained men of war. God bless the brave hearts! May England never lack a body of worthy men to make her shores illustrious for humanity.

When we see a fellow creature exposed to danger, our pulse beats quickly, and we are agitated with desire to save him. Is it not so? But the saving of a soul from death is a far greater matter. Let us think what that death is! It is not non-existence. I do not know that I would lift a finger to save my fellow creature from mere non-existence.

I see no great hurt in annihilation—certainly nothing that would alarm me as a punishment for sin. Just as I see no great joy in mere eternal existence if that is all that is meant by eternal life, so I discern no terror in ceasing to be. I would as soon not be as be, so far as mere colorless being or not being is concerned.

But eternal life in Scripture means a very different thing to eternal existence. It means existing with all the faculties developed in fullness of joy—existing not as the dried herb in the hay, but as the flower in all its beauty. To die in Scripture, and indeed in common language, is not to cease to exist. Very wide is the difference between the two words to die and to be annihilated.

To die as to the first death is the separation of the body from the soul—it is the resolution of our nature into its component elements. And to die the second death is to separate the man, soul and body, from his God, who is the life and joy of our manhood. This is eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. This is to have the palace of manhood destroyed, and turned into a desolate ruin for the howling dragon of remorse, and the hooting owl of despair, to inherit forever.

The descriptions which Holy Scripture gives of the second death are terrible to the last degree. It speaks of a "worm that never dies," and a "fire that never can be quenched," of "the terror of the LORD," and "tearing in pieces," of the "smoke of their torment which goeth up for ever and ever," and of "the pit which hath no bottom."

I am not about to bring all these terrible things together, but there are words in Scripture which, if pondered, might make the flesh to creep, and the hair stand on end at the very thought of the judgment to come. Our joy is, that if any of us are made in God's hands the means of converting a man from the error of his ways, we shall have saved a soul from this eternal death. That dreadful hell the saved one will not know, that wrath he will not feel, that being banished from the presence of God will never happen to him. Is there not a joy worth worlds in all this?

Remember the addition to the picture. If you have saved a soul from death, you have introduced it into eternal life. By God's good grace there will be another chorister amongst the white-robed host to sing JEHOVAH'S praise. Another hand to smite eternally the harp strings of adoring gratitude. Another sinner saved to reward the Redeemer for His passion. Oh, the happiness of having saved a soul from death!

And it is added, that in such case you will have "covered a multitude of sins." We understand this to mean that the result of the conversion of any sinner will be the covering up of all his sins by the atoning blood of Jesus. How many those sins are, in any case, none of us can tell. But if any man be converted from the error of his ways, the whole mass of his sins will be drowned in the red sea of Jesus' blood, and washed away forever.

Now remember, your Savior came to this world with two objects—He came to destroy death, and to put away sin. If you convert a sinner from the error of his ways, you are made like to Him in both these works. After your manner, in the power of the Spirit of God, you overcome death by snatching a soul from the second death, and you also put away sin from the sight of God by hiding a multitude of sins beneath the propitiation of the Lord Jesus.

Do observe here that the apostle offers no other inducement for soul-winners. He does not say if you convert a sinner from the error of his ways, you will have honor. True philanthropy scorns such a motive. He does not say if you convert a sinner from the error of his ways, you will have the respect of the church, and the love of the individual. Such will be the case, but we are moved by far nobler motives.

The joy of doing good is found in the good itself—the reward of a deed of love is found in its own result. If we have saved a soul from death, and hidden a multitude of sins, that is payment enough, though no ear should ever hear of the deed, and no pen should ever record it. Let it be forgotten that we were the instrument, if good be but effected.

It shall give us joy even if we are not appreciated, and are left in the cold shade of forgetfulness. Yea, if others wear the honors of the good deed which the Lord has wrought by us, we will not murmur—it shall be joy enough to know that a soul has been saved from death—and a multitude of sins have been covered.

And dear brethren, let us recollect that the saving of souls from death honors Jesus, for there are no saving souls except through His blood. As for you and for me, what can we do in saving a soul from death? Of ourselves nothing, any more than that pen which lies upon the table could write "Pilgrim's Progress."

Yet let a Bunyan grasp the pen, and the matchless work is written. So you and I can do nothing to convert souls till God's eternal Spirit takes us in hand—but then He can do wonders by us, and get to Himself glory by us, while it shall be joy enough to us to know that Jesus is honored and the Spirit magnified.

Nobody talks of Homer's pen, no one has encased it in gold, or published its illustrious achievements. Nor do we wish for honor among men—it will be enough for us to have been the pen in the Savior's hand with which He has written the covenant of His grace upon the fleshy tablets of human hearts. These are golden wages for a man who really loves his Master—Jesus is glorified—sinners are saved.

Now, I want you to notice particularly that all that is said by the apostle here is about the conversion of one person. "If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert *him*, let him know that he who converteth *the sinner* from the error of his ways shall save *a soul* from death."

