

A MAN OF GOD ALONE WITH GOD

NO. 2796

A SERMON
 INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1902
 DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
 ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 26, 1878

“I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.”
Psalm 119:26

WORLDLY men think very little of God. They live at a distance from Him, they have no communion with Him, like the fool, they have said in their heart, “No God,” and they try to realize in their lives their heart’s desire. Very different is it with the true believer. He recognizes God everywhere, he sees God in all the good or ill that checkers life, he believes that God has created every worm that crawls upon the face of the earth, and that He has painted every flower that blooms.

The whole world is full of God to him who believes in God, and he has communion with God wherever he goes. He cannot live without it, it is his joy and delight. He is a child of God, so how can he live happily in his Father’s house unless he often sees his Father’s face, and speaks with Him, and hears His voice in return? The Christian makes much of God, and God makes much of him, for they have a mutual delight in one another. Hence, in such a text as this, you perceive how the psalmist talked with God, and God heard him, and he knew that God heard him, and then he spoke again to God, and said, “Teach me thy statutes.”

This is, perhaps, one of the main differences between the believer and the unbeliever—between him that fears God and him that fears Him not. The first lesson for man is to know his God, the second is to know himself, and as the unbeliever fails in the first, he fails in the second also, he does not know himself. He does not think much about himself—about his real self, the most important part of his being. For his body, he caters freely, he can scarcely spend enough upon it, but he starves his soul. He scarcely recognizes its existence, and he has but little thought or care about the immortality to which it is ordained.

But a true believer knows himself. We are sure, from our text, that he does, for he would not declare his ways if he did not know them. But he has practiced introspection, and looked within himself. He has practiced self-examination, and studied his own inner life. He does not profess to understand himself altogether—for man is the next greatest mystery to God, God is the first mystery, and man is the second. He does not understand his own ways, he cannot always comprehend his own thoughts, or follow the devious wanderings of his own mind, but still, he does know a good deal about himself, and when he goes before his God, he can truthfully say, “I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me.”

Among other things, he has discovered his own ignorance, and hence he presents the prayer with which the text concludes, “Teach me.” He is ignorant even of God’s revealed will, so he prays, “‘Teach me thy statutes,’ O Lord! I know the Book in which they are recorded, and I can learn them in the letter, but You teach them to me, in my spirit, by Your Spirit, that I may know them aright.”

This then, is to be the subject of our meditation. Let us come to it, looking up to the Lord, and asking Him to bless the meditation to each one of us. I shall take the text in two senses, the primary one is, I think, *a man of God alone with God*, “I have declared my ways” (understand, “to God”), “and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.” But I judge that it is lawful, especially in the light of the following verse, to believe that the psalmist may have alluded to his speaking with men, so in the second part of my discourse, I shall speak of *a man of God considering his own public testimony*, and saying, when he had done so, “I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes. Make me to

understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk”—which must mean his speaking to others—“so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.”

I. So, first, we see here A MAN OF GOD ALONE WITH GOD, and we notice three things about him, he is making his case known, “I have declared my ways,” he is rejoicing in an audience which he has obtained, “thou heardest me,” and he is seeking a further blessing, “Teach me thy statutes.”

First, *he is making his case known*. I understand this to be, first, the language of a sinner confessing his sin, “I have declared my ways.” He is a sensible sinner, and therefore he is not in a confessional box with the human ear of a fellow sinner to listen to him, he is a rational being, who has not degraded himself as low as that. But he is confessing his sin to the great High Priest who can be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” to Him who cannot be defiled by listening to our tale of sin, to Him to whom alone will it avail to confess our sins, for “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,” if we confess them to Him.

Can each one of us now say, in this sense, “I have declared my ways” to the Lord? For, this should be done, not only at our first coming to Him, but continually throughout the whole of our life. We should look over each day, and sum up the errors of the day, and say, “I have declared my ways’—my naughty ways, my wicked ways, my wandering ways, my backsliding ways, my cold, indifferent ways, my proud ways—the way of my words, the way of my thoughts, the way of my imagination, the way of my memory, for it has a treacherous way of remembering evil and forgetting good—the way of my actions towards You, my God, and there is much to regret there, the way of my actions in my family, in the world, and in the church.”

