

ON HUMBLING OURSELVES BEFORE GOD

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.”
1 Peter 5:6.

PRIDE is so natural to fallen man that it springs up in his heart like weeds in a watered garden, or rushes by a flowing brook. It is an all pervading sin, and smothers all things like dust on the roads, or flour in the mill. Its every touch is evil as the breath of the cholera-fiend, or the blast of the Sahara wind. Pride is as hard to get rid of as charlock weeds from the furrows, or the American blight from the apple trees. If killed it revives, if buried it bursts the tomb. You may hunt down this fox, and think you have destroyed it, and lo, your very exultation is pride. None have more pride than those who dream that they have none. You may labor against vainglory till you conceive that you are humble, and the fond conceit of your humility will prove to be pride in full bloom. It imitates humility full well, and is then most truly pride. Pride is a sin with a thousand lives. It seems impossible to kill it; it flourishes on that which should be its poison, glorying in its shame. It is a sin with a thousand shapes; by perpetual change it escapes capture. It seems impossible to hold it, the vapory demon slips from you, only to appear in another form and mock your fruitless pursuit. To die to pride and self one would need to die himself.

Pride was man's first sin, and it will be his last. In the first sin that man ever committed, there was certainly a large mixture of pride, for he imagined that he knew better than his Maker, and even dreamed that his Maker feared that man might grow too great. It has been questioned whether pride was not the sin by which the angels fell when they lost their first estate. I will not go into any controversy upon that subject, but there was certainly pride in the sin of Satan and pride in the sin of Adam. This is the torch which kindled hell and set the world on fire.

Pride is a ringleader and captain among iniquities. It attains unto the first three of Satan's champions. It is a daring and God-defying sin, arraigning divine justice as Cain did, challenging Jehovah to combat as Pharaoh did, or making self into God, as Nebuchadnezzar did. It would murder God if it could, that it might fill His throne. While it is first to come, and first in horrible supremacy, it is also last to go. As Paul said, “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” I think I might say that the last enemy but one is pride, for even at our deathbed pride will be found in attendance. In his last moments John Knox had a sharp conflict with self-righteousness though he had preached against it with all his might, and knew, with a clearness seldom given to men, that salvation is of the Lord alone. Even within an hour of glory he had to make a stand against that vile thing, the pride of the human heart. Many others of the Lord's valiant ones have been sorely assailed by the same crafty foe, which shoots with feathered flatteries, shafts of destruction. In the quietest minds the deadly calm of self-conceit may be found. Our hearts are deceitful above all things, and in nothing less to be trusted than in this matter of pride. Even while we breathe out our souls unto God it will attempt to puff us up—yes, it will puff up poor dying worms! Brothers and sisters, for certain, you and I are in danger of pride, possibly we are even now victims of it. Let us be on our guard, for it may be ruining us without our knowledge, even as the moth in secret eats up the garment, or as unseen rust cankers the hidden treasure.

Let pride lodge where it may, it does its entertainer great mischief, for it bars out the favor of God, “God resists the proud.” It must be sent adrift before God can visit us with favor, for no grace comes to the proud, “but He gives grace unto the humble.” Humility is the grace that attracts more grace. As money makes money, so, humility increases humility, and with it, every other spiritual gift. If you would have much grace, have much humility. God has assistance for the humble, but resistance for the proud. You know how He fought Pharaoh. What blows He struck at the haughty monarch! He would have him down from the pinnacle of defiance one way or another, and make him learn, in bitterness, the answer to

his own insolent question, “Who is the Lord?” Remember how Nebuchadnezzar had to eat grass like an ox because he spoke with a haughty tongue? Wherever God sees pride lifting itself on high, He resolves to level it in the dust. He draws His bow, He fits His arrow to the string, and pride is the target that He shoots at. The more pride enters into the Christian’s heart, the less grace will enter there, and the more opposition from God will come there, for pride is never so hateful to God as when He sees it in His own people. If you see disease in a stranger you are very sorry, but if you discover its symptoms in your own child, your grief is much deeper. A viper is loathsome anywhere, but how it would make you start if you saw the head of one of those creatures peeping out from the bosom of a beloved friend! So pride is detestable anywhere, but it is worst in those whom the Lord loves best. If God sees pride in a David, He will smite him till he ceases from his high thoughts. Or if it is in a Hezekiah he will abase him, and be sure that if the Lord sees pride in you, he will smite you. Yes, smite you again and again till you wait humbly at His feet.

