

INVITATION TO A CONFERENCE NO. 2816

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1903
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“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”
Isaiah 1:18

THE persons to whom this gracious invitation was addressed were in a terrible condition, they could not well have been in a worse plight. They had provoked God above measure by their many sins. He had severely chastened them, yet they had not repented of their iniquities, they would not be either drawn from them or driven from them. Now the Lord seems to say that something else must be done, such a state of things must not be allowed to last any longer.

I am addressing myself to all the unconverted people who are in this congregation, and to all who have not yet believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. I have to say that your condition is a very sad one, and a very sinful one, you are standing out against the God of love, refusing to submit to Him whose service is perfect freedom and joy. You are utterly wrong in your relationship to God. You are either living in complete forgetfulness of Him, or you are living consciously in antagonism to Him in sin unrepented of and therefore unpardoned.

This state of things cannot be allowed to continue, you have yourself felt that it must not. There have been many times when you have been by yourself, when you have felt that you must not remain in this sinful condition, you have even breathed a prayer to God asking that you may not continue as you now are, yet you have not had resolution enough to turn from your evil ways. The first temptation that has crossed your path, has drawn you back into the ways of sin, and you still remain just as sinful as ever.

Some of you are getting old, and it is a long time since you received your first religious impressions. Possibly they have been repeated again and again, yet they have all come to nothing, and now you are in danger of death at any moment. If you were to die in your present condition, your everlasting state would be fixed, and you know it would be a state of the utmost misery and woe.

You tremble at the very thought of being launched into it, yet you may be, even while I am addressing you, and ere the very next word that I shall speak shall have reached the ears of others of my hearers. It may never reach your ears, for they may be closed in the silence of death. You know this, but do you always mean to go on in this way until you die?

I know that is not your intention, you have, within your hearts, a secret expectation that, sooner or later, a change will come to you. Why should it not come now? I should not like, even for a single moment, to be slung by a slender rope over the yawning mouth of a deep pit. I should not care to be, even for five minutes, in an upper room of a burning house. I should not like, even for a few seconds, to have a dose of poison in my system, although I might hope that there would be time enough to swallow an antidote, and so save my life.

Yet your position is more perilous than any of these conditions would be. Surely, you have indulged long enough in hesitancy, and delay, and questioning, and promise-breaking, have you not? The Lord seems to me to say to you, “Come now, let us end this state of things. ‘Come now, and let us reason together.’ Let us talk over the matter, and settle it one way or the other, so that, if your present condition is one that is worth continuing in, you may continue in it with some justifiable arguments to back you up, but if it can be clearly proved to you that something better is to be had, and ought to be had by you,

then perhaps our reasoning together may be the means of leading you to a better condition than that in which you are just now.”

May God the Holy Spirit help me to speak upon this important theme so as to reach your hearts! If it shall be so, He shall have all the glory.

Some texts need to be preached upon very often because they contain such vital truths—truths of the very highest importance, which it is not easy to get into our hearers’ minds and hearts. The carpenter is not blamed because he strikes a nail many times on the head, nor because he strikes the same nail with the same hammer, for he has to drive it into the wood somehow or other, and to clinch it on the other side, so, if one stroke is not sufficient, he must not leave his work incomplete, but must strike the nail again and again until it is driven home.

We shall do well to act in the same way, if we have preached from these words before—and I daresay some of us have done so many times [The following sermons by Mr. Spurgeon preached on Isaiah 1:18, have already been published in the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*—#366, The Silver Trumpet, #1278, Reasons for Parting with Sin, #2354, Scarlet Sinners Pardoned and Purified]—we feel quite justified in doing so again.

Our first division is to be *an invitation to a conference with God*, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD.” Secondly, we have *a specimen of the reasoning on God’s part*, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Then thirdly, I shall endeavor to show you that *this specimen of the reasoning, on God’s part, is an abstract of the whole argument*, a summary of all the real reasoning that there can ever be between the holy God and guilty sinners.

