

PLACE FOR THE WORD

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A SERMON

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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“My word has no place in you.”

John 8:37.

THIS was very plain speaking on the part of the Lord Jesus Christ. He could not only read the thoughts of these Jews, but He could also tell the source of them. He not only knew their feelings towards Himself, even before they expressed them; but He also knew why they had such feelings. Our Lord is not here now in bodily presence, but He is here by His Spirit. He knows those who have received His Word, and He looks with gracious approval upon them. If you have given it entrance into your heart, thank Him for it, and take care that you retain it, and that you permit it to influence your whole life. Let His Word be in you as salt to preserve you; and, as light first shining into you, and then streaming from you, let it make your life a blessing to all those who are around you. My Master is glad as He looks upon everyone here who has received His Word. Precious is that coffer which holds the priceless treasure of the Word of Christ. Your body is precious to Him, your soul is precious to Him, when He can see that sacred deposit of His own Word abiding within you.

But there are some here, I fear—no, in all honesty, I must say that there certainly are some here in whom the Word of God is not to be found. To them Christ says, “My Word has no place in you.” Jesus knows your condition, my dear hearer, if that is your case; He knows how often you have heard that Word, He knows what struggles it has cost you to keep that Word from entering your heart, He knows with what determination you have refused to receive that truth which has come from God to you. I would like, if I could, to talk very simply, and in a very friendly and homely manner, to every person here who has not received God's Word; and I would wish so to speak that I should not be understood to be preaching to this great mass of people so much as to be talking to individuals one by one, lovingly anxious that any here who have not Christ's Word in them may not go out of this building until it has a place in their hearts.

I. I will begin by asking this question—WHAT PLACE OUGHT THE WORD OF GOD HAVE IN MEN'S HEARTS? Jesus said to these Jews, “My Word has no place in you.” What place ought the Word of God to have in our hearts?

First, it ought to have *an inside place*. Many persons will give it an outside place. “The Word of God,” says one—“yes, of course I have it in my house. The Word of God—if you come home with me, you will find that I have a splendid copy of the Bible in my best room, well bound and capitally illustrated.” Another says, “I have a Bible in almost every room of my house; I think there is one in every room, I like to see it there.” Yes, that is very proper and right; but, still, the place for God's Word is not an outside place, but an inside place. It is infinitely better to have it hidden in your heart than it is to have many copies of it laid among the furniture of your house. It may be that your having the Word of God so plentifully at home may increase your damnation, rather than lead to your salvation. You had the Lamp of life, but you made a dark lantern of it; you shut in the light, and never used it for any practical purpose. My dear hearers, you who pay an outward reverence to that Word, and say that it is undoubtedly inspired, and praise and extol it; if, at the same time, believing it to be true, you do not yield yourself up to its power, may God have mercy upon you, and lead you to repent of your sin! The proper place for the Word is inside, in your heart; have you got it hidden there?

Next, it ought to have *a place of high honor*. God's Word in a man ought to be in the best part of that man; not merely in the store room of his memory, but in the drawing room of his enjoyments, in the par-

lor where it will talk with him. If the human mind is compared to a palace, the proper place for Christ's Word is on the throne. All the writings of men put together cannot equal in value one single chapter of the Bible. Their words at best are but gold-leaf; but God's Word is bullion. Here you have pearls that are altogether priceless, such as can never be found elsewhere. If the Word of Christ dwells in you, let it dwell in you richly; let it be honored and revered, beyond all the words of men, however excellent those words may be.

Give the Word of Christ an inside place and a place of honor.

Next, give it *a place of trust*. Let it cover you as the hen covers her chickens with her wings. Let it surround you as the ramparts surround the city, and protect it from the invader. Give yourself up to God's truth as one trusts himself in a lifeboat, hoping to be safely landed. Have no confidence but in the Word of the Master. If you stand partly on God's Word and partly on man's word, you will have one foot on a rock and the other foot upon quicksand, and that one foot upon the quicksand will be your ruin. "Trust you in the Lord forever;" for His Word is faithful, true, and steadfast. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His Word shall never pass away. Give then to that Word all your confidence; repose upon it for it; is infallible and unchangeable.