All this I have given by way of preface, but I think it is also an argument which may run before the words of the text, and strengthen them, “Humble yourselves *therefore* under the mighty hand of God.”

I shall handle the text, not at any great length, but for practical purposes in three or four ways. May the Holy Spirit bless the discourse.

I. First, our text is evidently intended to bear upon us IN OUR CHURCH LIFE.

We will use it in that respect. Observe that Peter has been speaking to the elders, and telling them how they should behave themselves in the flock over which they are set as overseers. Then he speaks to the younger members, and says, “Submit yourselves unto the elder.” He says to all church members, “All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.” And it is in the same context that he writes, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God.” I am, as a member of a church, not to seek honor for myself, but I am to walk humbly. I am not to make it in any respect the objective of my Christian life to be esteemed among my fellow Christians so as to have influence over them, and to take the lead among them. I am to have far humbler motives than that. I am to think very little of myself, and to think so much of others that I admire all that I see of God’s grace in them, and am glad to learn from them as well as to help them in their progress to heaven. Each one of us should think little of himself and highly of his brethren. I cannot say that all of us as Christians are clothed with humility as we should be. I am afraid that from the preacher down to the most obscure member, we may, every one of us, listen with awe to the injunction, “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God,” and confess that we fall short of this command. Yet I may honestly add that in this church I have seen more submissiveness, and deference to others, and less of ambitious self-esteem than anywhere else in the world. I have spoken nothing less than bare justice when I have said this. Let the entire world know that as a pastor I can in this point, praise the people of my charge beyond any that I have ever heard of. I am not apt to judge too favorably. I speak as I have seen, and this is my honest testimony. We owe our union and prosperity under God to the readiness of most of the brethren to do anything and everything for Christ, without considering ourselves.

Now, true humility in our church relationship will show itself in our *being willing to undertake the very lowest offices for Christ*. Some cannot do little things, they must be ordained to great offices, or they will sulk in indolence. Genuine humility makes a man think it a great honor to be a doorkeeper in the house of God, or to be allowed to speak a word to a little child about Jesus, or even to wash the saints’ feet. I am sure, brethren, that those who are not willing to fulfill the lesser offices will never be used by Christ to mind the greater duties. Humility is a qualification for greatness. Do you know how to be little? You are learning to be great. Can you submit? You are learning to rule. My symbolic sketch of a perfect Christian would be a king keeping the door, or a prince feeding lambs, or, better still, the Master washing His disciples’ feet.

The next point of humility is, that *we are conscious of our own incompetence to do anything right*. He who can do all things without Christ will end in doing nothing. The man who *can* preach without divine aid cannot preach at all. The woman who *can* teach a Bible class cannot teach a Bible class. Human ability without the grace of God is only puffed-up inability. Those of you, who, apart from supernatural help, feel quite sufficient for any kind of holy service, are miserably deluded. Self-sufficiency is inefficiency. The fullness of self is a double emptiness. He that has no sense of his weakness has a weakness

in his sense. I believe, brothers and sisters, that any man whom God uses for a great purpose will be so emptied out that he will wonder that God uses him in the least degree, and he will be ready to hide his head, and long to get out of public notice, because he will feel himself to be utterly unworthy of the favor which God manifests towards him. I do not believe that God ever fills a cup which was not empty, or that He ever fills a man's mouth with His words while that man has his mouth full of his own words. Humble yourselves *therefore* under the mighty hand of God. If you desire that the Holy Spirit should bless you, be purged from your own spirit. The way to rise into God is to sink in your own self. As our Lord Jesus descended into the depths, that He might rise above all things and fill all things, so we, in our imitation of Him, must descend to the uttermost that we may rise to the highest.

