

THE TENDER INQUIRY OF A FRIEND NO. 2025

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“How long will you cut yourself?”
Jeremiah 47:5.*

TRAVELERS in the East tell us that among the most melancholy scenes they witness are the following—Men inflict upon themselves very grievous, voluntary wounds and then exhibit themselves in public. They even disfigure themselves with gashes and cuts in the presence of excited throngs. I am speaking of what has occurred even within the last few years among the Muslims. When some great prophet or emir is coming that way, a certain number of fanatical Mahometans take swords, spears, and other sharp instruments, and gash themselves terribly with them, cutting their breasts, their faces, their heads, and all parts of their bodies. Frequently they have taken care to dress themselves in white sheets, in order that, as the blood flows copiously from their bodies, it may be the more clearly seen, that they may become the more ghastly spectacles of misery, or more fully display the religious excitement under which they labor. As everything in the East remains forever the same, this Muslim superstition carries us back to the olden times whereof we read in the Old Testament, when the priests of Baal, having cried in vain to their idol, cut themselves with lances and with knives. Our translators were probably afraid to write the harsher words, and so they translated the passage “knives and lances,” but they might have written swords and spears—sharp instruments of a desperate character. Thus they displayed their inward zeal, and thus, perhaps, they hoped to move the pity of their god. Eastern fanaticism surpasses belief; you would suppose that the raving creatures were about to commit suicide, and yet there is a method in their madness. You could hardly think that men possessed of reason would torture themselves and disfigure themselves as they do, but they know what they are doing, and are only carrying out their program. The Lord expressly forbade His people, the Jews, to perpetrate such folly. They were not even to shave the corners of their beards, or to hack their hair, as the Orientals do in the hour of their grief, and then they were further prohibited from injuring their bodies by the command, “You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the Lord” (Lev 19:28). Men in Eastern lands, not only in connection with fanaticism, but in reference to domestic affairs, will cut themselves to express their grief and anguish, or to make other people believe that they are feeling such grief and anguish. We may congratulate ourselves that we are free from at least one foolish custom.

The prophet here speaks to the Philistines who were about to endure the tremendous judgments of God, and, indeed, to be crushed as a nation by the Egyptians and the Chaldeans, and he says to Philistia, “How long will you cut yourself?” Gaza was to be made bald by the smiting of Pharaoh, Ashkelon was to be shorn away, and the whole nation was to feel the sword of the Lord, which would not rest in its scabbard. How long would they continue to bring upon themselves such terrible judgments?

The expression is used, first, *almost in despair*. The question is asked with little hope; as if the self-torturer would never have done, but would go on to mutilate himself without end. I intend to use it at this time, in the second place, *as a question asked instructively and hopefully*, in the hope that some, who have practically been cutting themselves, will cease from this self-torture, and find rest and peace where it is to be had, and to be had at once and forever. May the good Spirit grant our desire!

I. First, dear friends, I SHALL ASK THIS QUESTION VERY DESPAIRINGLY—“How long will you cut yourself?”—for many are cutting themselves very terribly, and will have to feel the wounds for a long, long time, neither can we induce them to cease.

I allude first, to some professors of religion who have been church members for ten, twenty, or more years, and yet *have practically done nothing at all for the Savior*. If they were really to awaken to a sense of their neglect, I do not know how long they would be in anguish, or how deep would be their

distress, for if Titus mourned that he had lost a day when he had done no good action for twenty-four hours, and he but a heathen, what would happen to a Christian if he were really to see his responsibility before God, and to feel that he has not only lost a day but a year—perhaps many years? Have not some of you well-near lost a whole lifetime? What hosts of opportunities you have thrown away! What multiplied responsibilities you have incurred! Favored as you have been, and so ungrateful! Comforted as you have been, and yet keeping the comfort to yourself, and never seeking out other lonely hearts to share with them the heavenly balm! Instructed as you have been, and yet instructing none in return! With light divine shining upon you, and yet never giving that light to others!—

*“Can we, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Can we, to men benighted,
The lamp of life deny?”*