Further, if the Word of God is in you, give it *a place of rule*. Let it be the master of your thoughts, ruling your understanding; the master of your affections, curbing your passions, and exciting in you holy desires. Let it be the master of your words; let all sinful and even all idle words be banished from your lips; let your speech be seasoned with the salt of revelation; let the Word of the Lord be the master of your action. "Whatsoever He says to you do it." If Christ forbids you to do anything, let it be renounced with all the energy of your spirit. Put the Scripture, the inspired Word, put Christ, the Incarnate Word Himself, upon the throne of your whole being, and surrender yourself to Him, without attempting to make any terms or conditions.

The Word of God ought also to have in us *a place of love*. "O how love I Your law," said David. God's Word is never truly known till it is loved. "I hate vain thoughts, but Your law do I love," said David; he esteemed it more than gold, yes, than much fine gold. In religion, to love is to know; I wish it were always true that to know is to love. When we love the Word, and it saturates our whole being, so that we cannot relinquish it, but take an intense delight in it, and have a fervent affection for every part of it, then it is that we put the Word of God into the place it ought to occupy—not in the attic of the brain, but in the parlor of the heart, and there let it take up its permanent abode.

That last remark suggests that the Word of Christ ought to have *a permanent place* in us; it ought never to be forgotten. We should not be followers of Christ today and followers of somebody else tomorrow. No; let the Word that Christ has spoken have an eternal effect upon our immortal nature, and a perpetual abiding place within our heart. God grant that it may be so intertwined with the very warp and woof of our being that it would be impossible to take it from us without destroying our very selves! May our life prove that the living Word is within us, quickening us, and causing us to live with the life of God!

Now, dear friends, it is for a special reason that I have insisted upon this point, that the Word of God should have its rightful place in us. I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet, yet I perceive that there is coming upon the world a time of most unusual trial. I believe that, within the next few years, we shall hear of all sorts of fanaticism and folly such as you have hardly imagined. There will probably arise false christs, and false prophets of every kind, and you will be bidden to believe in this, and to follow that, and to obey the other. I charge you, by the living God, have no master but Christ, and have no book but the Bible to be your infallible guide. Now, soldiers, the watchword for today is, "Stand fast." You who are but babes must grow, or else you will be swept off your feet in the cyclones of excitement that have already begun. Be no longer children, leaping over the hedge to seek for every nest that silly birds may build. Keep you to the King's highway, and follow Christ; and he that comes to you, though he seems a saint transparent as crystal and bright as the sun, turn from him, if he speaks to you any other thing than this Word of Christ, this permanent, perpetual Word, which cannot be shaped or changed. Stand you on this solid Rock; and when the hurly-burly is over, and when brains shall cease to swim, you will have cause to rejoice in your steadfastness. There are swift currents now, that strain every ship, and compel the mariner to put on all steam even to hold his own against them, and blessed shall he be who is not carried away by them. Blessed shall be the brave sentinel of Christ who stood still in his

watchtower though the morning was long in coming, and who watched through the dreary night with steadfast expectation that it would come, and with this resolve that whether it did come or did not come, where His Master put him, there would he stand. As for me, I care not what men invent, or what they deny; the truth which I have learned from the Scriptures, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, is the truth by which I shall stand so long as there is breath in my body; and with Luther I say, I can do no other. To this I must stand, and let those who will do otherwise, follow after novelties till they weary of them.

This much have I spoken concerning the place which God's Word ought to have in every man's heart.

II. Now give me your heart, friend; let me have a good grip of it, while I try to answer a second question—WHY HAS THAT WORD NO PLACE IN MANY HEARTS?