This humility will show itself, next, in this—*that we shall be willing to be ignored by men*. There is a craving in the heart of many to have what they do, written upon tablets and set up in the market places. I once heard a professing Christian complain bitterly that he had been ignored. He had been a Sunday school teacher for years, and yet he had never been publicly mentioned by anyone. Did he make that a complaint? He might far rather have rejoiced in his quietude. The fierce light of public notoriety is not much valued by those upon whom it falls. I wish some people would ignore *me*—at least, all next week, so much at least as not to call to see me, or write me a letter, or name me in the papers. I would be as happy as all the birds in the air to be ignored, if I might be left alone, and allowed peacefully to work for God with His sweet smile to cheer me in my loneliness. Oh, to be a little ant, allowed to labor on at God's bidding, receiving nothing of men but the high privilege of being left alone! A saintly soul was known to pray, "Grant me, O Lord that I may pass unnoticed through the world!" It seems to me to be one of the highest delights of life for people to permit you to work for God without being interrupted by their praises or censures. When I have seen a certain great artist at work, I have only peeped at him from a corner, and have kept out of his sunshine. I am quite sure he did not want me to express my valueless opinion about his glorious creations. To have people forever talking about you, for you, and against you is one of the weariness' of mortal life, and yet some people sigh for the attention that others would be glad to be rid of. Yes, so it is. It is but a little thing that certain friends have done, but they would like much made of it, their slender alms must be published at the corners of the streets, their prosy speech must be reported in all the papers. Oh, brothers and sisters, do not let us care about its being known that we have done our part. Let it be done as to God, and in God's sight. And then, as to what our fellow mortals shall say, let us have scant concern, for if we live on human praise, we shall grow not only proud, but vain, which, if it is not more wicked, is certainly more silly. Serve God, and do not wish to have a trumpet blown before you. Never cry with Jehu, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord of hosts." Go on serving God year after year, though you are altogether unknown, feeling it quite sufficient that you have by the grace of God served your generation and honored your Redeemer. This would be a great attainment in our church life if we could reach to it.

Brethren, we need humility, all of us, in our church life, in the sense of *never being rough, haughty, arrogant, and hard, domineering, lordly*, or, on the other hand, factious, unruly, quarrelsome and unreasonable. We should endeavor to think very carefully of those who are poorest, for fear we should hurt their feelings, and very noticeable of those who are obscure, lest we should seem to despise them. It is ours never to take offense, and to be most cautious never to cause it even by inadvertence. He that is set as a leader, in the church of God, let him be the person that is most ready to bear blame, and least ready to give offense. Let him say, "You may think what you please of me, but I shall lay myself out to do you good, and to be your servant for Christ's sake." The lower you can stoop, the greater is your honor. In the eye of wisdom, no piece of furniture in the house of God has greater dignity than the doormat. If you are willing to let others wipe their feet on you, then shall Christ Jesus take pleasure in you, for you are a partaker of His lowly mind. Even for your own sake it will be wise to occupy a humble place, for in the valleys the streams of peace are flowing. The mountains are the playground of the storm, but in the quiet villages the dove finds her shelter. If you would escape from ill will, and live peaceably with all men, practice the maxims of an influential man, who, when asked after the Revolution, how he managed to escape the executioner's axe, replied, "I made myself of no reputation, and kept silent."

I am speaking to a number of young men who have begun to speak for Jesus Christ in the church. Let me earnestly entreat them to take great notice of my text—"Humble yourselves under the mighty

hand of God.” Remember, you cannot do any good except “the mighty hand of God” is with you. Therefore be humble and look to that hand for all success. Feel it to be a wonderful thing that the mighty hand of God should ever use *you*. Therefore lie very low in that hand, and beneath that hand, for then you may claim the promise that He will exalt you in due time. If you are willing to look after a few poor people in a village, and to do your duty thoroughly well among a lowly company, you shall have a larger sphere before long. If you are satisfied, young brother, to stand in the corner of the street and talk about Jesus Christ to a few rough folk, you shall find hundreds of hearers, by-and-by. If you are willing to be nothing, God will make something of you. The way to the top of the ladder is to begin at the lowest rung. In fact, in the church of God, the way up is to go down, but he that is ambitious to be at the top will find himself before long at the bottom. “He that exalts himself shall be abased, but he that humbles himself shall be exalted.” Suffer, my younger brethren, this word of exhortation.

II. And now, secondly, I will use the text in quite another way—in reference to OUR BEHAVIOR IN OUR AFFLICTIONS. Here let every tried believer listen to the counsel of the Holy Spirit.

Certain of us are never long together without affliction and trial. Like salamanders, we live in the flame, passing from fire to fire. As by a succession of shafts we descend into the heart of the earth, going down from woe to woe. We need to learn the way of these dark places. Frequently our heavenly Father’s design in sending trial to His children is to make and keep them humble. Let us remember this, and learn a lesson of wisdom. The advice of Peter is that we should humble ourselves. Many people have been often humbled, and yet they have not become humble. There is a great difference between the two things. If God withdraws His grace and allows a Christian man to fall into sin, that fall humbles him in the esteem of all good men, and yet he may not be humble. He may never have a true sense of how evil his action has been. He may still persevere in his lofty spirit, and be far from humility. When this is the case, the haughty spirit may expect a fall. The rod will make blue wounds when pride ignores gentler blows. The most hopeful way of avoiding the humbling affliction is to humble yourself. Be humble that you may not be humbled. Put yourself into a humble attitude, and draw near to God in a lowly spirit, and so He will cease from His chiding.