What a sorrowful stock-taking each day would be to many professors if they were honest to themselves and to their God! Even those who “walk in the light, as God is in the light,” and have the closest fellowship with Him, yet know that it is a very sweet and blessed thing even for them that “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,” for even they still sin, and it is necessary for each one of them to say continually, “I have declared my ways.”

Do you try to hide your sin, dear friend? It is useless for you to attempt to do so, for God ever sees it. Why do you seek to conceal what is always before His eye? Better far to confess them to Him, that He may then cast it behind His back, and remember it against you no more forever. I believe that often, as sinners confessing to God, we miss much true comfort for want of making a clean breast of our transgressions. Yet the Lord knows what is in our heart even though we do not own it.

It has been well observed that when Moses tried to excuse himself to God for not wanting to go to deliver Israel, he said that he was slow of speech, and God met that objection by giving him Aaron his brother to speak for him, but the Lord in His reply to Moses also said, “All the men are dead who sought thy life.” Moses had not said anything about that matter, but God knew that there was that fear in his heart, so He put His finger on the sore place at once.

It is well when we can do that for ourselves, when in our spirit there is no guile, when we come, as David did in the fifty-first psalm, and confess the very sin which we have committed, “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,” calling it by its right name, then is it that the soul begins to get peace with God.

“But,” someone asks, “are we then to confess to God every sin in detail?” No, that would be impossible, and probably it would not even be useful, but there must be no wish to conceal any sin from God. Such a desire would be a vain one, for “all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” There must be an acknowledgment of the sins which we have not yet seen in their full heinousness. Each of us will do well to offer David’s prayer, “Cleanse thou me from secret faults.” If we have committed faults which are hidden even from ourselves, we desire to be delivered from them so that they should not remain to our condemnation.

I do not suppose that any unregenerate sinner will act thus towards his God until the Holy Spirit has begun to work graciously within him. While the prodigal was wasting his substance with riotous living, he thought himself a fine gentleman, and even when he was feeding the swine, he only said, “I have had very bad luck.” But it was “when he came to himself” that he said, “I will arise and go to my father,”

and it was when he felt his father's warm kiss upon his cheek that he made the confession, "Father, I have sinned." There is no contrition so deep as that of the man who can say concerning his sins—

*"I know they are forgiven;
But still, their pain to me
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on Thee."*

So then, our text is, first, the language of a sinner confessing his guilt to his God, but it is more than that. It is next, the private talk of a patient with his doctor, "I have declared my ways."

See, there is the little room upstairs, and there lies the patient whom the physician has come to try to cure. The doctor's first work is to find out all he can about the patient's disease, so he begins by asking concerning the various symptoms that have been noticed. He is sure to look at the sick man's tongue, and you may learn a great deal, spiritually, of the condition of a man's heart from the state of his tongue.

The doctor will also sound the patient's lungs, test his heart, and take his temperature, and ask him a great many questions, not merely about what appears on the surface, but about his inmost self, and when at last the patient can say, "There, doctor, I have told you all, now will you prescribe for me?" he is in the condition of the psalmist when he said to the Lord, "I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes."

The text very accurately describes such a state of things as that which exists when a patient relates his symptoms to the physician, and then the physician prescribes for him, for in addition to sin being a great evil in the sight of God, it is also a disease to which we are all prone, and from which only the great Physician can cure us.

We cry out against it, and our better self fights against it, yet the old man within us, "the body of this death," as Paul calls it, fights against the new nature, and we should be overcome were it not for divine grace. So it is well for us to declare our ways.

Suppose I put it for myself or for you thus, "Lord, I find that even when I am engaged in prayer, my thoughts wander. When I am in trouble, I get fretful and rebellious. When a little difficulty meets me in my business, I do not trust You as I ought. I sometimes find that when I try to be humble, I become desponding, and when I am joyful, I become presumptuous. I seem to be like a pendulum swinging too far this way, and then too far that way. I know not how to steer the ship of my life between the Scylla of this sin and the Charybdis of that.

