

PERSONAL SERVICE
NO. 312

A SERMON
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AT SURREY CHAPEL, BLACK FRIAR'S ROAD

ON BEHALF OF THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY

*“O LORD, truly I am thy servant;
I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid:
thou hast loosed my bonds.”
Psalm 116:16*

THESE sentences suggest a contrast. David's religion was one of perfect liberty—"Thou hast loosed my bonds." It was one of complete service—"Truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid." Did I say the text suggested a contrast? Indeed the two things need never be contrasted, for they are found to be but part of one divine experience in the lives of all God's people.

The religion of Jesus is the religion of liberty. The true believer can say, when his soul is in a healthy state, "Thou hast loosed my bonds. The penal fetters with which my soul was once bound are all dashed to shivers, I am free!" "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The burdensome bonds of ceremonials are all cast to the winds. Henceforth the beggarly elements are trodden under foot, shadows have yielded to substance, and the type and the symbol cease to oppress, the true light now shineth, and the torches are quenched.

"Thou hast loosed my bonds"—that is to say, You have not only saved me from the penal consequences of my sin and from the heavy burden of the old Mosaic ceremonial law, but You have moreover delivered me from the spirit of bondage which once led me to serve You with the fear of an unwilling slave.

You have taken the yoke from my neck, and the goad from my back. You have made me Your freed man. No more do I crouch at Your feet or go to Your footstool cowering like a slave, but I come to You with privilege of access, up to Your very throne. By the Spirit of adoption I cry, Abba Father. You do own the kindred, for by the same Spirit I am sealed to the day of redemption. Thus, O Lord, "Thou hast loosed my bonds."

Nor if religion has had its full sway in us, is this all. You have loosed me from the bonds of worldly maxims, You have delivered me from the fear of man, You have rescued me from the stooping and fawning which made me once the slave of every tyrant who laid claim to my allegiance, and You have made me now the servant of but one Master, whose service is perfect liberty. Whereas before I spoke with bated breath, lest I should offend, and even my conscience had continually to yield to the whims and prejudices of another man, behold now "Thou hast loosed my bonds."

As an eagle with my eye on the sun, with wings outstretched true to the line upward which I soar, bound no longer to the rocks of prejudice or the mounds of worldly maxim—free, entirely free to serve my God without let or hindrance—"Thou hast loosed my bonds."

Vast and wide is the liberty of the believer. The Antinomian, when he assays to describe Gospel liberty, only errs by forgetting that such liberty is consistent with the fullest service. But we enjoy all the liberty that even an Antinomian theology could offer. A liberty to be holy is a grander liberty than a license to be sinful. A liberty to be conscientious, a liberty to know forgiven sin, a liberty to trample upon conquered lusts, this is an infinitely wider liberty than that which would permit me to be the

comfortable slave of sin, and yet indulge the delusive hope that I may one day enter the kingdom of heaven.

The largest expressions that can ever be used by the boldest minister of free grace cannot here be exaggerations. Luther may exhaust his thunders, and Calvin may spend his logic, Zwingli may utter his periods with fiery zeal, but after all the grand things that have been spoken about the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, we are freer than those men knew.

Free as the very air we breathe is the Christian, if he live up to his privileges. If he be in bondage at all, it is because he has not as yet yielded his spirit fully to the redeeming and emancipating influence of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the fullest and widest sense therefore, the believer may cry, "Thou hast loosed my bonds." Nor is this liberty merely consistent with the profounder and most reverent service, but the service is, indeed, a main characteristic of the exalted freedom.

"Truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid." This does not conflict with the sentence that follows it—"Thou hast loosed my bonds." This fact of my being God's servant is to me a proof and evidence, and a delightful fruit and effect, of my having my bonds loosed by the great Emancipator, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Service then, as well as liberty! Service is ordained to be a constant characteristic of the true religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. "We are not our own, we are bought with a price." There is not a hair upon our head, there is not a passion in our spirit, there is not a single power or faculty in our mind which is our own. We are all bought—all purchased—we are all, every single particle of us, the purchased property of the Lord Jesus Christ—perfectly free, and yet perfectly the property of Jesus—supremely blest with the widest liberty, and yet in the fullest sense the property of another—the shackled servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This service, my brethren, it appears from the text, should be *true*—"O LORD, truly I am thy servant." I fear there is very much service of God that only lies in terms and words. Men sit and sing hymns, in which they cry—

*"And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call;
I love my God with zeal so great,
I'd freely give Him all."*

But within an hour their acts belie their song. There is much of service in our own thought which never comes to service in act. I do not doubt but that we often compliment ourselves upon schemes we have devised, which fall dead to the ground, like blasted figs never having been carried into effect. We go to our chambers and bend our knees, and Satan whispers some word of self-satisfaction to us because we have some project on our soul, some device in our heart, though that project has never come to service, has only been an unborn intention, has never come into the life of an act.

I would that each one of us knew more fully the meaning of this word, "truly." "O LORD, *truly* I am thy servant." So truly that mine enemies cannot dispute it, so truly that if they dare dispute it, my next action shall contradict them, so truly that never in any act of my life shall I give them reason to suppose the contrary, so truly Thy servant, that my thoughts yield You obedience as well as my hands, my head as well as my heart, my heart as well as my feet. "Truly I am thy servant!" Not so in name and by profession, but so by actual deeds of holy endurance, and of noble daring for You. "O LORD, truly I am thy servant."

This service, it appears to me also from the text, is *continual*. "I *am* thy servant," is the utterance at this moment. "I *am* thy servant," is the utterance of the next. "I *am* thy servant," is my utterance today. "I *am* thy servant," will be my utterance when I come to die.

Never should the Christian think that any other language to ever be in his lips anything less than traitorous. "I am thy servant," is to be the exclamation of the man the moment his spirit knows its sins

are forgiven. “I am thy servant” is to be his constant monitor when he stands exposed to temptation, it is to be his continual spur when idleness in a Laodicean spirit would make him lukewarm. “I am thy servant” is to be his joy in the time of the hardest of labor. “I am thy servant” is to be his song in the time of the sternest suffering.

Continually and always we are the servants of God. We may change our masters upon earth, but our Master who is in heaven is our Master forever. We may cease to serve our country, but we could not cease to serve our God. We may cease to be linked with any denomination, but we could not cease to be the servants of Christ. Even should it be possible for us to be so forgetful of our obligations as to dream for a moment of not being the servants of the church, we could not harbor the thought that we should cease to be the servants of Christ.

“I am thy servant.” Let the next moment repeat it, let the next hour echo it, let the next year continue to resound it, let my whole life prolong it, and let eternity be a continuation of the solemn swell. “Truly, I *am* thy servant; I *am* thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.”

May I take the liberty now after offering you these few remarks by way of introduction, as a sort of running commentary upon my text—may I take the liberty of concentrating your thoughts upon one particular, during the rest of my sermon. There is one important point which I wish to bring before this present audience, namely, *the duty and the excellence of personal service for their Lord and Master*. I think I shall be warranted in confining my text, although it contains far more, to the repetition of that pronoun “I.”

“Truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.” The personality of the text seems to be sufficiently conspicuous to allow me now to restrain myself to that one topic—the duty of the personal service to Christ. I feel at this peculiar season, when God has visited some parts of our land with rich revival, and when we have reason to hope that revival will extend through this great city, I do feel just now that no topic can be more adapted to the times than the topic of personal service—personal consecration of every Christian to his Lord’s will.

This evening then, I shall first speak upon *the nature of personal service*, secondly, *its reasonableness*, thirdly, *its excellence*, and in the last place, come to that which is no doubt upon your own minds, *the special assistance which the Religious Tract Society yields to personal effort in the Redeemer’s kingdom*.

I. First then, THE NATURE OF PERSONAL SERVICE.

Let me explain it by a contrast. The service of God among us has grown more and more a service by proxy. I would not be censorious. Judge you what I say, and if there be but any measure of truth in it, let the truth come home to your soul.

