

## **BIT AND BRIDLE: HOW TO ESCAPE THEM**

### **NO. 2190**

**A SERMON  
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*“I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with Mine eye.  
Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding:  
whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near to you.”  
Psalm 32:8, 9.*

THE joy of full forgiveness is described in the first two verses of this psalm: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” Oh, the blessedness of sitting at Jesus’ feet, a sinner washed in His blood! Outside of heaven there is no greater joy, and even there they sing of blood-washed robes.

After a man is pardoned, anxiety is awakened as to how he shall be kept from sin in the future. The burnt child dreads the fire, and although his burns have all been healed, he dreads the fire none the less, but all the more. These who have been scorched by sin tremble at even a distant approach to the flame. You will always know whether you are delivered from the guilt of sin by answering this question—Am I delivered from the love of sin? He who lost his way yesterday feels his need of a guide for today and tomorrow. How can the pardoned one endure the thought of again sinning against the Lord? David’s great anxiety on this score is met by the gracious answer of the Lord, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go.”

Another thing is noteworthy; David was now rid of guile as well as guilt. Orientals pride themselves on their cunning, and David, by nature, had a considerable share of craft about him, but he now drives it from his spirit; he will not henceforth tolerate himself in deceit. When he had thrown away this false wisdom, this carnal prudence, he felt that he must look elsewhere for guidance. If he is no longer to plot and plan with the cunning which he had shown in the matter of Uriah, he will need other direction, and he looks up for it. See how our gracious God comes in with the promise of guidance. “The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way.” “The Lord preserves the simple.” The upright, who can no longer trust their own deceitful hearts, shall find the Lord an all-sufficient guide. Happy is it for them that He has spoken such a word as this, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go.”

One other observation. We find David, in this psalm, reaching to a high state of joy, on account of his being forgiven. He exclaims, in the seventh verse, “You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance.” A very proper state of mind to be in. It is meet that the pardoned sinner should leap for joy. But, at the same time, the wisdom of God comes in, not to check the joy, but to render it more deep, more sure, and to prevent its coming to an untimely end. David is in ecstasies of delight, but he is to be reminded that he is not yet in heaven, and that he is compassed about with other things besides songs. The voice of God commends his joy, but also reminds him that there lies before him a future full of perils, and a life strewn with temptations. He is henceforth to be a disciple as well as a singer; he needs to be instructed and taught in the way, for he is a pilgrim still and not yet at his journey’s end. Sound the timbrel, if you will, and shout for joy and sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously, but remember that on the other side of the Red Sea there is a wilderness, and you will require much grace to traverse it—such grace as only the Shepherd of Israel can give you. You will be wise to address yourselves

to your journey, and resolve to follow Him whose eye discerns the way, and whose hand can help you in it. A pilgrim's life is not all feasting. He has something else to do besides praising God upon the high-sounding cymbals. We must sit at Jesus' feet, as well as look to His cross. We are to bear His yoke and learn of Him, that we may find rest for our souls.

This may stand as an introduction, for now I want to conduct you further into this grave business of the saved man. You are pardoned, my friend, you know you are, and you feel the joy of that knowledge. God grant that your joy may abound yet more and more! Sitting in your seat this morning, you are saying, "Oh, the heaped-up blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered!" Yes, but you are not in heaven yet, something more is needed, not to secure the love of God, not to complete the work of sovereign grace, but to educate you for the skies, to make you meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. About that matter we are going to talk as the Holy Spirit shall enable us.

That I may set before you, to the full, the teaching of the text, I would have you note, first, *a privilege to be sought*—divine instruction, practical teaching, and tender guidance. Secondly, *a character to be avoided*—"Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding." This will bring us to consider, thirdly, *an infliction to be escaped*—"Whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." If you do not wish to be bitted and bridled, be readily obedient to the direction of your Lord. We will come to a close by reflecting that there is *a freedom to be attained*. You may be free from bit and bridle, and guided by the eye of God; you may find your way to heaven without the need of those rough chastisements which compel obedience. Oh, for the help of the great Teacher in this matter!

