

HOPEFUL, YET DOUBTFUL

NO. 2361

A SERMON
 INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 20, 1894
 DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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*“And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.
 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests;
 but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.”*
Matthew 8:19-20

“A CERTAIN scribe”—“One scribe”—it is said in the original, perhaps to mark the noteworthy fact that he should be a scribe, and yet should wish to be a disciple of Christ. The Lord has some of His own in every class of men. You may go as low as you will, but grace can go lower. You may look as high as you please, but grace can rise higher. In Heaven we shall find a multitude of those who were considered to be the base people of this world, and here and there we shall find a king.

So there was one scribe, a certain scribe, who desired to be a follower of Christ. Let us not despair of anybody. If God has not shut them out of our commission, and He certainly has not, for He has bidden us preach the Gospel to every creature, then let us not shut them out from our hopefulness, but let us expect to see even “a certain scribe” coming forward and declaring, “Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.”

I. We have not time for any preface tonight, so we shall go at once to our first point, which is that here is SOMETHING VERY HOPEFUL. A certain scribe said unto Jesus, “Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.”

Note first, that this was a *very respectful* speech. The scribe addressed the Lord as “Master.” “Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” It was not a flippant speech. There was no absence of reverence. He evidently looked up to the great Miracle-worker who had been healing the sick in the streets on that long evening and he called Him, “Master.”

Jesus said, on another occasion, “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am,” and this scribe began his religious confession well, whatever that confession may have turned out to be, by addressing Christ as Lord. I do not like those professed converts who are irreverent, and I think that they condemn themselves out of their own mouth when they begin to talk about the Lord Jesus Christ as if He were some common person of their acquaintance, and as if faith and repentance and all that appertains to godliness were a thing to be joked about. That will not do. There is something hopeful about this scribe in that he speaks in respectful and reverent tones to the Lord Jesus.

There is more hopefulness still in the fact that his words are *very enthusiastic*. They go upon wheels, and the axles of the wheels are hot with speed, “Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” His utterance is earnest, it is hearty, it is enthusiastic, and from a scribe too, a man of pens and ink, a calm, quiet letter-man. To see him on fire is something really remarkable.

I do not like those converts who have no enthusiasm. If they do not burn at first, what will they do afterwards? If in their first love there is no zeal, no holy flaming fire, what shall we make of them by and by? It is well to see, in those who have newly come to Christ, even if it is possible, a little too much enthusiasm, we can very well put up with that.

There is a novelty to the soul that begins to see the light, a novelty in the light itself, which suggests to it something sparkling and brilliant, and we do not wonder if the words of confession that the newly

converted utter should burn and glow. There is something very hopeful then, in the reverent tone and in the enthusiastic spirit of this man's utterance.

We are also greatly pleased, and expectant of the best results, when we notice that he was *very ready*. I do not know that he had been pressed by anybody to become a follower of Christ. There had been, so far as we know, no distinct call given to him, but he had readily responded to that call which is really in Christ Himself, and in the miracles He wrought. When any man is blessed, there is a voice in that blessing to others who need a like favor.

All the sick are called when some sick ones are healed, and this man had a quick ear, and apparently, a very obedient spirit, so he delayed not, but made haste to avow his allegiance to Christ. The Savior was going down to the boat and about to leave the multitude, the scribe might not perhaps see Him again, so, at all risk of intrusion, he comes to Jesus and says, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." We like to see this readiness in those who have newly come to Christ.

And one also likes what this man said because it was so *very resolute*, "Master, I will follow thee." Hear how he says it, "*I will* follow thee." There is no "if," no "but," no merely, "I hope and trust so," but "Master, I am decided that whoever else may hesitate, I will follow Thee. I am determined, whatever others may do, that I will be Thy follower. I will follow Thee."