I. First then, here IS AN INVITATION TO A CONFERENCE WITH GOD, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD.”

The first observation I have to make upon this point is that sinful men and women—the great mass of mankind—do not care to reason with God. I am, on the whole, pleased when I find men reasoning about spiritual matters, even although they argue in a foolish fashion, I mean, when they raise the objections and arguments with which skeptics and infidels are usually tolerably familiar. There is a great deal more of hopefulness about people in that condition than about those who will not think at all on religious subjects.

A husband and wife had parted, and had been for years separated. He on several occasions entreated her to meet him, and talk over their differences with a view to reconciliation. She steadily declined an interview, and would not enter upon the subject of their alienation. Are you surprised when we add that the fault from the beginning lay with her? You cannot doubt that the sin of their continued separation was hers alone. The parable is easy to be interpreted.

The great masses of men seem to want a form of religion that does not require them to think. The people described in this chapter were quite willing to bring their rams, and their bullocks, their incense, and their oblations, for all that could be done without any effect being produced in their hearts and lives, and there are at the present day, plenty of persons who will pay for masses, and who will attend fine ceremonies, and who are very pleased to see the place of worship turned, at one time, into a theater, at another time, into a conservatory, and at a third time, into a costumier’s shop.

They have no objection to all such external observances, for there is nothing to give them any trouble or pain. They just open their mouth, and shut their eyes, and take in whatever “the priest” is pleased to give them. Many people like that style of religion. They want to avoid the trouble of thinking about sin, and righteousness, and judgment to come, in fact, they do not want to be bothered about the whole matter.

As they get their solicitor to attend to their legal business, so they would prefer to have their priest, their clergyman, their minister, to see to their spiritual business for them. As to reasoning with God, and having the matter out with Him, that is not at all according to their ideas. A great many folk want somebody else to do their thinking for them, they put it out, as they do with their washing, so that somebody else may do it in their place.

But dear friends, this will not do, because of all things in the world, *true religion demands most serious thought*. It is a thing which has to do with our mind, and heart, and spirit. Even under the old law, the command to Israel was, “Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” It was a matter for the heart and soul even under that old, dim, preparatory dispensation, how much more is it so under the dispensation of the Gospel whose very first commandment is “Believe,” which does not mean a blind shutting of the eyes, but the exercise of the most serious thought of which the mind of man is capable!

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD.” This invitation to a conference with God is, next, *a most reasonable thing*. I know that there is in certain quarters, an idea that all religion is fanaticism—that you have to believe in something or other, whether it is true, or reasonable, or not, and then go ahead without thinking anything more about the matter.

It is not so, beloved. To me, the religion of Jesus Christ is as much the subject of cool, calculating, common sense as anything that I have to do with. I know many Christian men who are gifted with calm, collected minds, and clear, argumentative powers, and I am certain, from my converse with them, that they have reasoned out the truth of the things which are most surely believed by them. They have proven, to their own satisfaction, that the Word of God is a divine revelation to men.

They have argued the matter out, and they are fully convinced of the soundness of their conclusions, and being so convinced, they have ascertained what this revelation from God demanded of them, and finding what it was, they judged that it was an act of true wisdom on their part to accept God’s way of salvation.

That way of salvation has commended itself to their judgment, so far as they have been able to understand it. They have not pretended to comprehend it altogether, but what they have understood of it has seemed to them to afford such a solid foothold for their spirit, that having reasoned the matter out, in solemn earnestness, before the living God, they have become convinced that they must believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Beloved friends, we are not afraid to set publicly before you the Gospel which we desire you to believe. The Romish Church locked away the Bible from the people, the priests did not want to have a thinking people, people who would search the Scriptures for themselves. But we earnestly exhort you to study the Word of God for yourselves, become familiar with its words and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as to their meaning. Judge of our preaching by its agreement with the teaching of this Book, never accept anything we say simply because we say it, but bring it all to the law and to the testimony, for if we speak not according to this Word, it is because of the lack of light in us.

