

JESUS ABOUT HIS FATHER'S BUSINESS

NO. 302

A SERMON
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AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

“Jesus saith to them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.”
John 4:34

IT is peculiarly pleasing to the Christian to observe the interest which God the Father takes in the work of salvation. In our earlier days of childhood in grace, we conceived the idea that God the Father was only made propitious to us through the atonement of Christ, that Jesus was the Savior, and that the Father was rather an austere Judge than a tender friend.

But since then, we have learned the Father through the Son, for it was not possible we could come unto the Father except through Jesus Christ. But now, having seen Christ, we have seen the Father also, and from henceforth, we both know the Father, and have seen Him, since we know the love of Christ, and have felt it shed abroad in our hearts.

It is always refreshing then, to the enlightened Christian, to call to mind the intense interest which the Father takes in the work of salvation. Here you find in this verse it is three times hinted at. Salvation-work is called the Father's will. “It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish,” but more, it is His will that His chosen, the blood-bought ones of Christ, should every one of them be redeemed from the ruins of the fall, and brought safely home to their Father's house.

Note again, we are told that Jesus *was sent* of the Father. Here again you see the Father's interest. It is true that Jesus rent Himself away from the glories of heaven, from the felicities of blessedness, and voluntarily descended to the scorn, the shame, and spitting of this lower world. But yet His Father had a part therein. He gave up His only begotten Son, He withheld not the darling of His bosom, but sent away His well-beloved, and sent Him down with messages of love to man. Jesus Christ comes willingly, but still He comes by His Father's appointment and sending.

A third hint is also given us. Salvation is here called *God's work*, “It is my meat to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish *his work*.” We know that when this world was made, the Father did not make it without reference to the Spirit, for “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,” brooded over chaos, and brought order out of confusion. Nor did He make it without the Son, for we are told by John the apostle, “Without him was not anything made that was made.” Yet, at the same time, creation was the Father's work.

So also is it in salvation, the Father does not save without the Spirit, for “the Spirit quickeneth whom he will.” He does not save without the Son, for it is through the merit of the Redeemer's death that we are delivered from the demerit of our iniquity.

But notwithstanding thus, God the Father is the worker of salvation as much as He is the worker of creation. Let us look up then, with eyes of delight, to our reconciled God and Father. O Lord our God, You are not an angry one! You are not an austere ruler! You are not merely the Judge, but You are the grand patriarch of Your people! You are their great friend! You love them better than You did Your Son! For You did not spare Him—You did send Him down to suffer and to die, that You might bring Your children home. “Glory be unto the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.”

The particular contemplation of this morning will be, however, to describe Christ Jesus as He manifests Himself as doing His Father's will, and finishing His Father's work. Our Lord and Master had

but one thought, but one wish, but one aim. He concentrated His whole soul, gathered up the vast floods of His mighty powers, and sent them in one channel, rushing towards one great end, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

1. In bringing out the great truth of Christ's entire devotedness to the work of salvation—a devotedness so great that He could say, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up"—I shall want to call your attention first of all to the fact, verified by the Gospels, that *His soul was in all that He did*.

Mark our Master when He goes about doing good. The task is not irksome to Him. There are some men who if they distribute to the poor, or if they comfort the fatherless, do it with such reserve, with such coldness of spirit, that you can perceive that it is but the shell of the man that acts, and not the man's whole soul.

But see our divine Lord. Wherever He walks, you see His whole self in flame, His whole being at work. Not a single power slumbers, but the whole man is engaged. How much at ease He seems among His poor fishermen! You do not discover that His thoughts are away in the halls of kings, but He is a fellow with them, bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. He walks in the midst of publicans and harlots, and He is not ill at ease, not like one who is condescending to do a work which He feels to be beneath Him, He is pleased with it, His whole soul is in it.

Mark how He takes the little children on His knee, and though His disciples would put them away, yet His whole Spirit is so truly with the poor, with the sinful, whom He came to save, that He says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Look up into that face, and there is a whole-souled man there, not one whose thoughts are set on dignity and power, and who is schooling Himself down, toning down his mind to the circle in which He moves, as a matter of constraint and duty. His vocation becomes His delight. His Father's service is His element. He is never happy when He is out of it. He casts His whole being, His whole Spirit, into the work of man's redemption.

