CONCERN FOR OTHER MEN'S SOULS

NO. 1425

A SERMON
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AT THE M METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,
that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.
For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren,
my kinsman according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption,
and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;
whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.
Amen."
Romans 9:1-5.

WHAT an intense man Paul was. Once convince him, and his whole nature moved in the direction which he judged to be right. He was whole-hearted when he persecuted the church of God, and he was equally whole-hearted when afterwards he labored with all his might to build up the church which he had sought to destroy. I would to God we were all as thorough-going in the service of our Lord.

The pity is that so many professing Christians appear to have no heart, while others borrow a heart for occasions but do not seem to keep one permanently beating in their own bosoms. O for a warm, engine-like heart, all consecrated, and forever pulsing mightily.

What a change was wrought in Saul of Tarsus, that he who was so ardent a persecutor should become so fervent a preacher! His conversion is one of the proofs of the divinity of Christianity. The study of the story of Paul was the means of the conversion of Lord Lyttleton, who read it with the design of exposing it as an imposture. His friend Gilbert West was at the same time considering the resurrection of our Lord in a similar spirit, and happily with the same result. The friends met to unite in the joint conviction that the Bible is the Word of God.

Dr. Johnson says of Lyttleton's, "Observations upon the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul," "it is a treatise to which infidelity has never been able to fabricate a specious answer."

Consider for a moment the renowned conversion of Paul. It was singularly opportune that just at that period when the church wanted such a man, the apostle with his remarkable education, his noble purpose, and his acquaintance with Jewish and Greek literature, should have been called out from the world and placed in the very forefront of the battle for Christ. Truly might he say that he was not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles, though in his humility he felt himself to be nothing. No name in the Christian church can be pronounced with greater honor after that of our glorious Master than the name of Paul, who was indeed a wise master builder.

When you remember what he was by nature you will marvel at the extraordinary change of thought and feeling which was wrought in him! He who was cruel to the saints, who gave his voice against Stephen and held the garments of those that stoned him, became tenderhearted as a nurse towards her child. Though his Jewish brethren terribly persecuted him, and pursued him from city to city, there is not a trace of resentment in any word he writes, but he is full of gentleness. The lion had become a lamb, and he that breathed out threatenings breathed out prayers! He who seemed to burn with enmity became a flame of love.

Dear friends, before we go any further, pause and answer this question—has such a change as this been wrought *in you*? Perhaps you have never been conspicuously a blasphemer or a persecutor as Paul was, but still if converted there will have been a very wonderful change in you. Old things will have passed away and all things will have become new. Do you feel that, and do you recognize the change

both in your inner and outer life? If not, ye must be born again. Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Our first thought after reading this passage is, what a wonderfully tender and loving preacher Paul must have been. One of the early fathers was wont to say that he wished he could have seen Solomon's temple in its glory, Rome in its prosperity, and Paul preaching. I think the last the grandest sight of the three.

Oh, to have heard him speak! It might have shamed us into deeper tones of earnestness. Though, I suppose, his oratory was not very astonishing as mere rhetoric, for some said his speech was contemptible, yet it must have been wonderfully powerful upon the heart, for it abounded in sighs and tears and other tokens of evident emotion. Besides, his awful intensity of look and tone must have made his discourses irresistible.

He would never have written as he has done in his epistles if he had been one who could speak with icicles hanging about his lips. He must have spoken from a burning heart, which shot forth red-hot bolts of fiery words. He poured his language out like lava from a volcano, from the flaming furnace of his soul. Hence his sentences burned their way into the hearts of those who heard him. Brother, if you are called to preach the Gospel, let Paul be your model.

I reckon that we never preach aright unless we pour out our inmost soul, and unless we long and hunger and thirst for the conversion of our hearers, we might as well be in bed and asleep. We shall teach them to be indifferent if we ourselves are indifferent. If it will satisfy us to read through a little essay or to speak a few godly words without heart and life, we are not called to the ministry. We are not sent, for we feel no woe upon us. We have not the anointing, for the live coal from off the altar has never blistered our lips.