**I.** First, here is A PRIVILEGE TO BE SOUGHT. I will proceed at once to set it forth from the words before us.

This guidance is *very full in its nature*. Three words are used to describe it, "I will instruct you, and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with Mine eye."

The first word is, "I will instruct you"—a promise more full of meaning than would appear upon its surface. God is prepared to give you an inward understanding of spiritual things, for His instruction is intensely effectual upon the mind. The Lord is prepared to teach you in His truth, to make you wise in heavenly matters. Though saved, you are as yet a mere child, and unfamiliar with great truths. You know but little of divine things; you know little of yourself, little of your danger, little of holiness, and little of God, but the Lord here promises to take you for His pupil, and to be Himself your instructor. He instructs so effectually as really to build up the mind, hence the psalmist says, "Through Your precepts I get understanding." Other instructors can awaken that measure of understanding which is already ours, but God gives understanding to the simple. A good understanding is one of the gifts of His grace, and blessed are they who receive it.

The second word is, "I will teach you," and this teaching is most practical, for the promise is—"I will teach you in the way which you shall go." God adds the precept to the doctrine, and instructs us in both. Eminently precious is that practical teaching by which you are made to know what to do, and how to do it. Theoretical teaching is of small importance compared with this practical learning. The Lord will teach us the art and mystery of holiness. He will apprentice us to the Lord Jesus as the master of righteousness; He will make us journeymen one of these days, and turn us into full-blown "workmen that need not to be ashamed." Our great Teacher sends forth fine workmen, whose good works are seen of men, and cause them to glorify the Father in heaven.

The promise of the Lord, in the third word of the verse, goes even further than doctrinal and practical instruction, for we read, "I will guide you with Mine eye." Herein is fellowship as well as instruction, for the guide goes with the traveler, and thus will God, in the process of our instruction, give us fellowship with Himself. Blessed are they who follow the Lamb wherever He goes; they have both the privilege of holy walk and heavenly company. It is our high privilege that, while our Shepherd goes before us, He calls us by name, and we follow closely in His footsteps, as His well-beloved sheep. We are not only to be told the way, and led into the way, but to be accompanied in it by our teacher and friend. The education which the Lord provides is complete in all its branches. Mind, and life, and heart are all under the divine tuition. This is no pauper school, or merely preparatory seminary; the text describes a high

school of holiness, a grammar school of grace, a University of holiness. In this place of sacred instruction, you may take high degrees if you will, and become teachers of others also. He who forgave you provides everything for you that you can need to make you a disciple indeed, a learner who in the ages to come shall make known to angels and principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God. Who would not be a scholar in such a University as this?

Note, next, that *this teaching is divine in its source*. See how it runs; “I will instruct you.” How delightful! “I will instruct you: I will guide you with Mine eye.” The Lord will not put us in a low class, where some half-instructed usher or pupil-teacher shall look after us. No, we shall all of us be taught by the Lord Jesus Himself, and His Holy Spirit. It is written, “I will instruct you: I will guide you.” Our Lord may instruct us by men who are taught of Himself, but, after all, the best of His servants cannot teach us anything profitably except the Lord Himself teaches by them and through them. He alone teaches us to profit. What a wonderful condescension it is that the Lord should become a teacher! Sunday school teachers, adore the head of your sacred college, even God Himself! “I will teach you, I will instruct you.” They are well taught that are taught of God, and this privilege is common to all the family of love, for the Scripture says, “All your children shall be taught of the Lord.” It is not said that a portion of them shall be left to be trained by angels or archangels, but they shall all be taught of the Lord. Jehovah Himself will be the instructor of every soul that comes to Him through Jesus Christ.