2. As a further proof of His devotedness, you will observe that whatever a man takes to heart as being the objective of his life, it always makes him glad when he sees it succeeding. Now you notice in our Savior's life, that when He goes into a Pharisee's house to eat bread He always seems under constraint. In any chapter which records what Jesus said in the house of a Pharisee there is a want of vivacity. He speaks solemnly, but evidently His spirit is spell-bound, He is unhappy. He knows that He is watched by cavilers who resist His good work, and He there says but very little, or else His discourse has but little joy and brilliance therein.

But see Him among publicans, when He is sitting down with Zacchaeus, or when He is come into some poor man's house and is sitting down to His ordinary meal, there is Jesus Christ with His eyes flashing, His lips pouring forth eloquence, and His whole soul at ease. "Now," says He, "I am at home, here is My work, here are the people among whom I shall succeed." How the common man snaps His chain! You see the Lord Jesus Christ as the child-man, no more restraining Himself before the watchers, but speaking out of His full soul all that His heart thinks and feels.

Now you generally know when a man's heart is in his work, by the joy he feels in it. You see some preachers go up into their pulpits as though they were going to be roasted at the stake, and they read their sermons through as if they were making their last dying speech and confession. What do you think they call it?—why, doing their duty. True ministers call preaching pleasure, not duty. It is a delight to stand up to tell others the way of salvation and to magnify Christ. But mere hirelings cannot go higher than the idea of doing their duty when they are telling out this glorious tale.

Jesus Christ was none of these. "My meat is," He said, "to do the will of Him that sent me." The only times that Jesus ever smiled and rejoiced are the times when He was in the midst of poor sinners. At that time, "Jesus rejoiced in Spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

Let Him see a penitent, let Him hear the groan of a sinner mourning over his evil way, let Him discern a tear trickling down the cheek of one of His hearers, and Jesus Christ begins to be glad, and the

Man of Sorrows wears a smile for a moment upon that pale and sorrowful face. At all times there is a travailing in birth for souls, He is only happy when He sees the family of God enlarged.

3. There is another test by which you may know when a man's spirit is in his work. When a right noble lord, some little time ago, stood up in the House of Lords to speak against the infamous productions and prints of Holywell Street, I felt quite sure that His lordship was thoroughly in earnest, because he grew angry. After some person had ventured to defend the filth that comes forth from that street, as if it had some connection with the glories of art, His lordship replied in a very tart speech, which at once let you see that he meant what he said, and that he felt the work upon which he had entered to be an important one.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ sometimes grew warm in speech, but He was never angry except with men who opposed the good work with which He came, and not even with them if He saw that they opposed it through ignorance, but only with those who stood up against Him on account of pride and vain glory.

Did you ever read such a mighty tirade of threatening as that which roars from Christ when He is speaking against the Pharisees? "But woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer, therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

I think I see His holy cheeks glowing with a divine *furor*, when He hurls His thunderbolts about Him, and denounces the men who shut up the gates of heaven, and will not enter in themselves, and they that would enter in they hinder.

Now, you can see that His soul is in it, because the man grows warm. The loving spirit of Jesus, who was trodden on like a worm, who would never defend Himself, who had not a spark of resentment towards His persecutors, but "when he was reviled, reviled not again," who gave blessings for curses—oh! how He kindles into a flame when He sees enemies in the way of His poor people whom He has come to save! Then indeed, He spares no words. Then can He ply the lash with a mighty hand, and let them see that the voice of Jesus can be as terrible as thunder, while at other times, it can be sweet as harpers harping with their harps.

4. A sure evidence that a man has espoused some mighty purpose, and that his purpose has saturated his whole soul, and steeped him in its floods, is, that if he is unsuccessful, he will weep. Now, see our Lord. Were there ever such tears shed as those which He poured forth over Jerusalem? Standing on the hilltops, He saw its towers and its glittering temple, and He discerned in the dim future the day when it should be burned with fire, and the ploughshare of destruction should be driven o'er its once fair, but then desolate, foundations, and He cries, "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

Oh that wail of his—"O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" Does it not remind you of those words of God in one of the old prophets, where weeping over Ephraim, He saith, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together."

JEHOVAH's bowels yearned to clasp His Ephraim to His breast. And so with Jesus. They may spit in His face, and He weeps not. They may drag Him out of the synagogue and seek to cast Him headlong down the brow of the hill, but I find not that He sighs. They may nail Him to the cross, and yet there shall be ne'er a tear. The only thing that can make Him weep is to see that they reject their own mercy, that they put away from them their only hope, and refuse to walk in that only way of peace.