The good Bishop’s hymn asks the question as if it were impossible. But, no, sirs, it is not impossible. It is sadly true, and alas, commonly true! Our churches are made up largely of barren members, and of cumber-ground trees that bring forth no fruit. Oh, if I am addressing such—and honestly in the sight of God I fear I am—then how long will you chasten yourselves for your neglect? It must be long before you can forgive yourselves for such wicked indolence. How long will you afflict yourselves to think that you should have suffered time which you can never recall, and opportunities which you will never enjoy again, to go by you wasted? The miller puts his wheel hard by the stream, and uses its constant flow to grind his corn, but you have a stream of opportunity and power flowing by you, which you have turned to no practical service. Your tears might well be as plentiful as the drops of the wasted stream of life. Some of you stand by, and listen to the hum of the wheel, and admire the liquid music of the falling waters, but nothing practical comes of it. Your taste is gratified, and your conscience is eased by attending religious services, but there is nothing done for Christ—nothing done for the souls of men. Like little children with their toy windmills, you are amused with that which, if you were true men, you would turn to good account. Are you not ashamed to have been playing, while God and heaven, and even Satan and hell, are all so terribly in earnest? You have come to years of discretion, when “Life is real, life is earnest,” and you have still trifled. Can you ever be sorry enough for this? How long will you cut yourself?

Ah, me! I think I should eternally regret it if up till now I had never preached the gospel of the grace of God. Ah, me! If it had not been God’s good pleasure to let me break out as a soul-winner while yet a boy, I could lay me down upon my bed, and wish that I had never been born. If I had reached the very center of life, and yet had done nothing to reclaim and restore the sons of men, and glorify the Lord my Redeemer, I should tear my hair. Do I address any who have come to the noon of life, and have not yet done a hand’s turn in my Lord’s vineyard? The dew of the morning is gone, and the best hours of the day have glided away; why do you stand here all the day idle? Do I make you feel uncomfortable? I shall thank God if I do, and I shall be happy, indeed, if, instead of cutting yourselves with vain regrets, you lacerate yourselves with my sharp remarks as with spears and knives, and then gird up your loins, and say, “God helping me, there shall never be another wasted year, no, nor another wasted day!” Then I shall be rejoiced, indeed. Oh, how I wish each one of you would pray—

*“Let every flying hour confess
I bring Your gospel fresh renown,
And when my life and labors cease
May I possess the promised crown!”*

But, lazy professors, when will you have done with your regretting if your conscience is once aroused? If you are once moved to see what cause you have for shame, surely you will never leave off cutting yourselves with regrets? And yet, what will be the use of your lamentations unless they lead you to amendments, and from sluggards you become laborers? Let us hope it will be so, but I am not very hopeful, for it is hard to make long habits of indolence yield to diligence.

The same may be applied, and applied very solemnly, too, to those who backslide—who, in addition to being useless, are injurious, because their example tends to hinder others from coming to Christ. Oh, if any of you that name the name of Jesus, and have been happy in His service, and have enjoyed high days and holy days in His presence, turn aside, I shall use this lamentation over you! You will do your-

selves terrible injury, and I shall shudder as I see the edged tools of sin in your reckless hands. Every sin is a gash in the soul. The Lord will bring you back and save you, as I believe, but oh, how long will you cut yourselves? You will feel in after life how grievously you have injured your souls. David's great sin was put away so that he did not die, but he was never the same David as before. The Lord's people seem to have shunned him for a time while the adversary found occasion to blaspheme. He offers a remarkable prayer in the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm when he says, "Let those that fear You turn unto me." I think they had, in a measure, turned away from him in horror at his great sin. They began to stand in doubt of him. They had loved him as their champion in his earlier days, when he led the van of the armies of the Lord of hosts, and when as a youth he returned from the battle bringing the head of Goliath. They had looked up to him when he was in the wilderness because of his integrity. Though hunted like a partridge by the ungodly party, yet he was the hope of Israel, and the joy of all the saints. With what delight did they gather round him at Hebron and Jerusalem when he was crowned their king! They felt that God had blessed His people in giving them such a leader. But when it was whispered that he had defiled his neighbor's wife, then the godly shuddered. They knew what blasphemy and rebuke would come of it, and they kept out of his way. They must have been deeply grateful when they found him truly penitent. When he was crying to God for mercy, probably some of them would know it, and perhaps step in to cheer him. But still David was scarcely David again, either to the people of God or to himself. The Lord out of very love to him chastened him sorely, and pursued him with plague upon plague. His family became his dishonor and his sorrow. He went with broken bones to the grave—a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. How grievously he had injured himself! How long he had to cut himself with anguish for that one sin! His life, surely, from the time when he fell with Bathsheba was penitential sorrow rather than confident delight, and though the Lord left him not, but brought him to much maturity of grace out of his brokenness of heart, yet, still, as often as he went to his couch, the memory of his great transgression would cut and wound his heart.