It is most gracious on the Lord’s part to invite you to a conference with Him. How condescending it is for the Most High to be willing for you to reason with Him! He seems to say to you, “Come, My friend, you and I are not agreed. There is something or other in your mind that keeps you from yielding to My love. I mean you no hurt, ‘Come now,’ keep nothing back from Me. Come and tell Me all about the matter.” How graciously the Lord stoops down to us in saying, “Come now, and let us reason together”! “Us.”

It is His voice that shakes the earth with tempests—the voice of the mighty God, the Creator and Judge of all, who speaks to us, worms of the dust, utterly insignificant compared with Him, and says, “‘Come now, and let us reason together.’ Tell Me what is your difficulty. I will lay aside My glory and will come down, and talk familiarly with you that we may have this question settled.”

See, dear friends, what a proof this is of God’s lovingkindness and graciousness that He invites us to reason with Him, because if He had not meant good to us, He would have had no reasoning with us. He would simply have said, “These people have sinned against Me, let them die. I have already sent My Son to them, and they have rejected Him. They have disregarded My Sabbaths, and despised My holy Word, why should I reason with them? They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. Their fathers and mothers have reasoned with them, and their minister has done the same, now I will punish them as they deserve.”

But no, the Lord still says to you, “‘Come now, come now.’ All the reasoning of other people has failed, perhaps the argument has not been put fairly before you. ‘Come now, and let us reason together.’ Speak out the bitterest thought that is in your mind, let the very wormwood and gall of your enmity against Me come out, but ‘let us reason together, saith the LORD.’” He must mean well to you, dear friends, or He would never have spoken such words as these, He could not have thought of them in anger. Designs of love must be within His heart when He says, “Come now, and let us reason together.”

I think that there is also great tenderness in my text in the use of the word, “*now*.” “Come *now*, and let us reason together, saith the LORD.” God would not have you live another moment as you now are. “As I live, saith the LORD God”—and He lifts His hand to heaven and swears by His own self, as He can swear by none greater—“I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?”

The Lord has no delight in having you continue to be His enemy! It gives Him no pleasure to see your hardness of heart, or to see the consequences of that hardness of heart in the awful peril that you are running every minute that you live in sin, so He says to you, “There is the whole universe for Me to govern, yet I am willing to have a conference with you. ‘Come now,’ this very hour.

‘Come now,’ do not put it off till tomorrow. I am always at leisure to reason with a sinner, whenever there is a soul that is anxious to seek Me, I am always ready to seek that soul, and to welcome it to My heart.” “Come now,” saith the Lord, then, let it be now with you. God appoints this present time for His conference with us, let it be our time too. “Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.” “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

II. Now let us turn, in the second place, to AN SPECIMEN OF THE REASONING ON GOD’S PART.

We will suppose that the sinner is willing to confer with God about this all-important matter, and that he goes at once to his main argument. “My Lord,” says he, “I would be reconciled to You if I could, but alas! sin lies at the door, and I am no ordinary sinner. I have broken Your commands a thousand times. I have done what I ought not to have done, and I have left undone the things that I ought to have done, and there is no health in me.” Now observe the method of reasoning on God’s part.

First, *the one main ground of difference is honestly mentioned*. The Lord does not deny the truth of what the sinner has confessed, but He says to him, “‘Though your sins be as scarlet’—I meet you on that ground. You need not try to diminish the extent of your sin, or seek to make it appear to be less than it really is. No, whatever you say it is, it is all that, and probably far more. Your deepest sense of your sinfulness does not come up to the truth concerning your real condition, certainly, you do not exaggerate in the least. Your sins are scarlet and crimson, it seems as though you have put on the imperial robe of sin, and made yourself a monarch of the realm of evil.” That is how a man’s guilt appears before the searching eyes of God.