This alone might serve as a proof of the intensity of Jesus' soul in His great purpose. He must save others, and if they be not saved, He will weep. If others oppose their salvation He will grow angry, not

for Himself but for them. Careless of what happens to Himself, He has no fear, no anger for injuries that are poured on Him, but His whole Spirit is given up to the one great work of rescuing souls from sin, and sinners from going down into the pit.

5. It often happens however, that when we are really earnest about some purpose, some enemy will rise up. Unconscious perhaps of the nobility of our purpose, he will misconstrue our motives, vilify our character, and tread our fair name in the dust.

There is a strong temptation at such seasons to defend one's self. We want to say just a word about our own sincerity and heartiness of purpose. The temptation comes very strongly on us, because we think that we ourselves are so wrapped up, so intimately connected with the work, that perhaps if our name be injured that work may suffer also.

How many good and great men have fallen into this snare, so that they have left their work in order to take care of themselves, and have at least diminished some little of their ardor, or commingled the ardor which they feel for those objectives with another fervency of spirit—the fervency of self-defense.

Now, in our Lord Jesus Christ you see nothing of this. He is so set upon His purpose that when they call Him a drunkard He does not deny it, when they say He is a Samaritan and is mad, He takes it silently and seems to say, "Be it so, think so, if you will." Now and then there is a word of complaint, but not of accusation. When it is really for their good He will rebuke them and say, "How can Beelzebub cast out Beelzebub?" But there is no elaborate defense of His character.

Christ has left on record in His sermons, no apology for anything He said. He just went about His work and did it, and left men to think what they pleased about Him. He knew right well that contempt and shame from some men are but another phase of glory, and that to suffer the despite of a depraved race was to be glorified in the presence of His Father, and in the midst of His holy angels.

Yet we might wonder (if we did not know who He was) that some little personal animosity did not sometimes creep in, but you never detect a shade of it. Many there were, I dare say, whom He knew to be His dire enemies, He has not a word to say against them. Some would come up in the street to insult Him, I do not find that He took the slightest notice of them. Many there were too, that spread all manner of ill reports, but He never told His disciples to try and stop the ill tale that was abroad.

He treated with silent pity the calumnies of men, and walked on in the majesty of His goodness, defying all men to say what they pleased, for all their devices could no more make Him turn aside from His course than the baying of the dog can make the moon stand still in her orbit. And so, too good to be selfish, too glorious to care for anyone's esteem, He could not and would not turn aside, but as an arrow from the bow of some mighty archer, He sped on His way towards His destined target.

6. Then mark again, another proof of the full devotedness of Christ to His ministry, namely, that you always see Him laboring. The three years of Christ's ministry were three years of ceaseless toil. He never rested, one wonders how He lived at all.

It is but little marvel that His poor body was emaciated, and that His visage was more marred than that of any man. What with stern conflicts with Satan in the desert—conflicts so severe, that if you and I were to undergo them, they might make our hairs turn grey in a single night—what with conflicts with the crowd of men who all seemed to rise up at once against Him, like warriors armed to the teeth, while He stood like a defenseless lamb in the midst of cruel wolves—what with preaching, the more private teaching, the healing the sick and the lepers, restoring the maimed, the deaf, the blind, going about everywhere doing good, and never ceasing in His journeys, walking every inch of the way on foot, save when He was tossed on the stormy bosom of the lake, in some small boat which belonged to His disciples—never having a home wherein to dwell, crying, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head"—surely never man labored like this man.

That three years of our Savior's ministry reads like the history of three centuries. It is the life of a man who is living at a matchless rate. His minutes are all hours, His hours all months, His months all years, or longer still than that. He does enough in one day to give a man eternal fame, and yet, thinking nothing of it, He goes to something yet more arduous, and on, and on, and on, He toils His whole life

through. The most hard working man among us has his hours of sleep. Give us but sleep and we can do anything, we rise up from our beds like giants refreshed with new wine, to run our course anew. But Jesus sleeps not.