What is true of David applies also to others who have in any great measure turned aside. Solomon, in a high degree, hurt himself by his terrible follies. In the New Testament, Peter is a conspicuous example. It is a tradition that whenever Peter heard the cock crow he used to weep, and I do not wonder at it. Alas! If you and I should ever be suffered to fall into grievous sin, it may be all done in ten minutes, but it cannot be gotten rid of in fifty years. We shall bear the scars of that ten minutes' sin until the Lord shall take us home, and permit us to wake up "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," in the full likeness of our perfect Lord. Oh, my brethren, watch anxiously lest you have to mourn for years over the sin of an instant!

God grant that all His servants may be kept both from the sin of omission, of which I spoke at first, which leads to neglect of duty, and also from the sin of commission, which leads to actual backsliding and practical departing from the living God.

There is one thing which comes after these, and comes in connection with them. If you and I should *know that souls have been lost*—lost as far as we are concerned—*through our neglect*, how long shall we cut ourselves on that account? A dear soul said to me yesterday, "My husband died. He had been a sad drunkard, but in his last illness, through the blessing of God upon those who visited him, I trust he found peace. He said that he believed in the Lord Jesus, and there is my comfort. But oh, if he had died without finding Christ, I should have been indeed a widow! I know not what could have comforted me." I am grateful that our sister called in her Christian friends, and that, by their efforts and her prayers, she was spared the keenest edge of sorrow. "Surely the bitterness of death is past." But suppose *you* were to lose your son, and that your son should die in sin which he learned of you, or in sin which you saw in him and never rebuked! Suppose, I say, your son should die in his iniquity. What if he should have been your favorite child and you should have tolerated much evil in him which you would not have suffered in another! What if you pampered and indulged him, and gave him liberty to make himself vile! Shall I tell you how you will behave yourself when the news comes to you that he is dead? You will get by yourself alone, and cry like David, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son, my son!" You can lay your children down upon the bed all stark and cold, and follow them to the tomb, and even sing as you commit their mortal remains to the grave, when you know that they die in hope, but if they perish in their sin, guilty, red-handed, unforgiven, what will

you say to yourselves? Fathers, if you have never sought to bring your children to repentance, how will you excuse yourselves? If you have never prayed with them, or wept with them—if you have never even instructed them in the things of God, what flattering unction will you lay to your guilty consciences? What will you say, mother, if your daughter passes into eternity unforgiven, and you have never tried to lead her to Jesus? What shall I say of you, my congregation, if I waste your Sabbaths with fine shows of oratory but do not seek your souls? When next the knell is heard, and there is another gone who constantly listened to my voice, if I have not been faithful with you, and persuaded you to lay hold on Christ, how long must I tear my hair, and cut myself for very anguish, because my garments will be spotted crimson with your blood?

These are solemn things, but there is deep truth in them, and they ought to be considered by all of you who profess to be Christians. I knew one who used to have a man calling upon him in the way of business, and bringing certain articles which he bought across the counter. This tradesman said one day to himself, “I have dealt with that man for nine or ten years, and we have scarcely passed the time of day. He has brought in his work, and I have paid him across the counter, but I have never tried to do him any good. Surely this cannot be right. Providence has put him in my way, and I ought at least to have asked him whether he is saved in Christ.” Well, the next time the man came, our good brother’s spirit failed him, and he did not like to begin a religious conversation. The man never came again, but a boy brought in the next lot of goods. “How is this?” said the shopkeeper. “Father is dead,” said the boy. My friend, the shopkeeper, said to me, “I could never forgive myself. I could not stay in the shop that day. I felt that I was guilty of that man’s blood, but I had not thought of it before. How can I ever clear myself from the guilty fact that, when I did think of it, my ungracious timidity prevented me from opening my mouth?” My own dear friends and comrades do not bring upon yourselves such cutting regrets! Avoid them by daily watching to save men from the second death. Will you let them die? Will you let them die? If so, when you wake up to the sense that you have suffered them to perish, then this dreadful question may well be put to you, “How long will you cut yourself?” How long will you feel remorse and regret that your hopeful opportunity was allowed to pass by unimproved?