And surely, he who is not resolute when he enters upon the heavenly war, courts defeat. You must draw your sword from the sheath, you must say, "Set down my name, sir," to the man with the writer's inkhorn, and you must begin straightway to cut a lane through your foes, for only he who is resolute and determined will take the kingdom of heaven, of which our Lord said, "the violent take it by force." We are glad to see the strong determination, the firm decision of a clear-cut man, who comes right straight out from his old associates, and says with all his heart and soul, "Master, I will follow thee."

Then observe, with congratulation and hopefulness, that this man's declaration was *very unreserved*, "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." "If You go to sea, I will go with You; if You do land on the other side, where You will be confronted by men possessed of devils, I will follow Thee whithersoever thou goest."

There is something of the unreserved loyalty of Peter when he said, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death." So this scribe makes no exception of any kind, but says, "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Oh, if he had only meant it in its highest spiritual sense, what a blessing this man would have had resting upon him!

Of the glorified spirits above it is written, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth"—

*"Foremost of the sons of light,
Nearest the eternal throne."*

May we be among those who always follow Christ, keeping at His heels through floods or flames, to whom it is imperative that they should do what He does, and be what He is in His humiliation, that they may be like Him in the day of His appearing in glory! I like a convert—do not you, my brethren, also delight in a convert—who can use such language as this, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest"?

The best thing that I can say about this man's utterance is that it was *very right*. I am about to show you that *he* was not right, but the *words* he used were right. He said, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Is not this what Jesus has a right to expect of us? Will He ever be satisfied with less than this?

Unless our heart takes Him for better and for worse, in life and in death, do we really take Him at all? Is not this what the Holy Spirit would work in us, that we should follow the great Master whithersoever He goeth? Is not this the one want of the present age, the lack of fidelity to Christ in everything? Are not many aiming at originality? Are they not too much striking out paths for

themselves? Have we not been told, over and over again that we are to be “independent thinkers”? Is not the position of sitting at Jesu’s feet looked upon with contempt by many?

Jesus Himself said that the words that He spake were not His, but He spake what His Father told Him. He was no original thinker, but He was the great translator of the thoughts of God to men. But men disdain this in the pride of their scientific knowledge. Professing themselves to be wise, they thus become fools. Still, this is the point to which we come back, and may God bring His church there, and bring you and me there, to say with heart and soul, without reserve, “Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.”

The voice of the Virgin, at the first miracle at Cana of Galilee, spoke a word which it is well for us ever to obey, “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” That was at Christ’s first miracle, and we should see many miracles if we would give heed to that word, but because we do not act as He bids us, the water is not turned into wine, and we lack that special brightness, and glory, and fullness, and sweetness in life which would come of complete obedience to Him. What Jesus commands, let us delight to do, where Jesus leads, let us rejoice to follow.

So far I have shown you that in the utterance of this scribe, there is something very hopeful, but our blessed Master is not deceived by glitter, He looks for gold. He does not seem to answer this man’s words, it is a way that Christ has, you will notice, all through the Gospels, that often He does not reply to men’s words. You and I have to do that, but Jesus read their thoughts, and He answered their thoughts rather than their words. So He read this man’s thoughts, and we too may read them, reflected in the reply which Jesus gave him, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay his head.”

II. By this answer, Jesus showed us, I think, that there was SOMETHING WHICH NEEDED TESTING. That will be the second part of my subject.

Note first, that this man’s resolve to go with Christ was *very sudden*. Perhaps therefore, it was the fruit of excitement. It was a very exciting evening—a hospital in the street, a great Physician instantly healing all kinds of disease, shouts of joy on all sides, lame men leaping like harts, and the tongues of the dumb singing. Well, I do not wonder if some people did not quite keep their heads, and though this man now with intense enthusiasm cries, “Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest,” perhaps after all it is only the result of excitement.

You know, beloved, that nature can do nothing in the spiritual realm, yet nature can make a wonderful imitation of grace, but the child of nature, however finely dressed, is a dead child, and not a living one. “Ye must be born again,” is the word of Christ to all who would enter the kingdom.

It is not at all a difficult thing to take nature, especially some natures that are kindly and well-disposed, and have much that is amiable about them, and so to work upon them that nature cries, “I will follow Christ.”