“Oh!” says one, “*I am so very busy that I cannot admit it.*” My dear friend, I hope you will alter that answer. I heard, some time ago, of one who, when anyone spoke to him about religion, always used to reply, “You see, I am so very busy that I cannot attend to it.” It happened, one morning, that he saw in the paper that a fellow-tradesman had suddenly died; and, as he read the paragraph, he said to his wife, “I don't know how old So-and-So found time to die; I have such a deal to do that I could not afford time to die.” He staggered as he went out of the room, and fell across the threshold dead within five minutes after having uttered that wicked speech. I have no doubt that the same thing has happened elsewhere. You may fancy that you are too busy to think of the affairs of your soul; yet you may be taken away, all of a sudden, from the midst of your occupations, and then what will those gains benefit you? It may be printed, in *The Illustrated London News* that you died worth so many thousands of pounds; but will it not be a great falsehood? When a rich man dies, what is he worth? He has, perhaps, a lead coffin, or the undertaker may use more expensive wood than for a poor man, and there is a greater display at the funeral, and very often there is more squabbling with his family over what he has left. I have often thought that the poor man's funeral has much more sorrow in it, much more, that could be desired and spoken of with pleasure, than the funeral of the man who seeks to be immensely rich. You know what happens when poor Hodge dies. His wife weeps, for he was the mainstay of the household, the bread-winner of the family. The poor woman wonders how he is to be buried. Well, there is his daughter, Mary; she is a domestic, and she gets about 15 pounds a year for wages; she has not much to spare, but she makes up her mind that her father shall not be buried by the parish, so she finds a little of the money that is needed. There is the eldest son; he has eight children of his own, and he has only the wages of an agricultural laborer; but he pinches and bargains so that he may subscribe his sovereign towards the expense. They all feel what they give, they are made to feel it; and they all sincerely mourn and lament; and though there is not a sixpence to divide between them, yet with what honor and with what love they lay their father in the silent tomb! On the other hand, you know how it often is with rich people; the best part of the funeral is when the will is read; and I have more than once heard some such remark as this—“That man was very much like a hog—no good to anybody while he lived, but he will make some fine sides of bacon when he is cut up.” Is it worth while for a man to fling his soul away merely that he may get so much together that he cannot use, and which will very likely be misused by those who inherit it? I say that “the game is not worth the candle.” My dear friend, if this is the game you have been playing, give it up at once, and say, “I must have time, I will have time, come what may, to seek the salvation of my soul, for above all things else I want to make sure of life eternal.” You will not again say that you are too busy to receive Christ's Word, will you?

Another says, “You ask me why the Word of Christ is not abiding in me; I think it is because—.” No, you would not like to say it, so I will say it for you; it is *because there is no particular novelty about it*. You like a brand-new gospel, do you not? Well, there are plenty of people, nowadays, who supply that worthless article. We get a new sect about every month, and some new-fashioned gospel invented almost every week. Away they go after something fresh; first, North; then, South; then, East; then, West. “Hurrah! We have found the very thing; sound the timbrels, beat the drums, blow the trumpets!” Just so; but “the kingdom of God comes not with observation.” Remember what was written concerning Christ hundreds of years before He came to earth: “He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth.” If the gospel that men teach is new, it is not true, for there is nothing that can be new and true. The truth is old as the everlasting hills. Therefore, dear friends, be not touched with

that Athenian madness of always seeking after some new thing. Did you ever hear of new gold? To all intents and purposes, all gold that is worth having is old. Men can make what they call pearls, and sapphires, and diamonds; but they are paste gems, and utterly valueless. It is just the same with the doctrines made by men; they are not according to the eternal Word, and therefore they are not worth a penny a cartload. Do not be so foolish as to reject Christ's Word because it is ancient; that is the very reason why you should receive it, and retain it in your memory and in your heart.