John Bunyan says that he often felt while preaching that he would give up his own salvation for the salvation of his hearers. And I pity the man who has not felt the same. To preach with the harps of angels ringing in your ears, anxious that all your hearers should stand at last amongst the elect company above, or to preach with the groans of hell rising in your ears and piercing your heart, anxious beyond all things that no man who listens to your voice should ever come into that place of torment—this is the Pauline style.

The style of Demosthenes, the manner of Cicero, the method of the forum—these are nothing. Commend me to the eloquence of Paul, and to the oratory of his Master, for Paul was a great preacher because he caught his Master's spirit and spoke in the manner of Him of whom they said of old, "Never man spake like this man."

Now, coming to the text and dwelling upon it, I shall want to notice first, *the persons about whom Paul felt the anxiety which he expresses*. Then, secondly, *we shall look further into the character of that anxiety*. And lastly, we shall dwell awhile upon *the excellence of each one of us feeling just as Paul did*, for a thousand good results would follow if God the Spirit would bring us to the same condition of heart.

I. First, then, WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE FOR WHOM PAUL WAS ANXIOUS BEYOND MEASURE AND OUT OF BOUNDS?

To begin with, they were *his worst enemies*. The name of Paul brought the blood into the face of a Jew. He spat in rage. More than forty of them had bound themselves with an oath that they would slay him, and the whole company of the circumcised seemed, wherever he went, to be moved by the same impulse. He frequently gathered large congregations of Gentiles who attended to him earnestly, but the Jews stirred up riots and mobs, and frequently, he was in danger of his life from them. They detested him, regarding him as an accursed apostate from the faith of his fathers.

Remembering how earnest he had been against Christ, they could not believe in his sincerity when he became a Christian, or if they did, they hated him as a fanatic whose delusion was beyond measure mischievous. His generous retaliation was to pray for them, nay, more, to carry the whole nation on his heart as a burden. "I have continual heaviness," says he, "and sorrow of heart for my kinsmen according to the flesh."

Now, if any of you in following Christ should meet with opposition, avenge it in the same way. Love most the man who treats you worst. If any man would kill you in his anger, kill him with your loving prayers. If he strikes thee on one cheek, turn to him the other also in submission, and lift both hands and eyes to heaven and cry, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Never let oppressors see your anger rise. They will observe your emotion and your grief, and they will perceive that you are naturally vexed and troubled, but let them also see that you bear them no malice, but desire their welfare. I commend this to those who have a hard fight for Christ in the workroom, in the midst of sneers and jests. Never use the devil's weapons, though they lie very handy, and look very suitable. Only use Christ's omnipotent weapon of love, so shall ye be His disciples.

Next, these people for whom Paul was in so much concern were *his kinsfolk according to the flesh.* It is well said that charity must begin at home, for he that does not care for his own household is worse than a heathen man and a publican. He who does not desire the salvation of those who are his own kith and kin, "how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Christianity is expansive, it makes the bosom glow with love to all that God has made. But at the same time, our love does not expand so as to lose force and this is seen when it turns its power towards those who are nearest home.

Is your husband unsaved? O woman, love him to Christ! Is your child unconverted? O parent, pray that child to Christ! Are your neighbors still out of Christ? Lay them on your heart as an intercessor before God on their account, and cease not to plead till they are saved. Think much of the heathen, by all means regard India and China, and the like, but do not forget Newington, Butts, and Lambeth and Southwark, or wherever else it is your lot to live. Next to your homes let your own neighborhoods be first of all considered, and then your country, for all Englishmen are akin.

Wherever we wander we are proud of our common country, and like the Romans of old, we are somewhat quick to make known our citizenship. Therefore, let us never cease to plead for this beloved island and our kinsmen according to the flesh. For his countrymen Paul prayed, and never let us bear within our bones a soul so dead as to forget our native land.

We may regard those for whom he prayed, in the next light as *persons of great privileges*, a very important point. They had privileges by birth—"who are Israelites." Many of you are highly favored. You are not Israelites, but you are the children of godly parents, which is much the same thing. Almost the first sound you ever heard from your mother's lip was the voice of prayer for you.

You can recollect when you were taken for the first time to the house of prayer, when, perhaps, you did not understand anything, but still your godly friends thought it well that you should sit in your earliest days in the courts of the Lord's house! In that sense you are like the Jews. You have the privilege of being born in the midst of holy and gracious influences, an advantage not to be despised.

