

THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

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**A SERMON
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AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS**

*“These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.”
Acts 17:6*

THIS is just an old version of an oft-repeated story. When disturbances arise in a state, and rebellions and mutinies cause blood to be shed, it is still the custom to cry, “The Christians have done this.” In the days of Jesus we know that it was laid to the charge of our blessed and divine Master, that He was a stirrer of sedition, whereas He Himself had refused to be a king, when His followers would have taken Him by force to make Him one, for He said, “My kingdom is not of this world,” yet was He crucified under the two false charges of sedition and blasphemy.

The same thing occurred with the apostles. Wherever they went to preach the Gospel, the Jews who opposed them sought to stir up the refuse of the city to put an end to their ministry, and then, when a great tumult was made by the Jews themselves, who had taken unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring him out to the people, then the Jews laid the tumult and the uproar at the door of the apostles, saying, “These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.”

This plan was followed all through the Roman empire, until Christianity became the state religion. There was never a calamity befell Rome, never a war arose, never a famine or a plague, but the vulgar multitude cried, “The Christians to the lions! The Christians have done this.”

Nero himself imputed the burning of Rome, of which he himself doubtless was the incendiary, to the Christians. The believers in Jesus were slandered as if they were the common sewer, into which all the filth of sin was to be poured. Whereas, they were like Solomon’s great brazen sea, which was full of the purest water, wherein even priests themselves might wash their robes.

And you will remark, that to this day the world still lays its ills at the door of the Christians. Was it not the foolish cry a few months ago, and are there not some weak-minded individuals who still believe it, that the great massacre and mutiny in India was caused by the missionaries. Forsooth, the men who turned the world upside down had gone there also, and because men broke through all the restraints of nature and of law, and committed deeds for which fiends might blush, this must be laid at the door of Christ’s holy Gospel, and the men of peace must bear on their shoulders the blame of war! Ah! we need not refute this, the calumny is too idle to need a refutation.

Can it be true that He whose Gospel is love should be the fomenter of disturbance? Can it be fair for a moment to lay mutiny and rebellion at the door of the Gospel, the very motto of which is, “Peace on earth, good will towards men”? Did not our Master say, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s”? Did He not Himself pay tribute though He sent to the fish of the sea to get the shekel?

And have not His followers at all times been a peaceful generation?—save only and except where the liberty of their conscience was touched, and then they were not the men to bow their knees to tyrants and kings, but with brave old Oliver they did bind their kings in chains, and their nobles in fetters of iron, as they will do again, if their liberty ever should be infringed, so that they should not have power to worship God as they ought.

We believe that what these Jews said of the apostles was just a downright willful lie. They knew better. The apostles were not the disturbers of states. It is true, they preached that which would disturb

the sinful constitution of a kingdom, and which would disturb the evil practices of false priests, but they never meant to set men in an uproar. They did come to set men at arms with sin, they did draw the sword against iniquity, but against men as men, against kings as kings, they had no battle. It is with iniquity and sin, and wrong everywhere, that they proclaimed an everlasting warfare.

But still, brethren, there is many a true word spoken in jest, we say, and surely there is many a true word spoken in malice. They said the apostles turned the world upside down. They meant by that, that they were disturbers of the peace. But they said a great true thing, for Christ's Gospel does turn the world upside down. It was the wrong way upwards before, and now that the Gospel is preached, and when it shall prevail, it will just set the world right by turning it upside down.

And now I shall try to show how, in the *world at large*, Christ's Gospel turns the world upside down, and then I shall endeavor, as well as God shall help me, to show how the *little world that is within every man* is turned upside down, when he becomes a believer in the Gospel of Christ.

I. First, then, the Gospel of Christ turns the world upside down, WITH REGARD TO THE POSITION OF DIFFERENT CLASSES OF MEN.

In the esteem of men, the kingdom of heaven is something like this. High there on the summit, sits the most grand rabbi, the right venerable, estimable and excellent doctor of divinity, the great philosopher, the highly learned, the deeply instructed, the immensely intellectual man. He sits on the apex, he is the highest, because he is the wisest.