One other most solemn use may be made of this question; God grant that it may never be so, but if *anyone of you should die in his sins*, how long will you regret it, do you think? It looks dreadfully possible that some of you will perish forever, since you have so often been entreated to come to Christ, and have never come. For the moment, suppose that there is no hell, but if you are only shut out of heaven, how long will that be a subject of grief? If you should only hear the King say, “Depart, you cursed!” and should only have to depart, and keep on departing, oh, the wringing of hands and the anguish! O you who have lost eternal life, how long will you cut yourself? If you should miss Christ, and miss mercy, and miss heaven, and miss eternal glory, if there were nothing else, how long will you bemoan yourself? With what depth of anguish will you smart to have lost all this—to have, in fact, lost all which makes up life, and joy! What if, after all, I come short of the kingdom, I that had my Sabbaths, but never found rest in Christ! I that heard the gospel, but never took Christ to be my Savior! I that was almost persuaded, and yet never yielded my heart to divine grace! I that was almost in the ark, and yet, not being altogether in it, was left to drown! I that had so much about me that was hopeful! I that would, as I said, in a short time, concern myself about divine things; I—I am cast out, left with the tares, not gathered with the wheat. What if I find myself on the left hand, condemned, and cast away! What regrets will such a calamity cost me if it is so! O souls, how long—how long will you grieve and mourn when it shall come to this? According to my reading of that Book—and I would gladly read it otherwise if I did not feel that truth and honesty forbid me to do so—your loss, your anguish will be forever. Forever you will cut yourselves. Forever will you lament that, when the opportunity was so near you, you put it away from you, and when Christ was ready to receive you, you would not be received, but chose your own delusions, and committed eternal suicide. O friends, do not trifle with that which is and must be eternal! Make not a dreadful choice which can never be altered. Be solemn; be intense when you are dealing with matters which for good or bad will be past changing when death comes to you.

II. There I leave this very painful use of the text, to try and use it at greater length in a happier sort, by way of consolation and hopeful comfort, to those who will, we trust, be soon brought to receive the Lord Jesus.

“How long will you cut yourself?” I SHALL ASK THIS QUESTION HOPEFULLY, trusting that in many their sorrow is nearing its end.

This text may be very profitably and prudently applied to *those who have been bereaved*, and who, being bereaved, sorrow, and sorrow to excess. I hope that I am not about to say a harsh word, but I would deal faithfully with rebellious repining. “Jesus wept,” and he that does not weep when he loses a dear one must be something less than a man, and unworthy to be called a Christian. But there is such a thing as carrying to an extreme our sorrow for those we lose, till it becomes rebellion against God. You remember the Quaker saying to the lady who was wearing very deep double mourning attire years after one of her children had died, “Madam, have you not forgiven God yet?” And there is a truth about that remark; some do not forgive God for what He has done. Their sorrow amounts to this—that they have a quarrel with God over His dispensations. “How can He be good and have taken away my mother?” said one to me. “How can God be good and have taken away my child?” cried another. There is a want of faith, a want of reverence, a want of love, a want of many sweet and placid graces, in such mourning as that, and, without dwelling long upon it, I beg to put that question to any mourner here who is mourning with the ungodly sorrowing of the heathen—as if there were no hope. “How long will you cut yourself?” Is not your child in Jesus’ bosom? Has not your friend gone among the angels, to join the sweet singers of God? Is it not a gain to the departed, though it is a loss to you, that they are translated to the place of everlasting bliss? Would you have them back again? Dare you wish such a thing even for a moment? If they are supremely blessed, is there no blessedness to you in their blessedness? Are you so selfish that you would tear a star from heaven that you might have the light of it all to yourself? Come, be reconciled, not only to your grief, but to your God, who sent it! It has come to be now like a fretting canker within you; will you not end it? As the moth eats the garment, so does this grief eat you up. Therefore arise and shake yourself from it. Know you not that their Redeemer lives, and your Redeemer too? And will you not now yield up to Christ what is infinitely more His than yours, and cheerfully say, “Let Him have those whom He has purchased with His blood, and for whom He prayed, ‘Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am’ ”? “How long will you cut yourself?” Put away your disputing and murmuring, and either, like Aaron, hold your peace, or better still, like Job, bless the name of the Lord, and rejoice in your God.