*“Cold mountains and the midnight air,
Witness the fervor of His prayer.”*

He has stood up to preach all day long, He has fed thousands, and at last He faints. His disciples take Him even as He is, for He cannot walk, His strength is gone, and they carry Him down to the boat and lay Him there. He shuts His eyes, He is about to have some little repose, but they come to Him and cry, “Master, why sleepest thou? Awake! we perish.” And He arises to rebuke the waves, and finds Himself on another shore, and in another field of labor, upon which He enters at once without delay.

He seems to have known no moment of repose. He preaches day by day, He prays by night. He seemed to be a sun that never had a setting, always shining, always progressing in His mighty course. Oh! there never was such a worker, never such a toiler as this Lord Jesus, who toiled not for Himself but for others.

7. And here let me remark again, that I may give you another proof that His meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him, namely, that at many times when He was in full labor He does not seem to have felt fatigue at all. He had been walking one hot day along the dusty road, under the burning sun, and He comes at last to the well of Sychar. Being very weary, He sat down on the well. He was hungry too, for His disciples had gone away to buy meat.

That little wallet which Judas carried was not often full enough to afford meat for luxury, they could only buy for mere necessity. They doubtless had enough in that little bag, which was filled by the voluntary gifts of those among whom He labored, to keep those twelve men with daily bread, but they had none to spare. I conclude then, that our Savior needed meat, or they would not have gone away to buy it.

They come back after they have bought their meat, and they find their Master sitting on the well preaching to a woman. She goes away, and they wonder how it is He does not eat. He tells them He needs no food, He has been refreshed, He had seen that woman converted. A woman who had had five husbands, and was then living with one who was not her husband, had listened to His voice, and she had been saved, and He saw her go away to bring the men to hear. He expected a harvest, He saw the fields white and ready for it, and this so refreshed His Spirit that He did not need to eat.

And we read at another time He forgot to eat bread, and at another season we read they thronged Him in, “insomuch that He was not able to eat.” Yet He could say, “I have meat to eat that ye know not of.” He seemed to get refreshed in His work, to grow stronger amid His toils, instead of growing tired, He renewed His strength as He went on with His sacred labors.

Now, this could not have happened to Christ, unless His whole soul was in it. Those of you who have ever undertaken an enterprise with all your might, know that as that has been going on you have been so absorbed that you did not know when it was time for you to eat, and when at last you have seen success dawning upon you, if anyone had hinted that you needed bread, you would put him by and say, “Don't disturb me, let me watch, let me see this light come to its full blaze of noon day.” You have needed no other refreshment than that which success has given you.

I could myself give an illustration of this, which occurred to me a little while ago, to prove that fact. Coming from home early in the morning, I went to the chapel, sat there all day long seeing those who had been brought to Christ through the preaching of the Word. Their stories were so interesting to me that the day went on. I may have seen some thirty or more during the day, one after the other, as they came up to me. I was so delighted with the tales they told me, and the wonders of grace that God had wrought in them, that I did not know anything about how the day went.

Seven o'clock came for prayer meeting. I went in and prayed with the brethren. After that came the church meeting. A little before ten o'clock I felt faint, and I began to think at what hour I had had my

dinner, and I found that I had had none, I never thought of it, I never felt hungry, because God had made me so glad with success. I think we could live right on, almost without food, if God would sustain us daily with this divine manna—this heavenly food of success—in winning souls. This showed that our Master's heart was in it, for the toil needed no refreshment.

8. Then again, if I have not said enough to convince you that He gave His whole Spirit to the work, let me remark that many a man has espoused a purpose, and as he imagined, has betrothed himself to it by eternal nuptials, yet at last he has been divorced from the darling object. He has seen some path of brightness opening to him with some glittering honor at the end, and he has turned aside to self-aggrandisement and glory.

But our Lord had a prospect before Him, such as no man ever had. Satan took Him to the brow of a hill, and offered Him all the kingdoms of this world—a mightier dominion even than Caesar had—if He would bow down and worship him. That temptation was substantially repeated in Christ's life a thousand times.

You remember one practical instance as a specimen of the whole. "They would have taken him by force and would have made him a king." And if He had but pleased to accept that offer, on the day when He rode into Jerusalem upon a colt, the foal of an ass, when all cried "Hosanna!" when the palm branches were waving, He had needed to have done nothing but just to have gone into the temple, to have commanded with authority the priest to pour the sacred chrism publicly upon His head, and He would have been king of the Jews. Not with the mock title which He wore upon the cross, but with a real dignity He might have been monarch of nations.