And indeed, there is so much about Christ that is naturally beautiful, so much that is sweetly attractive, that we have known plenty of instances of individuals, quite destitute of spirituality, who have been in love with Jesus Christ with a natural love for the natural excellences of His character, and there have been some who have been prepared to go a long way, and as they thought, prepared to go all the way with Christ, but who, nevertheless, did not really and savingly know Christ at all.

They only saw the outer Christ, but the true Christ, the spiritual Christ, they had not perceived. They could not have said to them what Jesus said to Peter, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” They had had no such revelation, and this man had no divine call, at least there is no mention of any, he had no effectual calling, no inward drawings, no work of the Spirit of God that we can perceive at all, and so he suddenly breaks out with an enthusiasm that is, after all, but the effort of nature.

It is well known to everybody that water will of itself rise as high as its source, but it will not rise any higher. Human nature will rise as high as human nature, no higher. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” You watch, and you fancy that there will be some wondrous birth, and that human nature in her

throes will bring forth something very superior to herself, but she cannot, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and nothing more. The offspring of the flesh cannot rise beyond its parentage. “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.”

So, brethren, sudden conversions may be genuine conversions, but on the other hand, a supposed conversion may be only an apparent change, the fruit of excitement, the working of an excitable nature, but not the work of the Spirit of God at all.

Next, there was reason for testing the scribe’s utterance because it was *very unconsidered*, he had probably not thought about the matter at all, but without consideration cried out, “Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” He had jumped to this decision, and perhaps being unconsidered, it may have been based upon ignorance.

The man did not appear to know the poverty of the Christ. He professed that he would follow Jesus anywhere, but he was not aware that the great Physician, who had wrought such mighty wonders that evening, had not a place where He could lay His head. When the scribe was once enlightened upon that point, apparently he dropped the matter altogether, and gave up all thought of being a follower of the meek and lowly Jesus.

My dear friends, I want you to be so converted to Christ that when you come to read your Bible through, you will not find anything there that you will kick at. I want you to be so converted to Christ that when you are further instructed in the Gospel, you will take it all in and say, “Just so, I am Christ’s disciple, and I am prepared to accept whatever He teaches me.”

Why, there were some who were for a time with Christ, but who went back and walked no more with Him when they heard certain truths which He uttered! Such people as those are poor converts. They cheat our hopes, they bring discredit upon the church to which they join themselves, and therefore it is needful for us to say to all who are thinking of following Christ, “Search the Scriptures, read the Word, and realize what you are doing. Do not put on the uniform of our great Captain without knowing what His service will involve. We do not want to entrap you as sergeants enlist half drunken clowns, we wish you to take the oath of allegiance to the great King, knowing something of what it means. Otherwise we shall be disappointed in you, and you will be disappointed in yourselves when you come to know more of our great Master and of His service.”

Note further, the reason for testing this utterance lay here, this man was evidently *very self-reliant*, “Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” What a great “I WILL” there is there! There is no prayer for grace or guidance, there is no dependence upon a greater than himself, it is simply, “I will.” You know, “I will,” is for God to say, but when we say, “I will,” it must always be, “*cum grano salis*,” with a grain of salt, and that salt must be, “If thou wilt help me so to do.” But nothing of that dependence upon divine support appears here, and consequently, the scribe’s declaration is unsatisfactory.

That which is said by one who is self-reliant may prove to be untrue. In Simon Peter’s case, there was truth at the bottom of what he boastfully said, but there was not enough truth to keep him steadfast when a silly maid put a plain question to him, and he denied his Master. But in the case of some boasters, there is not even sincerity in what they say. They think that they are sincere, but their utterance is very shallow. There is not depth enough in it for it to be honestly called a heart-word, it is but a lip-word, and of little or no real value.

Oh, my dear friend, I told you how glad I was just now to hear you say that you would follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, but I am very sorry if I have to feel that in what you have said, there is more of dependence upon self than of reliance upon God, for you will break down as this man did, as soon as ever the Lord tested him by saying, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay his head.”