O my Master, I am but dust and ashes, I am less than nothing, and vanity! If You do ask me what ails me, I seem to have all manner of diseases upon me at once. Sometimes, I am hot with fever and full of wrath, and at other times, I shiver with ague as though I did not know what I believed, and could not lay hold of Your truth with a firm grip.

Sometimes I fear that I have a fatal disease upon me, and certainly, were it not for Your unfailing medicine—the great catholicon—my soul would pine away and die. Yet, amid all these evil symptoms, there is one sign that, I trust, is for good. I do know where my help lies, and I look alone to You for healing. I know that Your precious blood has cleansed me, and on that blood alone I do rely." Thus the patient tells the good Physician, as far as he can, what he feels, and what is the disease from which he is suffering.

I think too, that we might use another figure to illustrate the meaning of our text, it is like a client telling his advocate all about his affairs. It is a difficult case in law. There is an accuser who has come forward with very serious charges, and he brings witnesses to substantiate what he affirms, and the case is a very complicated one. The client says that he does not know how to plead for himself, he says that he is at his wits' end, and he asks the advocate whether he has any argument that can avail for him. The advocate replies, "I must first know all about your case before I can advise you, so tell me everything."

Now, the Lord Jesus, your great Advocate, already knows all about you, yet He likes you to tell it all to Him. It is always a good thing to—

*“Tell it all to Jesus,
Comfort or complaint.”*

Mind that you do tell it all to Him, do not keep anything back. Tell Him the complex part of your life, and tell Him the black part of it, be sure to bring that out. Tell Him that the accuser has good ground for his charges against you, and that he can bring abundant witnesses against you—ay, that your own conscience will witness against you—and that you do not know of any plea, on earth or in heaven, that can avail for you unless He will be your Advocate.

Then how dear that Advocate will be to you when He tells you that He can plead His righteousness, His life, His blood, and His death, for “if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

I do not think, however, that we have reached the very marrow of our text until we regard it as describing the intimate communion of friend with friend, “I have declared my ways.” When two men become linked together in close friendship, they are in the habit of telling one another all that happens in their lives, and if one of them is in a difficulty, he goes off to his friend, and tells him about it. They agree with Solomon that “two are better than one; for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow,” and by mutual counsel, wisdom will be found.

The one who is in trouble tells his friend about it, and his friend, perhaps, puts to him a number of questions, not out of prying curiosity, but in order that he may become acquainted with the whole case, and so be qualified to advise or to help. And we, beloved, if we really know the Lord in spirit and in truth, are exalted to the position of friends of Jesus. “Henceforth,” said He to His disciples, “I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.”

The Lord said, “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” when he was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, and we must hide nothing from our God. It ought to be the daily habit of the believer to commune with his God, we ought to make Him our Confidant in all things. You will go amiss, depend upon it, if you do not wait upon the Lord for guidance. “Bring hither the ephod,” was David’s command to the priests when he was in perplexity, and knew not what he ought to do.

Israel made a great mistake with regard to the Gibeonites because the case seemed so simple to them that they did not need to consult the Lord concerning it. Here were men with dry and moldy bread, and with old shoes and clouted upon their feet, they said they had come from a far country, and the matter appeared so plain that the Israelites asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord, but took of their victuals, and made a treaty with them, as they would not have done if they had consulted the Lord.

I do not think that God’s people often go astray in the most difficult cases, for they do take them to the Lord in prayer. It is in simple matters that we make our greatest blunders, because we think we know what to do, and therefore we do not wait upon the Lord for guidance. Yet he who leans to his own understanding is trusting to a broken reed which will be sure to fail him just when he most needs it. So let us, each one, say to the Lord, in the language of the text, “I have declared my ways.”