Do we not observe even in the outward worship of God, at times a great attempt towards worship by proxy? Do we not often hear singing—certainly never in this place—but do we not often hear singing the praises of God confined to some five or six or more trained men and women who are to praise God for us? Do we not sometimes have the dreary thought, when we are in our churches and chapels, that even the prayer is said and prayed by the minister for us? There is not always that hearty union in the one great prayer of the day which there should be whenever we are gathered together.

The thought suggests itself continually to the thinking mind, “Is not much of the devotion confined to the minister, and to those few who pass through the service?” In fact, we have actually degraded ourselves by applying the term “performance” to divine worship. “Performance!” A phrase begotten in the theater, which certainly should have spent its existence there, has actually been brought into the house of God, and the services are nowadays “performed,” and the worship of God is gone through, and the thing is called the “doing duty” of the minister, and not the taking delight and the enjoying of a pleasure by the people.

Do we not observe too, that in all our churches there is too much nowadays of serving God in acts of benevolence, and acts of public instruction through the minister? Your minister is supported, you expect him to discharge your duty for you, he is to be the means of converting sinners, he is to be the means of

comforting the feeble-minded, in fact, all the mass of duties that belong to the church are considered to belong to the one man who is specially set apart to devote himself to the service of the ministry.

Oh that this were rectified! Would to God that our people could all feel that no support of ministers can ever rid them of their own personal responsibility! I think I speak in the name of all my brethren in the ministry—we repudiate the idea of taking your responsibility upon ourselves. We find that our own work is more than we can perform without our Master's strength. To come at last with clean hands before our Maker's bar, and to be able to say, "We are free from the blood of all men," will be as much as with the most arduous labors, and the most unremitting anxieties, we can expect to attain unto. We cannot take your work—we do not pretend to do so.

If you have dreamed of it, forget the delusion, and be rid of it once for all. I will do no man's duty but my own, I will not attempt to stand sponsor to your remissness, and take upon myself the sin of your sloth and lethargy, nor will any minister of Christ for a moment think that his most arduous efforts, and most self-denying exertions, can for a moment acquit you of being guilty of the blood of souls, unless you, each of you, do personally the utmost that you can.

A sorry contrast to this principle, I fear, is presented in many, many a Christian church. You have put one man into the rank, and he is to do all, while you are to sit still to be fed, to be edified, to be built up, as if you had nothing to do but to be stones and bricks that are to be built up, and not living men and women, who are to spend and be spent in the Redeemer's cause.

Having thus sought to exhibit by contrast, let me now illustrate the nature of this personal service by an actual picture. Look at the early days of Christendom—the church's pride and glory—when the purest air and the most refreshing dew were upon her mouth—then was the day of personal service.

The moment a man was converted to God in those days, he became a preacher, perhaps within a week a martyr. Every man then was a witness—not here and there a bishop, or now and then a confessor—but every Christian, whether he moved in Caesar's household, or whether he moved, like Lydia, in the pursuits of humble commerce—every believer had a part in the service, and sought to magnify the name of his Master.

Within but a few centuries after the death of Christ, the cross had been uplifted in every land, the name of Jesus had been pronounced in every known dialect, missionaries had passed through the deserts, had penetrated into the remote recesses of uncivilized countries, the whole earth was, at least, nominally evangelized.

But what has befallen us now, my brethren? The results of the labors of the church through a space of years—what are they? They dribble into utter insignificance, when compared with the triumphs of the apostolic times, and my own conviction is, that next to what I fear is the great cause—the absence of the Spirit's influence—next to that and perhaps first of all, is the absence of personal agency in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the Spirit is manifested in the diversities of His operations.

What conqueror or mighty warrior could expect to win a campaign if his troops should vote that one in a hundred should be supported by their rations—that one in a hundred should go to battle? No, you legions! you must every one of you draw swords. Every heart must be stout and every arm must be strong, the line must not be composed of here and there a warrior and an interval between, but every man must march forward, with the spirit of a lion and the strength of God, to do battle against the common enemy of souls.