And just below him there is a class of men who are deeply studied—not quite as skilled as the former, but still exceeding wise—who look down at those who stand at the basement of the pyramid, and who say to them, “Ah, they are the ignoble multitude, they know nothing at all.”

A little lower down, we come to the sober, respectable thinking men, not those who set up for teachers, but those who seldom will be taught, because they already in their own opinion know all that is to be learned.

Then after them there come a still larger number of very estimable folks, who are exceeding wise in worldly wisdom, although not quite as exalted as the philosopher and the rabbi. Lower still come those who have just a respectable amount of wisdom and knowledge, and then at the very basement there comes the fool, and the little child, and the babe.

When we look at these we say, “This is the wisdom of this world. Behold how great a difference there is between the babe at the bottom and the learned doctor on the summit! How wide the distinction between the ignorant simpleton who forms the hard, rocky, stubborn basement, and the wise man of polished marble, who stands there resplendent at the apex of the pyramid.”

Now, just see how Christ turns the world upside down. There it stands. He just reverses it. “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye can in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.” “Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty men are chosen; but God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, heirs of the kingdom.”

It is just turning the whole social fabric upside down, and the wise man now finds that he has to go upstairs towards his simplicity. He has been all his life trying as far as he could to get away from the simplicity of the credulous child. He has been thinking, and judging, and weighing, and bringing his logic to cut up every truth he heard, and now he has to begin, and go up again. He has to become a little child and turn back to his former simplicity. This is the world turned upside down, with a vengeance, and therefore the wise seldom love it.

If you wish to see the world turned upside down to perfection, just turn to the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. Here you have a whole summary of the world reversed. Jesus Christ turned the world upside down the first sermon He preached. Look at the third verse. “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*”

Now, we like a man who has an ambitious spirit—a man who, as we say, knows how to push his way in the world—who looks up—is not contented with the position that he occupies, but is always climbing higher and higher. And we have a very fair opinion too of a man, who has a very fair opinion

of himself—a man who is not going to bow and cringe. He will have his rights, that he will. He will not give way to anybody. He believes himself to be somewhat, and he will stand on his own belief, and will prove it to the world yet. He is not one of your poor, mean-spirited fellows, who are content with poverty and sitting still. *He* will not be contented. Now such a man as this the world admires.

But Christ just turns that man upside down and says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” The men who have no strength of their own, but look for all to Christ—the men who have no spirit to run with a wicked world, but who would rather suffer an injury than resent one—the men who are lowly and of a humble carriage, who seek not to lift their heads above their fellows.

Who if they be great have greatness thrust upon them, but never seek it—who are content along the cool, sequestered valley of life, to keep the even tenor of their way—who seem to have always ringing in their ears, “Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not”—“the poor in spirit,” happy in their poverty, who are content with the Lord’s providence, and think themselves far richer than they deserve to be.

Now, these men, Christ says, are blessed. The world says, they are soft, they are fools, but Christ puts those on the top whom the world puts at the bottom. “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Then there is another lot of people in the world, they are always *mourning*. They do not let you see it often, for their Master has told them when they fast, to anoint their face so that they appear not unto men to fast, but still secretly before God they have to groan. They hang their harps upon the willows, they mourn for their own sin, and then they mourn for the sin of the times. The world says of these, “They are a moping, melancholy set. I would not care to belong to their number,” and the gay reveler comes in, and he almost spits upon them in his scorn.

For what are they? They love the darkness. They are the willows of the stream, but this man, like the proud poplar, lifts his head, and is swayed to and fro in the wind of his joy, boasting of his greatness, and his freedom! Hear how the gay youth talks to his mourning friend, who is under conviction of sin. “Ah! yours is a morbid disposition. I pity you, you ought to be under the hand of a physician. You go mourning through this world. What a miserable thing, to be plunging through waves of tribulation! What a dismal case is yours! I would not stand in your shoes and be in your position for all the world.”