Thus far, we have been thinking of the believer making his case known, now secondly, we are to see him *rejoicing that he has obtained an audience with God*, “Thou heardest me.” I cannot tell you how my heart is touched with the sweetness of that short sentence. Did You hear me, O Lord? What condescension on Your part! You have the whole universe to rule and govern, the sweetest songsters are in Your choirs, sounding forth Your praises day without night, yet You heard *me*. And I was not singing Your praises, but confessing my sins. I was not telling the story of all Your wondrous works, I was telling of my own wicked works, and of my sorrows and cares, and You might well have said, “These

things are too small, too insignificant to be brought before My notice,” yet You did not speak so, for You heard me.

But there is something even more wonderful than His condescension, I think, and that is His patience. It is an amazing thing that He should listen to us, and then, when the sad story is told, that He should not turn away in the greatness of His wrath, and utterly destroy us. I think that if you were to tell out all that is in your own heart to any one of your most intimate friends, he would never speak to you again. We read many very charming biographies of men and women, but if the whole of their lives could be written—which we may be thankful cannot be done—the book would not be fit to be read.

But the Lord listens to us, in some things that we have to confess to Him, that we would not confess, and could not confess, and ought not to confess, in any human ear, yet He does not turn away from us in disgust. His pure and holy eyes cannot look upon iniquity except with the utmost abhorrence. He loathes sin in such a way as we can hardly imagine, yet when a penitent sinner comes to confess to Him, He patiently listens to the whole sorrowful story, and feels nothing but pity and love for the guilty narrator of it.

This is truly wonderful, and is very different from the manner of men. A man would probably say, “You have told me now, sir, what I wish I had never heard, for I can never trust you again. I did not think you were so mean, I could not have believed it of you. You have told me something that has let me know that I have been cherishing a viper in my bosom. Never come to my house again, you are a person with whom I do not wish to be in any way associated.”

That is how man talks, but when we have told the Lord everything, He does not spurn us from Him, but He says, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” He puts away our sin by blotting them out like a cloud, and our transgressions as a thick cloud, blessed be His holy name!

When the psalmist says, “Thou heardest me,” he means, “You heard me with sympathy.” There are several different ways of hearing a story. When I have to deal with a case of very deep grief—I do not know whether you have all learned this lesson, but I will tell you how I act, and you may be wise if you do the same, especially if you are a young pastor. If you get a case of very deep grief, hold your tongue, and let the sorrowful one talk, and tell out all the painful details. Those various items may not be very interesting to you, but if you cease to listen to any of them, you will be stopping the process of cure for that poor bleeding heart.

Let the sufferer tell it all out, and do not grudge the time it takes. Interject a word or two of sympathy now and then, and be really sympathetic all the while, but let the troubled soul tell it all out, just as here the psalmist says to the Lord, “I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me.” If you do so, the tried one will go away, and say, “I was so comforted by my interview with the pastor, or with that friend, it did me so much good.” Yet you are conscious that you did nothing but listen to the story of sorrow, and that is the best thing you could possibly have done.

“Mother,” said a little girl, “I can’t think why our neighbor is so glad for me to go in and see her. She has lost her little baby, and she sits and cries, and she says I am such a comfort to her, but mother, I never say anything, I only just put my arms round her neck, and I cry too.” Ah! but that is the best way to comfort the sorrowing, and that is what Jesus does for you when you get near to Him. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmity, and it is His being touched that enables us to bear the blow which has so grievously wounded our heart.

“Thou heardest me.” Even if the Lord did not seem to answer us, yet there would be much comfort to us from His hearing us, letting us tell all our grief to Him, in the full belief that we are not merely telling it out to the air, or speaking to emptiness, but that into His ear, and into His heart, the story of our grief is falling. There is no comfort like this. Try it, mourning ones, you who love His blessed name.

