

THE CHARGE OF THE ANGEL

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A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JULY 8, 1888,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,
Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.”
Acts 5:19, 20.*

THE second persecution of the church, in which all the apostles were put into the common prison, was mainly brought about by the sect of the Sadducees. These, as you know, were the Broad School, the liberals, the advanced thinkers, the modern-thought people of the day. If you want a bitter sneer, a biting sarcasm, or a cruel action, I commend you to these large-minded gentlemen. They are liberal to everybody, except to those who hold the truth, and for those they have a reserve of concentrated bitterness which far excels wormwood and gall. They are so liberal to their brother errorists, that they have no tolerance to spare for evangelicals. We are expressly told that “the high priest, and all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), were filled with indignation.” That which had been done deserved their admiration, but received their indignation. Such gentlemen as these can be warm at a very short notice, when the doctrine of the cross is spreading, and God the Holy Spirit is bearing witness with signs following. Let them display their indignation; it is according to their nature.

To them the only answer which God gave was spoken by His angel: “Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.” Argument will be lost upon them; go on with your preaching. They have lost the faculty of believing; go and speak to the people. They are so given over to their doubts, that it is like rolling the stone of Sisyphus to persuade them to faith. They are so eaten up with objections that to attempt to answer all the questions they raise would be as vain as the labor of filling a bottomless tub. Go on with your preaching, you apostles, but address yourselves mainly to the people. Extend as widely as possible the range of the truth, and thus answer the opposition of its adversaries. It is better to evangelize than to controvert. The preaching of the word of life is the best antidote to the doctrine of death.

Clearly enough, if they had known it, and had been capable of seeing it, these blind Sadducees were answered at every point when the apostles were brought out of prison and bore witness to their Lord. Here was the creed of the Sadducees; they said that “there was no resurrection, neither angel, nor Spirit,” but these apostles stood up and witnessed to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. What did they make of that? An angel had come from heaven and had brought these apostles out of prison. Then there were angels. As these apostles were set free while the sentries remained standing before the doors, and those doors were afterwards found fastened, if there were no spirit, assuredly materialism had acted in a singular fashion. Every item of their negative creed had been made to fall like Dagon before the ark. The Lord always arranges Red Seas for Pharaohs. All that the apostles had to do was to go on with their preaching, and this they did, for “daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”

This morning may we be profited while we consider our text and its surroundings. May He who spoke by His angel now speak to our hearts by His Spirit.

I. In reviewing the whole story which we read just now, from the seventeenth verse to the end of the chapter, my first thought is that THE AGENTS EMPLOYED FOR SPREADING THE GOSPEL ARE MEN, AND NOT ANGELS. The angel of the Lord opened the prison door and set free the preachers, but might not be a preacher himself. He might give the ministers their charge, but he had no charge to preach himself. Surely the angel who brought them out of prison was quite able to have gone and proclaimed the gospel, and so he might have brought many out of their prison spiritually. But no, it must not be. His commission permits him to say to the apostles, “Go and speak to the people,” but it does not permit him to join in their testimony.

I think that almost with reluctance the angel of the Lord returned to his Master, and left the chosen men to go upon their blessed errand. As our Lord took not on Him the nature of angels for man's redemption, so neither does He employ the agency of angels for man's conversion. I feel glad that, in the preaching of the everlasting gospel, angels are not our competitors, at this present time at any rate. "Unto the angels has He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." They are ministering spirits, but they have not received the Holy Spirit anointing them to the ministry of Christ.

This divine choice of human instrumentality *puts honor upon manhood*. Those redeemed by the blood of Christ are men, and their redemption from sin by power is to be instrumentally accomplished by men. The great fight which began in the Garden of Eden is to be waged by men even to the end. The conquest of the revolted world is to be achieved by men under the leadership of the all-glorious Son of man. You see your calling, brethren. I pray you, everyone, to preach the gospel in your vocation, but especially would I plead for zeal with those whose very vocation it is to preach the gospel. What a vocation is ours! What can be more honorable? What more responsible? To rule empires is a trifle compared with speaking to the people all the words of this life. "Lord, what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him?" You make him higher than the angels in this respect, that out of his mouth You have ordained strength because of Your enemies. Such honor have all the saints, for they may all either teach or preach Jesus Christ.