And do this, first, by *noticing whether you have been guilty of any special sin of pride*. You are suffering, let the rod point out to you in which way you have erred through pride. I believe that David was afflicted in his children because he had been proud of his children, and had indulged them. When there is a breakage in the house, it is generally the idol that is broken. Usually our sins lie at the roots of our sorrows. If we will repent of the sin, the Lord will remove the sorrow. Have you been tried in your worldly possessions? Were you ever puffed up by them? Is your health failing? Did you ever glory in your bodily strength? Are you deceived? Were you ever boastful of your own wisdom? Are you mourning over a failure in character? Did you not once dream that you were past temptation? Look into your affliction till you see, as in a glass, what was the thing you were proud of, and then take the idol down from its pedestal, humble yourself before God, and from then on worship only Him.

In your affliction, humble yourself by *confessing that you deserve all that you are suffering*. Is it poverty? Then, dear child of God, admit that you deserve poverty because of your love of the world. Is it physical pain? Then acknowledge how every erring member deserves to smart. It is a great thing to have wrung out of us the confession that our chastisement is less than we deserve, and that the Lord is not dealing with us according to our sins, but rewarding us according to our iniquities. Is there bereavement in the house? Then, I pray you, acknowledge that if God were to visit you, as He did Job, and take all your children away in a stroke, yet still you deserve it at His hands. Confess that the chastening hand is not dealing too severely with you. Humble yourself, and then you will not quarrel with your grief.

But, more than that, humble yourself so as to *submit entirely to God’s will*. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you in this act of self-humiliation while you meekly kiss the rod. Bow yourself before the mighty hand of God, ready to receive harder blows if God so pleases, for when your will entirely yields to the will of God, it is highly probable that either the affliction will be removed, or else the sting of it will be taken away. Down, brothers and sisters, down in the dust as low as you can get. God is evidently dealing within you as with a child, and a child’s wisdom lies in cheerful submission to parental discipline. When a child is under his father’s chastening hand, it will not help him to kick, and quarrel, and say ill words. His best hope lies in submitting absolutely to his father’s good pleasure. When that is done, the chas-

tisement will soon end. Humble yourself therefore under the mighty hand of God. Yield up your will so as to have no suit-in-law against the Lord, no difference as to His goodness, not even if the evil you dread should actually come, and come in the worst form. Submit to the Lord's will as the rush bends to the wind or as the wax yields to the seal. Pray against the calamity which moves you to fear, but let your petition always end with, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." Ask that you may not be obliged to drink the bitter drink, but do not upset the cup, nor push it away. There let it stand, while you for the moment supplicate for its removal. And when there comes no answer to your prayer, then take it up meekly, put it to your lips resolutely, and drink right on, even as your Master drank His cup and drained it to the dregs. This needs the help of the Holy Spirit, and truly He waits to help us. He delights to aid us in such holy acts of submission. Nothing is better for us in our time of tribulation than to bow ourselves in lowliest obeisance before the hand of God.

Dear friend, what can be the use of striving against the hand of the Lord? It is a mighty hand, we cannot resist it, even if we are wicked enough to attempt rebellion. If affliction is to come, it will come, and come with all the greater sharpness because we refuse to yield. If God appoints a trial, we cannot escape it. What can be the use of our striving against divine decrees? It will only make our sorrow more severe. When the ox kicks against the goad, the iron enters deeper into its flesh, and when the bullock hastens on its way, sensitive to the least touch, the driver scarcely urges it again. The tender, sensitive horse scarcely receives a stroke from the whip; he feels it too much. But the mule that will not move is struck again and again for his obstinacy. So will it be with us. We can make rods for ourselves by willfulness. Oh foolish fingers, which prepare thorns for our own pillows! Humble yourself, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, and by-and-by brothers and sisters, you shall be exalted to consolation and prosperity. Your affliction shall bring forth the comfortable fruits of righteousness. You shall come out of the furnace purified and refined. You shall have more knowledge, more grace, more zeal, more of every excellence as the result of sanctified trial, but all this must come by obedient resignation. A rebellious heart comes out of affliction worse rather than better. Submit, and you shall be so exalted by your affliction that you shall bless God for it, and feel that you would not have missed the trouble for 10,000 pounds if you could have done so. Heavy tribulation shall bring with it unspeakable preferment. You shall be exalted to a higher degree in the peerage of Christianity by battling with adversities. Therefore I pray you, humble yourselves under the hand of God.