Notice again, this man was *very obtrusive and bold* in his declaration of loyalty to Christ, “I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” I am loath to judge him for being so outspoken, but at the same time, it is possible, when persons are so very loud in their profession, that there may be much of self-

interest in what they say. I wonder if this man thought, “Well now, I am a scribe. If I join that company, I shall be a leader. I perceive that they are only fishermen, the bulk of them, and if I come in amongst them, I shall be a great acquisition to that little band. I shall no doubt be the secretary.”

Perhaps he may have thought that there was something to be made out of such a position, there was one who thought so. Remember him who had the bag, and who kept that which was put therein. Did this scribe think so? Or had he an idea that Jesus really was the Messiah, and that following Him he would be joining one who would be a great King, who would have a splendid retinue, and so if he cast in his lot with Him, no doubt he would sit on one of the twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel? He who could heal the sick at that rate was evidently a great man, and some shadow of His greatness would rest upon His followers.

Oh, if you try to join the church of Christ from any such motives as these, may the Lord, by His good Spirit, readily detect you and touch your conscience, and let you know that you are not such as He invites to follow Him!

This man’s confession of faith was also *very daring*, and as I have shown you, this would have made it very commendable if it had been genuine, but it was very temporary, it did not last long. Some have said that there was in it too much attachment to the person of Christ rather than to the teaching of Christ. I like not the distinction, but still, I have no doubt that many converts do what is worse than that, they have an attachment merely for the preacher.

Oh, how many come to join churches because such and such a preacher speaks well, and he has charmed them with that interesting story, or with that excellent metaphor, ay, and they like him for his work’s sake and for his godliness, and so, when the good man dies, or is removed, do we not often see it, that flocks are scattered and many go back to the world? It must be because their faith stood in the wisdom of man and not in the power of God. Surely it must be so, that they based even their confidence in Christ upon confidence in His minister.

Oh, I pray you, keep clear of that fatal mistake! In no respect, I trust, would you rely upon me, if you did, you would be foolish to the last degree. Let not your reliance be upon the preacher, what is he at the best but as a trumpet set to his Master’s mouth? The music lies not in the instrument, but in Him who uses it, and produces a certain sound through it. Let your trust be in Jesus only, and in that glorious Gospel which He came to preach, yea, which He wrought out upon the cross when, as the Lamb of God, He took away the sin of the world.

Thus I have shown you that there was something in this man’s declaration that needed testing. I am sorry that I have not time to work out the subject from other points, for they are well worthy of notice, especially by ministers, and those who have to see many inquirers after salvation.

III. But now, thirdly, and very briefly, here is SOMETHING TO REMEMBER.

Jesus said to this enthusiastic person, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.”

Remember this then, *you must expect to fare like your Lord*. He said to His disciples, “If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” “If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?” If you follow Christ, you must go at night where He goes, to Olivet, where the dew shall saturate your garments. You must go with Him to Vanity Fair, to be hunted unto the death, you must expect to be called mad, you must reckon upon being even charged with being a drunken man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. Are you ready for this?

There is no going to heaven without wearing for Christ’s sake a fool’s cap and a fool’s coat. You will find, if you seek honor here, that you may possibly get it, but it will do you no good, for when you die, the honor which you obtain by unfaithfulness to Christ will clothe you with shame and everlasting contempt. See then, what Jesus expects His followers to be, they must be willing to share and share alike with Him, for the disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord.

Notice next, and remember it well, that *the Lord Jesus does not want any but real disciples*. You know how it is with some. They want to make up a good number, and to report that so many have been

converted, and so many have joined the church. Oh, that desire after big figures! What mistakes and misery it leads some people into!

But Jesus does not want to count this man unless he is one who can be rightly counted as really made His follower, so He speaks to him discouragingly and testingly. He tries and tests him, and the man goes his way. The Lord Jesus Christ does not ask you to become His follower unless you mean to be wholly His. Body, soul, and spirit, through and through, out and out, you must be His, or else you cannot be a follower of Christ at all. Hear that, and remember it well.