Have you never wished you were a Whitefield? Have you never felt, young man, in your inmost soul, great aspirations to be another McCheyne, or Brainerd, or Moffat? Cultivate the aspiration, but at the same time be happy to bring one sinner to Jesus Christ, for he who converts one is bidden to know that no mean thing is done. He has saved a soul from death, and covered a multitude of sins.

And it does not say anything about the person who is the means of this work. It is not said, "If a minister shall convert a man, or if some noted eloquent divine shall have wrought it." If this deed shall be performed by the least babe in our Israel, if a little child shall tell the tale of Jesus to its father, if a servant girl shall drop a tract where some one poor soul shall find it, and receive salvation, if the humblest preacher at the street corner shall have spoken to the thief or to the harlot, and such shall be saved, let him know that he that turns any sinner from the error of his ways, whoever he may be, has saved a soul from death, and covered a multitude of sins.

Now, what comes out of this but these suggestions? Let us long to be used in the conversion of sinners. James does not speak concerning the Holy Ghost in this passage, nor of the Lord Jesus Christ, for he was writing to those who would not fail to remember the important truths which concern both the Spirit and the Son of God.

But yet it may be meet here to remind you that we cannot do spiritual good to our fellow creatures apart from the Spirit of God, neither can we be blessed to them if we do not preach to them, "Jesus Christ and him crucified." God must use us, but oh, let us long to be used, pray to be used, and pine to be used.

Dear brethren and sisters, let us purge ourselves of everything that would prevent our being employed by the Lord. If there is anything we are doing, or leaving undone, any evil we are harboring, or any grace we are neglecting, which may make us unfit to be used of God, let us pray the Lord to cleanse, and mend, and scour us till we are vessels fit for the Master's use.

Then let us be on the watch for opportunities of usefulness. Let us go about the world with our ears and our eyes open, ready to avail ourselves of every occasion for doing good. Let us not be content till we are useful, but make this the main design and ambition of our lives. Somehow or other we must and will bring souls to Jesus Christ.

As Rachel cried, "Give me children, or I die," so may none of you be content to be barren in the household of God. Cry and sigh until you have snatched some brand from the burning, and have brought at least one to Jesus Christ, that so you also may have saved a soul from death, and covered a multitude of sins.

III. And now, a few minutes only to the point which is not in the text. I want to make A PARTICULAR APPLICATION of this whole subject to the conversion of children.

Beloved friends, I hope you do not altogether forget the Sabbath-school, and yet I am afraid a great many Christians are scarcely aware that there are such things as Sabbath-schools at all. They know it by hearsay, but not by observation. Probably in the course of twenty years they have never visited the school, or concerned themselves about it. They would be gratified to hear of any success accomplished, but though they may not have heard anything about the matter one way or the other, they are well-content.

In most churches you will find a band of young and ardent spirits giving themselves to Sunday school work. But there are numbers of others who might greatly strengthen the school who never attempt anything of the sort. In this they might be excused if they had other work to do, but unfortunately, they have no godly occupation, but are mere killers of time—while this work which lies ready to hand, and is accessible, and demands their assistance, is entirely neglected. I will not say there are any such sluggards here, but I am not able to believe that we are quite free from them, and therefore I will ask conscience to do its work with the guilty parties.

Children need to be saved. Children may be saved. Children are to be saved by instrumentality. Children may be saved while they are children. He who said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,” never intended that His church should say, “We will look after the children by and by, when they have grown up to be young men and women.”

He intended that it should be a subject of prayer and earnest endeavor that children, as children, should be converted to God. The conversion of a child involves the same work of divine grace, and results in the same blessed consequences as the conversion of an adult. There is the saving of the soul from death in the child’s case, and the hiding of a multitude of sins.

But there is this additional matter for joy—that a great preventive work is done when the young are converted. Conversion saves a child from a multitude of sins. If God’s eternal mercy shall bless your teaching to a little prattler, how happy that boy’s life will be compared with what it might have been if it had grown up in folly, sin, shame, and had only been converted after many days!

It is the highest wisdom, and the truest prudence to pray for our children that while they are yet young their hearts may be given to the Savior.

*“It will save them from a thousand snares,
To mind religion young.
Grace will preserve their following years,
And make their virtues strong.”*

To reclaim the prodigal is well, but to save him from ever being a prodigal is better. To bring back the thief and the drunkard is a praiseworthy action, but so to act that the boy shall never become a thief or a drunkard is far better. Hence Sabbath-school instruction stands very high in the list of philanthropic enterprises, and Christians ought to be most earnest in it. He who converts a child from the error of his way, prevents as well as covers a multitude of sins.

And moreover, it gives the church the hope of being furnished with the best of men and women. The church’s Samuels and Solomons are made wise in their youth. Davids and Josiahs were tender of heart when they were tender in years. Read the lives of the most eminent ministers, and you shall usually find that their Christian history began early. Though it is not absolutely needful, yet it is highly propitious to the growth of a well-developed Christian character that its foundation should be laid on the bottom of youthful piety.

