

A SENSE OF PARDONED SIN NO. 316

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 20, 1860,
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AT EXETER, HALL, STRAND.

*“You have cast all my sins behind Your back.”
Isaiah 38:17.*

HEZEKIAH here speaks positively on a matter concerning which he had not the remotest shadow of a doubt. He had trusted his God; he had cast himself upon the merit of the promised Messiah—and as the result of that faith, assurance had been granted to him and he now sings with unfaltering tongue, “You,” even You, O God, Most High and Most Just, “You have cast all my sins,” great and innumerable though they are, You have cast them all “behind Your back.” Oh, what a joyous thing it is to have a ray of heavenly sunlight in the soul and to hear the very voice of God as He walks in the garden of our souls in the cool of the day, saying to us, “Son, your sins which are many, are all forgiven you.” The whisper of that heavenly Voice may raise our heart to bliss almost divine! It confers a joy that is not to be equaled by all the corn and the wine, and all the pleasures which the riches and the enjoyments of this world can afford! To have the divine kiss of acceptance; to be robed in the best robe; to have the ring on the hand and the shoes on the feet; to hear the heavenly music and dancing with which the returning prodigals are returned to their Father’s house—this, indeed, is a bliss worth worlds!

My dear brothers and sisters, there are some who choose to dwell to a very large degree in their ministry upon such enjoyments as these which concern the experience of the child of God. But I fear they make it the main object of their preaching, to advance a system of experiences and feelings. On the other hand there are other brothers who constantly insist upon the doctrine of salvation by faith and by faith alone, but almost forget to testify to the experience which is the *result* of faith. Now, both of these men err, doubtless; but, nevertheless, their error is founded upon a conscientious desire to advance the truth of God. The brother, who preaches experience and insists upon it, is afraid lest any should possess a fictitious faith which is not the faith of God’s elect. He therefore preaches *experience* as a test and a touchstone by which he may try the spirits whether they are of God. On the other hand, our other brother who deals with faith and not with experience, is afraid lest men should make a God of their *feelings* and lest they should rest in their *experience* and not in the cross of Christ! He is anxious to maintain in its clearness, the fact that we are saved by what *Christ* felt, and not by what *we* feel. He so wishes to expound the great truth of God that we are redeemed by Christ’s most precious blood, and not by any experience of our own, that perhaps he overshoots the mark, and forgets that where there is faith there will be experience, and where there is a true experience there must have been a real faith.

Permit me, then, just to spend one moment in trying to show how these two truths of God really meet—a divine experience and a single faith—necessary and joyous feelings, and yet a more necessary and unalloyed confidence in Christ. The fact is that we are saved by faith and not by feeling. “We walk by faith and not by sight.” Yet there is as much connection between faith and hallowed feelings as there is between the root and the flower! Faith is permanent, just as the root is always in the ground; feeling is casual, and has its seasons. Just as the bulb does not always shoot up the green stem; far less is it always crowned with the many, many-colored flower. Faith is the tree, the essential tree; our feelings are like the appearance of that tree during the different seasons of the year. Sometimes our soul is full of blooms and the bees hum pleasantly and gather honey within our hearts. It is then that our feelings bear witness to the life of our faith, just as the buds of spring bear witness to the life of the tree. Then our feelings gather still greater vigor, and if we come to the summer of our delights, again, perhaps, we begin to

wither into the dried and yellow leaf of autumn. No, sometimes the winter of our despondency and despair will strip away every leaf from the tree and our poor faith stands like a blasted stem without a sign of green! And yet, my brothers and sisters, as long as the tree of faith is there, we are saved! Whether faith blossoms or not, whether it brings forth joyous fruit in our experience or not—so long as it is there in all its permanence—we are saved! Yet we should have the gravest reason to distrust the life of our faith, if it did not sometimes blossom with joy and often bring forth fruit unto holiness. Experience, if I may so speak, is like a sundial. When I wish to know the time of day with my spirit, I look upon it. But then there must be the sun shining, or else I cannot tell by my sundial what and where I am. If a cloud passes before the face of the sun, my dial is of little service to me, but then my faith comes out in all its excellency, for my faith pierces the cloud and reads the state of my soul—not by the sunshade on the dial, but by the position of the sun in the heavens themselves! Faith is a greater and grander thing than all experience, less fickle, more stable. It is the root of divine grace and these are but the flowers, the germs, the buds. Yet let us not speak against experiences; let us value them—for it is a grand thing to sit in the sunshine of God's presence—it is a noble thing to eat the grapes of Eshcol, even while we are in the wilderness! It is true there is a greater grandeur in believing heaven to be mine when I can see no evidence; yet it is a sweeter thing—

*“To read my title clear
To mansions in the skies.”*

I shall now turn to the one point of experience which seems to be brought out prominently in our text—that blessed experience of a consciousness of pardon—a sense of pardoning love shed abroad in the soul. I shall view my text in two ways. There are two sorts of pardon which God gives and it is very necessary to distinguish between them. First, I shall speak of *a consciousness of pardon enjoyed by a man as a forgiven sinner*. When I have so done, I shall speak of that other consciousness of pardon, more true to my text, more intimately connected with it—*a sense of forgiveness enjoyed by man, not as a sinner, but as a child*. A pardoned child who knows he has already been forgiven by the Judge, but who now smiles to know that he is pardoned, also, by the Father.