My dear hearers, you may be yourselves grateful that this ministry is committed to men, because *it is a condescension to human weakness*. Imperfect as human ministers are, we are better preachers to you than angels could be. We cannot sing with their celestial melody, nor charm you with their seraphic eloquence, but we have a sympathy with you which they cannot feel, seeing they are not compassed with infirmities, nor humbled by imperfections. We know your sins, your sorrows, your struggles. We know the roughness of the road you travel, for we, too, came in at the wicket-gate, and have floundered in the Slough of Despond, and scrambled up the Hill Difficulty. We can have compassion, and give direction learned by experience. I suppose an angel would command a very large congregation for a time, but, after a while, you would feel that there was something alien and distant about the manner of his teaching. You would be awed rather than comforted. A being altogether superior to yourselves would before long drive you to cry for your old minister again, with lips of clay and heart of love. You would prefer our feeble pleadings to the more glorious, but less brotherly, address of an angel from heaven.

God's use of the ministry of men is honorable to men, and it is condescending to men, and surely it *is a blow at Satanic pride*. The Prince of the power of the air might have felt proud to contend with angels, finding in them foemen worthy of his steel, but when the Arch-enemy sees before him no combatant but a man sent of God, he feels like Goliath when he saw David, a youth and ruddy, approaching him with a sling and a stone. Disdaining such an adversary, I hear him cry, "Am I a dog, that You come to me with staves?" Yes, Satan, you are no better than a dog, and we come against you in the name of Jehovah of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. By humble, truth-speaking, earnest men the Lord turns the battle, and routs the forces of error, that the old Serpent may still feel the foot of the seed of the woman upon his head. He thought he had made an easy prey of man, but it shall be by man that the enemy shall be driven back to his infernal den with defeat. By man came death, and by man came also the resurrection of the dead, which glorious fact is proclaimed by man, to the eternal shame of him that has the power of death, that is, the devil.

To work by men *must bring special glory to God*. The weaker the instrument, the more honor to the worker. I like to think, whatever I may feel driven to believe from Scripture, that the great fight between good and evil will be so fought out that the Lord shall conquer by feeble men even to the end. The omnipotence of God will be glorified in the insignificance of the agents by whom He will achieve the everlasting triumph. Those first apostles brought all the more glory to God because they came from the fishers' nets, and were called "unlearned and ignorant men." The weakness which men despised compelled them to confess that the power which they wielded was divine. The Spirit of God who spoke by them found in them no fancied wisdom to obstruct His impulses. If the Lord will graciously use us poor ministers to the end, it will wonderfully illustrate His wisdom and power. Somebody once said that it proved the divinity of our holy religion that it survived ministers, and there was a good deal of truth in the remark. How I have wondered that this congregation has survived me! And I think we may wonder that as a whole the gospel survives its advocates. We are poor tools. I do not refer to you, brethren, from Amer-

ica, but I mean all of us in England, and specially myself. We are poor tools after all, and if God uses us to save sinners and sanctify saints, He must certainly have all the glory of it. Brethren, the Lord has used us, blessed be His name! He has used us; we should give the lie to manifest facts if we were to deny it. Brethren, the Lord means to use us. He has said, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

I cannot help adding that the employment of men as soul-winners *gives a tender joy to the heart of Jesus*. It pleases the Lord Jesus Christ that God should use men, for He Himself is a man. God, as He is, blessed forever, yet is He most truly man, delighting in humanity, and pleased to see men called to a work of so much glory and honor. He loves to bless men and to see them made a blessing. He delights to see the many brethren used in their measure in the same way as Himself, the First-born. The Lord Jesus must take great pleasure in the attempts of His servants to seek and to save souls, for they are learning to be shepherds like Himself. When our King, Edward III, heard that the Black Prince was having a hard battle with the French, he smiled to think that his son was in a place where he could show his valor. When he was entreated to send reinforcements, he refused, for he wished his son to have the undivided honors of the day. The Lord Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, puts some of His chosen into places of great peril, and He does not seem to send them all the help they could desire, in order that they may prove their faith and consecration, and thus earn their spurs. He takes a brotherly pleasure in the courage and faith which He Himself has worked in them. All the valor of Christ’s soldiers is given them by Himself, and all that it achieves is to be attributed to Him, yet He finds joy in seeing them exercise their graces. Like a father delights to see his boy take prize after prize at the University, like a friend delights to see his friend elected to one honorable position after another, so does Jesus rejoice in the honors earned by His servants in the field of service. When we save a soul from death, Jesus, the Savior, rejoices in the deed. When we thus cover a multitude of sins, Jesus, the sin-bearer, sees of the travail of His soul. The father in the parable was glad when his prodigal son was found, but he would have been gladder still had a brother found him. Our Lord Jesus desires to make us happy with that which makes Himself happy, and so He sends us out to win souls.