III. Thirdly, I am going to use the text in another way. IN OUR DAILY DEALINGS WITH GOD, whether in affliction or not, let us humble ourselves under His hand, for only so can we hope to be exalted.

It is a blessed thing whenever you come to God to come wondering that you are allowed to come, wondering that you have been led to come, marveling at divine election, that the Lord should ever have chosen you to come, wondering at divine redemption, astonished that such a price should have been paid that you might be brought near to God. It is well to draw near to God weighed down with gratitude that the Holy Spirit should have ever deigned to work effectual calling upon you. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of divine grace, which has brought you into the family of love, and constantly say, "Why me, Lord? Why me?" A grateful walk is a gracious walk, and there is no gratitude where there is no humility. Never trace the difference between yourself and others to your own free will, nor to any betterness of your natural disposition, but entirely to the mercy and grace of God, which have been freely bestowed on you. Let grace be magnified by your grateful heart!

When you are doing this, be very humble before God, because you have not made more improvement of the grace that He has given you. You are chosen, but you are not as choice as you ought to be! You are redeemed, but you are not so much your Lord's as you ought to be! You are called, but you are still too deaf to the divine call! You are blessed, enriched, instructed, adopted, comforted, with heaven before you and everything prepared on the road to there, but what a poor return you have made! Always feel thus humbled in reference to your God and His grace. When you are doing most, and God is using you most, always feel that if you had been fit for it, He might have done much more by you—that if you had been meet to be used, He might have used you far more extensively. Thus you will always see cause for humility, even when you discern abounding reason for gratitude. Walk always so with God that when you stand on the highest point you still feel, "I might have been higher but for my own fault. I

have not, because I have not asked, or because I have asked amiss. I have not become as rich as I might have been in spiritual things, because I have not been as diligent in my Lord's business, or as fervent in spirit, or as abundant in serving God as I ought to have been."

Next, humble yourself, dear brother, under the hand of God by feeling your own need of knowledge whenever you come to God. Do not think that you understand all divinity. There is only one body of divinity and that is Christ Himself, and who knows Him to the fullest? When even His love, which is the plainest point about Him, passes knowledge, who shall know Christ in all His fullness? Come before God to be instructed in the knowledge of your God and Savior. Do not think that you understand providence, for I am sure that none of us do. We sometimes think that we could manage things a great deal better than they are managed. Many farmers would not have appointed that heavy shower for this afternoon, and yet that downpour was essential to the general well-being of the universal kingdom. I cannot tell why, but it is so. Everything that comes by God's appointment is a cog in the wheel of providence, and if that cog were gone, the machinery would be out of order. The Lord does all things wisely, only a vile pride will suspect otherwise. Consider, O man that you do *not* know; only God knows. Little children sometimes think they are wise, but they know nothing. Wisdom is with their father, not with them. Let us be content to humble ourselves under the hand of God as poor know-nothings, satisfied that He knows what is best for us. This humility is the vestibule of knowledge, the cornerstone of true philosophy. Commence with a confession of ignorance, or you will never be taught of the Lord. It cannot be hard to confess this when the mighty hand of the Lord is seen and felt.