We shall never see great things in the world till we have all roused ourselves to our personal responsibilities. God will not give the honor of saving the world to His ministers. He meant it for His church, and until His church is prepared to grasp it, God will withhold the crown which He has prepared for her brow, and for hers alone, and which none but she can ever win.

I think you may readily understand then what I mean by personal service. I mean this, if there be poor, it is not for you to subscribe to a society that shall send out paid agents for their relief, but as far as lies in you to visit them in their homes, and with your own hands supply them the bounty of a Christian heart. It is not for you to say the City Mission supplies admirably a sufficient number of ministers, the

whole lack is supplied, I may be idle. It is for you to instruct them, you are to be as a burning and a shining light in the midst of this dark generation.

Personal service is for you, it is for you to say, "Though I am content with my minister's labors, I cannot be content with my own. I must have more, and more, and more to do. I desire to spend all that I have in Jesus Christ's cause, and not to keep back a single power which I possess, but to be continually the living servant of the living God."

II. Having thus explained the nature of personal service, let me pass on to observe THE REASONABLENESS OF THIS PERSONAL SERVICE.

Heir of heaven, blood-bought and blood-washed, Jesus did not save you by another. He did not sit in heaven Himself at ease and then array Gabriel in His power and might and send him down to suffer, bleed, and die for you, but "He, his own self"—mark the strong expression of Scripture—"His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." He might send out apostles and seventy disciples to preach, but He never relaxed His service when He employed others. He might kindle other lights, but He did not quench His own.

He was Himself your servant. He washed the disciples' feet, not through the medium of another disciple, but with His own hands. They fed the hungry, but He Himself multiplied the fishes and broke the bread. He sent the Gospel into the world, but not by missionaries, by Himself, He became His own preacher, His own expounder, and then left the truth to be taken up by others, when He Himself had ascended into glory.

By the streaming veins then, of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the blessed body which for your sake endured the curse—the curse of toil, aggravated till it became not the sweat of the face, but the sweat of the heart in very drops of blood—by these I hold the reasonableness of your personal service to Him, and "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

But again, have you not a personal religion? You are not content with promises that are held in a sort of "joint stock" by the entire community, you long to have in your own heart the personal cry of adoption, nothing but vital personal union to the Son of God can ever satisfy you. You are not content with the general election, you feel that you must have a personal election and a personal calling. You long to read your title clear to mansions in the skies. The charter of free grace, bright as it is, does not satisfy you unless you can see your name among its inheritors. All the broad acres of the promises cannot charm you unless you can walk over them and call them your own.

You live, if you be a true Christian, you live upon the personal realization of your interest in that covenant of grace. What is more reasonable then that you should give personal service? Were I preaching to those who were dolts, this might be seen and felt too, but I speak to those who are wise men, because they have been taught of God, and I say—what can be a more logical conclusion than that personal benefits enjoyed, and personal blessings received, should be reciprocated by personal services rendered?

Further, let me remark to you that this *personal* service is reasonable, from the fact that personal service is the only kind of service at all available. I scarcely know whether you can serve God except by individual consecration. All that your minister can do is already due from him to God. You could not say before the eternal throne, "Great God, I am Thy servant, but I serve Thee by another." Might He not reply, "That other was My servant too"?

Here is a man who has spent his whole life, and whom you have felt to do so, does he come before God and cry, "Great God, I have done all, and I have a surplus left to supplement the dilatory character of my fellows"? No, when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants, we have done no more than it was our duty to have done. How then, can you by any means hope that you can serve God through us, when we ourselves feel we cannot reach the mark to which we would have aspired in our own personal service to Jesus?

Oh! brothers and sisters, if you will but think of it, all your idea of showing your gratitude to God by making another man carry your burden on his back, is founded on idleness, and cannot be maintained in righteousness. More might I say, but I choose instead thereof to appeal to you thus—does not the reasonableness of personal service strike you at once? If it does not, there was a time when it did. If you be a child of God, there was a season when argument was quite unnecessary to you.