Shall I suggest that there are some who do not receive Christ's Word *because they are listening to man's word*? If you know anybody who is equal to my Master, hear him. If you know anybody who is superior to Christ, hear him. As for me, He is the one and the only Teacher of the truth of God, and at His feet I reverently and humbly sit. All other teachers whom I have ever heard of, or met with, so far as they speak as He does, are worthy of attention; but whenever their teaching diverges from His, on that point they are worthy of no regard whatever. Did you say that such-and-such a thing is believed by you because you found it in Calvin's *Institutes*? I am a Calvinist and a lover of that grand man's memory and doctrine; but I believe nothing merely because Calvin taught it, but because I have found his teaching in the Word of God. "Oh, but the Prayer Book says such-and-such!" It may do so; but, I pray you, believe nothing because it is there, unless it can also be found in Holy Scripture. "But such-and-such things were in the Minutes of Mr. Wesley's Conference." If they are according to Scripture, let them stand; but if they are not, who was Mr. Wesley that we should receive his teaching? "Oh, but the archbishops have said it!" And what are all the archbishops piled together, from the days of the first archbishop until now, wherein they have differed from the Word of God? No, my friend; do not fill your brain with other people's teaching; but if you would be right, turn all else out, and come and say, "The Word of Christ for me! The Word of Christ for me!" If I have any influence over you, and if you are ever inclined to believe a thing simply because I say it, I charge you, throw away such superstition, and test all that I say by the Word of God. The real weight of truth consists not in what one man says, or in what another man says; the weight, the power, the substance, lies in what Christ has said; that and that alone, is the truth of God.

I think I hear another say, "I have not received Christ's Word, for *it seems to me to be too spiritual, too holy*." We can never deny that it is holy and spiritual; but, my friend, think that matter over, and withdraw those words you just uttered. Can anything be too spiritual to come from God, or too holy to bring us back to God? Let those characteristics of the Word charm you to Christ, and not drive you away from Him.

"Oh, but!" says one, "if I were to believe Christ's Word, *it would be very cold comfort to me*; and it would rob me of many of my present enjoyments." Yes, if those enjoyments would rob you of your soul, but not else. There is no pleasure denied to me, as a Christian man, except such pleasure as would be no pleasure to me as a Christian man. The moment a man's mind takes in Christ's Word, and is saturated with Christ's Spirit, he finds a pleasure only in that which is good; while that which is deluding, that which is degrading, that which is depraving, becomes a misery to him. Can anyone find comfort in Christ's Word? Ask the sick who can lie on their beds and sing. Is there comfort in Christ's Word? Ask the aged who, tottering on their staff in the midst of many infirmities, are taught a holy patience. Ask the dying who, as they gasp out their life, yet shout of victory, their faces beaming with the light of the glory which is opening up before them. If you want real joy, find it in Christ's Word, and let him no longer say that it has no place in you.

Let me give you a very special squeeze of the hand, and whisper in your ear that I am afraid the reason why God's Word has no place in your heart is that *you are not very much in earnest*. You are only like a butterfly; you have not come to real living yet; you are sporting, playing, trifling. Oh, that you might soon find life in earnest, and think in earnest about eternity! Then, but not till then, will you seek to lay hold on Christ.

May I also whisper to you very softly, and ask,—Is not the reason why you have not received Christ's Word, *because you have some favorite sin*? I have known men, who could not be Christians, and they argued very plausibly about the matter, but the real hindrance was that they had another house besides their own. I have known some men who could not believe in Jesus Christ, for one very sufficient reason—namely, that they believed too much in the bottle. You know that a man cannot be a believer in the Savior when he is devotedly attached to the god Bacchus. And I have known some to get very much

enraged against the truth, and the one who preached it, when the reason has been that their mode of conducting business did not square with the gospel. Their yard measure was short of thirty-six inches; and when they began to count up to a hundred, it was very difficult for them to get beyond eighty-five; a “dozen” did not mean twelve, and a gross—well, I do not know how grossly short their “gross” fell. There are all sorts of tricks of trade; and a man who practices them says, “Well, you know, I am not strait-laced.” No, sir; nobody ever thought that you were. “Oh, but I am not going to be one of your precise people!” No, I know you are not; we really would not malign you so much as to suppose that you were going to be precise, like the Puritans, for instance. You, also, are among those who like a broad theology. Yes, I know; you sometimes are unable to get home at night because the pavement is so narrow, I understand you perfectly well. It is for this reason that many do not receive Christ’s Word, because there is some pet sin of their own that they do not like to have interfered with, and therefore Christ and His Word are shut out of their heart.