Those poor gutter children, born we scarcely know where, who pine in poverty and breathe an atmosphere of vice, their young ears are from the first so much acquainted with the voice of blasphemy that they will never tingle should the profanity of hell be let loose around them—those, I say, start in the race of life under terrible disadvantages. And you, some of you, have had everything in your favor. For you the path of right is smooth, and there are many beckoning you to walk in it. And yet we tremble for you, lest you, with other children of the kingdom, should be cast out while many come from the east and from the west and sit down at the banquet of grace.

If there are any people we ought to pray for above others, it seems to me they are the unconverted who live in the light but will not see, who have the bread of heaven upon the table before them but will not eat, who have free grace and dying love sounding in their ears, but yet refuse the wondrous message of grace. Beloved, let us not rest unless we feel a deep solicitude for those who stand on a par with Israelites, since they have the privilege of being born under a Christian roof.

The objects of Paul's prayer had yet a higher privilege, for it is said, "to whom pertaineth the adoption." There was an outward adoption. "Israel is my first-born," saith God. Israel enjoyed national advantages, and we also, living in such a land as this, possess innumerable Gospel privileges. England is, as it were, the favorite of heaven. God has been pleased to adopt the nation as His child, giving it

special liberty, an open Bible, the free proclamation of the Gospel, and the church of God in the midst of it to be its light. To Israel belonged the glory too. That is to say, God had revealed Himself in their midst from the mercy seat in the bright light of the Shekinah.

And oh, in this very house of prayer, I am sure I may say it, the Lord has manifested His glory very wonderfully. How many hundreds have been turned from darkness to light in this place! At times the power of God has been gloriously revealed. It was so last Sunday evening. We felt it, we distinctly recognized it, and we are looking for many to come forward to declare what God did for souls on that occasion.

Well, then, if you have seen this glory, if you have heard the glorious Gospel, if you have felt in some degree the working of the gracious Spirit and have had some longings, some wishes, towards salvation, what a sad thing will it be if after all you should be cast away! I do fear me that this will be true of many of you, and I have great heaviness in my heart at the thought.

And then they had *the first hold of all the spiritual gifts which the Lord bestowed upon the sons of men*. They had as it were a monopoly of light and truth among them. The Jewish people had been singularly favored, they had seen God revealing His Son to them by types, by priests, by sacrifices, by the temple, by a thousand signs and marks. Verily the kingdom of God had come very near to them.

But the privileges of the Jews were not greater than the privileges of men and women who hear the Gospel in these days, for Christ is not so well seen in bleeding bullocks and rams and hyssop and scarlet wool as He is seen in the preaching of the Gospel.

In the Gospel God has rent the veil, and made bare His heart to us in the person of His dying Son. You have no longer to spell out the mind of God by mysterious hieroglyphs, it is written in plain letters, and the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. You have but to hear it, and with the exercise of an ordinary understanding the letter of its meaning may be comprehended. And if there be a willing heart, no matter how small the capacity of the mind, there is intellect enough to receive the saving truth.

You do not now live in the moonlight of the Jewish dispensation, but you bask in the noontide sunlight of the truth. God who spoke to our fathers by the prophets has in these last days spoken to us by His Son who is the express image of His person and the brightness of His glory. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." Because we fear you may do so our heart is heavy, and we have sorrow of heart for some of you. We are distressed for you whose feeling comes and goes like the midnight meteor. Your case is one of such peril that we are deeply concerned about you. O God, help all Your servants to feel what a dreadful thing it will be for persons so highly privileged to be lost forever.

I should not have completed the subject if I did not say that Paul had a great solicitude for these people because *he saw them living in the commission of great sin*. Some of them were exceedingly moral, and the bulk of them extremely religious, yet they were living in gross sin. Do you know what is the greatest of sins? It is to be at enmity with God.

The most damning of iniquities is to refuse Christ. Did God send out of His bosom His only-begotten Son to die for men, and do men reject Him? Ah, this is worse than rejecting the law, worse than rejecting the Gospel, for it is a direct personal insult to the loving God—this rejecting the Son of God, His only Son, His bleeding, dying Son. Here sin reaches its climax and surpasses itself in infamy.