Do you remember the time when your sins lay heavily upon your breast, and you did cry both night and day, “God be merciful to me a sinner”? Have you forgotten that glad hour when at the foot of mercy’s cross all the strings were loosed that bound that burden to your back, and you were free? Have you forgotten then, those feelings of devout gratitude which made you fall to the ground and cry, “My Master, take me, make something of me, do what You will with me, only let me serve You”?

Do you remember that hot haste in which you did rush into the world to tell to another the secret which God had whispered in your ear? Do you remember now, that first month of your consecration to God, when you could not do enough, when you did long to be rid even of necessary worldly employments, that you might devote yourself to God?

I think I hear those sighs of yours now—“O that I were a doorkeeper in the house of my God! O that I could serve my Master with all my might, and with all my strength!” Ah, brethren, and if you need arguments now, what does it betoken but that you have lost your first love, and that you have fallen from the height of your consecration? It seems to be believed by some men, who pretend to deep experience, that the love of Christians necessarily cools after conversion. I am sure it ought not to do so, and if it does, it is a fact which were disgraceful to us.

To my mind, it is palpable that if we loved our Master much when we first knew Him, we ought to love Him with a tenfold degree of fervent attachment after we have known Him more. Certain I am, if we have seen Christ, the very Christ, and have verily seen Him, we shall be more deeply in love with Him every day, whereas at first we thought Him lovely, we shall come to know Him so, and whereas once we thought anything we could do would be too little, we shall come to think that everything we could do would not be enough.

I question that man’s love altogether, who has to say of it, that it grew cold after a little season. What! Is the work of God’s Spirit but a sort of spasmodic twitching? Is this all the Spirit does, to lay the lash upon the back of the ass and make it go its jaded journey for an instant with a little more quickened pace? Surely not. God does not thus work. It were an inferior work to any which is exhibited in nature if this were all He did.

And shall grace be second to the deeds of nature? Does God send the planets on in their orbits, and do they continue to roll, and after He has made a creature serve Him, will He stop? Does He light the sun and does it blaze forever, and will He kindle our zeal, and shall it soon be quenched? Is God’s grace as the smoke from the chimney, as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away? God forbid that we should harbor the idea!

No, brethren, and personal service, personal continued service too, is but the reasonable effect of that grace which God gave us at the first, and which He continues to give us every hour, and will give us till we mount to eternal glory.

III. And now let me advance to my third point—PERSONAL SERVICE—ITS EXCELLENCE,

This excellence is so manifold, that had I some three hours to preach in, I might continue to go through the list and not exhaust it. Among the first of its charms, personal service is the main argument of the Christian religion against the skeptic.

The skeptic says the religion of Christ is maintained by men who make a gain of godliness. “Your living is dependent upon your advocating the cause,” says the infidel. Even to our missionaries, this is often said, and though an unworthy suspicion and utterly untrue of men who sacrifice much even when they gain most, uttered to men who in any other service might soon grow rich—in their Master’s service seldom, if ever—yet nevertheless, the taunt being never so unworthy, it has great power over unthinking minds.

Let the church, however, but begin to work unanimously, let every private man have his mission, let every man and woman begin to build nearest to their own house, and from that day skepticism begins to lose, at least, one of its arguments, and with it, it loses one of its most formidable elements—one of its deadliest weapons with which it has attacked the church.

“See there, see there,” says the infidel, “there is an honest man, though he is an honest fool he does at least believe what he says, for he does it not by word, but personally. He does it not by another, but by himself—not because he is paid for it, but because he loves it.” Oh, sirs! it were greatly to the confusion of infidelity, if not to its utter destruction, if the whole church could once see in its proper light, and carry out in its full measure, the grand doctrine of personal service.

But further, I am persuaded that while it would be a grand argument against skeptics, it would be one of the greatest means of deciding that class of waverers, who, although they are not skeptical, are negligent of the things of the kingdom.