No, but Christ turns the world upside down, and so those people whom you think to be mournful and sorrowful, are the very ones who are to rejoice. For read the fourth verse, “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.” Yes, worldling, your joy is like the crackling of thorns under a pot. It blazes a little, and makes a great noise, it is soon done with.

But “light is *sown* for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.” You cannot see the light now because it is sown. It lies under the clods of poverty, and shame, and persecution, mayhap. But when the great harvest day shall come, the blades of light, upstarting at the second coming, shall bring forth “the full corn in the ear” of bliss and glory everlasting.

O you mourning souls, be glad, for whereas the world puts you beneath it, Christ puts you above the world’s head. When He turns the world upside down, He says you *shall be* comforted.

Then there is another race of people called “*the meek*.” You may have met with them now and then. Let me describe the opposite. I know a man who never feels happy unless he has a lawsuit. He would never pay a bill unless he had a writ about it. He is fond of law. The idea of pulling another up before the court is a great delicacy to him. A slight affront he would not easily forget.

He has a very large amount of mock dignity, and if he be never so slightly touched, if a harsh word be spoken against him, or one slander uttered, he is down upon his enemy at once, for he is a man of a hard temper, and he casts the debtor into prison, and verily I say unto you, if you get in there by his writ, you shall never come out until you have paid the uttermost farthing.

Now the meek are of a very different disposition. You may revile them, but they will not revile again. You may injure them, but they know that their Master has said, “I say unto you, resist not evil.” They do not put themselves into airs and passions on a slight affront, for they know that all men are

imperfect, and therefore they think that perhaps their brother made a mistake, and did not wish to hurt their feelings. And therefore they say, “Well, if he did not wish to do it, then I will not be hurt by it. I dare say he meant well, and therefore I will take the will for the deed, and though he spoke harshly, yet he will be sorry for it tomorrow. I will not mention it to him—I will put up with whatever he chooses to say.”

There is a slander uttered against him, he says, “Well, let it alone. It will die of itself, where no wood is, the fire goes out.” Another speaks exceeding ill against him in his hearing, but he just holds his tongue, he is dumb and opens not his mouth. He is not like the sons of Zeruiah, who said to David, “Let us go and take off that dead dog’s head, because he cursed the king.” He says, “No, if the LORD hath bidden him curse, let him curse.” “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the LORD.”

He is quite content to bear and forbear, and put up with a thousand injuries, rather than inflict one. Meekly and quietly he goes his way through the world, and people say, “Ah! such a man as that will never get on, he will always be taken in. Why, he will be lending money, and will never get it back again. He will be giving his substance to the poor, and he will never receive it. How stupid he is! He allows people to infringe on his rights, he has no strength of mind, he does not know how to stand up for himself, fool that he is.”

Ay, but Christ turns it upside down, and He says, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” Is not that provoking to you grasping, you high-spirited people, you lawyers, you that are always trying to bring your neighbor in trouble touching your rights? you do it in order that you may inherit the earth. See how Christ spites you, and treads your wisdom under feet. He says, “*The meek shall inherit the earth.*”

After all, very often, the best way to get our rights is to let them alone. I am quite certain that the safest way to defend your character is never to say a word about it. If every person in this place chooses to slander me, and utter the most furious libels that he pleases, he may rest quite assured he will never have a lawsuit from me. I am not quite fool enough for that.

I have always noticed that when a man defends himself in a court of law against any slander, he just does his enemy’s business with his own hand. Our enemies cannot hurt us unless we hurt ourselves. No man’s character was ever really injured except by himself. Be you among the meek, and you shall inherit the earth. Bear all things, hope all things, believe all things, and it shall be the best, even on this earth, in the end.

Do you see that very respectable gentleman yonder, who has never omitted to attend his church or his chapel twice every Sunday ever since he became a man. He reads his Bible too, and he has family prayers. It is true that there are certain stories flying about that he is rather hard upon his laborers, and exacting at times in his payments, but does justice to all men, although no further will he go.

This man is on very good terms with himself. When he gets up in the morning he always shakes hands with himself and compliments himself on being a very excellent person. He generally lives in a front street, in his opinion, and the first number in the street, too. If you speak to him about his state before God, he says that if *he* does not go to heaven nobody will, for he pays twenty shillings in the pound to everybody. He is strictly upright, and there is no one who can find any fault with his character.