One point concerning which I should like every one of us to humble ourselves under the hand of God is about our little enjoyment of divine things. The elder brother in the parable said, "Lo, these many years do I serve you. Neither transgressed I at any time your commandment, and yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends." I have known certain sincere Christian men fall into such a horribly legal state of mind. They have always been very regular in their living, constant in their religious observances, and persevering in their prayers, and yet they have never had much joy. But they see a poor soul, just saved from sin, full of delight, and they envy him, and cry out, "Why is a fuss made over such a sinner, when I have been all these years a Christian, and my brethren have never made any rejoicing over me? There is no music and dancing about me! You never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." I do not know how we could make a fuss over some of the elder brothers. They would not allow it, they would be angry, and inquire, in hard and surly tones, what these things meant. Music and dancing are things too trivial for their solid souls. They stand outside and grumble, and we cannot warm them into a revival spirit. They are freezing outside the door of our happy home. Must they always stand there? How divinely sweet was the father's answer to that naughty elder brother! He said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours." That is to say, "You live in my house. You are with me as my own dear son. Everything I have is yours by heirship. Your brother had his portion, and he spent it, but all that remains to me is yours." Hence his short commons had been of his own appointing. If he had not made merry with his friends, it was his own fault. Is it not much the same with us if we have been dull and melancholy? I mean those of us who are believers. Are not all things ours? Come; let us humble ourselves under the hand of God, because we have not made merry with our friends. You growling Christians—if you growl it is because you *will* growl; there is nothing to murmur at. You who never have a happy day, who never have any of the fervor and enthusiasm of young beginners, whose fault is that? It is your own. You might have anything in the Father's house. You have a right to rare music and dancing, for you are always with God, and all that He has is yours. It is meet that we should make merry and be glad. And if we are dull at the business of holy merry-making, let us humble ourselves under the hand of God because of our despondency and mistrust. O my soul, if your ceilings are painted with black instead of vermilion, blame yourself only and not your God.

I am sure, dear friends, if any of us will go over our daily lives, we shall find plenty of reasons for humbling ourselves under the hand of God. It is really dreadful how a man can serve God nobly and do great things and yet in a certain matter, he may sadly fail. A grand old prophet is that Jonah, going through the streets of Nineveh, and bravely delivering the Lord's warning. Whoever did the same? "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown" are the words which he hurls into the face of princes. Grand man! One, yet a conqueror of myriads! Yes! But look at him a day or two later! Call that a grand

man, sitting there crying because the cucumber that grew up over his head is withered, fretting because a worm has devoured a gourd! He is angry, and he says that he does well to be angry about a shelter of melon leaves. Dear me, that a man can be so great in noble things, and so little in a trifling matter! How many have the same cause to be humble before God! Observe that good man, he bore the loss of his property with holy resignation, but he lost his temper because a button was gone from his linen. Such a thing has often happened. Do I put it so that you smile at it? It would be better to weep over it. As you think about yourselves, my brethren, remember the causes that you have to be humble under the hand of God because of the gross weakness by which you have shown the natural depravity of your heart, and the faultiness of your nature apart from the strengthening Spirit of God.

Humble yourselves therefore under the hand of God as creatures under the hand of the Creator. We are the clay, and You our potter, O Lord. It becomes us to be lowly. Humble yourselves under the hand of God as criminals under the hand of their judge. Cry, "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight, that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge." Humble yourselves under the hand of God—as chastened children under a father's rod—for He chastens us for our profit, and right well do we deserve each smarting blow. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, lastly, as servants under their Lord's word. Ask no questions about your Master's command, but go and do it. And when He rebukes you for shortcomings, answer not again, but accept the reproof with bowed head and tearful eyes, acknowledging that His rebuke is well deserved. Humble yourselves thus, dear brethren, in your daily lives, and God will exalt you in due time.

IV. I finish by using my text with all the earnestness my soul can feel in reference to the unconverted part of this audience **IN OUR SEEKING FORGIVENESS AS SINNERS.** Oh, tender Spirit of God, help me now.

The text was not originally meant for the ungodly, but it may fitly be applied to them. If you would find grace in God's sight and live, dear unconverted hearers, you must humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. So you want to be saved, do you? The way of salvation is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." "But," you say, "I do not understand it." Yet it is very simple, no hidden meaning lies in the words, you are simply bid to trust Jesus. If, however, you feel as if you could not do that, let me urge you to go to God in secret and admit the sin of this unbelief, for a great sin it is. Humble yourself. Do not try to make out that you are good. That will be fatal, for it will be a falsehood which will shut the gate of grace. Confess that you are guilty. When a man is clearly and manifestly guilty, it is of no use his standing before the judge and beginning to urge his own merit. His best course is to cast himself upon the mercy of the court. It is *your* only course, dear soul, the only one that can profit you. Know that you have transgressed, and feel that it is so. Sit down and think over the many ways in which you have done wrong, or failed to do right. Pray God to break you down with deep penitence. It is no waste of time to dig out foundations when you build a house, and it is no superfluity to labor after a deep sense of sin.