Observe *how wonderfully personal is this promised guidance*. While the address in the ninth verse is in the plural, “Be *you* not as the horse, or as the mule,” the promise is in the singular to each individual, “I will instruct *you* and teach *you* in the way which *you* shall go; I will guide *you* with Mine eye.” Wonder of wonders, the Infinite focuses Himself upon the insignificant! We, who are less than the motes in the sunbeam, are nevertheless considered individually by Him who fills all in all, who is greater than all that He fills. “I will instruct *you*.” Yes, Jehovah will condescend to instruct that believer who is feeblest of all the company. Rejoice, my brother that though your understanding is a commonplace one, and though your position is very obscure, yet the Lord does not say, “I will send you to a preparatory school kept by some inferior teacher”; but He does say, “I will instruct you.” God instructs each believer as truly as if He were His only child. It is delightful to reflect that while Christ’s death has a sufficient efficacy in it to save a believing world, yet if His design had been to save only me, He must have offered the same sacrifice as He has done. His death would have been needful to prove that “He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” So, while our Lord’s teaching would suffice to instruct myriads of men who are willing to learn, yet does He condescend to bring all His teaching to bear upon each single person, “I will instruct *you*, and teach *you* in the way which *you* shall go.” I note with comfort, in the text, what the French call *tu-toi-age*. Speaking to one another very familiarly, they say “you” and “you.” How sweetly is this seen in this passage, “I will instruct *you*, and teach *you* in the way which *you* shall go. I will guide *you* with Mine eye”! Hear you not the great Father talking to His dear child? Yes, I hear Him speaking to you and to me! Blessed be His name for such familiar love! Let us profit by its promise even to the full.

Furthermore, *this teaching is delightfully tender*, “I will guide you with Mine eye,” that is to say, if you are willing to be so directed, the Lord will guide you, not by the rough means of bit and bridle, muzzle and cord, but with His eye—a way which implies understanding on your part, and love on His part. It is a recognition of confidence in us when He promises thus to guide us. The mistress at the head of the table gives a nod to Sarah, she knows what it means, and the will of the lady is done at once. The master has not to enter into details with old John, who has been with him for so many years, he knows his wishes, and a wink or a look will speak volumes. Well-trained children of God have their faces toward Him, and soon perceive His mind, and this secures their prompt obedience. They see much in little, and they make great account of every word of the Lord. When we are what we ought to be, the guidance of the Lord is not sent us in thunder, but in a still small voice, and His instruction comes, not in tempests and hailstones, but in sunbeams and dewdrops. Some saints can be effectually led with a thread of hair. Cords of love and bands of a man are at once the tenderest and the strongest bonds for a sanctified soul. “I will guide you with Mine eye” is a charming promise, but it is of no use to the blind, the stubborn, the careless, or the self-willed. What a pity that any should debar themselves from so choice a privilege!

See, dear friends, you that have been lately pardoned, and you, of older years, who have long been forgiven, see what guidance there is for you all the way from your starting point to the gate of pearl at the end of the road! I say this because I mean to wind up this point with the remark—*This teaching is constant*. “I will instruct you and teach you; I will guide you.” He that has begun to guide will not suddenly desert; He that has commenced to teach you will never dismiss you from His class; He that has in a measure instructed you, and given you an understanding, will continue to teach you until He has perfected you in the knowledge of Himself, and conformed you to the image of His Son. I feel most happy to think that such a privilege is promised and provided. I have heard of some, who dream that, once forgiven, they may live as they wish, but to such I would say, “You know nothing about the matter; you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity.” The man, who believes in Jesus for salvation, believes in Him so as to be set free from his sins, and his great anxiety is to be saved from all iniquity, and to be led in the ways of righteousness to the glory of God. Here is comfort for you that are really seeking a holy life; God has made provision for your being led in it. He who has made you His child, will put you in school, and teach you until you shall know the Lord Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life. Soon shall you know your Father’s name and character, and sing unto His praise among the bright intelligences that surround His throne.

**II.** I now ask your attention while I show you A CHARACTER TO BE AVOIDED. We are told that since the Lord is ready to instruct us, we are not to be stubborn and wayward. It is ours to be docile and obedient. “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.”