Isn’t he a good man? Don’t you envy him?—a man who has so excellent an opinion of himself that he thinks himself perfect. Or if he is not quite perfect, yet he is so good that he believes that with a little help, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Well, now, do you see standing at the back of the church there, a poor woman with tears running down her eyes? Come forward, ma’am, let us hear your history. She is afraid to come forward, she dares not speak in the presence of respectable persons. But we gather thus much from her. She has lately found out that she is full of sin, and she desires to know what she must do to be saved. Ask her.

She tells you she has no merits of her own. Her song is, “I the chief of sinners am. Oh! that mercy would save me!” She never compliments herself upon her good works, for she says she has none. All her righteousnesses are as filthy rags. She puts her mouth in the very dust when she prays, and she dares not

lift so much as her eyes towards heaven. You pity that poor woman. You would not like to be in her case. The other man whom I have just mentioned, stands at the very top of the ladder, does he not? But this poor woman stands at the bottom.

Now, just see the Gospel process—the world turned upside down—“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled,” while the man who is content with himself has this for his portion—“As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.” Publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before you, because you seek not the righteousness which is of faith, but you seek it as it were by the works of the law. So here you see again is the world turned upside down in the first sermon Christ ever preached.

Now, turn to the next beatitude—in the seventh verse—“Blessed are the *merciful*: for they shall obtain mercy.” Of this I have already spoken. The merciful are not much respected in this world—at least if they are imprudently merciful—the man who forgives too much, or who is too generous, is not considered to be wise. But Christ declares that he who has been merciful—merciful to supply the wants of the poor, merciful to forgive his enemies and to pass by offenses, shall obtain mercy. Here, again, is the world turned upside down.

“Blessed are the *pure in heart*: for they shall see God.” The world says, “Blessed is the man who indulges in a gay life.” If you ask the common run of mankind who is the happy man, they will tell you, “The happy man is he who has abundance of money, and spends it freely, and is freed from restraint—who leads a merry dance of life, who drinks deep of the cup of intoxication—who revels riotously—who, like the wild horse of the prairie, is not bitted by order, or restrained by reason, but who dashes across the broad plains of sin, not harnessed, unguided, unrestrained.”

This is the man whom the world calls happy—the proud man, the mighty man, the Nimrod, the man who can do just as he wishes, and who spurns to keep the narrow way of holiness. Now, the Scripture says, Not so, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”

*“Blest is the man who shuns the place
Where sinners love to meet;
Who fears to tread their wicked ways,
And hates the scoffer’s seat,”—*

the man who cannot touch one thing because that would be lascivious, nor another because that would spoil his communion with his Master. A man who cannot frequent this place of amusement, because he could not pray there, and cannot go to another, because he could not hope to have his Master’s sanction upon an hour so spent.

That man, pure in heart, is said to be a Puritanical moralist, a strict Sabbatarian, a man who has not any mind of his own. But Jesus Christ puts all straight, for He says these are the blessed men, these are the happy ones. “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”

And now look at the ninth verse. What a turning of the world upside down that is! You walk through London, and who are the men that we put upon our columns and pillars, and upon our park gates, and so on? Read the ninth verse, and see how that turns the world upside down. There upon the very top of the world, high, high up, can be seen the armless sleeve of a Nelson. There he stands, high exalted above his fellows. And there, in another place, with a long file up his back, stands a duke. And in another place, riding upon a war horse, is a mighty man of war. These are the world’s blest heroes.

Go into the capital of what empire you choose to select, and you shall see that the blessed men, who are put upon pedestals, and who have statues erected to their memory, who are put into our St. Paul’s Cathedral, and our Westminster Abbey, are not exactly the men mentioned in the ninth verse. Let us read it. “Blessed are the *peace-makers*; for they shall be called the children of God.”