When your sin is confessed, then, acknowledge that if justice were carried out towards you, apart from undeserved grace, you would be sent to hell. Do not quibble at that fact. Do not entertain skeptical questions as to whether there is a punishment for sin, and as to what it will be, but acknowledge that whatever it is, you deserve it. Do not fence with God or quarrel with Scripture, but as His word declares that the wicked shall be cast into hell with all the nations that forget God, admit that you deserve to be so dealt, for you *do* deserve it. When this is acknowledged, you are on the road to mercy. You have almost obtained mercy when you have fully submitted to justice. You have in a measure received grace when you are brought to admit your sin and the justice of its penalty.

Then, next, accept God's mercy in His own way. Do not be so vain as to dictate to God how you ought to be saved. Be willing to be saved by free grace through the blood of Jesus Christ, for that is God's way. Be willing to be saved by faith in Jesus Christ, for that also is God's way. If your unbelief, begins to ask, "How can it be, and why should it be?" cease from such questions. Humble yourself and say, "God says it is so, and therefore it must be so." If God says, "Believe, and be saved," I will believe and be saved. And if He says, "Trust Christ, and live," I will trust Christ and live. If a man had forfeited his life, but should be told by the court that he shall have pardon freely given to him if he will freely accept it—he would be a fool if he began to inquire, "But is this according to law? Is this according to precedent? What may be the effect of this pardon?" and so on. These inquiries are for the court, not for

the prisoner. My dear man, you do not want to hang yourself, do you? Yet some men argue against their own souls, and labor to find out reasons why they should not be saved. If this perverse ingenuity could but be taught right reason, and men would strive to find out why they should at once yield themselves to God's way of salvation, they might enter into comfort and rest much sooner. O, quibbling sinner, let your artful doubts and reasoning be nailed with Jesus to the cross. Be a little child, and come and believe in the salvation which is revealed in Jesus Christ. Trust Christ to save you, and He will do it, as He has saved so many of us, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

"Ah," you say, "I have done this, but I cannot get peace." Then dear friend, sink lower down! Sink lower down! Did I hear you say, "Alas, sir, I need to get comfort"? Cease from that. Do not ask for comfort, ask for forgiveness, and that blessing may come through your greater discomfort. Sink lower down! Sink lower down! There is a point at which God will surely accept you, and that point is lower down. "Oh," you say, "I think I have a due sense of sin." That will not do. I want you to feel that you have *not* a due sense of sin, and come to Jesus just so. "Oh, but I do think that I have been brokenhearted." I should like to see you lower than that, till you cry, "I am afraid I never knew what it was to be brokenhearted." I want you to sink so low that you cannot say anything good about yourself, no, nor see an atom of goodness in yourself. When you look inside your heart and can see nothing but that which would condemn you, when you look at your life and see everything there that deserves wrath, then you are on the road to hope. Come before God a criminal, in the prison dress, with the rope about your neck. You will be saved, then. When you confess that you have nothing of your own but sin—when you acknowledge that you deserve to die, and to be cast away forever—God in infinite pity will let you live through faith in Christ Jesus. Many years ago a certain prince visited the Spanish galleys, where a large number of convicts were confined, chained to their oars to toil on without relief—I think nearly all of them were condemned to a life sentence. Being a great prince, the King of Spain told him that he might, in honor of his visit, set free any one of the galley slaves he chose. He went down among them to choose his man. He said to one, "Man, how did you come here?" He replied that false witnesses swore away his character. "Ah!" said the prince and passed on. He went to the next, who stated that he had done something that was certainly wrong, but not very much, and that he never ought to have been condemned. "Ah," said the prince, and again passed on. He went the round, and found that they were all good fellows—all convicted by mistake. At last he came to one who said, "You ask me why I came here? I am ashamed to say that I richly deserve it. I am guilty; I cannot for a moment say that I am not. And if I die at this oar, I thoroughly deserve the punishment. In fact, I think it a mercy that my life is spared me." The prince stopped and said, "It is a pity that such a bad fellow as you should be placed amongst such a number of innocent people. I will set you free." You smile at that, but let me make you smile again. My Lord Jesus Christ has come here at this time to set somebody free. He has come here at this time to pardon somebody's sins. You that have no sins shall have no pardon. You good people shall die in your sins. But, oh, you guilty ones, who humble yourselves under the hand of God, my Master thinks that it is a pity that you should be among these self-righteous people. So come right away, and trust your Savior, and obtain life eternal through His precious blood. And to Him shall be glory forever and ever. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 PETER 4.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—605, 704, 564.**

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