We are not to imitate *creatures of which we are the superiors*. Man is made to have dominion over the horse and the mule, and the whole animal creation; let him not seek his models among his servants. I have sometimes heard speeches which have looked in that unwise direction. One said, in my hearing, as an excuse for a passionate speech, “I could not help it. If you tread on a worm it will turn.” Is a worm to be the example for a saint? By a worm in that case, I suppose, is meant a serpent, and are you to follow serpents in their malice and venom? I have heard the same thing turned the other way, and it has been made to appear as if an animal might be all the worse for copying a man. The driver of an omnibus was using his whip pretty freely upon one of his horses, and a gentleman sitting on the box-seat observed, “You never strike the horse on this side.” “Bless you!” said the driver, “if I were to touch that mare, when I went near her in the stable at night, she would kick me like a Christian.” What a remarkable simile, was it not? Like a Christian! Is that so, that Christians kick? That Christians are found taking revenge? Here is a matter about which we would urgently cry, “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule.” Never render evil for evil, railing for railing, for that is to copy the beasts of the field. Let us look upward to the highest for our model, and never go down to the beasts of the field for models.

We must mind that we do not imitate *creatures to whom we are so near akin*. The mule has a touch of the ass in it, and I fear it is not the only creature of which this may be said. Is not man, as unredeemed, likened to the ass in the types of the Mosaic Law? Ah, brethren! We are likened in Scripture to many strange beasts, and not without reason. St. Augustine and other ancient writers discuss, at length, the likeness which exists between men and mules. I am not going to follow them in their observations, but would simply say with Dr. Donne, “They have gone far in these illusions and applications, and they might have gone as far further as it had pleased them; they have sea-room enough, that will compare a beast and a sinner together, and they shall find many times, in the way, the beast the better man.” I am afraid that it is so. David himself says, “So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You,” and yet he was so good a man that he could add, “Nevertheless I am continually with You.” A large part of us is animal, and its tendency is to drag down that part which is more than angelic. How abject, and yet how august is man! Brother to the worm, and yet akin to Deity. Immortal and yet a child of dust. Be not the prey of your lower nature. As children of God, yield not yourselves to that which it is your duty to subdue. Have the horse and mule in subjection; keep under your body; do not bear the burden of the animal, but make the animal your burden-bearer. “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule,” but rise superior to flesh and blood. May the Spirit of the Lord help your infirmities in this matter!

I believe the psalmist here alludes to the horse and mule *as creatures naturally wild, and needing to be broken in and trained*. We are by nature as the wild ass that inhales the wind of the wilderness, “he scorns the multitude of the city, neither regards he the crying of the driver.” These wild creatures we can make nothing of till we break them in; be not like them, useless, untrained, unbroken. Yet this is how we begin life, naturally and spiritually. It is good to get broken in early in life; “it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.” It is an ill thing for a man to have no restraint in youth, and no trouble in manhood. When men and women follow out their own sweet wills, the end thereof is seven-fold bitterness. A mind uncorrected is a vine unpruned, which yields no fruit, but trails along the ground, and rots as it trails. It is a grand thing to learn the meaning of the word “obey.” It is ill with those who remain unsubdued; they are of little worth to themselves or to others. The Holy Spirit would not have any of the Lord’s people to be of that wild, untamable character, for which there is neither use nor hope.

Furthermore, we are not to imitate *creatures devoid of reason*. “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding.” He especially lays stress on this—that they are without understanding. What does he mean by that? Horses and mules have been so trained that they have needed neither bit nor bridle, but have performed marvelous feats at a word. It is possible for these animals to be brought to so high a training that they obey the word of command without the use of force. They come to have an understanding of their owner’s intent, and act as if they really entered into their master’s designs. With the horses and mules of our streets, and of David’s day, this is not the case; these display little understanding, and we are not to be like them. You are a reasoning man; act reasonably. You have understanding; do not act under mere impulse, blind willfulness, or ignorant folly. Here is the point, brethren; what we need is to come to an understanding with God, and to keep in that condition. The horse does not understand his driver’s wishes, except as he intimates them through the bit and bridle. When he is to turn, when he is to quicken his pace, and when he is to stand still, he must be told through the rein, for apart from the bit in his mouth, he has no understanding of the man’s mind. That thought which works in the mind of his driver is not working in the mule’s mind, and therefore he has to feel a pull at his mouth to make him know his master’s desire. We need to come to an understanding with God. “Be you not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” Be sensitive to the Spirit of God. So dwell in God that He shall dwell in you, and His indwelling shall cause you to feel at once what it is that He would have you to do. May your will be so in accord with the Lord’s will that you will only what He wills! This is the highest form of understanding that I know of; may we never rest till we have it. “Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law.” You know how we say, “I should like to come to some understanding with that man,” for you feel that without it your relations are unsatisfactory. When two friends really understand each other’s purpose, and enter into each other’s design, then they act as if they were one. Be you so near to God in heart that you can be guided with His eye, because you understand the mind of your heavenly Father, and are in full sympathy with Him.