Shall I tell you one thing more? Very possibly, you do not receive Christ’s Word *because you need to be made a new man before you will do so*. The carnal man receives not the things that are of God. There is a hard slab of rock in your heart, and when the good seed falls upon it, the birds soon take it away. What you need, friends, is to have that rock broken up, dissolved, changed into crumbly earth. Can I do that for you? I was going to say, I wish I could; but I cannot. Only the Eternal Spirit, who can quicken the dead, can renew you in the spirit of your mind. Cry unto God that this great miracle may be worked; you will never receive the Word until it is. This is the message for you, “You must be born again:” *must*, mark you; it is not *may*;—“you must—you *must* be born again,” for until you are born again, this living and incorruptible seed of the Word of God will never get into your hearts. May the Holy Spirit speedily work the miracle of regeneration in your spirit!

III. I have finished when I have tried to answer very briefly my third question—IF YOU HAVE NOT THE WORD OF CHRIST IN YOU, WHAT WILL COME OF IT?

Something came to the Jews because they rejected Christ’s Word; they sought to kill Christ because His Word had no place in them. I hope that will not happen to you, friends; but I have witnessed it in others. I have seen the child of godly parents quench conscience and resist the Spirit. I have seen many a young man, full of fair promises, but refusing to be decided for Christ; and, all of a sudden, I have found him a skeptic; I have seen him grow into an infidel; I have seen him develop into a blasphemer; I have known him to become a most violent antagonist to the gospel. “Is your servant a dog,” says one, “that he should do this thing?” No, it may be that you are not a dog; but there is enough of the dog spirit in you to do it. If you are dog enough to turn away from Christ, you will be dog enough yet to howl at His heels. Beware of resisting the Spirit of God, and trifling with conscience, for there is nothing worse. A man may play on the edge of a precipice, and he may do it safely for many a day, but one of these days he will make a fatal slip. Mind what you are doing, I pray you; never let it be said of you, as Christ said to these Jews, “You seek to kill Me, because My Word has no place in you.”

Or, if that shall not be the case with you, I will tell you what may happen. Christ may cease speaking to you. “I shall not leave off going to chapel,” says one. No, perhaps not; but the gospel may no longer have any voice to you. Possibly, it has already less power over you than it once had; you used to shiver in your shoes when you heard the truth, you have gone out of this place trembling under the Word; you do not do so now. I hope it is not because I do not preach as earnestly as I did; but if I do preach as earnestly and as faithfully as ever, then what is happening to you? Why, you are getting deaf ears, and the callous, hardened heart, and these are the commencement of that most awful of all conditions into which men slide when God says to His messengers, “Go, and tell this people, Hear you indeed, but understand not; and see you indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.” It is a terrible thing when even the gospel becomes the savor of death unto death to those who would not permit it to be the savor of life unto life to them. Before Christ packs up His wares, and goes His way, because you would not have His goods, ask Him to let you buy them of Him. His terms will not hurt you; He sells His precious things “without money and without price.” Crave at His hands that, before He turns His back on you, you may yield to Him and be saved.

And, remember, once more, that if the Word of God has no place in us, *it will exist somewhere*. Down came the Word of God to a man, the other night, and it knocked very hard at his heart, but the