But now, turning to quite another character, I would use the same expression for another purpose. There are some *persons with whom God is dealing in great love, and yet they are very rebellious*. They persevere in known sin, although the evil way has become exceedingly hard to them. They seem as if they would walk over red-hot plowshares to hell. I have known some who have found the pleasures which once delighted them to become a nuisance, a trouble, a pain, a disgust and a weariness, and yet they continue in their unprofitable course. You remember Saul of Tarsus, to whom the Lord said, “It is hard for you to kick against the pricks”; he was acting as though with a naked foot he kicked against iron nails, or like the bullock when it is struck with the ox-goad, and kicks back, driving the goad much deeper into itself than otherwise it would have gone. Certain men are doing just *that*;—how I wish they could see that it is so! They are following a wild course of life, and they are losing money at it, and they are likely to lose much more. They are plunging down. What are they thinking of? “How long will you cut yourself?” Already they have met with great disasters and misfortunes; they will meet with many more. When the dogs are out hunting, they run in packs. The plagues of Egypt are ten at least, and everyone who plays the Pharaoh may expect the full number.

O you to whom the Lord is sternly kind, by terrible things in righteousness He will chasten you to your right mind! If the Lord means to have you at His feet, He will bring you there. By hook or by crook He will bring you there, depend upon it, and if you will not come by gentle means, you shall come by some other means, but He will break you down in due time. I know that already certain of you have had stroke upon stroke. From wealth you have descended to poverty, from health you have come down to sickness, from honor you have fallen to obscurity. Is not this enough to humble you before God? You will come down lower yet. As surely as you live, you will be made to feel that it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against God. My heart’s desire is that it may be so, that by this painful method you may be saved. I spoke some time ago with the son of a very godly man. He seemed to be an infidel outright, and had taken to horseracing, and the like. My inmost soul was grieved concerning him; I could have wept.

As he talked very largely, and mild words were lost on him, I said to him, “Keep as many racehorses as you can, and go in for gambling most heartily, for thus the sooner you will lose all your money. Some prodigals never come back to the Father’s house until they sink as low as the pig’s trough, and that is probably the way for you. When you get a hungry belly, I trust you will come home.” He knows what my warning meant, and I fear he intends to make it true. The way of transgressors is hard, and it is a mercy when it becomes so hard that they are resolved to quit it for another and a better way. Is this happening to anybody here? Have you spent your money riotously? Are you getting into trouble? I half congratulate you. I congratulate the angels who watch your course; I hope that the probabilities are that you will soon say, “How many hired servants of my Father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise, and go to my Father.” But do not make the process too long, I charge you. “How long will you cut yourself?” Have you not had enough of the consequences of your folly? Will you not turn at the Lord’s rebuke? Will you not yield under the strokes you have already felt? “Turn you; turn you; why will you die, O house of Israel?” Why should you be stricken any more? Have you not played the fool long enough? “How long will you cut yourself?”

I might use this expression even to *the Jewish nation itself*. Ah, God, through what seas of trouble have they had to swim since the day when they said, “His blood be on us, and on our children!” Alas, the story of Israel is enough to make one’s blood turn to ice within his veins! And will they not come back? Will they not come back? Must they be hunted in Germany, and hounded in Russia? Shame on the countries that dare do such things! But must it be so? God grant that they may no longer provoke their Holy One to indignation against them! How long will they cut themselves? For still these great evils happen to them according to the eternal counsels of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because of their unbelief. When they turn to the Messiah, their glory shall return, also, and the crown wherewith God crowned His people shall again be set upon their head, and their ancient city shall again be “beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.” Assuredly the Lord gave the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed forever; how long will they shut themselves out of it?