But the psalmist also adds, concerning the horse and the mule, that having no understanding, they are *creatures with much self-will and waywardness*. “Their mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.” If you look at the Revised Version, you will find it is “else they will not come near unto you.” And Calvin has it, “lest they kick at you.” This is a very obscure passage as to the words, but it is not at all doubtful as to its sense, for the point is that the animal will not do what it should do, but it will obstinately do what it ought not to do, until it gets the bit in its mouth to compel it to do its master’s will. So is it with ourselves, but so it should not be. At one time we find men rashly rushing near to God; they have no reverence, no holy trembling and awe. Some appear to be as familiar with God as if He were one of them. Thus the Lord complains in the psalm, “You thought that I was altogether such an one as yourself.” Such vain people need a bit, lest they come near to God. They need to hear the voice which cries, “Draw not nigh hither: put off your shoes from off your feet.” Oh, for more holy reverence! Others will not come near to God at all, and need a bit because they run off from the Lord into infidelity, blasphemy, or open vice. These endeavor to carry out their own wild wills, throwing up their heels as they please, and prancing over hill and plain with a defiant contempt of rule and order. We know that kind of people; let us not in any measure grow like them. There are horses and mules that will kick, and bite, and do grievous harm to those around about them, unless they are restrained with



straps and harness. I am afraid I know some kicking saints as well as kicking sinners, and I am more afraid of these kicking professors than of the outwardly wicked. I would sooner be bitten by a wolf than by a sheep, that is to say, I could more readily bear injury from an ungodly man than from a professed believer. A kick from a Christian causes very serious wounding to a gracious heart. "It was not an enemy: then I could have borne it." Remember the question and answer—"What are these wounds in your hands? Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." Those are wounds indeed which our Lord receives from a traitorous disciple. "Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they kick at you." Kick not at the will of your Lord. Kick not at the doctrines of His Word. Kick not at the precepts of His house. Kick not at His servants. Kick not at His providences. Kick not at His cross. Surely, I need not further urge you to avoid this unlovely character. None of you would wish to be as the horse, or as the mule.

**III.** I will now dwell for a few minutes upon AN INFLICTION TO BE ESCAPED. If you mean to be like the horse or the mule, you may readily be so, but you will have to pay the penalty. If the Lord means to save you, He will use a bit and a bridle upon you, if you render them necessary by your willfulness. If you will be guided by His eye, there will be no need for such stern work, but if you are stubborn, He will not spare you.

I may say of this bit and bridle, that such trappings are *a curb upon freedom*. A man would not endure to go about wearing a bit and a bridle, yet many a child of God is in that condition spiritually, because he is not subdued to the will of the Lord. Because he is not tender of conscience, because he is frequently disobedient, because he does not carry out his Lord's will, he has to suffer severe discipline, and labor under serious disadvantage. If the man were willingly obedient to the divine will, things would go more happily with him.

The bit is not applied unless it is found necessary, but *it will be applied if necessary*. My text says, "Whose mouth *must* be held in with bit and bridle. Mark that, "*must*." That *must* arises out of the nature of the creature dealt with. Some men, if they are to go to heaven, must be poor on the road, or must be sick, or must be defeated, or must be misunderstood; not because there is any real necessity, apart from their obstinate, cross-grained nature, but because they themselves render it needful. God is resolved to save them, and therefore he will drive them to salvation with bit and bridle, rather than leave them free to rush downward to hell through the indulgence of their own passions and ambitions.