These men rejected Christ and set up their phylacteries, their paying of tithes of anise and mint and cumin, their fasting thrice in the week, and I know not what trifles besides, in insulting competition with the Savior. In the same manner at this hour many persons value their external religiousness above faith in Jesus. They attend to the ceremonies of this church or of the other, and refuse the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. The greatest of sins lies there.

You may as easily be lost religiously as irreligiously unless your religion is God's religion and is based upon faith in His dear Son. This grieved the apostle, that they were mad against Him whom they ought to have loved, and were violent against Him in whom they should have believed, so that they had become a race anathematized from Christ.

I know he means that, because he says he could wish that he himself could stand in their place, and take that anathema upon himself which he felt was upon them. They had said, "His blood be on us and on our children," and Paul knew that it would be. He remembered the Master's words when He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate."

He could see in spirit the siege of Jerusalem, the most tremendous of all slaughters, the most fearful of all scenes of blood enacted on the face of the earth. And His heart sank within him, and his spirit quailed at the thought of the tremendous judgment.

Some in these days describe the penalty of sin as though it were a trifle. I beseech you do not regard them. If I had one dying before me whom I loved, if I was in any fear about the salvation of that dying person, I would not say "Perhaps when you go out of this world you may be unsaved, but there is a larger hope. And I would not have you distress yourself about immediate repentance, for mercy may come to you in another state."

Sirs, I dare no more talk that way than administer a draught of poison to one I love. No, rather would I say, "My brother, my sister, it is now or never with you. Seek the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near, for when once the Master of the house has risen up and shut to the door and you begin to stand without and knock, and to say, 'Lord, Lord, open unto us,' He will not say, 'Wait a while, I will open by-and-by,' but His final reply will be, 'Verily I say unto you, I know you not.'" There is no hope of blessing for those who die impenitent anyhow or any when, but they must depart, depart, depart, and that forever.

O my hearer, I beseech you do not run the risk of the everlasting wrath of God. May God help you by His infinite mercy to feel how terrible a thing it is to be out of Christ, for our God is a consuming fire, and it is written, "Beware ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

Now the thought of all this made the apostle feel great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart for his brethren, his kinsfolk according to the flesh. If he had thought that they would be annihilated, when they died he would have had no heaviness about them. If men and women are nothing after all but cats and dogs, and have no immortal souls, I for one will never bother my head about them. If they can die, let them die, it is nothing to me that they should be immortal.

It is because I know that they *are* immortal and if they die unsaved they will have forever to endure the wrath of God, that my soul feels, and desires to feel more than ever, a continual heaviness of heart concerning every unsaved soul that still lives. God grant us more of this heaviness of spirit. May we be deeply pained by that dread, awful, overwhelming, I will even dare to add, horrifying thought of souls being lost forever.

II. I have spoken enough, then, as to the persons for whom Paul was anxious. Now let us notice, secondly, HIS DESCRIPTION OF THIS ANXIETY, which was *very truthful.*

There was no sham about it. It is pretty easy to work yourself up into a state of feeling, but it was not passing emotion with Paul, it was deep, true, constant grief. He says, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost."

He did not fancy that he felt, but he really felt heart-breakings for guilty souls. He did not sometimes get up into that condition or down into it, but he lived in it. "I lie not," he says, "I do not speak more than the truth. I do not exaggerate." For fear he should not be believed he asseverates as strongly as is allowed to a Christian man, "I say the truth in Christ. I lie not."

His was true heaviness, real sorrow. Do we feel the same, or is it only a little excitement at a revival meeting, a chance feeling which passes over us through sympathy with other people who are earnest? May the Lord plough your soul deep, dear friend. If He means you to be a soul-winner, He will. May the ploughers make deep furrows upon your heart, as once they did upon your Master's back. You are not fit to carry souls on your heart till it has been bruised with grief for them. You must feel deeply for the souls of men if you are to bless them.