But, now, all this has rather kept me from my main design, which is to speak to those dear friends of ours who are *afflicting their souls with needless fears*. No good can possibly come by a continuance in their unhappy moods; they are cutting themselves quite needlessly. They might at once have peace, and rest, and joy if they were willing to accept the Lord’s gracious way of salvation. You who are burdened with sin, and are trying to get rid of it, but will not come to Christ for deliverance—I want to ask each one of you, “How long will you cut yourself?” Why, there are some persons who think that before they can believe in Christ they must undergo a world of torture! From where do they derive the notion, and what Scripture do they twist to support it? My commission runs thus, “Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” I do not find that I am to look out for those who have undergone a long probation, and then tell them to believe in Christ, but every creature is to hear the good news, that whosoever believes in Christ Jesus has everlasting life, and shall never come into condemnation. So far the gospel message gives no hint of a sort of purgatory in this life, but it deals with every creature as it finds him. Now, you think, “Well, I must not—I really must not lay hold upon this salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus; I dare not be so greatly blessed. I must first of all be tortured with conviction, and afflicted with despair.” Alas, that you should thus choose to be miserable, and refuse to be made happy! I am forced again to put to you the question, “How long will you cut yourself?” Find me, if you can, any place where the Lord requires this at your hand—that you should be dragged about by the devil—that you should be despairing, that you should be tempted to blaspheme, and all that. I know that some who have come to Christ have endured such misery, but I defy you to prove that it is any part of the gospel, and that we are to preach up such an experience as a necessary preface to believing in Christ. The case is far otherwise.

Hear me, I beseech you, and be not obstinately wedded to your wretchedness. You are a sinner; you cannot question that fact. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. If you trust Him—you are saved. This, in brief, is the glad tidings of salvation. This is the gospel way. Who has required at your hands that you should despond? That you should despair? That you should deny the promises of God? That you should put from you the invitation of mercy? That you should remain outside the gospel feast, and say, “I dare not enter, for I am not hungry enough, nor poor enough, nor ragged enough, nor filthy

enough”? Oh, that you were wise, and would cut yourself no more with these absurd objections to infinite grace! How can this cutting of yourself, this tearing of yourself with anguish, bring you any benefit? Do you think that God delights in it? Is He a God who delights in the misery of His creatures? Will it not be joy to Him that you should believe in His Son and find peace? He wills not the death of any, but that they should turn unto Him and live. “Oh,” said one to me, “I cannot think that the way can be so plain, for my grandfather was so miserable for years that they had to put him into a lunatic asylum before he found the Savior.” You smile, but the good woman who told me this was in terrible earnest. I cannot help quoting what she said, for it was the natural and outspoken form of an error which lurks in thousands of minds. I believe that many think they must be driven near to madness or they will not be able to come to Christ. But what benefit could this despair possibly be to you? If the gospel were, “Doubt and be saved,” I would bid you doubt. And if it were, “Despair and be saved,” I would preach despair to you with all my might, though it might go a little against the grain. But it is not so written. The Scripture is, “Believe; trust; confide; rely. Trust in Jesus—and you are saved.”

Despairing and desponding are not commanded in the gospel, but they are forbidden by it. Do not cultivate these gross follies, these deadly sins. Do not multiply these poisonous weeds—this hemlock and this rye grass—as if they were fair flowers of Paradise.

How long do you mean to continue in this wretched condition? Have you set yourself a certain point of anguish up to which you will go, and then you will trust Christ? The sooner you reach that point the better. But suppose that, in reaching that point, you should grow hardened in sin, and perish therein! Suppose that in striving to be tenderer, the very skin of your soul should turn hard and callous, so that you no longer feel anything! I have known that to occur. I have known persons attend places of worship many years, and always say, “I do not feel tender enough and penitent enough,” and all the time they have been growing invulnerable to the shafts of God’s Word, till they have perished in an unfeeling, indifferent, immovable condition. They have hugged a sort of self-righteousness of feeling, and would not give it up to believe in Christ, and that self-righteousness has been their destruction. Beware lest you lose all feeling because you idolize feeling. Beware lest your heart turn to an adamant stone because you prefer your own feelings to the sufferings of the Lord Jesus.