Then notice, that *a little more instruction may sometimes drive some disciples back*. The Savior hardly said more than a sentence to the man and he was gone. Let us take care to instruct our converts. It will act as a sieve, and prevent much deception. Tell them all about the trials they will have to endure, bid them count the cost, set before them the difficulties of the way, and the need of a higher power than their own to help them through.

There is one other thing that I would like you to remember, *that which drove this man away was the real reason why he ought to have stopped with Christ*. O brethren, why do we love Christ, if we do love Him? Why, because, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor! What! shall we leave Him because He gave up everything for our sakes? Shall we leave Him because He had not even a hole like a fox, or a nest like a bird? Shall we leave Him because He was despised and rejected of men? Shall we leave Him because He was scourged and spit upon? Shall we leave Him because they crucified Him?

No, these are the bonds that bind us fast to Him, and will not let us go.

*“His visage marred with sorrows great,
The vinegar and gall;
These are His golden chains of love,
His captive to enthrall.”*

And if men leave the Savior because of those very things that ought to bind them to Him, then it is not Christ who is at fault, they must have all the blame laid upon themselves, and they must bear it to their everlasting confusion. Yet no doubt there are many who do forsake the cross because it is the cross, and leave Christ because of the shame He endured for the sake of sinners. What is that but to quit Jesus because He is Jesus?

Do not do it, I beseech you, but if you do, then will you be discovered, and unmasked, and your fine professions of allegiance and all your pretty resolutions will be blown away like chaff before the wind.

IV. Bear with me a minute or two more while I finish by saying that here is SOMETHING FOR PERSONAL CONSIDERATION. I will only throw out hints, and will not enlarge upon them.

There are a few questions that I am going to ask. The first is, *Would it not be better always to do than to promise?* The scribe said, “Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” That sounded well, but suppose he had followed Christ whithersoever He went, that would have been much better. Next time you are going to make a vow, pause a while, vows are entangling things. Next time you think of giving a promise, stop a little. You had better perform the promise rather than make it, and then break it, is it not so?

The next question is, *Would it not be better always to pray than to promise?* Instead of saying, “Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest,” suppose the scribe had knelt down and said, “Master, lead me, take me for a disciple, draw me with bands of love, and hold me fast even to the end,” that would have been better. A resolve is well enough in its way, but it may prove to be lame, and weak, and broken-backed, but a prayer—ah! God hearing it, you have girded yourself with omnipotence, and you are indeed strong.

Now for another question. *Is Jesus worth the price?* Is not Jesus worth following to poverty, to shame, to death? Oh, some of us have had to ask this question! For the truth’s sake, we must lose friendships, we must bear contempt, we must expect to be misunderstood, but is not Jesus worth it all?

Say, is Jesus worth our going to prison, or worth our suffering the rack, or worth our being burnt at the stake? I do verily believe that some modern Christians do not hold any doctrine for which they would think it worth while to suffer even the toothache, I fancy that they almost think so themselves by the ready way in which they go on to something else.

Would they not be fools if they did die for *their* Gospel? It is not worth the killing of a fly, for there is nothing in it. But is Christ worthy of anything we have to bear for His sake? Is He, or is He not? If you can honestly say, after calculating and reckoning it all up, “Yes! Yes! those things that were gain to me, I count loss for Christ, yea, I count, I reckon, I estimate, all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord,” if it be really so, then go on following your Lord, for you have counted the cost. If not, do not begin to build what you cannot finish, and what is not worth your while to finish.

And next, what sayest thou? *Are the spiritual and heavenly rewards of following Christ a sufficient recompense?* What if you should never make a penny by following Christ, but should lose everything that you have? What if you should never get any comfort out of it for the present, but often be in the dark, and have a world of soul-conflict as the result of it? Say, do you believe that to be a Christian, to have a spiritual life, to have communion with God in prayer, will be enough for you without anything else?