As for the Romans, His omnipotence could have swept away the intruders. He could have lifted up Judea into a glory as great as the golden days of Solomon, He might have built Palmyras and Tadmors in the desert, He might have stormed Egypt and have taken Rome. There was no empire that could have resisted Him. With a band of zealots such as that nation could have furnished, and with such a leader capable of working miracles walking in the van, the star of Judea might have risen with resplendent light, and a visible kingdom might have come, and His will might have been done on earth, from the river unto the ends of the earth.

But He came not to establish a carnal kingdom upon earth, else would His followers fight, He came to wear the thorn-crown, to bear our griefs and to carry our sorrows. And from that single object the most splendid temptation could not make Him diverge. You may heap together the glittering pomps and the gaudy jewels, but He treads them all beneath His feet. The cross to Him is brighter than a crown, the suffering more dear than wealth and honor. So then, in this too, we may see how full was His purpose, and how firmly He was set on the salvation of man.

9. One other thought here. If we knew that some purpose which we had undertaken could never be achieved unless by our death, supposing that we could bring our minds to give up our blood as the price of success—if we knew that after the most toilsome effort, though the walls of the structure might rise, yet our own tomb must furnish the topstone—if we resolve to die for it, yet I can well conceive that firmly as our purpose might be set, we should dread the hour. Let it be at a distance, we should say. And if we were told it was drawing near, we should sigh, and our spirit would sink.

But not so, Christ. Do you observe throughout His life in what a hurry He is? Read the Gospel according to St. Mark. The Gospel of St. Mark is the Gospel of the servant. The chosen emblem in the old church windows represents St. Mark as the ox, the laborious ox. Each of the evangelists had his own particular idiom, and the idiomatic expression of St. Mark is the word, *Eutheos*, which we translate "straightway," "immediately." You will see if you read the evangelist through, that the word "straightway," "immediately," occurs more frequently in that book than in any other, perhaps more times than in all the rest of the Word of God besides, to teach us this lesson, that Christ as a servant was in haste to fulfill His mission, never loitering, but always doing it straightway.

He seems to me to be always stretching out His hands after the cross, not standing back from it, as if He knew it must come to Him by necessity. No, He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how

am I straitened till it be accomplished." His soul was speeding towards the cross, and His body seemed to be straitened, encaged, imprisoned, that it could not get to the end of this three years of labor. His soul was panting after suffering, groaning, crying out to be permitted to drink of the cup of our redemption even to the dregs.

Now, this majesty of purpose, not merely to die, but to pant for death—not simply to climb the wall, to lead the forlorn hope and to long to do it, to be panting for the battle, desiring the fight, longing for the suffering—this is heroic ardor, self-devotion entirely unexampled! I could imagine a man panting for the fight an hour before it begins, but all His life to be desiring to enter upon it, to be panting for that bloody sweat, to be sighing for those nails, that shame, that spitting, this showed how strongly our Lord Jesus Christ had bent all His thoughts to the divine purpose of doing His Father's will, and finishing His Father's work.

Now, I shall say no more upon this subject by way of proof. I come very briefly to make *the practical use thereof*.

The first practical inference is addressed to the timid, agonized soul, who desires salvation, but who thinks that Christ is unwilling to give it to him. Timid spirit, timid spirit, put away the thought that He is unwilling to save. It is a lie against your own soul, it is a libel against His character. What! He unwilling to distribute that which He so freely bought at so immense a price!

Do you see in any one period of His life an unwillingness to save? There might be once a shrinking of the flesh, but that is over now. No more the crown of thorns, the cross and nails no more. The flesh has nothing more to shrink at. It is done, redemption is accomplished, and think you He was so earnest and so intent on the work of redemption, and now is unwilling to reap the fruits of it?

Why, do you not know, poor penitent, that He died to save you, and think you that it needs much argument to move the heart that once was pierced to pity and compassion? Scout the thought once for all. He is able to forgive, that thou knowest. He is as willing as He is able. Infinite is His ability, and as infinite His willingness.

I beseech you, distrust Him not. Come as you are, with all your sins about you. Come, now, and put your trust in Him. You shall find the door of heaven's gate not creaking on its hinges, but standing ajar and opening easily.