door was shut; the Word knocked again, and again, and again. Still the door was shut, and the Word went back to Him who sent it, and it stayed there. How many times have you heard the gospel, my friend? Could you count up the number of faithful discourses that have been preached in your hearing? Do you know how many earnest entreaties from friends have been in vain addressed to you? You shut them out, but they all went back and there they are, at the throne of God; and when you come there at last, and your trial takes place, you will be surprised to find all those messages and messengers present at the last grand assize, to bear witness against you. Oh, let it not be so, I pray you! Will you not believe in Jesus Christ even now? Will you not turn unto Him and live, this very hour? Will you not leave your sins and trust the Savior? Will you not go to Him, and, with a broken heart, confess that you need Him? He may be found of those who seek Him; then, will you not seek Him now? If not, remember this scene—these crowded galleries, this area, these thousands of eyes—I call upon all to witness against you, in that day, that this night I preached Christ to you, and bade you live; and if you will not, if you prefer moral and eternal suicide, I call this building, every beam and every stone in it, and every person here, to witness that I have told you of the way of salvation, and implored you to run in it. They shall be swift witnesses against you to condemn you if you will not repent. Turn you; turn you, why will you die? Trust the Savior; trust Him now; and live forever. God grant that it may be so, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 8:28-59.

Verse 28. *Then said Jesus unto them,—*

That is, to the Jews who were questioning and opposing Him,—

28. *When you have lifted up the Son of man, then shall you know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father has taught Me, I speak these things.*

Blessed be God, there were many, after the crucifixion of Christ, who did believe in Him! Yet, alas! In others, the blindness of heart continued, and they would not see the Messiah in Him who was crucified.

We, who believe in the uplifted Savior, can see the Father in the Son; and to us, faith has become a most blessed thing; and we know that He does nothing of Himself, and that, as the Father has taught Him, so He speaks.

29. *And He that sent Me is with Me:*

I commend that short sentence to all my Master's servants, for there is great comfort in it. Your Lord could say this, and so can you if you are truly employed in His service: "He that sent me is with me."

29. *The Father has not left Me alone;*

There is another precious motto for you. Jesus could truly say, "The Father has not left Me alone;" and, as He did not leave His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, so He will not leave any of His sons.

29. *For I do always those things that please Him.*

Let us labor earnestly to be able to say that. If there is anything which would not please God, let us have nothing to do with it; if it would not please God, it ought not to please us. Blessed shall that servant of the Lord be who can sincerely say, "I do always those things that please Him."

30-32. *As He spoke these words, many believed on Him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If you continue in My word, then are you My disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

There is such a thing as a temporary faith; beware of it, I beseech you. Men appear to believe in Christ for a little while, like that seed which was sown upon the rock, which speedily sprang up, and just as quickly withered away. God-given faith is not temporary, but permanent: "If you continue in My word, then are you My disciples indeed." God gives us the faith which is able to endure the fire of persecution, and which continues steadfast even when exposed to the evil example of an ungodly world. "He that endures to the end shall be saved;" but temporary faith brings only delusion, and ends in destruction.

33, 34. *They answered Him, We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how say You, You shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin.*

Depend upon it, acts of sin breed habits of sin; and habits are like the chains which slaves wear. How many there are who are bound to their lusts with many shackles and fetters! Once, they seemed to enjoy the sin, and to hold it in subjection, but now it has bound them, and they cannot escape from it.

35, 36. *And the servant abides not in the house forever: but the Son abides ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.*

If He sets you free from sin, you will never go back to its slavery again. There is no emancipation like that which Jesus brings, for it is eternal; when He snaps the fetter, He sets the believer free forever.

37, 38. *I know that you are Abraham's seed; but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and you do that which you have seen with your father.*

It is a common characteristic of children to tell what they see; what they witness at home, they are sure to tell abroad. If you are a child of God, you will act and speak like your Father does; and if you are a child of the devil, you will act and speak like him. Our parentage may be discovered by our acts and our words: "I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and you do that which you have seen with your father."

39. *They answered and said unto Him, Abraham is our father. Jesus said unto them, If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.*

"That is, if you were the true spiritual children of faithful Abraham, you would act as he did."