Paul's feeling was *very gracious*. It was not an animal feeling, or a natural feeling, it was a gracious feeling, for He says, "I say the truth *in Christ*." When he was nearest to his Lord, when he felt most his union with Christ and communion with Him, then he felt that he did mourn over men's souls. It was truth *in Christ* that he was expressing because he was one with Christ. He had a love for sinners because his very soul was knit to Christ. He had a heaviness such as his Master knew when He also was very heavy, and sweat great drops of blood in Gethsemane, in the day of His passion.

O beloved, we want the Spirit of God to work this feeling in us. It is of no use to try to get it by reading books, or to pump yourself up to it in private. This feeling is the work of God. A soul-winner is a creation. As a Christian has to be created, so out of a Christian the soul-winner has to be fashioned. There has to be a careful preparation, a softening of the soul to make the worker know how naturally to care for the welfare of others. Paul had been trained and qualified for soul-saving work.

He says that his conscience bore him witness that he spoke the truth, and then he says the Holy Spirit bore witness with his conscience. May we have such a manifest love for sinners that we can ask the Holy Ghost to bear witness that we have it.

Brothers, sisters, I am sometimes afraid that our zeal for conversion would not stand the test of the Holy Ghost. Perhaps we want to increase our denomination, or enlarge our church for our own honor. Or we want to get credit for doing good, or to feel that we have power and influence over others. None of these motives can be tolerated, our concern for souls must be wrought in us by the Holy Ghost. It must come irresistibly upon us, and become a master passion.

Just as the birds, when the eggs are in the nest, have upon them what the Greeks call an στοργη, a natural feeling that they must sit on those eggs, and that they must feed those little fledglings which will come from the eggs. So if God calls you to win souls, you will have a natural love for them, a longing wrought in you by the Holy Spirit, so that the whole of your being will run out in that direction, seeking the salvation of men.

Then the apostle goes on to say that he had *great heaviness*, not only heaviness, but *great* heaviness. Was he, therefore, an unhappy man? By no means, he had great joy in other things, though he had great heaviness on this point. We are not to imagine that Paul went about publicly groaning and sighing because Israel was not saved. Oh, no. He rejoiced in the Lord and bade others rejoice. But still there was the skeleton in the closet, a silent, heartbreaking grief was on him.

We are many men in one, and each man is a very complicated piece of mental machinery. We can be in great heaviness and in great exultation at the same time. Whenever Paul's thoughts turned towards his brethren, a great heaviness came upon him. It bore him down, and he would have sunk under it if it had not been for sustaining grace. "O God," he said, "shall my nation perish? Shall my people die? Shall my kinsmen be anathema? Shall it come to this, that they shall hear the gospel in vain and perish, after all?"

He had great heaviness, and he tells us that this did not come on him at times, but that he always felt it whenever his thoughts turned that way, I have "*continual sorrow* in my heart." In his very heart, for it was not a superficial desire. A continual sorrow, for it was no fitful emotion. It always grieved him to think that his kinsmen should reject Christ. He thought of Jerusalem and of its doom. He thought of his brethren and their unbelief, and then he thought of how they had been the enemies of Christ, and therefore sorrow filled his heart. I could wish that in full many a professor the selfsame sorrow reigned, for then there would be much more holy work done for souls.

The strongest expression which Paul uses is that which is contained in the third verse, "For I could wish that I were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." The margin reads, "separated from Christ."

Now this text has so puzzled the expositors that they have done their very best to kill it and tear out its bowels, to get rid of its obvious meaning. They have invented all kinds of interpretations, such as that he did once wish himself separated from Christ. Now, do you think the apostle Paul would have begun by saying, "I say the truth in Christ. I lie not," and so on, if after all that mountain of expression he was

going to bring out this little insignificant sense, that once upon a time he also wished to be separated from Christ?

Besides, the Greek does not bear such a preposterous rendering. Our version has given as fully as it could the meaning of the apostle. The gentlemen who like to dissect texts and pull them to pieces say, "Well, but he could not have wished to be an enemy to Christ, an enemy to God, and to be lost and yet he could not be lost without being an enemy to Jesus."