Do you think that heaven, the sight of the King, the sitting on the throne with Him, and the everlasting glory, will make amends for all this? Would you fling the world away, as though it were a child’s ball? Yea, would you throw ten thousand worlds away, as so many rotten apples, glad to get rid of them, if you might but have your God, your heaven, your all?

You are the stuff of which Christ’s soldiers are made if you can say all that from your heart, but if you cannot, may God renew you, for you know not yet what Moses knew when he counted even the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt! It was not reigning with Christ, but even His reproach, that Moses esteemed to be greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.

The last question is, *Does grace enable us to take Christ with all the consequences?* Does the Holy Spirit at this moment sweetly constrain your heart to say, “Yes, yes, after every consideration has had due weight with me, if Jesus will have me, I will follow Him whithersoever He goeth”?

Do you feel that this is not the voice of nature, but the cry of grace within you? Is it because He has loved you with an everlasting love, and washed you from your sins in His own blood? Is it because His Spirit has reached you, changed your likes and dislikes, and made you love the things which you did once despise? If so, then, my brother, Christ gives you His hand tonight, and you may take it, never to let it go again, for who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

Will you also believe in Him, dear friend? Will you trust Him? Will you take Him to be your Leader and your Lord forever? God make it to be so this very night! God make this your birth-night, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—639, 646, 659

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

MATTHEW 8:16-34 AND 9:1

Matthew Chapter 8. Verse 16. *When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:*

It was the evening after the Sabbath. They did not venture even to bring out their sick till the day of rest was ended, and the Savior, saying nothing about their lingering superstition, began to work mightily among them, “He cast out the spirits with his word.” What a power there is in the word of Jesus! There is nothing like it for the casting out of devils. All our philosophies will not do what it does, the enemy

will say, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?” “He cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick.”

17. *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.*

It does not look like a fulfillment, except upon the wondrous principle of the power of substitution. Jesus takes the sickness, and therefore He removes it from us. He heals our infirmities because He took them upon Himself. Is it so, do you think, that every miracle of healing that Christ wrought took something out of Him?

We remember that when the woman with the issue of blood was cured by touching His garment, Jesus said, “I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.” Was it so that He suffered while He was thus relieving the suffering? It was the joy of His heart to bless mankind, but every blessing that He gave was very costly to Him. I think that truth lies embedded in the evangelist’s declaration.

18. *Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.*

This again looks like a *non sequitur*. You and I would have said, “If there are great multitudes about us, let us speak to them while we are here.” But then again you see, we may not always judge by the apparent usefulness of the present moment, we have to consider the rest of our career. Our Savior knew that the governors of the country were very jealous, and that if people came together in large numbers, they might suspect insurrections and revolutions, and they would be there with their troops, and many innocent folk might be slain, and speaking after the manner of men, His work of usefulness might be quickly brought to an end. Therefore, when He saw the great multitudes, He judged it wise to go elsewhere.

Besides, He was no lover of popularity, He looked upon it as a shadow which necessarily followed Him, rather than as a thing to be sought after. This He showed in the intense humility of His spirit, and in that love of solitude which was so natural to one who walked in continual fellowship with God. Sometimes we shall really do more by apparently for the moment doing less.

19-20. *And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith to him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

We hear no more of this man. Our Savior’s faithfulness probably dismissed Him.

21. *And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.*

Now this man was a disciple, mark you, and according to Luke, the Lord had said to him, “Follow me,” yet he urged this plea, “Suffer me first to go and bury my father.”

22. *But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.*

Nothing, not even the duties of filial love, must be allowed to come in conflict with the command of Christ, “Follow me.” I take it that this is not so much a word to the common disciple as to a disciple called out to a special ministry, “Your ministry is to be your first, your main, your only occupation. ‘Follow me: and let the dead bury their dead.’ Let the politicians attend to the politics, let the reformers see to the reforms, but as for you, keep to your own work and follow Me.”