All these are good reasons why the Lord should employ men and women to spread the gospel rather than cherubim and seraphim. Dear friends, do you not think that the angels must often wonder at us? When they see men eager upon politics and negligent of souls, are they not astonished? Do they never say, “We wish the great Lord would let us go and speak to perishing souls. We would speak with all our hearts”? Do they not sometimes say to one another, “What are these men doing? Do they disdain their high calling? God has given to them the great privilege of preaching and teaching His holy word, but they do not care to do it. They speak as if they were half asleep. Where is their zeal for God, their love to men, their earnestness for Christ”? Brethren, these holy spirits must feel ashamed of us! True, they are our servants, and bear us up in their hands, lest we dash our feet against a stone, but must they not sometimes wish that we were stronger on our feet, and were more eager to dash our hands against the enemies of God? We are carried as invalids, when we ought to be fighting like champions. I charge you by the angels of God, who are not permitted to touch this holy work, preach the word, be instant in season, out of season. Preach with a vigor worthy of the divine exercise. Preach the word in some such style as you would expect from those who are bought with the precious blood of Jesus.

So have I spoken to you who are men. As for you, O angel of God, you have opened the prison doors and set free the men of God, but you must now go back to Him that sent you. Bright Spirit, I dare not offer you my pulpit. Feeble as I am, I must do the preaching. Oh, that your Lord and mine may help me, and enable me to make full proof of my ministry! Farewell, angel of God, go your way!

II. Secondly, THESE MEN ARE TO TEACH THE PEOPLE. All the words of this life they are to speak.

The manner of their teaching is hinted at—they are to do it promptly, yes, immediately. “Go,” says the angel, “go. Do not linger here. Go at once.” They did go, so that they were in the temple courts early in the morning. The first beams of the sun that were reflected from the golden roof met their eyes. The first worshippers in those hallowed courts heard the apostles testifying of Jesus and His love. O dear servants of God, let us run with the glad tidings. “The King’s business requires haste.” The first moment we can get man or woman to listen to us, let us speak the living word which we have learned at the feet of Jesus.

They were to make this their primary business. “Go,” said the angel, “before anything else, this is your chief employ.” I should have been tempted to linger a little just to find out how the angel released the prisoners. He had opened the doors, so we are told, but yet they were found closed and fastened when the officers came, and the sentries had not left their posts. Here is a mystery; I should like to clear it up. Are there not many such mysteries? But the command is pressing and peremptory, “Go, speak to the people.” “Let me tarry; one does not see angels every day. Let me stay and take in a more complete idea of the heavenly stranger. Indulge me with a little conversation with one who has seen my Lord. There are a great many questions which I would gladly have answered.” Dear fellow-worker, we perhaps are tempted to study very deeply into mysterious points which do not minister to profit; let us, then, hear the angel say, “Go, speak to the people.” Let us keep our thoughts to that gospel which we are sent to preach. “The words of this life” will furnish ample scope for all our powers; let us not wander into endless debates which are rather for curiosity than salvation, and tend rather to gratify our taste than to accomplish our life-purpose. The first and chief business of the man of God is, “Go, stand and speak to the people.” However simple the speaking, it may be rather talk than oratory; this is our one great business here below.