Ah! but you do not often bless the peace-makers, do you? The man who comes between two belligerents, and bears the stroke himself—the man who will lie down on the earth, and plead with

others that they would cease from warfare—these are the blessed. How rarely are they set on high. They are generally set aside, as people who cannot be blessed, even though it seem that they try to make others so. Here is the world turned upside down.

The warrior with his garment stained in blood, is put into the ignoble earth, to die and rot, but the peace-maker is lifted up, and God's crown of blessing is put round about his head, and men one day shall see it, and struck with admiration they shall lament their own folly, that they exalted the blood-red sword of the warrior, but that they did rend the modest mantle of the man who did make peace among mankind.

And to conclude our Savior's sermon—notice once more, that we find in this world a race of persons who have always been hated—a class of men who have been hunted like the wild goat—persecuted, afflicted, and tormented. As an old divine says, "The Christian has been looked upon as if he had a wolf's head, for as the wolf was hunted for his head everywhere, so has the Christian been hunted to the uttermost ends of the earth."

And in reading history we are apt to say, "These persecuted persons occupy the lowest room of blessedness. These who have been sawn asunder, who have been burned, who have seen their houses destroyed, and have been driven as houseless exiles into every part of the earth—these men who have wandered about in sheep's skins, and goat's skins—these are the very least of mankind."

Not so. The Gospel reverses all this, and it says, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for *righteousness*' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." I repeat it—the whole of these beatitudes are just in conflict with the world's opinion, and we may quote the words of the Jew, and say, "Jesus Christ was 'the man who turned the world upside down.'"

And now I find I must be very brief, for I have taken so much time in endeavoring to show how Christ's Gospel turned the world upside down, in the position of its characters, that I shall have no space left for anything else. But if you will have patience with me, and I will briefly pass through the other points?

I have next to remark, that the Christian religion turns the world upside down *in its maxims*. I will just quote a few texts which show this very clearly. "It was said by them of old time, eye for eye and tooth for tooth; but I say unto you, resist not evil." It has generally been held by each of us, that we are not to allow anyone to infringe upon our rights, but the Savior says, "Whosoever would sue thee at the law and take thy cloak, let him have thy coat also." "If any man smite thee on the one cheek, turn unto him the other also." If these precepts were kept, would it not turn the world upside down?

"You have heard that it has been said by them of old time, love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy." But Jesus Christ said, "Let love be unto all men." He commands us to love our enemies and to pray for them who despitefully use us. He says, "If thine enemy hunger feed him, and if he thirst give him drink, for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head."

This would indeed be turning the world upside down, for what would become of our war ships and our warriors, if at the port-holes where now we put our cannons, we should have sent out to some burning city of our enemies—for instance, to burning Sebastopol—if we had sent to the houseless inhabitants, who had been driven from their homes, barrels of beef, and bundles of bread and clothes, to supply their wants?

That would have been a reversal of all human policy, but yet it would have been just the carrying out of Christ's law, after all. So shall it be in the days that are to come, our enemies shall be loved, and our foemen shall be fed.

We are told too, in these times, that it is good to a man to heap unto himself abundant wealth, and make himself rich, but Jesus Christ turned the world upside down, for He said, there was a certain rich man who was clothed in scarlet, and fared sumptuously every day, and so on, and his fields brought forth abundantly. And he said, "I will pull down my barns, and build greater," but the Lord says, "Thou fool!"

That is reversing everything in this world. You would have made an Alderman of him, or a Lord Mayor, and fathers would have patted their boys on the head, and said, "That is all through his frugality and taking care. See how he has got on in the world—when he had a good crop, he did not give it away to the poor, as that extravagant man does who has kept on working all his life, and never be able to retire from business. He saved it all up—be as good a boy as So and so, and get on too." But Christ said "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." A turning of everything upside down.

And others of us will have it, that we ought to be very careful every day, and always looking forward to the future, and always fretting about what is to be. Here is a turning of the world upside down, when Jesus Christ says, "Remember the ravens; they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feedeth them, are ye not better than they?"

I do believe that at this day the maxims of business are clean opposed to the maxims of Christ. But I shall be answered by this, "Business is business." Yes, I know business is business, but business has no business to be such business as it is. Oh! that it might be altered, till every man could make his business his religion, and make a religion of his business.