There is no way to make another man earnest like being earnest one’s self. If I see others who neglect the great salvation and if I neglect it too, I patronize, and aid, and abet them in their neglect, but if that man sees me earnest about his salvation, he begins at once to put to himself the question, “Why is this? Here am I asleep and going down into hell, and this man who is no relation of mine, and who has no personal interest in me, is grieved, pained, and vexed, because I am going wrong and he cannot rest and be quiet because he fears I am in danger of the wrath to come.”

Oh! my brethren, there would be more souls, I do believe, moved to earnestness by earnestness, than by aught else. The closest logic, the most mighty rhetoric never convinced a soul so well as that mightiest of logic and of rhetoric—the earnestness of a true Christian. Let men who are now slothful see us in earnest, and they will begin to follow in our wake, God will bless our example to them, and through us they will be saved.

But further, the excellency of personal service, it strikes me, is not confined to the good we do, but should be argued from the good we get. We have in our churches, men and women who are always looking for an opportunity for quarreling. If there is a member who has made the slightest slip, they report it to the public, they tell it in Gath, and publish it in the streets of Askelon. There is nothing that is right. If you do a thing today, it is wrong, if you were to alter it tomorrow, it would be just as wrong. They are never consistent in anything, but in their inconsistent grumbling.

The mightiest cure for the church is to set them to work. Armies are troublesome things, even emperors find they must allow these hungry things to blunt their appetite with war. The church itself can never be much blessed while it has division in its own ranks. Its very activity will cause disorder, the very earnestness in the Christian will cause confusion, unless you lead forth that earnestness to its proper field of development.

I have always found that where there is a quarrelsome church, it is sure to be an idle church. But where men are always “at it,” they have very little time to find fault with one another. When we fuse iron, the two pieces will soon weld, bring two cold pieces together, and the stoutest arm and the heaviest hammer can never weld them. Let our churches be united and they will be earnest, let them be cold, and they will be dashed to a thousand shivers.

And moreover, we have a large class of poor creatures, who, while not discontent with others, are discontent with themselves. They don’t fight with other people, but they seem to be incessantly quarreling with a personal jealousy of their own selves. They are not what they like to be, and they are not what they wish to be, they don’t feel as they should feel, and they don’t think as they would like to think.

They are always plunging their finger into their own eyes, because they cannot see so well as they would wish. They are always ripping up the wounds they have, because those wounds smart, making themselves miserable in order that they may be happy. And at last, crying themselves into an insupportable state of misery, they acquire a habit of mourning, until that mourning seems to be the only bliss they know.

To use a homely illustration, and one which will be remembered, if another might not, the swiftest way for these cold souls to warm themselves is by setting them at once to work. When we were boys, we sometimes gathered round our father's fire in the winter time, and almost sat upon it, yet we could not get warm, we rubbed our chilblained fingers, but they still kept blue, at length our father wisely turned us out of doors and bade us work, and after some healthy pastime we soon came in with limbs no longer benumbed, the blood was circulated, and what fire could not do, exercise soon accomplished.

Ministers of Christ, if your people cry to you, "Comfort us! Comfort us!"—comfort them, and make the fire a good one, at the same time remember that all the fire you can ever kindle will not warm them so long as they are idle. If they are idle they cannot be warm. God will not have His people eat the fat and drink the sweet, unless they are prepared to carry their burden and give a portion to others as well as seek meat for themselves. The benefit of personal service then is not confined to others, but will come to be enjoyed even by those who engage in it.

An example or two here may tend to enforce the lesson I am anxious to inculcate. If you wish to prove the truth of this, you can begin to make a tolerable experiment in the course of the next half-hour. Do you want to feel grateful? Do not go home and get the hymn book down. Just go down this street here, and take the first turning to the left or the right, whichever you please. Go up the first pair of stairs you come to, you see a little room, perhaps the husband has come home by now—come home weary, and there is a swarm of children, all dirty, and all live and sleep in, perhaps, that one room. Well, if you will only take a view of that with your own eyes, and then go home to your own house, you will begin to feel grateful.

Or rise up tomorrow morning, and go to another house, and see a poor creature stretched on the bed of languishing, dependent on the parish allowance, and worse than that, dying without hope, knowing nothing of God or of the way of salvation, and if that does not make you grateful when you think of your own interest in the precious blood of Jesus, I know nothing that will.