Now see how the Lord deals with this sad and difficult case. *He Himself removes the ground of difference between Himself and the sinner*. 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 does not, in our text, say how this great change shall be wrought, it suffices here to give us an assurance that it shall be so.

Well, then, what is the inference from that assurance? Why, sinner, surely it is that there is nothing now to keep you away from God because your sin, which was like a great stone that had been rolled between you and your God, has been rolled right away by God. He has removed every stain, and spot, and speck, and trace of sin by the precious blood of Jesus, which cleanses all to whom it is applied.

Why do you stand back then? Surely, you cannot continue to stay in the background. If your sin is pardoned, you will rush into your Savior’s arms, the reasoning will be ended, and your heart melting with repentance. and God’s grace pouring itself over you in a flood of holy joy, there will be no longer any ground of difference between you and your God, for you and He will be truly one.

Now let us look a little more closely at this specimen of reasoning on God's part. I have pointed out to you the grand outline, now let us consider the argument in detail. This will show you that *the Lord will remove the offense perfectly*, "scarlet" and "crimson" are to become "as snow" and "as wool."

I suppose that the text implies that the sinner might say, "Lord, there is the guilt of my sin, how can I ever get rid of that? I have been guilty of transgression all my life long, how can that guilt be put away? I know of nothing that can remove it. Though I should give enough of the blood of bullocks and rams to make a river, my guilt could never be washed away by it."

I remember how I asked this question of God many and many a time, and I could not for a long while, exercise any hope of salvation because the mountain of my guilt seemed to separate me from the thrice-holy God. Our text shows us that the Lord meets the difficulty, not by denying the sinner's guilt, but by removing it. He says to the guilty one, "No doubt you are as bad as you say you are, but I will make all this guilt of yours to vanish away, it shall be cast behind My back, into the depths of the sea, and shall be found no more forever. The scarlet shall be as snow, the crimson shall be as wool."

Then the awakened conscience brings forward another difficulty and says, "But Lord, my sin must be punished." I cannot make out how it is that some people seem to think that the punishment of sin is an arbitrary act on the part of God. I remember well when God burnt this truth into my soul as with a hot iron—that sin necessitated punishment—that if I walked contrary to God, if I was out of gear with Him, I must suffer, just as certainly as I should do if I were to thrust my arm amidst the wheels of a powerful engine when they were revolving at a tremendous rate. If I were to do that, I am certain to suffer, just as, in continuing to sin, I am resisting the moral law of God, and its ponderous wheels must crush me.

I recollect when I used to say to myself, when I was quite a lad, "If God does not punish me for my sin, He ought to do so." That thought used to come to me again and again. I felt that God was just, and that He knew that I did not wish Him to be anything but just, for even my imperfect knowledge of God included my recognition that He was a just and holy God. If I could have been certain of salvation by any method in which God would have ceased to be just, I could not have accepted it on those terms, I should have felt that it was derogatory to the dignity of the Most High, and that it was contrary to the universal laws of right.

But this was the question that puzzled me—How can I be saved, since I have sinned, and sin must be punished? You see, in our text, the blessed answer which the Lord Himself gives, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." That is to say, the Lord means, "You shall have no sin to be punished, for I will so effectually remove it that there shall be none left upon you. I will be as sternly just to you as a righteous and holy God must be, yet I shall not smite you, for I see nothing in you, or upon you, which I ought to smite." O wondrous miracle of mercy and grace!

Then the sinner further objects, "But Lord, if You do thus pardon me at once, and take all my guilt and fear of punishment away, yet alas! there are habits of evil which I have acquired, but which I cannot conquer. I would—oh, that I could—be perfectly free from sin, but Lord, how can I be? I find ever within me a tendency towards that which is evil, and though I now hate the evil, yet I find the law of sin in my members warring against that better law which your Holy Spirit has implanted within me. O God, how can I ever be reconciled to You, for how can I kill these deadly serpents that are coiled up in my heart?"