Dear friends, *what a wretched descent is this from being guided by God's eye!* In the first case we have an intelligent servant so in accord with his Lord that a look suffices to set him running in the way of obedience, and in the second case we have an avowedly Christian man so out of accord with God that he has to be treated like a mule which will only yield under compulsion, and only obey as it is made to smart. I do not know, dear brethren, if this description applies to any of you, but if it does, kindly take it home, and if I seem to be personal to you—well, I intend to be personal, and, therefore, I dare not apologize. I am afraid that many of us ought to make it more personal to ourselves than we are likely to do. There is a hair of the mule's tail in every one of us.

"Be you not as the horse, or as the mule," or you shall have your mouth held in with bit and bridle. *That is always a very unpleasant matter*. It is not comfortable, even to a mule, to wear bit and bridle, and it certainly must be very unpleasant to a man. I have known brethren whom God could not use in the conversion of many souls, for they could not bear prosperity. The Lord did bless the preacher once, and he grew so great in his own esteem that he was not bearable to those around him. For the man's own sake the good Lord saw that it was not safe to let him be useful. Here is a man who formerly succeeded in business, but he grew so worldly, so purse-proud, so forgetful of God, that it was necessary to take his wealth away from him, and it has been done—and now he is devout and lowly. Another man, when he is in health and strength, is so full of levity and carelessness that he plays the fool, and in order to keep him right it is necessary to let him have a sluggish liver, or an aching head, or a sick home, or something else, which may sober him. My friend, if God means to get you to heaven He will lead you there gently if you will freely go, but if you are obstinate and hard, He will thrust the bit between your jaws and drive you there. The less willfulness the less harness, but if need be, you shall wear all the paraphernalia of an unquiet horse, for the great Trainer will have the upper hand of you, and thus He will save you. The

Lord would be glad for you to go without these disagreeable things, but if you will have them, you shall have them. I know a person who is always grumbling, and I do not wonder that he always seems to have cause for it. It is like the child that I heard crying, and its mother said to it, “Hold your tongue! If you cry for nothing, I will soon give you something to cry for.” Many a child of God has found something to cry for as the result of wanton murmuring. Some hearers even go to the house of God, and complain that the preacher says this, and does not say that, and omits the other. Before long the Lord removes the preacher they complained of, and they have nobody to feed their souls, and then they begin to wish they had the old preacher back again. Well, well, if you make rods for your backs, God will use them upon you. It is His custom not to let anything lie idle in His house; so, if you are busy making a rod, He will be busy in putting it to its proper use.

But all this is *unnatural to the child of God*. Your children do not go about your house with bits in their mouths and bridles on their heads. God would not have his own regenerated ones going up and down in the world all bitted and bridled, but it shall be so sooner than they shall be lost. Disobedience is ruin; from that He must deliver His people. If we take delight in holiness we shall not need rough usage. Here is the sweet alternative—“I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with Mine eye.” This is God’s way. Oh that it may be our way! May the good Spirit lead us into it! Do not drive your Savior to be stern with you. Do not choose the way of hardness—the brutish way, the mulish way. “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding,” for then you will become sad, gloomy, dull, stupid, and full of disquietude. It is essential that your iniquities should be subdued, and they shall be. He will save you—save you from rebellion, save you from self-seeking and self-will. He will bend you to His holy will, and if it cannot come to pass anyhow else—, then the bit and the bridle shall conquer you. O Souls, submit yourselves to God. Vex not His Holy Spirit by hardness of heart.

**IV.** Now I close by noticing A FREEDOM TO BE ATTAINED. There are children of God who wear no bit or bridle; the Lord has loosed their bonds. To them obedience is delight; they keep His commands with their whole heart. The Son has made them free, and they are free indeed.

They are free, first, *because they are in touch with God*. God’s will is their will. They answer to the Lord as the echo to the voice. Happy is he who can say, “Whatever You desire, O my Lord, I would desire it because You desire it.” Then is it safe for the Lord to leave the man free from compulsion. It is written, “Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” This large liberty can only be promised to these whose desires are in accordance with their heavenly delight. When the desires run towards God with delight, they shall surely be granted. When you and God have come to a good, clear understanding with each other, so that you yield to Him in all things, then He will hear your prayers and give you the blessing which makes rich and adds no sorrow therewith. When you rejoice in Christ Jesus, in whom the Father is well pleased, then will the Lord be pleased with you. When you cry to Him in the day of trouble, coming to the mercy seat, where He delights to dwell, then He will meet with you, and lift up the light of His countenance upon you.