Again, you want to be zealous and earnest. Next Sabbath morning walk down the New Cut, and if the open depravity does not make you earnest, your blood is fish's blood, and you have not the warmth of man's blood in you. Just see how the street is thronged all day with those who buy and sell, and get gain, while you are meeting in the house of God for prayer and praise.

If that should not satisfy you, and you want to feel peculiarly zealous, take your walk abroad and not only look on but begin to act. Take your stand amidst the crowd near the Victoria Theatre and try to preach, and if you do not feel desirous when you hear their clamors and see their anxious eyes, as if they longed to hear you with eyes as well as ears—if that does not make you zealous, I know of nothing that will make you so.

Take a handful of tracts in your hand and a handful of coppers in your pocket—two good things together, and give some of each to the poor people, and they will recollect you, and after you have gone to those—the poorest and the most depraved—if you do not go home with a feeling of gratitude mingled with one of earnest zeal for the salvation of souls, I do not know what remedy I can prescribe.

I wish some of you fine ladies and gentlemen had the walking down some of our courts and alleys—nay, I would wish you to have a special treat that you might always remember. I would like you to sleep one night at a lodging house, I should like you to eat one meal with the poor man, I should like you to sit in the midst of one drunken brawl, I should wish you to see one poor wife, her face all bleeding, where a brutal and degrading husband had been striking her, I should like you to spend one Sabbath in the midst of sin and debauchery, I should like you to see one scene of vice, and then hurry you away once and for all.

I think if I took you there not only to see, but to act and cooperate in some holy deed of service, took you there that you might thrust your hand into the kennel, and bring up some lost jewel, that you might thrust your finger into the very fire, that you might pluck some brand from the burning, I think that usefulness would not be all on the part of others, but to a great degree react upon your own heart. You would go home and say, "I could not have believed it, I could not have imagined that the necessities of

this city were so great, that the need of praying and preaching, and generous liberality, could have been one-tenth so huge.”

I am sure if you be Christians, from that time forward, you would be more indefatigable in your industry, and more unlimited in your gifts than before. I must not tarry longer, time reproves me, though if it be that any of you shall carry out in practice, the time employed in persuading you will have been well spent.

IV. I want now for a minute or two, to come to that Society, for which I stand here to plead tonight, and observe ITS PECULIAR ADAPTATION TO PERSONAL SERVICE.

We love the Missionary Society, both for home and abroad, though it does in measure help us to serve God by proxy. I love the Bible Society, because that enables me to serve God personally. For the same reason, I must ever love the Religious Tract Society, because that enables me, nay, compels me, if I would do anything, to do it myself.

I think I need only just mention one or two particulars. The peculiar form of usefulness which the Religious Tract Society lays hold upon, is admirably adapted to those persons who have but little power and little ability, but nevertheless wish to do something for Christ. They have not the tongue of the eloquent, but they may have the hand of the diligent. They cannot stand and preach, but they can stand and distribute here and there these silent preachers. They do not feel that they could subscribe their guinea, but they may buy their thousand tracts, and these they can distribute broadcast.

How many a little one in Zion has spent his life in doing this good, when he could not perhaps have found any other good within his reach. This however, is but the beginning—the smallest part of the matter. And when men begin with little efforts for Christ, such as the giving away of a tract, they become stronger to do something else afterwards.

I speak personally tonight—and excuse the allusion—I remember the first service which my youthful heart rendered to Christ, was the doing up of tracts in envelopes, that I might send them, with the hope that by choosing pertinent tracts, applicable to persons I knew and then sealing them up, that God would bless them. And I well remember taking them and distributing them in a town in England where tracts had never been distributed before, and going from house to house and telling in humble language, the things of the kingdom of God.

I might have done nothing, if I had not been encouraged by finding myself able to do something. I sought to do something more, and then from that, something more, and now have I got beyond. And so I do not doubt that many of the servants of God have been led on to do something higher and nobler because the first step was for good.