To this piteous lament, the Lord graciously replies, "Yes, poor soul, your nature is all that you say. It is a nature that has been lying soaking in the crimson lye till there is no getting the stain out by any human instrumentality. This evil thing called sin is engrained in your very being, but I can take it out, and I will take it out. I will conquer every propensity to sin—yes, and so utterly conquer it that the day shall come when you shall have no tendency to sin whatever, but shall be altogether delivered from it, and dwell with Me in spotless and eternal perfection."

Oh, how sweetly does the Lord, by promising to do all this, take away from the sinner the great barrier that stood between him and his God! Thus, the guilt, the penalty, and the power of sin, shall all be removed.

Now give me your most earnest attention, for two or three minutes, while I remind you that although it is not in our text, yet, in other parts of God's Word, the Lord has been pleased to tell us how He works this great change. I like you to understand, as far as you can, how it is wrought, though, mark you, many have been saved who have not understood very clearly how their salvation was accomplished.

They have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, they have not comprehended as much as it is well that you should comprehend, but yet, simply trusting in Jesus, believing that the promise of grace was true, they have proved it true to them.

But listen. God has told us how He can put our guilt away. Most of you know "the old, old story," yet perhaps, as I tell it once again, God the Holy Ghost may enable some people to understand it who have never understood it before. I know that there are some of us who heard the Gospel preached very plainly for many years, yet we did not understand it till, one day, when the familiar story was being told to us yet again, in much the same language as before, God the Holy Spirit let the light into our dark minds and we saw Jesus as our own dear Savior and rejoiced in Him with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

Now, this is how God puts away our scarlet and crimson sins. His Son—His only begotten and well-beloved Son—came down from heaven, took upon Himself our nature and became a man, and being found in fashion as a man, He stood as the Substitute for all who should ever believe in Him, so that God regarded Him as the Representative of all those for whom He stood as Surety, and laid upon Him all their iniquity. And when it was laid upon Him, it was no longer upon them, since it could not be in two places at the same time.

So the sin of Christ's people was removed from them and put upon Him, according as it is written in the Old Testament, "The LORD hath laid on him ("caused to meet upon Him") the iniquity of us all," and in the New Testament, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

The sin being, by imputation, laid upon Christ, God the Father proceeded to deal with Christ on account of that sin, as though He had been the actual sinner. He was brought up, charged, condemned, and put to death, and He died deserted of His Father, crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And that agonizing death of His—God tells us that it is so, therefore we may well believe it—has vindicated the justice of God, magnified the law and made it honorable, and now God, for Christ's sake, can—nay, more, He does blot out the sin of all His people, and make it cease to be, seeing that it is a rule of His never to punish the same offense twice, so, if Christ was punished for my sin, I can never be punished for it, for, as Toplady truly sings—

*"Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine."*

If you, my friend, whoever you are, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, I am able to assure you, beyond all doubt, that He bore your sin, carried your sorrow, and discharged your debt, and that therefore, you are forever clear. Do you not see how reasonable all this is?

Perhaps you raise a difficulty and ask, "But why should Christ stand in my stead? Where was the justice of punishing the Innocent, and letting the guilty go free?" Ah! that is a wonder of distinguishing grace that we cannot comprehend.

When the angels fell, they fell one by one—each one sinned and rebelled as an individual, but when you and I fell, it was in our representative head, Adam the first. Therefore it became possible, since we originally fell in one Adam, that we could be raised on the same principle through another Adam, and

lo! Jesus Christ, the second Adam—in whose loins lay all His elect ones—even as the whole human race lay in the loins of the first Adam—has come, and instead of all who are in Him, suffering, He has suffered in their stead, upon a strictly righteous principle.

At any rate, you need not question the rightness of the principle, if God approves of it—if it satisfies Him—it may very well suffice for you. If the system of salvation by substitution meets the claims of eternal justice, it should certainly content you. O poor soul, trust you in the blood of Jesus, and your sins shall all vanish through His substitutionary sacrifice!