My dear friends, if you take passionate expressions to pieces with icy hands, you will never understand anything which comes from the heart. Of course the apostle never thought of wishing that he could be an enemy to Christ, but he did sometimes look at the misery which comes upon those who are separated from Christ, until he felt that if he could save his kinsmen by his own destruction, ay, by himself enduring their heavy punishment, he could wish to stand in their stead. He did not say that he ever did wish it, but he felt as if he *could* wish it when his heart was warm.

His case was parallel with that of Moses when he prayed the Lord to spare the people and said, "If not, blot my name out of the Book of Life." Do you think He wished it done? No, it was because that blotting out would have been to him the most horrible thing supposable that therefore he went even to that length for the good of his people.

Because the last of all things the apostle could have thought of was being separated from Christ, therefore he says there were times when he could even have borne that most horrible, unthinkable thing if he could but have saved the people.

Is there a minister of Christ who has not sometimes used expressions which cool logic could never justify? Why, sirs, love knows nothing of grammar even in its common talk. A true passion grinds words to dust. When the heart is full of love even the boldest hyperboles are simple truths. Extravagances are the natural expression of warm hearts even in ordinary things, and when a man's whole soul gets seething like a caldron and boiling like a pot with sympathy and pity for men that are being lost, he speaks what in cold blood he never would have said. What the cool doctrinalist pulls to pieces, and the critic of words regards as being altogether absurd, true zeal nevertheless feels.

Some of us have felt at times that our lives would have been cheaply spent a thousand times over by the bloodiest and most cruel deaths, if we could save our hearers. And there have been moments of passion when we have been ready to say, "Ah, if even my destruction could save them, I could almost go that length." Why this is Christ's method, this is Christ's method. "He saved others, himself he could not save."

It may be an extravagance in us, since we are not able to redeem our brother or give God a ransom, but it is a blessed extravagance. Men are extravagantly prudent nowadays, extravagantly dubious, extravagantly profane, and some of them extravagantly able to deny what their conscience must know is true. They may therefore well permit the minister of Christ to be extravagant in his love for others. I like a bit of hyperbole in our hymns, for instance I admire the extravagance of that verse of Addison's—

"But oh, eternity's too short
To utter half His praise."

A gentleman said to me," That cannot be, because eternity cannot be short, and therefore it cannot be too short." If the Lord had put a drop of poetry into that critic's nature he would not have dealt so harshly with the poet's language. And if the same Lord had put a little of the fire of grace into the nature of some hard-headed commentators, they would have understood that this passage is not meant to be cut to pieces and discussed, but it is intended to be taken boiling hot and poured upon the enemy after the fashion of the olden times when they poured melted lead or boiling pitch upon the besiegers who wished to take a tower or city.

Such a text as this must be fired off red-hot. It spoils if it cools. It is a heart business, not a head business. The apostle means us to understand that there was nothing which he would not suffer if he might save his kindred according to the flesh.

III. Well, now, I close my sermon by speaking upon THE EXCELLENCIES OF THIS SPIRIT, because I pray the Lord to work it in each of you.

I wish all felt it, but there are generally some in every church who will never warm up to the right point. If we could once get the whole church up to blood heat we might be content. I never want you to get to fever heat, but to blood heat—the heat of the blood of Christ—to love as He loved. Oh, to get there and to stay there!

Well, what would be the result, if we did feel as Paul did?

The first effect would be *likeness to Christ*. After that manner He loved. He did become a curse for us. He entered under the awful shadow of JEHOVAH's wrath for us. He *did* what Paul *could wish*, but could not do. He passed under the awful sword that we might be delivered from its edge forever.

Brethren, I want you to feel that you would pass under poverty if you could save souls better by being poor. That you would gladly endure sickness if from your sick bed you could speak better for Christ than now. Ay, and that you would be ready to die, if your death might give life to those dear to you.

I heard of a dear girl the other day, who said to her pastor, "I could never bring my father to hear you, but I have prayed for him long, and God will answer my request. Now, dear pastor," she said, "you will bury me, won't you? My father must come and hear you speak at my grave. Do speak to him. God will bless him." And he did, and her father was converted. The death of his child brought him to Christ!

Oh to be willing to die if others may be saved from the death eternal. God give us just such a spirit as that. This should be our constant feeling, how else can we become like Christ?