I have not detained you long upon that point, and therefore I am free to mention a third. How Christ has turned the world upside down, as to our *religious notions*. Why, the mass of mankind believe, that if any man wills to be saved, that is all which is necessary. Many of our preachers do in effect preach this worldly maxim.

They tell men that they must make themselves willing. Now, just hear how the Gospel upsets that. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." The world will have a universal religion too, but how Christ overturns that. "I pray for them; I pray not for the world." He has ordained us *from among* men. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." "The Lord knoweth them that are his." How that runs counter to all the world's opinion of religion!

The world's religion is this—"Do, and thou shalt live," Christ's religion is—"Believe and live." We will have it, that if a man be righteous, sober, upright, he shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but Christ says—This you oughtest to have done; but still, not this can ever cleanse thee. "As many as are under the works of the law are under the curse." "By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified."

"Believe and live," is just the upsetting of every human notion. Cast yourself on Christ—trust in Him. Have good works afterwards, but first of all trust in Him that died upon the tree. This is the overturning of every opinion of man. And hence mortals will always fight against it, so long as the human heart is what it is.

Oh! that we knew the Gospel! Oh! that we felt the Gospel! For it would be the upsetting of all self-righteousness, and the casting down of every high look and of every proud thing.

II. And now, beloved, spare me a little time, while I try to show THAT WHICH IS TRUE IN THE WORLD, IS TRUE IN THE HEART. Instead, however, of enlarging at full length upon the different topics, I shall make my last point the subject of examination.

Man is a little world, and what God does in the outer world, He does in the inner. If any of you would be saved, your hearts must be turned upside down. I will now appeal to you, and ask you whether you have ever felt this—whether you know the meaning of it?

In the first place, your *judgment* must be turned upside down. Cannot many of you say that which you now believe to be the truth of God is very far opposed to your former carnal notions? Why, if anyone had told you that you should be a believer in the distinguishing doctrines of free and sovereign grace, you would have laughed him in the face. "What! I believe the doctrine of election? What! I ever hold the doctrine of particular redemption, or final perseverance? Pshaw! Nonsense! It cannot be!"

But now you do hold it, and the thing which you thought unreasonable and unjust, now seems to you to be for God's glory and for man's eternal benefit. You can kiss the doctrine which once you despised, and you meekly receive it as sweeter than the droppings of honey from the honeycomb, though once you

thought it to be as the very poison of asps, and gall, and wormwood. Yes, when grace enters the heart, there is a turning upside down of all our opinions and the great truth of Jesus sits reigning on our soul.

Is there not, again, a total change of all your *hopes*? Why, your hopes used to be all for this world. If you could but get rich, if you could but be great and honored, you would be happy! You looked forward to it. All you were expecting was a paradise this side the flood.

And now where are your hopes?—not on earth, for where your treasure is, there must your heart be also. You are looking for a city that hands have not piled, your desires are heavenly, whereas they were gross and carnal once.

Can you say that? Oh! all you members of this congregation, can you say that your hopes and your desires are changed? Are you looking upward, instead of downward? Are you looking to serve God on earth and to enjoy Him forever? Or are you still content with thinking, “What ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, and wherewithal ye shall be clothed”?

Again, it is a complete upsetting of all your *pleasures*. You loved the tavern once, you hate it now. You hated God’s house once, it is now your much-loved habitation. The song, the Sunday newspaper, the lewd novel—all these were sweet to your taste, but you have burned the books that once enchanted you, and now the dusty Bible from the back of the shelf is taken down, and there it lies, wide open, upon the family table, and it is read both morn and night, much loved, much prized, and delighted in.

The Sabbath was once the dullest day of the week to you. You either loitered outside the door in your shirt-sleeves, if you were poor, or if you were rich, you spent the day in your drawing room, and had company in the evening. Now, instead thereof, your company you find in the church of the living God, and you make the Lord’s house the drawing room where you entertain your friends. Your feast is no longer a banquet of wine, but a banquet of communion with Christ.