Listen again. Something was said, just now, about evil habits that were to be put away. How is that to be done? The moment you believe in Jesus, at that very instant the Holy Spirit entirely changes your nature. There is then born in your soul, a new principle, the spirit—something far superior to the natural soul—a spirit which understands and has to do with spiritual things.

This is what our Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,” and this new spirit within you is the Spirit of Christ. It is a living and eternal principle, which will follow after holiness, and which cannot sin because it is born of God. Do you not see, then, how your old habits will be broken? You will be a new man, and you will be able to say with the apostle, “We are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God.” This is what God will do with you, your scarlet and crimson sins shall vanish because you are born again, made “a new creature in Christ Jesus.”

I do not know whether I am putting this matter plain enough for all of you to understand it, but I know that there was a time when I was very anxious about my soul, when I would have been very thankful to have heard such plain talk as this, rather than a fine sermon that would have been of no service to me in my sad condition, and I say to you, young man—you who are troubled because of your sin—that if you believe in Christ Jesus, His atoning sacrifice will take all your guilt away, and the Holy Ghost will come and dwell within you, and so enable you to conquer every sinful propensity, and your life shall, from this time forward, become “holiness unto the Lord.” “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD,” and is not this grand reasoning when your greatest difficulties are thus swept away by His almighty grace?

III. I must, however, finish by briefly showing you that THIS SPECIMEN OF REASONING IS AN ABSTRACT OF THE WHOLE ARGUMENT.

I do not know the particular condition of everybody now present here, but I do know that all possible cases are covered by the divine invitation given in this one verse of Scripture.

Possibly, somebody says, “I do not need to be saved.” My dear sir, I am not speaking about such a case as yours, for you refuse to reason, there is no sense or reason in you. “But,” says another, “I do not intend to yield to the Gospel.” That is another case in which there is no reasoning and no reason.

You simply say, “I do not want to have anything to do with Christ.” Well, if so, you have only yourself to blame for your fatal decision. Your destruction, when it comes upon you, will rest upon you alone, and amidst the flames of hell, as you bite your tongue in anguish, you will not be able to charge your ruin upon God, or upon the preacher who is now addressing you. You put the Gospel of Jesus Christ away from you, counting yourself unworthy of it, and if you continue to do so, there remains nothing for you but to perish forever and ever.

But there are some people of another kind, and these have various difficulties in coming to Christ. One says, “I have been too great a sinner.” That difficulty is fully met here, “Though your sins be as scarlet.” Granted that they are scarlet, “they shall be as white as snow.” “But I have sinned so long.” Very well, that case is also included here, “though they be red like crimson.” These two colors—scarlet and crimson—are often made to lie a long time in soak till the very warp and woof of the cloth has taken the dye. Well, you are like that, but though it is so with you, God will make you “as snow” and “as wool”!

“Oh, but I have sinned against a great deal more light than most people have had!” No doubt that is true, I do not deny it, and that certainly increases your guilt, but my text covers your case, “though your

sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” “Ah, sir! but I have resisted the Holy Spirit,” says another. Granted, but “though your sins be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

“I fear,” says yet another, “that the Holy Spirit has left me, for I have so sorely grieved Him.” Read the verse following our text, “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.” Now, if you are willing to be saved, and willing to be obedient to that divine command, “Believe and live,” the Holy Ghost has not left you. As long as you have any feeling whatever, you have not committed the sin which is unto death, for if you had committed that sin, you would have been utterly unmoved and careless, and no thought of divine things would come across your mind again.

Oh, you may tell me what you like about yourselves, but my text meets your case! You may be a harlot, sister, give me your hand, just as you are, and listen to these words of God Himself, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

If there were a murderer here, red-handed from his crime, his sin would, evidently, be scarlet and crimson, yet my brother—yes, even your hand would I take, and I would say to you, “‘Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.’ If you believe in Jesus Christ—that is, if you trust Him with your soul—if you will accept God’s way of salvation, which is ceasing to try to save yourself, and yielding yourself to be saved by Jesus only, you shall be saved here and now.”