It is clear from the text that they were to take a conspicuous place and speak boldly, “Go, stand in the temple.” Go where the Sanhedrim holds its sittings, where the high priest and his Sadducean comrades are on the watch. Let not the danger hinder you. Go where all can see you; stand up and stand out. Wherever the people are, there let your voices be heard. Be there perseveringly, taking your stand, and keeping it till removed by force. The object was to make the gospel known, therefore, let them go to headquarters, let them stand in the chief place of concourse, let them be in the resort of the devout, let them challenge the observation of pilgrims from every corner of the land. Brethren, it is not ours to hide in holes and in corners, our gospel is like the sun, whose line has gone out through all the earth. Let us not speak timidly, for we have not received the spirit of fear, neither will we hide our candle under a bushel. We are to publish the tidings of that life from the dead which has brought life for the dead.

The persons for whom this preaching is designed are mentioned, “Speak into the people.” “Unto the people,” that does not mean the poor to the exclusion of the rich, or the many to the exclusion of the few. The expression is most comprehensive, and embraces both the masses and the classes. If the men of the council would hear them, let them speak to them. They did so, alas! With small result. This is a truly gospel word of command, for the gospel is glad tidings to all people, and it is to be preached to every creature under heaven. A restricted audience is not an evangelistic idea. Go and speak unto the people, then, to all sorts of people, to everybody. Let not a soul escape if you can help it, for your mission is to all mankind. O, gospel fisherman, spread the great seine net, which will encompass a great multitude of fishes, and with diligence draw it to shore.

If we take the word “people” in its popular sense, it has a lesson to all who teach the word. Some aim at the intellectual; let us speak to the people all the words of this life. A minister whose congregation numbers about forty all told rejoiced in the smallness of it, because he professed that a greater work could be done with a few than with a large number. In answer, a friend suggested that he should infer from that statement that a greater work could be done with no people at all. This reduced the hypothesis to an absurdity. “I am sure,” said one, “that the better a man preaches the smaller his congregation will become.” This shows what a large number of very excellent preachers we have in London. But our business is to reach the people somehow. To obey the text, we must “Go and speak to the people.” They need it; are they not perishing for lack of knowledge? The gospel is adapted to their needs and capacities—it is simple, suitable, seasonable, saving. The people will receive it. If the poor have the gospel preached to them, they will hear it. God inclines the hearts of the multitude to hearken. We read of Jesus, that “all the people were very attentive to hear Him.” Moreover, the people retain the truth when they receive it. Note this fact in history; the Reformation in Spain was among the nobility, and it was the same in Italy, and the work soon subsided. In England the common people received the truth from Wycliffe, and it never died out. If you wanted to burn a haystack, you would set it alight at the bottom, and if you want a whole nation to feel the power of the gospel, it must first be received by laborers and artisans. The martyrs of England were largely taken from weavers and such like. The people love the man “chosen out of the people.” The Bible is their charter, the gospel is their estate, and when they know it, they will retain it with heroic constancy. What is more, they will spread it. Christ’s first preachers were

of the people and in the streets of London today, and in the Sunday schools of England today, you will find that the people are to the front in holy work. We are glad to see the noble, the great, the rich, the cultured dedicated to our Lord, but, after all, our chief hope lies among the people.

The angel even mentioned *the place to which they were to go*, “Go, stand in the temple.” It was the most public place in all Jerusalem, therefore, “Go, stand in the temple” rather than in a private house. It was the likeliest place to find attentive hearers; the noise of the sheep market and the bazaar would be absent. Those who came early would probably be among the most devout. “Go, stand in the temple.” But when they were bidden to stand in the temple it meant that they were to stand in any place and every place where an audience could be gathered. So they understood it according to the last verse of the chapter, “Daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.” Fellow workers, our business is to speak to the people concerning eternal life, and we must see that we do it. If in this great house so many will gather that the utmost capacity of my voice is used up, this is the place for me to preach in, but if the people will not come here, I must go after them. We must take public halls and assembly rooms; we must even hire theatres and music halls, or stand in the streets, for we must speak to the people. As men enlightened from on high we must carry the light to the eyes of men. We must carry bread to the hungry, and healing to the diseased. If not by one style of speaking, yet by another, we must so speak as to be heard; it is of no use to go on droning to empty pews, or holding forth to bare walls. We *must* get at the people. This is what the angel bids us do. “Go,” said he, “speak to the people all the words of this life.”