But I think that the psalmist meant even more than this when he said to God, “Thou heardest me.” Surely he meant, “You did graciously come to my help, ‘I declared my ways’—the sinfulness of them, ‘and thou heardest me,’ and did blot out my transgressions. ‘I declared my ways’—the disease of sin

that was in my soul, and by Your stripes You did heal me, by Your Spirit You did sanctify me. ‘I declared my ways’—my legal difficulties, my accusers’ words, and You did hear me by answering them, and sending such joy and peace into my soul that I dared even to cry, ‘Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again.’ I told You all my ways, and like a true and faithful friend, You did not spare anything that You might help me. As You did give Your Son to redeem me, and Your Spirit to sanctify me, so did You give Your providence to succor me, and Your presence to comfort me. ‘Thou heardest me,’ I did not cry to You in vain.”

Are not these words wondrously rich, dear brethren? I seem, in talking to you, as if I only skimmed the surface of them, as a swallow touches the brook with his wing, and is up and away again in a moment, but you may dive into their depths in your happy, heartfelt experience.

Now I come, in the third place, to this man of God alone with God *seeking a further blessing*, “Teach me thy statutes.” I think the psalmist means this, “My Lord, I have told You all, now will You tell me all? I have declared to You my ways, now will You teach me Your ways? I have confessed to You how I have broken Your statutes, will You not give me Your statutes back again? I have owned my weakness, now will You not strengthen me, that I may run in the way of Your commandments?”

We will take this request, “Teach me thy statutes,” in the same way as we took our first division. “I, a sinner, have confessed to You, O Lord, my wicked ways, will You not teach me Your statutes, that I may sin against You no more? Teach me how to be holy. Teach me to repent, for repentance is one of Your statutes. Teach me to believe, for faith in Your dear Son is one of Your great Gospel statutes. Teach me to pray, for this shall help to keep me pure, and prayer is a statute of Yours. Teach me to watch against temptation. Teach me to search the Scriptures. Teach me to yield myself up to You as a living sacrifice, which is my reasonable service, so teach me that I shall—

*“No more from Thee depart,
No more Thy Spirit grieve.”*

Then next, our text means, “I am a patient, and You, O Lord, are my Physician. I have told You the symptoms of my case, now will You teach me Your statutes that I may be healed? I know that Your Word has a healing power, for it is written, ‘He sent his word, and healed them.’ Now, Lord, heal the bleeding wounds of my conscience by Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word. Heal my darkened understanding by your Spirit’s illumination of it through Your Word. You see what my disease is, Your Word is the great Pharmacopoeia, which contains remedies for all spiritual maladies, and You know which will best suit my case. Prescribe for me, ‘Teach me thy statutes.’”

Then, in the case of a client consulting his advocate, the text means, “I have declared my ways to Thee, my great Advocate, now ‘teach me thy statutes,’ I pray You, that I may be wise to meet my accusers in future. ‘Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies.’ ‘Teach me thy statutes’ that I may not give occasion to the enemy to accuse me. Make me wise, since I have to deal with the craft of the devil, and the malice of the world. Teach me when to be silent and when to speak. Give me my Master’s wisdom, which baffled all His adversaries though they constantly sought to catch Him in His speech. Teach me how to live so blameless and guileless a life that I may be both wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove. I have told You the difficulty of my ways, and how my adversaries seek to entrap me, ‘teach me thy statutes,’ that I may escape like a bird from the snare of the fowler.”

Then, as a friend speaking to his friend, this passage means, “‘I have declared my ways,’ now ‘teach me thy statutes,’ O Lord, that I may never lose Your friendship! O my great Friend, I have told You how remiss, and how unthankful and unkind I have been to You, but do not You be angry with me! Undertake to mend me, I pray You. Make Your poor friend better. Some of my sin springs from ignorance, so ‘teach me thy statutes.’ Much of it springs from my corrupt heart, so O Lord, sanctify it by

the power of Your cleansing Word! O Jesus, I cannot bear the thought of losing Your friendship! You have taught me the sweetness of it, so do not take it away from me, for if now I were to lose You, I should be of all men most miserable. The unregenerate sinner knows not the sweetness of Your love, but like the swine, he is content with his husks, but I have eaten heaven's bread, and if I am to lose it now, woe is me, for I shall be doubly undone."