Why, my friends, if you are allowed to follow up this despairing policy much further, some of you will go out of your senses! Those who love to take up a reproach against the Lord Jesus frequently declare that religion has deprived many people of their reason. But the fact is that many lose their senses because they refuse true religion, and then take to sullenness, and morbid feeling. Why blame Jesus for the fact that men refuse Him, and so find no rest? I do fear that many have fought against believing in Christ till their uneasiness has weighed them down, and so they have lost their reason. They have been indulging their pride, and, not yielding themselves up to Jesus, has cost them dear. I am afraid that some of you, who now feel God’s hand heavy upon you, will come to utter hopelessness, unless you yield to the Lord Jesus very soon. Therefore, I pray you, make haste about it, and may the blessed Spirit lead you to obey the gospel, believe in Jesus, and enter into rest!

Besides all this, remember that you may die while you are, as you think, getting ready for the Savior. The Savior never told you to get ready for Him. Have we not preached to you continually that you are to come as you are? Alas! You will not come just as you are, but will try to mend and improve, and I have a dreadful fear upon me that you will die in the process of mending and improving. If it should be so, where will you be? Why, you will be guilty of having set up your mending and improving in the place of Christ and that is a serious insult to the great God and His dear Son! You will have taken more notice of your own efforts to save yourself than of Christ’s atoning death. Will not this seal your condemnation? Jesus will save you, if you will have Him, just as you are, whoever you may be. But if you reply, “Not just as I am; I must be somewhat better before I can trust Him,” then, if you perish while you are getting somewhat better, who shall be to blame? A sick man is dying, and the physician says, “Here is medicine that will restore you; will you take it?” The dying man answers, “Sir, I believe in your medicine, but I will not take it till I feel better.” If that man dies, who murders him? Shall the physician be blamed? Surely not. On his own head his death must lie. And recollect that it will be as certainly your ruin to refuse Christ because you want to be better, as it will be to refuse Him from any other reason. Any reason which leads you to reject the Lord Jesus is a bad one. One man refuses Christ because he hates Him, and

he blasphemes Him; another refuses Him because he thinks that he must be a little better; there may be a difference in the motive, but the result will amount to the same thing. Take heed, I pray you, lest through your pride in refusing to receive the gospel just now and just as you are, you should put it away from you till you get where there will be no gospel preaching, and no invitations to Christ, and you are cast away forever.

Now let me ask you this question; *what good have you got by all this up till now?* O you, good sir, who always mean to have Christ by and by, how much farther have you got after all your good intentions and painful waiting? You used to sit in that pew twelve, fifteen, twenty years ago, perhaps; and even then you had hopeful resolves. Are you any nearer Christ now than you were then? Say, does the preaching affect you any more than it did in those bygone days? “No,” you say, “not half so much.” This is a dangerous symptom; what does it mean? Has the preacher changed? I will take my share of the blame. I grow older, I know. Perhaps I get more stupid too, but still, when I sat yesterday to see the converts coming to join the church, I saw them till I had not physical power to see any more, for God had brought so many to come and tell me that I had led them to the Savior. Therefore I think that there cannot be much difference in my preaching. It must be *you* that are getting hard! I fear you are getting chilled into indifference, and I pray that the deadly process may go no further. Therefore I pray God that you may end this mischief, this death, this ruin to your soul, and may you be driven or drawn—whichever God pleases—to say at once, “I will immediately cast myself on Jesus. If I perish, I will perish clinging to His cross. If there is power in trusting Christ to give a man peace, liberty, salvation, holiness, then I will have it, and if there is not this power, I will at least know by personal trial that it is not so, and that free grace is not for me.”

Would to God that you, my dear hearers, would leave all things else, and just come and cast yourselves on Jesus! If you will not, I must again persecute each one of you with this inquiry, “How long will you cut yourself?” How long must you go on with your piteous prayers, and get no answer? Must you have more tears, more groans, more cries, more despairs, more regrets, more broken vows? How long will you cut yourselves with these vain attempts to be your own Savior? How long must you shut heaven’s door against yourself by a horrible resolve to disbelieve? How long will you be so diligent to pull down an avalanche of wrath upon your own head? How long will you refuse the bread of heaven, and determine to perish with famine, while all the plenty of God’s grace is round about you? How long? How long? God end it before you cross the portal of this house of prayer, and go down those stone steps, which will again conduct you to the level of a careless world! Stop here till you have yielded yourself to Jesus. I beseech you not to go home a stranger to eternal life. The Lord grant that you may now throw yourself into the arms of Jesus, for His dear name’s sake!

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 32:1-7; ROMANS 10:1-17

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—537, 536, 560, 538.

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