When God’s ministers come to this point, that they have to win souls, and that this is their only business, then souls will be won. There are plenty of dead people to bury the dead, there are plenty of moral people to see after the ordinary affairs of morality. As for us, let us follow Christ, and keep to our one business.

23. *And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.*

He went first, and they followed afterwards. If the ship be the type of the church, then Christ is the first on board, He is the Captain, and the disciples make up the crew, “His disciples followed him.”

24. *And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.*

What! a tempest where Christ is? Yes, it is generally so. If all seems very calm, you may question whether Christ is there, but when He goes into the ship and His disciples follow Him, it is not remarkable that the devil comes after Him. "The ship was covered with the waves." That sea of Galilee lies very deep indeed, and it is surrounded by lofty crags and yawning chasms that act like funnels to the wind, so that to this day it is very dangerous for those who are on it in a boat.

"The ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep." Here is the weakness of humanity, and here is, also, the strength of faith. Jesus went to sleep because that boat was in His Father's hands, and He would take care of it. "He was asleep." Sometimes the best thing that we can do is to go to bed. You are worrying and troubling yourself, and you can do nothing, go to sleep, brother. It is the climax of faith to be able to shake off all care and to feel, "If the Lord cares for me, why should I not sleep?"

Remember what Alexander the Great said of his friend Parmenio, "Alexander may sleep, for Parmenio watches," and surely we, who have a far greater Friend than Parmenio, can say at any time, "We may sleep, for God watches." "He was asleep." To sleep was the best thing that Jesus could do to renew His bodily energies, and to prepare Himself for the time when His efforts would be needed for the deliverance of His disciples from danger.

25-26. *And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?*

The disciples might have answered, "Lord, how can you ask us why we are fearful? The ship is covered with waves, the sea threatens to swallow it and all of us up." Still, they might have thought, "If Christ is on board the ship, will He allow it to sink? Can He be drowned? We carry Christ and all His fortunes, is not our vessel thus insured beyond all risk? He may well say to us, 'Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?'"

26. *Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.*

"A great calm." No ordinary stillness of the sea, but it was a great calm, as the tempest had been great which had preceded it. What! and all on a sudden too? Storms sob themselves to sleep through lengthened intervals of fretfulness, but when Jesus gives the word of command, the storm is gone at once. "There was a great calm."

27. *But the men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!*

They did not know their Lord yet, nor do we. Perhaps we have to go to sea to learn more of Him, I mean that troubles and trials of a greater sort than we have known before may yet have to come to be our schoolmasters to teach us who Jesus is. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep." You landsmen are thankful for your quiet, but you do not see so much of Jesus as others of His disciples do, you must go to sea to be able to cry, "What manner of man is this?"

28-29. *And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?*

They know that there is a time when He will judge them, and when their torment will begin. Say what you please, sin in men or devils will be followed with torment, with sorrow indescribable, unutterable, and these devils knew it, and they were obliged to confess the truth. They were afraid lest Jesus had come to inflict upon them the penalty of their evil deeds before that last great day.

30. *And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.*

The owners of these animals had no business to have any swine there, swine were forbidden in that holy country, and they should not have been kept there.

31. *So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.*

What a wonderful creature a man is, as compared with an animal! A legion of devils could be packed away into these two men, but they needed a whole herd of swine to contain them all. How much greater is a man than a beast, that is to say, how much more capable of spiritual influence for evil as well as for good!

32. *And he said unto them, Go.*

Jesus never wastes words on devils, He is always short and sharp with them, “Go.”

32. *And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.*

The proverb has it, “They run fast whom the devil drives,” they run to destruction, even as these swine perished in the waters.

33-34. *And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus:*

You feel that they are going to worship Him, or at least to ask Him to come, and teach them the way of salvation, nothing of the sort.

34. *And when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.*

And there are many still who try all they can to get Christ to go away from them. Woe be to them if He grants their desire!

Matthew Chapter 9:1. *And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.*

I think I see the departing sail—love, hope, and peace melting away upon the distant horizon, and the Gergesenes left to perish! O God, do not so with any of us! Say not, “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.”

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.