III. Thirdly, THIS MESSAGE IS DESCRIBED: “Speak to the people all the words of this life.” Our teaching, if we are true to Christ, will be not only a doctrine, but a life. The high priest conceived that they preached doctrine, for he said, “Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine.” Yet it may as truly be called life as truth. The Christian religion is like Christ—way, truth, and life. We have to preach “words of life,” truth which brings life, feeds life, and perfects life. We are to preach all the great truths which concern eternal life.

What are the “words of this life”? If I had to give a short list of them, I should say, the first word of this life is “*Jesus Christ*,” for in the forty-second verse we read, “They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ”; Jesus has the words of eternal life. We preach His Deity, His manhood, His offices, His sacrificial death, His resurrection, and everything about Him. We preach Christ crucified, and if we did not, we should not speak the words of life.

The next word to use would be “*atonement*.” There is no preaching “the words of this life” except we preach the sacrificial death of the Son of God. The apostles boldly spoke of our Lord’s death, for they said to the council, “Whom you slew and hanged on a tree.” They had mentioned the precious blood, for the high priest said, “You intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” Leave out the satisfaction made by Christ for sin, leave out the doctrine of a real and effective substitution, and you have left out of the gospel “the blood which is the life thereof.” “The words of this life” are not preached to the people where the cross is put in the background.

The next word, to my mind, would be “*resurrection*.” This they preached very fully, saying, “Him has God raised from the dead.” The resurrection of Christ secured the justification of believers, and also guaranteed their resurrection from the dead by virtue of their union with Him. If the resurrection were more fully preached at this time, I am confident that it would be a powerful means of conversion.

Nor could the apostles forget “*regeneration*.” They would echo their Lord’s words, “You must be born again.” This new birth is possible to you, for “He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.” Leave out the doctrine of the new birth, and you have left out one of the cardinal “words of this life.”

Then comes “*faith*.” What a word is this! “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” “By grace you are saved through faith.” He who does not preach justification by faith has not begun to preach “the words of this life.” He that believes in Christ has everlasting life, but without faith all is death.

The sixth out of seven words is “*indwelling*.” The Holy Spirit comes into the heart, and abides there, working sanctification within, and producing holiness without. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,” and if holiness is not preached as the effect of the indwelling Spirit of God, “all the words of this life” are not spoken to the people.

Then comes the doctrine of *the eternal life*; that the life given by the Holy Spirit never dies. “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” This eternal life is seen here in the perseverance of the saints; it is seen hereafter in their immortality and endless glory. To leave out this would be to leave out the grandest of “the words of this life.”

If you desire another outline of the gospel, I would refer you to Peter’s little address to the council. Read at the twenty-ninth verse. Here is *the principle of this life*: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” He, who gets this life into him, will be under law to God, and when that law goes counter to the authority of man, man’s law will go to the wall. God is supreme to the man who has this life; he lives as an obedient child of God.

The next great truth mentioned by Peter is *the cause of this life*. He declared the death of Christ—“Whom you slew and hanged on a tree,” that followed by His resurrection—“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus,” that followed by His ascension to glory—“Him has God exalted with His right hand.” These are historical facts which contain vital doctrines. We must keep on hammering away at this; Jesus died, rose again, and rose to heaven to make intercession for us, because of all this there is life for the sons of men. There is no teaching “all the words of this life” unless these three great facts flame out like the stars of heaven, and are made to be essential to our eternal life.

Then comes *the manner by which we receive this life*, namely, as a free gift. Jesus is exalted “to give repentance.” The gift of God is eternal life. Salvation is by free grace and free grace alone. “This life” is never an evolution. Spiritual life does not lie dormant within the dead heart of man; it is an importation from heaven, an implantation by the Spirit. We are quickened by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit.

Here we have *the beginning of this life*, namely, repentance, a sense of sin, a turning from it, an abhorrence of it; this is the gift of Jesus, and the beginning of the new life.

Then you have *the privilege of this life*—“forgiveness of sin.” He that lives in Christ is set free from the guilt of sin by the righteousness of Christ.

Then comes *the evidence of this life*—“whereof we are witnesses.” We speak to you of a life which we have felt. We do not talk to you about an imaginary thing; we speak about a fact which we have observed, no, a fact which we have felt. A far greater witness is the Holy Spirit, who, as He converts and sanctifies men, bears the best possible testimony to the truth and life of the gospel.