You shall be free, next, *because you are tutored*. The Lord cannot trust our wild nature; He gives freedom where He gives His Spirit, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” How does our Lord put it?—“Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.” He gives rest through His blood; He makes you find rest through learning of Him, and bearing His yoke. It is only a horse that has been long taught and trained by great skill that can be trusted to go through a performance without bit or bridle. I sometimes hope there will come a day when these who drive horses will not need to carry whips, because the noble animals have been so trained by kindness as to answer to a word. I fear that time is a long way off, but I have greater hope of you, beloved brethren, that you will be so trained that no constraint but that of the love of Christ will be needed to be put upon you. The law was not made for a righteous man. I hope we shall not need church discipline, or providential discipline, because we have been trained to joyful, watchful, exact obedience. Oh, that it were so! Teach me, O Lord! Teach me Your way. Show me what You would have me to do. Make me to know the perfect love which casts out fear. When we are thus instructed, the Lord will leave us by His sweet grace to be encompassed about by mercy, and to be guided by His eye.

We shall be free, again, because *always trusting*. Look at the tenth verse, “He that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.” Faith gives life, and more faith gives light and liberty. When we completely trust in God, we shall do His will completely. When we raise no questions with God, when our reliance upon Him is without reserve, when we know by faith that His will and way for us are perfect, then we shall run in the way of His commandments, because He has enlarged our steps. When we have received life more abundantly through a growing faith, it will be safe for our Lord to take away all bits and bridles, but not till then. When, through grace, faith has triumphantly mastered our whole being, we shall be victorious over the law of sin and death which dwells in our members, and tends to unrighteousness, and then shall the yoke be taken away, and the burden be removed. Blessed freedom this!

Especially *free because tender*. “Be you not as the horse or as the mule”; these are thick of skin, and tough of mouth, and so they are mastered by hard means. If we become as tender as the apple of an eye, God will guide us with His eye. If we avoid even the appearance of evil, and shun every false way with delicate sensitiveness of mind, we shall hear little about bits and bridles, and the many other sorrows which shall be to the wicked. Ah, dear brethren! What a difference there is between one man and another even in the same church, holding the same faith! One Christian man needs warnings repeated and urgent, and another is distressed with half a word of admonition. It is hard to stir one to generosity or to any exertion in the Lord’s cause, while another is earnest at once. Love works more in some than fear can produce in others. We have to use strong arguments and sharp cuts of the whip with certain sluggish minds, while others are all sensitiveness, and take to themselves censures which were never meant for them. Oh for a tender heart! May the heart of stone be taken away, and a heart of flesh be granted! May we be to the Lord’s will as sensitive as the mercury to air and heat! The wave is flowing, and a cork upon the water is carried wherever the current moves. That same wave merely ripples at the side of a man-of-war, and it does not stir in the least degree. Saintry souls feel the ripples of the Holy Spirit, while self-sufficient professors know nothing of anything less than a tornado. Crave as a choice gift the renewal of a right spirit within you, and that right spirit will be eminently tender and pliant to the will of the Lord. My brothers and sisters, my longing is that you and I may stand with our faces towards the Lord, watching for the faintest indications of the divine will. May we be humble, teachable, and mild! May our soul be even as a weaned child!

*All this will lead to high joy*. See how the psalm ends, “Shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart”! When the bit is taken from the mouth, the tongue will show forth the praises of the Lord. When the bridle is gone, the mouth is free to sing to the Most High. If the heart is well adjusted there will be music in the life. When we follow the Lord’s guidance with alacrity, peace shall be our companion, and joy shall hover over us like a guardian angel. This world will be the vestibule of heaven when we begin even now to rehearse that perfect obedience which is the essential condition of bliss.

Beloved, all this the Holy Spirit must work in our hearts, or it will never be there. Cry to Him for it in the name of Jesus, and the Lord will give you an answer of peace.

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 32.**

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