I look upon the giving away of a religious tract as only the first step for action not to be compared with many another deed done for Christ, but were it not for the first step we might never reach to the second, but that first attained, we are encouraged to take another, and so at the last, God helping us, we may be made extensively useful. Besides, there is this to be said for the Society, that it does not make a man perform an act which looks like service but which is not.

There is a real service of Christ in the distribution of the Gospel in its printed form, a service the result of which heaven alone shall disclose, and the judgment day alone discover. How many thousands have been carried to heaven instrumentally upon the wings of these tracts, none can tell.

I might say, if it were right to quote such a Scripture, “The leaves were for the healing of the nations”—verily they are so. Scattered where the whole tree could scarcely be carried, the very leaves have had a medicinal and a healing virtue in them, and the real Word of truth, the simple statement of a Savior crucified, and of a sinner who shall be saved by simply trusting in the Savior, has been greatly blessed, and many a thousand souls have been led into the kingdom of heaven by this simple means.

And now what shall I say to bind up what has been already said into a compact form? Let each one of us, if we have done nothing for Christ, begin to do something now. The distribution of tracts is the first thing. Let us do that and attempt something else by and by. Are we, on the other hand, diligently engaged already in some higher service for Christ, let us not despise those steps which helped us up, but

let us now assist others with these steps that they too may rise from the grade of service which is theirs to a higher and a greater one. Let us in fact encourage this Society at all times with our contributions and with our prayers.

I would remind you that during this year the Tract Society has sent abroad some forty-two millions of tracts—some four and a half millions more than last year. These have been sent throughout the whole earth. Extensive as man, I may say has been the action of this Society—not confined to any sect or denomination, or any class or clime. It has labored for all, and all Christians have labored with it, and God has given it a large measure of success.

I think I may leave it in your hands tonight. But permit me this one word ere I bid you farewell. Many of you I shall never see again, and I remember that my own sermon tells me that I have personal service to perform for Christ. It is not enough for me to urge you to do it, *I must do it too.*

My hearers, imagine not that any service you can do for Christ will save your souls if you are unrenewed. If your faith is not fixed in Jesus, your best works will be but splendid sins. All the performance of duties will not affect your salvation. Cease from your own righteousness, cease from all deeds of working out life, and “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Trust Jesus and you are saved, trust self and you are lost. Just as you are, cast yourselves on Christ.

I remember Dr. Hawker concluding an admirable discourse with these brief words—the words were addressed to Rebecca of old, “*Wilt thou go with this man?*” Let me conclude with the like words—Souls, will you go with Christ? Will you go to Christ?

“I would go with Him,” saith one, “but would He have me?” Did He ever reject one who came to Him? “I would go with Christ,” saith another, “but I am naked.” He will clothe you. “I would go to Him,” says a third, “but I am filthy.” He can cleanse you, nay, His own blood shall wash you, and His own veins will supply the purifying stream. “I would go with Him,” saith another, “but I am diseased and leprous, and cannot walk with Him.” Ah, but He is a great Physician, and He can heal you.

Come as you are to Christ. Many say, “But I cannot come.” I remember praying in the North of Ireland, in the revival, which just hits the mark. The young converts will say to one another, when one says, “I cannot come,” “Brother, come if you can, and if you can’t come, come as you can.” Will you not come, when by coming to Christ you may save your soul?

We do not know what faith is when we say to ourselves, “It is something so mysterious I cannot reach it.” Faith is trusting Christ. It is the end of mystery and the beginning of simplicity, the giving up of all those idle feelings and believing that aught else can save the soul, and the reception of that one master-thought, that Christ Jesus is exalted on high to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins.

Never soul perished trusting Jesus, never heart was ever blasted with perdition that had confidently rested itself upon the cross. There is your hope, poor shipwrecked mariner, yonder constellation of the cross with those five stars, the wounds of Jesus. Look there and live. One glance and you are saved. Those soul-quickenings words, “Believe and live,” comprehend the whole Gospel of God. May the Divine Spirit lead you now out of self unto Christ. O Lord! command Thy blessing for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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.