The fruit of this life must also be preached—“whom God has given to them that obey Him.” There is no life in Christ apart from obedience to Christ. Obedience is the sure result of our being made to live by the Spirit of God, nor must this ever be forgotten.

Thus have I very roughly told you what you are to preach.

IV. But now, fourthly, THE WHOLE OF THE DIVINE MESSAGE MUST BE DELIVERED. “Stand in the temple, and speak unto the people *all* the words of this life.” Dear brethren, it is forbidden us to omit any part of the gospel. I am very glad it is, for if we were permitted, we should sometimes shirk the unpopular parts of it. Yet surely it would be very *dangerous* to omit any part of the gospel, would it not? It would be like a physician giving a prescription to a dispenser, and the dispenser omitting one of the ingredients. He might kill the patient by the omission. The worst results follow the keeping back of any doctrine; we may not see those results, but they will follow. Possibly only the next generation will fully display the mischief done by a truth concealed or denied. It would be a dangerous experiment for any one of us to make.

And would it not be *presumptuous* to leave out a word? If we might take away from the testimony, who among us is wise enough to know what to omit?

It is a thousand mercies that we are not left to pick and choose, for this would involve us in responsibilities far too weighty to be borne. It is too *responsible* a business for us to enter upon.

Would not the liberty be *injurious to us*? Would it not encourage pride? Should we not think ourselves somebody if we were allowed to make a selection of the best parts of the sacred message? Surely, he that judges is greater than that which is judged. We should soon imagine ourselves to be far more nearly infallible than the Holy Scriptures.

Would not this greatly *dishonor God*? Would it not suggest that God’s gospel is full of superfluities and excrescences, and needs our wisdom to make it perfect? Should we not conclude that the Lord was not as wise as ourselves if He needed our assistance to adapt His gospel to the occasion?

Do you not think it would open a very *easy way for another gospel*? If we might omit, we might also add, and I feel sure we should very soon add a great deal which would neutralize and paralyze that of the gospel which remained. If we felt at liberty to leave out something, we should naturally omit that which is offensive, and away would go the tooth and edge of the gospel. That which is offensive in the gospel is just that which is effective. What men oppose is what God uses. If the offense of the cross had ceased, the power of the cross would have ceased also. It is not left to us to cut and carve the doctrine of Christ; we are to preach “all the words of this life.”

Have we done so? That is the question. Have we knowingly concealed anything? “Well,” says one, “I have not preached *all* the words of this life *to the people*, but I have preached them to a choice company.” But you are told to preach them *all to the people*. The doctrine of reserve must not be tolerated among Protestants. We must not make that philosophical division which is expressed in those two ugly words *esoteric* and *exoteric*. This is abolished by the command to preach to the people “*all* the words of this life.” We shall get into no end of mischief and dishonesty if we incline to this practice of the Jesuits. We want an open Bible for every eye, and a plain ministry for every ear. We are to preach “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth” in fair proportions, and to preach this to the people openly.

At the present moment there is a great tendency to be obscure upon the true and proper Deity of Christ. I enjoyed the commencement of the prayer just offered by our dear friend, Dr. John Hall. I enjoyed the whole of it, but I was greatly touched by his lowly adoration of our Divine Lord. The Broad men will say that Jesus is divine, but they do not mean that He is God; they speak of His divinity, but they reject His Godhead. This is juggling with words. I hate deceptive phrases. We believe in the Godhead of Jesus, and worship Him as God. Christ Jesus is either God or an impostor; there is no halting place between the two. He said that He was God, He permitted His disciples to think that He was God, He has left words in Scripture which have made millions believe Him to be God, and he could not have been a good man if, as a mere man, He had produced such an impression and had taken no pains to remove it.

There is also a sad tendency to becloud the truth of man’s fall and depravity, but if you do not preach man’s ruin, you cannot preach “all the words of this life.” You must be clear about his spiritual death, or you will never be right about his quickening into spiritual life. Unless you preach the terrible doom of the wicked, you will never see the greatness of the salvation which comes to us by our Lord Jesus, who has “the words of eternal life.”