I cannot get out to you all that this text keeps on saying to me. It is singing in my soul, I can hear the music of it even if you cannot, I only wish that you might do so. Sometimes, when I am preaching, I feel like a butcher at the block, cutting off large joints of meat for others, and getting nothing himself, but just now I am feeding on the text myself, I only wish I could make every soul here feel hungry after it, for it is yours as much as it is mine as you are a sinner against God.

Perhaps I am addressing someone who says, “I do not see any need to reason with God.” Friend, let your condition of mind startle and alarm you. A man, who is not right with his God, may be sure that there is something wrong with his soul, and if this grandest of all possessions—the possession of God Himself—does not seem to you to be pre-eminently desirable, it is because your eyes are blinded, and your heart is dead to the things of God, and you are in “the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.”

It is because you are of the earth earthy that you find your pleasure in the things that you can see, and feel, and taste, and hear. It is because you are carnally minded, and have never been renewed in spirit, that you are thus content with what will do you no good.

Do you know what will become of you if you continue as you are? You are born of the flesh, and that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and flesh will go to corruption one of these days, and that is what you will go to—to corruption—the worm that never dies, and the fire that shall never be quenched. There is only one way to keep in check the hurtful, horrible corruption that grows out of carnal mindedness. “Ye must be born again.” “Ye *must* be born again.”

There are some things that may be or may not be, but you “*must* be born again,” for unless you are born again, if you could go to heaven, it would not be heaven to you, and if God gave Himself to you, you could not enjoy Him. You must be born again. Oh, let that, “*must*,” impress itself upon your mind and heart, and rest not, O dear hearer, until you are born again! This is the work of the Spirit of God upon you, and side by side with it runs that other text, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.”

May you be enabled by the Spirit to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! Then you will be born again, no longer will you be under condemnation, but as a spiritual man you will delight in spiritual things, and chiefly, you will delight in God, and He will make my text true to you, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Pray David’s prayer, and you will receive a gracious answer from the Lord even as the psalmist did, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

I have done with my text for this time, yet I have half a mind to linger a minute and say, “Come now, if you have not reasoned with God, let *me* try to reason with you. Let us reason together. Come, my dear friend, can any good result from your continuing as you now are? You unconverted men and women, and especially you unconverted old people, can any good come of your remaining strangers to Christ?”

Let me put another question. Could any hurt come of your being the friends of Christ? Can you imagine any real loss that you could sustain by being saved? I would not tell a lie even for God Himself, and He would never wish me to do so, but this truth I do declare to you now, ever since I have believed in Jesus, the joy, rest, and peace I have experienced are altogether indescribable.

One thing ought to convince you of the blessings of true religion, and that is that you never met a Christian yet—you never saw a dying Christian, setting up in his bed, leaning on the pillow, with his children round him, and saying, “My dear boys and girls, beware of the Christian religion, beware of confidence in Christ, it is all a delusion.” There has never, since the foundation of our blessed faith, been one who, in the valley of the shadow of death, has said, “I have discovered all this to be a fiction, and I wish to warn everyone else against it.”

On the contrary, they have unanimously said, either with shouts of triumph or with quiet words of peaceful trust, “Blessed be the name of the Lord, this is joy indeed to be found in Christ Jesus now that I am about to depart, to be forever with Him.”

Let practical evidence convince you, dear people, and if there be anything real and precious about all this of which I have been speaking—as there certainly is—if it is anything worth having, it is worth having now. If it is ever a good thing to be saved, it is well to be saved at once. If it is ever worthwhile to be rid of sin, it is worthwhile to be rid of sin before that clock ticks again. If it is ever worthwhile for you to have joy in God, it is worthwhile for you to have it ere your eyes have again closed in slumber. The Lord grant that you may find it right speedily, for His name’s sake! Amen.

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