40-42. *But now you seek to kill Me, a man that has told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. You do the deeds of your father. Then said they to Him, We are not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, you would love Me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me.*

If any man has a right idea of God, and really loves God, if he will study the character of Christ, he will see that Christ is the very image of God in human flesh, and he will fall in love with Christ. That result is inevitable. Men form wrong ideas of God; and then, when they read the life of Christ, they see no likeness between the Christ and their conception of God; nor is there any. But if they would take their idea of God from God's own Word, then they would see that, in the person of the Man of Nazareth, the Divine character truly shines out, though it is toned down so as to meet the human eye without the excessive glare that would blind it. But it is the same Light of Light, the same Love of Love, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, "for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." He is the express image of God, and he who truly knows God will know that Christ is also God, for Father and Son are one.

43-47. *Why do you not understand My speech? Even because you cannot hear My word. You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, you believe Me not. Which of you convinces Me of sin? And if say the truth, why do you not believe Me? He that is of God hears God's words: you therefore hear them not, because you are not of God.*

What a wonderful character was the character of Christ! We get a strange light cast upon it as we read this dialog in which He endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself. My brethren, in Christ there is all the tenderness of a woman; but do not think that He is effeminate, far from it. What masculine force, what vigor, what power, there is in Him! There are some people who, if we speak plainly against error, tell us that we are uncharitable, and that we have not the spirit of Christ. Is it so? Did there ever fall from any lips more burning words than those which we find here, when He is brought into conflict with His foes? The fact is, He is meek and lowly, but He is most courageous; He is genial and kind, but He is honest and true. He speaks with suavity and gentleness; but, at the same time, there is great force about every expression that He uses. He does not mince matters when He is dealing with sin. There is no velvet on His lips; He utters no honeyed phrases. Naked truth flashes, like a scimitar from its scabbard, when He has to deal with those who oppose the truth. "Because I tell you the truth,

you believe Me not. Which of you convinces Me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do you not believe Me? He that is of God hears God's words: you therefore hear them not, because you are not of God."

48. *Then answered the Jews, and said unto Him, Say we not well that You are a Samaritan, and have a devil?*

You know this form of answer; it is an old trick, when there is no case, abuse the plaintiff. So, when there is no answer to what Christ has said, call Him a Samaritan, and say that He has a devil.

49-51. *Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. And I seek not My own glory: there is one that seeks and judges. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death.*

What glorious gospel brilliance Christ suddenly flashes upon these men! He promises even to them that, if they will keep His saying, they shall live forever; they shall be partakers of an eternal, unquenchable life. It might have seemed to us to be like casting pearls before swine to proclaim that great truth to such hearers; but our Master's infinite wisdom does not permit us to think so.

52-56. *Then said the Jews unto Him, Now we know that You have a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, If a man keeps My saying, he shall never taste of death. Are You greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? And the prophets are dead: whom do You make Yourself? Jesus answered, If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing: it is My Father that honors Me; of whom you say, that He is your God: yet you have not known Him; but I know Him: and if I should say, I know Him not, I shall be a liar like you: but I know Him, and keep His saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and He saw it, and was glad.*

He will not answer their questions, for they do not ask that they may learn. They ask that they may quibble; so He multiplies His riddles. He lets the light blind them yet more. Now He speaks, not so much of the undying life of believers, as of His own eternal existence, long before the prophets and Abraham of whom they had spoken.

57, 58. *Then said the Jews unto Him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I Am.*

Before there was any Abraham, there was this glorious Christ of ours, existing as the Eternal I AM, in all the infinity of His glory.

Now comes a thoroughly characteristic Jewish answer,—

59. *Then took they up stones to cast at Him: but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.*

They believed that He claimed to be God, as He certainly did, and therefore they tried to stone Him; and there is no foothold for those who say that Christ was a very good man, but only a man. If He was not the Son of God, He was not a good man, for no good man would have left upon his followers, and upon his foes, too, the impression that he claimed to be God, if he was not; and no good man could have claimed to be God if he was not really so. Rank Him either among the grossest of impostors, or else as the Son of God—one or the other. There is no halting-place between the two. Blessed be Your name, O Son of Mary, You are also the Son of the Highest, and as such we worship and adore You!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—166, 434, 478.

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