There are some of you who once loved nothing better than the theatre, the low concert room, or the casino. Over such places you now see a great black mark of the curse and you never go there. You seek now the prayer meeting, the church meeting, the gathering of the righteous, the habitation of the Lord God of hosts.

It is marvelous how great a change the Gospel makes in a man’s *house* too. Why, it turns his house upside down. Look over the mantle-piece—there is a vile daub of a picture there, or a wretched print, and the subject is worse than the style of the thing. But when the man follows Jesus he takes that down, and he gets a print of John Bunyan in his prison, or his wife standing before the magistrate, or a print of the apostle Paul preaching at Athens, or some good old subject representing something Biblical.

There is a pack of cards and a cribbage board in the cupboard. He turns them out, and instead he puts there perhaps the monthly magazine, or mayhap a few works of old divines, just here and there one of the publications of the Religious Tract Society, or a volume of a Commentary. Every thing is upside down there.

The children say, “Father is so altered.” They never knew such a thing. He used to come home sometimes drunk of a night, and the children used to run upstairs and be in bed before he came in. And now little John and little Sarah sit at the window and watch till he comes home, and they go toddling down the street to meet him, and he takes one in his arms, and the other by the hand, and brings them home with him.

He used to teach them to sing, “Begone, dull care,” or something worse. Now he tells them of “Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,” or puts into their mouth some sweet song of old. A jolly set of companions he used to have come to see him, and a roaring party there used to be of them, on a Sunday afternoon, but that is all done with.

The mother smiles upon her husband. She is a happy woman now, she knows that he will no longer disgrace himself by plunging into the vilest of society, and being seduced into the worst of sins. Now, if you could take a man’s heart out, and put a new heart right into him, it would not be half so good, if it were another natural heart, as the change that God works, when He takes out the heart of stone, and puts in a heart of flesh—

*“A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
Our dear Redeemer’s throne,
Where only Christ is heard to speak,
Where Jesus reigns alone.”*

I put, then, the question to you again, Have you been turned upside down? How about your companions? You loved those the best who could swear the loudest, talk the fastest, and tell the greatest falsehoods. Now you love those who can pray the most earnestly and tell you the most of Jesus. Everything is changed with you. If you were to meet your old self going down the street, you would not know him, except by hearsay. You are no relation to him at all.

Sometimes the old gentleman comes to your house, and he begins to tempt you to go back, but you turn him out of doors as soon as you can, and say, “Begone! I never got on so long as I knew you. I had a ragged coat to my back then, and I was always giving the publican all my money. I never went to God’s house, but cursed my Maker, and added sin to sin, and tied a millstone round my neck. So away from me, I will have nothing to do with you. I have been buried with Christ, and I have risen with Him. I am a new man in Christ Jesus, old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new.”

I have some here, however, who belong to a different class of society, who could not indulge in any of these things. But ah! ladies and gentlemen, if you are ever converted, you must have as great a sweeping out as the poorest man that ever lived. There must be as true a turning upside down in the salvation of an earl, or a duke, or a lord, as in the salvation of a pauper or a peasant. There is as much sin in the higher ranks as in the lower, and sometimes more, because they have more light, more knowledge, more influence, and when they sin, they not only damn themselves, but others too.

O you that are rich, have you had a change too? Have the frivolities of this world become sickening things to you? Do you turn away with loathing from the common cant and conventionalism of high life? Have you forsaken it? and can you now say, “Although I am in the world, yet am I not of it. Its pomps and vanities I do eschew, its pride and its glory I trample under feet, these are nothing to me. I would follow my Master bearing His cross, through evil report and through good report”?

If such be not the case, if you are not changed, remember, there are no exceptions, one truth is true for all—“Except ye be born again, you cannot see the kingdom of heaven.” And that amounts in substance to my text, except you be thoroughly renewed, turned upside down, you cannot be saved. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” for he that believes shall be sanctified and renewed—shall be saved at last—but he that believes not must be cast away in the great day of God’s account.

The Lord bless you, for Jesus’ sake!

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.