A poor man, who has always been poor, knows not the smart of poverty like the emperor or the prince who comes down to be a beggar. It must have been a sad sight to see Belisarius, the valiant general, brought down so low as to beg in the streets of Rome, and oh! if a believer could lose the friendship of his Lord, he would be doubly damned. There would be two hells for him who had peeped into heaven, and tasted angels' food, and then had lost it, and been cast away forever.

Blessed be the name of the Lord, that shall never be the case with any true believer, and that it may not be the case with you, pray this prayer, "O Lord, 'teach me thy statutes.' I am a poor ignorant fool, but O my blessed Friend, to whom I have confessed my ignorance, teach You me! I shall be but a dull scholar, yet do not put me out of Your class. It will show what a wonderful Teacher You are if You will teach me. It will make even the angels marvel if You can make a good scholar out of such a dullard as I am, yet here I am, Lord, 'teach me thy statutes.'"

II. Now for a few minutes let us turn to the second way of considering our text, that is, THE MAN OF GOD IN PUBLIC STATING HIS TESTIMONY.

First then, according to this way of understanding the text, we have here *a man of God who has borne his testimony*. He has spoken to man experientially. He has not spoken about something he has read of, but he says, "I have declared *my ways*"—the ways which I myself have trodden. I have told them of my evil ways, and warned them against the evils that lurk in the paths of sin. I have told them of the wounds I received in the house of sin, and I have warned others against going there. I have told them also of the ways of penitence, for You have graciously led me in them. I have told them of that bitter sweet or sweet bitter, the pleasing pain of weeping over sin. I have told them of the ways of faith—how I was led by the law, as schoolmaster, to Christ—how I was shut up from every other confidence, and then came and trusted in the Lord. 'I have declared my ways' and I have also told my fellow sinners what the Lord has done for me, and what ways I have been led in since I have believed in Jesus. I have told them of the ways of answered prayer which I have trodden, of the ways of gracious help which have been vouchsafed to me. I have told them of my Ebenezers, of the ways of God's providence, and related how I have been succored, again and again, in the hour of my distress. 'I have declared my ways' and said of them all, 'Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life.'"

We are bound, dear friends, not only to preach Christ's Gospel, but to also preach our experience of it. You remember that remarkable expression of our Lord, in one of His last prayers to the Father, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through"—what? "*through their word*." Then, is it their word? No, it is the Lord's, yet it is also theirs, for they have made it theirs by personal appropriation and experience of it.

The truth of God never seems to have such vividness about it as when a man tells it out of his own soul. You read it in this blessed Book, and you know it is true, for God has revealed it, but when you hear a godly man say, "I have tasted and handled this, and have proved its truth," then somehow, there is a still greater force in it which brings the truth home to you. That is what this servant of God could say, "I have declared my ways."

And he had not declared them with any view to vain glory, but only that he might glorify God. Neither had he spoken of himself except with the object of persuading others to walk in the ways of the Lord in which he had himself been so graciously led. We must always be cautious as to how we speak of ourselves, we shall do well if we can say with the apostle Paul, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." If we ever do speak about ourselves, it must be only as a foil or setting to that priceless jewel of the lovingkindness of the Lord. "I have declared my ways."

The next sentence, “Thou heardest me,” teaches us that *God had heard this man*. What solemn work it is to preach if we have God for a hearer! You know how Richard Baxter felt about this matter—

*“I preached as never sure to preach again,
And as a dying man to dying men.”*

We should so preach as though we knew that every word was being written down by the recording angel, and that God Himself was listening to all that we said. This would make it a very solemn thing to open our mouth for the Lord, and to bear testimony for Him, yet what a cheering thing it is that the Lord hears our testimony, and can confirm its truthfulness!

For as surely as any of you ever speak for the Lord, you will be misunderstood, and that is not the worst of it, you will also be willfully misrepresented by some of your hearers. The very thing you did say, they will declare that you ought to have said, and the thing that you did not say, they will pretend that you did say. They will turn your words upside down and inside out, I am judging by my own experience, for I have long proved that it is utterly impossible for me to utter a single sentence which someone or other cannot twist into mischief.