If we have this spirit it will *save us from selfishness*. They say—but it is a great falsehood—that we teach people to look after their own salvation, and then being saved we bid them wrap themselves up in self-content. Was anything ever spoken more contrary to fact? We do urge men to seek to be saved from sin. How can they bear to abide in it? But the first instinct of a saved soul, to which we continually appeal, is a longing to bring others to Christ.

Yet, brethren, lest there should grow up in your spirit any of that Pharisaic selfishness which was seen in the elder brother in the parable, ask to feel a heaviness for your prodigal younger brother, who is still feeding swine. Pray for him that he may come to his father's house. It will keep your soul sweet if you open the window of sympathy, and let the heavenly air of love blow through you.

This *will save you from any difficulty about forgiving other people*. I do not suppose that Paul forgave the Jews for what they did to him, because he never went the length of thinking that he had anything to forgive. He loved them so much that he took their ill usage without anger or resentment. He loved them, therefore he bore with them. You will bear with those who scoff at you, and you will put up with the idleness of the boys and girls in your class, if you love them. Love mankind with all your soul, and you will feel no difficulty in exercising patience, forbearance, and forgiveness.

This spirit will also *keep you from very many other griefs*. Some people are always fretting for need of something to fret about. No people are more uneasy than those who have nothing to do, and nothing to think about. Such persons keep a little growlery in the house, and use it as a trouble factory where they invent grievances.

There are people that I know of who ought to be as merry as the birds of the morning, and yet they are always worrying and stewing about nothing at all. Now, the best way to kill one grief is to introduce another. John Foster wrote of the expulsive power of a new affection, and I want you to experience it. Get love for the souls of men—then you will not be whining about a dead dog, or a sick cat, or about the crotchets of a family, and the little disturbances that John and Mary may make by their idle talk. You will be delivered from petty worries (I need not further describe them) if you are concerned about the souls of men.

When certain persons come to me with their sentimental sorrows, I wish the Lord would fill them with the love of souls, and make their hearts break with anxiety for their conversion. Then would their griefs be of a nobler sort. You would no longer weep over a mole hill if you began to move mountains. Get your soul full of a great grief, and your little griefs will be driven out. These thoughts of Paul about his brethren cause us to feel that we too may make our lives sublime, if in our hearts there shall burn the selfsame ardent affection towards our fellow men.

If you are moved by this feeling, *it will put you much upon prayer*. You will bring one and another before God, because you cannot help it. That is the right style of praying—when a man does not pray to order at a set time because it is his rule, but prays because he has an awful weight upon him, and pray he must.

You cannot force yourself to this, but when the Spirit of God has brought you to it you will pray day and night for those whom you love. As you go down the road something will suggest your praying for them. The very oaths and blasphemies so common in our streets will make you pray for sinners. A gracious meeting where some are saved will move you to prayer. A thousand things will lead you to pray, and that prayer will lead you to effort—to proper and fitting effort. It is wonderful how a man can talk to souls when he loves them.

If any one of you should say, "I do not feel any particular concern about other people's souls, but still I will look out for somebody and speak to him," you will fail in it, brother. You must love before you can plead. You must have such a concern for a man that you feel—even if you could not say anything, still I could put my hand on his shoulder and blunder out, "Friend, I am concerned about your salvation." The evident concern of your spirit will be one of God's ways of touching the hearts of others. I suppose His Spirit has used deep emotion more than almost any other instrument in arousing careless minds.

Now tonight a good many of our friends are away, for the lawful claims of business detain them at this season. I hope that you who have come hither on such a week evening are among those who aspire to the highest things in the kingdom of God. Do so, I pray you, they are all before you and within reach, and among them aspire after great sensitiveness as to others. Let other men's sins grieve you. Let their eternal destiny be often on your mind. No better spur can be wanted. You will labor for their good in proportion as you feel for them.

I do not think that I can ask a better thing for the unconverted than that the converted may be in heaviness over them. We long to see many inquirers coming forward. Very well. Inquiring saints always bring inquiring sinners. "For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel"—not by the sinners first of all—but "by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

My brethren, go and inquire at the Lord's hands, and then you will soon prove a blessing to others.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
ROMANS 9:1-5 AND 10

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—464, 972

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.