John Bunyan says the posts of the gates of the temple were made of olive trees, and he allegorized it thus—They were made of that fat and oily tree, that so the hinges might move readily and smoothly, that there might be no difficulty in opening the temple gates when timid souls came flying in. When mothers are unwilling to receive their children, when fathers are unwilling to give food to their own offspring, then—nay, not even then, will Jesus be unwilling to forgive.

When the hard working man is unwilling to take his wage, when the toiling politician is unwilling to grasp the honor which he has achieved, then—nay, not even then, may Christ be unwilling to lay hold upon the sheep which is His own, purchased with His own blood, and to pluck that jewel from a dunghill which He has redeemed with His own suffering. He is not unwilling, you are unwilling.

If there be hardness of heart, it lies with you, and not with Him. If there are difficulties in the way of your salvation, they are difficulties in yourself, not in Him. Come and welcome. This is the invitation which reaches you today from heaven's festal board. Come and welcome. Come and welcome. Come and welcome, sinner, come! Let nothing make you linger. He thirsts to save, He pants to bless. He longs to redeem and ransom. Only trust Him, and if you be made glad when you trust, He will be glad too.

If the prodigal is glad when he returns, the father's joy is not an atom less. If there be mirth in the heart of the returning one, there is as much mirth in the heart of the parent to whom he returns. So come, and make your Savior glad. Come and make Him see of the travail of His soul, that He may be abundantly satisfied. This is my first practical inference.

There is yet another. Christian men, it is but fair that we should give you one lesson from such a subject as this. Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. I would not be censorious, but solemnly and seriously, I fear there are not very many whose whole heart is set on Christ's glory. We

have church members, men of wealth, do they not spend more upon themselves than upon Christ? And may I not infer from this that they love themselves better than Christ? We have other members of our churches, men who are but comparatively well-to-do. These spend more on their mere pleasures than on Christ. What am I to suppose, but that they find more pleasure in the enjoyments of the flesh than they do in serving Christ?

Oh, have we not tens of thousands in the army of the Lord, that strike for themselves in their own battles with an arm as strong as that of King Arthur of our fable, but when they come to fight for Christ their arm drops nerveless at their side? We have men who are all eye, all ear, all hand in business, but they are blind, and deaf, and impotent when they come into Christ's church.

The fact is, we have in too many of our churches the chrysalis of men, but not the real body. They give us their names, but they keep their whole influence for the world. Ah! and is this what Christ deserves of you? Is this the reward of His self-devotion? Do you thus repay Him who saved others but could not save Himself. And you profess to be a follower of the Lamb, is this your following? An imitator of Jesus, and is this the imitation? Oh, sirs, the likeness is marred and blotted. You are poor sculptors indeed, if you imagine yourselves to be sculptured in the image of Christ.

Brothers and Sisters, this matter may not seem to be of interest to you, but I feel it to be a subject of the most intense importance to the world that lies in the wicked one. If we were more like Jesus it would be a happy day for the poor dying sons of men. Oh, if our divided aims could but be exchanged for singleness of heart, if our littleness of zeal could be consumed in the intensity of love to Christ, what better men should we be, and what a happier world would be this.

Do you imagine that you are pleasing to God when you are living for fifty aims instead of one? When you bring to Christ your lukewarm love, your lukewarm zeal, do you think He is pleased with you, and that He accepts your offer?

Oh, church of Laodicea, you have moved from Asia, you have come to England, and taken up your abode in London! Truly might the Lord say to many of our London churches, "You are neither cold nor hot, you are lukewarm, and I will spue thee out of my mouth."

There is nothing God abhors more than our cold Christianity, such as we have in these modern times—a religion which professes to live, but which lives like a gasping, fainting, trembling creature, that is on the verge of death. And you think to shake the world while you are shaking yourself with the ague of your cold indifference! You cry to God, "Arise!" And yet you rise not yourself! You ask a blessing and yet you will not win it! You crave for victory, and yet your swords rust in their scabbards!

Out with you, sirs, be rid of this hypocrisy, begin first to ask for singleness of soul, and devotedness of purpose, and when this is given you, then shall there come days of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Then shall sinners be converted, and Christ shall see of the travail of His soul. But for all this we want the influence of the Holy Spirit, for without that we shall never give our whole hearts up to the sacred mission of winning souls for Christ.

Spirit of the living God! descend upon us now, rest on Your saints, and fill them with love to perishing souls, and rest You on the sinner, to bring him to this willing Savior, and make him willing in the day of Your power.

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