I do not expect to see the churches of Jesus Christ ordinarily built up by those who have through life lived in sin, but by the bringing up in their midst, in the fear and admonition of the Lord, young men and women who become pillars in the house of our God. If we want strong Christians, we must look to those who were Christians in their youth. Trees must be planted in the courts of the Lord while yet young if they are to flourish well and long.

And brethren, I feel that the work of teaching the young has at this time an importance superior to any which it ever had before, for at this time there are abroad those who are creeping into our houses and deluding men and women with their false doctrine.

Let the Sunday schools of England teach well the children. Let them not merely occupy their time with pious phrases, but let them teach them the whole Gospel, and the doctrines of grace intelligently. And let them pray over the children, and never be satisfied unless the children are turned to the Lord Jesus Christ and added to the church—and then I shall not be afraid of Popery.

Popish priests said of old that they could have won England back again to Rome if it had not been for the catechizing of the children. We have laid aside catechisms, I think with too little reason, but at any rate, if we do not use godly catechisms, we must bring back decided, plain, simple teaching—and there must be pleading and praying for the conversion of the children—the immediate conversion of children unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Spirit of God waits to help us in this effort. He is with us if we be with Him. He is ready to bless the humblest teacher, and even the infant classes shall not be without a benediction. He can give us words and thoughts suitable to our little auditory. He can so bless us that we shall know how to speak a word in season to the youthful ear.

And oh, if it be not so, if teachers are not found, or being found, are unfaithful, we shall see the children that have been in our schools go back into the world like their parents—hating religion because of the tedium of the hours spent in Sunday school—and we shall produce a race of infidels, or a generation of superstitious persons.

The golden opportunity will be lost and most solemn responsibility will rest upon us. I pray the church of God to think much of the Sunday school. I beseech all lovers of the nation to pray for Sunday schools. I entreat all who love Jesus Christ, and would see His kingdom come, to be very tender towards all youthful people, and to pray that their hearts may be won to Jesus.

I have not spoken, this morning, as I should like to speak, but the theme lies very near my heart. It is one which ought to press heavily upon all our consciences, but I must leave it. God must lead your thoughts into it.

I leave it, but not till I have asked these questions—What have you been doing for the conversion of children, each one of you? What have you done for the conversion of your own children? Are you quite clear upon that matter? Do you ever put your arms around your boy's neck, and pray for him and with him? Father, you will find that such an act will exercise great influence over your lad.

Mother, do you ever talk to your little daughter about Christ and Him crucified? Under God's hands you may be a spiritual as well as a natural mother to that well-beloved child of yours. What are you doing, you who are guardians and teachers of youth? Are you clear about their souls? You week-day schoolmasters, as well as you who labor on the Sabbath—are you doing all you should that your boys and girls may be brought early to confess the Lord? I leave it with yourselves.

You shall receive a great reward if, when you enter heaven, as I trust you will, you shall find many dear children there to welcome you into eternal habitations. It will add another heaven to your own heaven, to meet with heavenly beings who shall salute you as their teacher who brought them to Jesus.

I would not wish to go to heaven alone—would you? I would not wish to have a crown in heaven without a star in it, because no soul was ever saved by my means—would you? There they go, the sacred flock of blood-bought sheep. The great Shepherd leads them. Many of them are followed by twins, and others have, each one, their lamb. Would you like to be a barren sheep of the great Shepherd's flock?

The scene changes. Harken to the tramp of a great host. I hear their war music. My ears are filled with their songs of victory. The warriors are coming home, and each one is bringing his trophy on his shoulder, to the honor of the great Captain. They stream through the gate of pearl. They march in triumph to the celestial Capitol, along the golden streets, and each soldier bears with him his own portion of the spoil.

Will you be there? And being there, will you march without a trophy, and add nothing to the pomp of the triumph? Will you bear nothing that you have won in battle, nothing which you have ever taken for Jesus with your sword and with your bow?

Again, another scene is before me. I hear them shout the "harvest home," and see the reapers bearing every one his sheaf. Some of them are bowed down with the heaps of sheaves which load the happy shoulders—these went forth weeping, but they have come again rejoicing—bringing the sheaves with them.

Yonder comes one who bears but a little handful, but it is rich grain—he had but a tiny plot and a little seed corn entrusted to him—and it has multiplied well according to the rule of proportion. Will you be there without so much as a solitary ear? Never having ploughed nor sown, and therefore never having reaped?

If so, every shout of every reaper might well strike a fresh pang into your heart as you remember that you did not sow—and therefore could not reap. If you do not love my Master, do not profess to do so. If He never bought you with His blood, do not lie to Him, and come to His table, and say that you are His servant.

But if His dear wounds bought you, give yourself to Him. And if you love Him, feed His sheep and feed His lambs. He stands here unseen by my sight, but recognized by my faith. He exhibits to you the marks of the wounds upon His hands and His feet, and He says to you, “Peace be unto you! As My Father has sent Me, even so send I you. Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, and this know, that he that converts a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

Good Master, help us to serve you! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JAMES 5

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—98, 1004, 473

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.