This is a grievous evil under the sun—that he that speaks is not judged according to his own words, but according to whatever men choose to put into those words, and to make them mean, so that the thing that was farthest from our thoughts, and which our soul abhorred, has often been set down to us, when we neither said nor thought anything of the kind.

Now, if any of you are called to pass through that trouble—and I daresay you will if you try earnestly to serve your Master—fall back upon this declaration, “‘I have declared my ways,’ honestly, simply, plainly, with a pure desire to glorify God and bless my fellow men, ‘and thou heardest me.’ I appeal to You, O Lord, for You know what was spoken! You are the supreme Judge, and to You I bring my case.”

When with weeping eyes, and with broken words, my dear sister, you talk to some poor soul about the Savior, let it be a comfort to you that the Lord hearkens and hears, and that a Book of remembrance is kept before Him in which are recorded all such holy acts as you are doing for Him.

My dear brother, perhaps you have not any special gift or talent, but yet you do try to talk about Jesus whenever you can, and somebody has heard what you said. It was very ungrammatical, and some people made a joke of it, and that grieves you very much, for you know that you were speaking in the sincerity of your heart.

Now, do not you say one word the less because they jest about you, rather say the more, because you have the double advantage of affording some people a little amusement, and at the same time, of doing good to others. Do not fret, or trouble, but just go straight on with your work for the Lord, and if you really did make a mistake, and used the wrong word, you can say, “Ah, but the Lord knew what I meant! You did know, O Lord, with what simplicity of soul and earnestness of heart I spoke that word, and if it was not the right word, and if some even see occasion for mirth in it, yet Thou heardest me.”

The last word of all is this—and it fits in well with this view of the text—*this man needed more teaching*, so he prayed, “Lord, ‘teach me thy statutes.’ Now that I have become a teacher of others, teach Thou me.” No man can teach if he is unwilling to be taught. Any gentleman who has “finished his education” will never be an educator of others. We must be continually making progress if we would lead others onward.

I am sure that every brother here, who is engaged in the Lord’s work, will find that he needs to get fresh food for his own mind every day. He must eat a double portion, because he has to feed others as well as to be himself fed. He has not only to fill his basket with bread for the eater, but also with seed for the sower, so he needs a double—nay, a sevenfold portion—that he may have enough for others as well as for himself.

“Teach me thy statutes,” is a good prayer to be presented by you dear young friends, who have lately come into the church. I am always delighted to hear of your trying to do good, I am glad for you to get into the Sunday school, or into the Evangelists’ Society, that you may try to speak for Jesus, but do recollect that you need much teaching if you are to teach others.

This remark applies especially to some of you. I would not keep you back, even for a minute, from trying to teach others what you already know, but I beg you to try to learn a little more. The other night, a dear brother told some of you a good story of the Negro who heard his pastor say that they all ought to teach something to somebody. Poor old Sambo called out from the gallery that he could teach something. The minister said, “I do not mean you, Sambo, for you only know your A B C.” “Ah!” said Sambo, “but there are some bredren and little children that don’t know dere A B C, so Sambo can teach them dat.” Well, there is something in that view of the case, if you only know the elements of the Gospel, teach them to those who do not know them.

At the same time, dear brother, if you can learn more, you can then teach more, so do not give up the good habit on Sabbath days, of going to hear at least one sermon. I would like to turn a lot of the people out half a day on Sundays—I mean you experienced Christian people, that you might go out, and teach others, but I would like to bring in some of the young people who are always out at work, and do not come in to feed as they ought. They must feed, as well as work, they must get taught, or else their teaching will soon become very vapid and powerless.

In all honesty and sincerity, let each one pray, “Lord, teach me more, so that when You hear me next time, there may be more of that which You have taught me, and that when men hear it, they may be more impressed by it, because they learn more from it.” May we all first go to Him, and learn of Him, then talk to Him, and learn more of Him, and then go to others, and talk with them about Him.

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.