The work of the Holy Spirit is left too much in the rear by many preachers. Have we not heard of late that certain children do not need to be converted, that the divine life is in them at their birth? Have they not preached education rather than regeneration, evolution rather than conversion? This is not speaking “all the words of this life.” It is telling “old wives’ fables.”

Brethren, have we not also a few about us who will not bear “all the words”? If you preach holiness as the fruits of the new life, they say you are legal. Verily, the results of this life are among the most important of the words which must be spoken to the people. Grace which does not make us hate sin is false grace. We must preach repentance from dead works, and faith which works by love and the people must be told that Christ has not come to save men *in* their sin but *from* their sin. On this we will be clear as the sun at noon.

If there is any other point of truth which is kept back, let us bring it the more forward. Let us insist doubly upon that which others neglect. It needs that the whole gospel be brought before the people, that they may know it, and feel its power. It will involve you in strife and struggle if you resolve on delivering an all-round gospel, but fear not, the Lord will help you, even He who says to you by His angel, “Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.”

I have done when I have asked what we are doing about this. We who are God’s people, what are we doing in this matter? Some of us are preaching, are we preaching the whole gospel? Has any doctrine been withheld? Let us bring forth things new and old, and keep back nothing. Let us put every stone into the arch, lest our building come to nothing. Have we also preached these truths as words of life? Have we felt the life in them? Have we expected life to come by them? Our preaching will be very much what we believe it will be, and if we do not believe that God is going to bless it, He is not likely to bless it. If we do not expect to see life created by the living word, we shall preach dead sermons to dead ears.

Have we preached as witnesses? Complaint is made sometimes of a preacher that he says too much about his own experience. I do not believe that he can do so, for our experience is our witness-bearing. You can be egotistical, and say that which is to your own credit, and this is censurable, but you can also be happily egotistical, and say that which is to God's glory, and that is commendable. You may lawfully say, "This is true. I have proved it!" This is one great reason why God uses men instead of angels to speak the gospel, because men can support their message by their experience, and angels cannot.

But, beloved friends, are there not some of you who never tell anybody "the words of this life"? In such a congregation ought it to be possible to put your finger upon a single regenerated man or woman who has never for a whole lifetime spoken to another about the things of God? Are such persons regenerated? I will not come round and mark you, but, alas! Some of you have never even confessed your faith in Christ. If you have not obeyed that important command for yourselves, you are not likely to have done much for the souls of others. But having joined the church of God, are any of you satisfied to be silent? Are you content to let those around you sink to hell? What! Never tell of Christ's love? What! Never speak of salvation to your own children and servants? Can this be right? In God's name, wake up! What are you left on this earth for? If there is nothing for you to do, why are you in this sinful world? You ought to be hurried off to heaven, where you might praise God. No, no, I am afraid I am mistaken. You could not praise God in heaven; you have not learned the way. You could not join in the song of the redeemed, for you have never had a rehearsal. Begin, begin, begin at once to praise Jesus in the ears of someone. Tell of Jesus and His love to sinners on earth, or how will you be able to make it known to angels, and principalities, and powers?

Could not some of you do more than you are doing? Are there not young men who might preach in a street corner or at a cottage meeting? Some of our evangelistic societies flag for want of preachers. It ought not to be the case. What are you doing? If you could not preach to men and women, could you not teach the children? Very many Sunday schools in this region are straitened dreadfully for want of teachers. I could tell you of Ragged schools on Sunday evenings where multitudes of children are turned away because there are no teachers. What are you doing? You confess that you are not your own, but bought with a price by the Lord Jesus; why, then, do you not serve Him? I have succeeded to a large degree in routing some of you out; I miss you on Sunday evenings, and a good miss too, since I know where you are, and that you are out serving God. You take your meal in the morning, and then you feed others in the after part of the day. The Lord bless you in it. You were not created to sit in these pews, and listen to me; there is something better for a mortal man to do than to be a hearer only.

I charge every Christian man and woman here to listen to what I am about to say. Though I am no angel, I repeat in the name of the Lord Jesus the command of the heavenly messenger, "Go, stand out boldly, and speak unto the people all the words of this life," and may God bless you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ACTS 5:12-42.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—916, 486, 483.

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