I. First, then, let me speak of A SENSE OF PARDON AS GIVEN BY GOD TO THE SINNER.

We are not to wait for this sense of pardon before we come to Christ. The soul beholding itself lost, ruined and naked, is commanded in the Word of God to trust itself, *just as it is*, in the hands of Christ. Faith obeys that command and without one glimpse of joy within, commits the soul, all trembling and quivering with fear, into the hands of Christ, as into the hands of an all-loving and all-powerful Redeemer. I repeat it, we are not to stop for a sense of pardon until we do this. Faith is our *duty* and the sense of pardon is our *privilege*. We must first *obey* and then receive the reward. I, feeling that I am utterly undone and that there is no reason in myself why I should have been saved, cast myself at the foot of Christ's cross and trust Him with myself eternally. As the result of that, God afterwards, of His own free grace, by His Spirit, sheds abroad in my soul an Infallible witness which proves to me that I was forgiven in that very hour when I closed in with Christ and trusted my soul in His hands.

Now this consciousness of pardon *includes many things*, although it is not alike comprehensive in all souls. With some uninstructed persons, who know too little of Scripture, all the consciousness they enjoy is this—that sin is forgiven. They feel in their souls that every sin that ever stood on record in the book of God has been blotted out once and for all. Joined with this they are released from the terror and dread which once weighed upon their spirits. The nightmare has departed; that huge apparition which haunted them—a consciousness of their guilt—is gone and laid in the Red Sea of Jesus' blood forever. But, being ignorant and uninstructed, they are not conscious of more than this—the sum total of their joys lies here—that sin is forgiven—that the wrath of God is turned away, and that they shall not now go into the pit of hell. If the Holy Spirit, however, is pleased to show them more at this time, they have a consciousness that God loves them. They are sure that Jehovah looks upon them as His favorites, as those to whom He has given a special grace with love. They, then, at that very moment, begin to read their title to the blessings of the covenant. They see that all things are theirs because they are Christ's

and that since there is no condemnation, there must be every blessing vouchsafed by the very act which took away the condemning sentence. It sometimes happens, too, that this sense of pardon swells till it exceeds the narrow bounds of time—till the spirit is not only sure that it is reconciled to God and that its life is now secure—it sees heaven, itself, as at a little distance. It begins to realize its own title to the inheritance of the saints in light—no, in the hour of pardon I have sometimes known the emancipated spirit by faith—walk the golden streets, and lay its finger on the strings of the glorious harp of heavenly praise. There is no telling how comprehensive at times this sense of pardon may become. It may embrace a past eternity—receiving its election, an eternity to come—beholding its glory. It may go into the depths of hell and see the fires forever quenched, or mount to the glories of heaven and see all these splendors given to it to be its own. And, yet, as I have said before, it is not so in all cases, for with many uninstructed minds, the only sense of pardon they get, is a removal of terror, and an assured conviction that their sins are all forgiven.

But, says one, “*How does this sense of pardon come? In what manner, and form?*” We answer, it comes in different ways and forms. Many men receive their consciousness of pardon in an instant. They were reading the Word of God, perhaps, and some one text seemed as if it rose up from its fellows, illuminated with heavenly fire and they saw that text printed on their own hearts. Such a one as this—“Come now, and let us reason together. Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow.” Or, such another as this—“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” The man doubted before, full of gloom and despondency; in a minute all is light and life and joy in his heart! If he could have passed from hell to heaven by a single step, the change in his soul could not have been more manifest and clear. From being heavily burdened, he has suddenly become light of soul; from being sin-black from head to foot, he comes to view himself washed completely white and standing in the snowy garment of the Savior’s righteousness. With others this sense of pardon is of slower growth. It begins with a faint gleam of hope, another ray, and yet another, till at last the morning star arises in their souls. The light increases still, till at last the morning star of hope gives way to the sun of righteousness, Himself, risen with healing beneath His wings. I have known some obtain peace in an instant and others have been months, if not years, before they could walk with a steady and firm footstep and say with unquivering lips—“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.”

This conviction is sometimes conveyed to us in the most extraordinary manner. I have known it brought home to the soul by some singular saying of a minister, by some saying so appropriate to one’s own case, that we were compelled to say—“That is not the voice of man, but the voice of God, for man could not know my heart; that sentence is surely spoken by one who tries the heart and searches the reins.” At other times some strange providence has been the singular means of giving joy and relief. The strangest story I ever remembered to have read, with regard to peace given after a long season of despondency, was the case of Mrs. Honeywood, whom you may have read of. Living in Puritan times, she had been accustomed to hear the most thundering of its preachers. She became so thoroughly broken in peace with the consciousness of sin, that for, I think, some 10 years, if not 20 years, the poor woman was given up to despair—she was absolutely certain that there was no hope for her. It seemed that in her case, a kind of miracle must be worked to give her peace of mind. One day an eminent minister of Christ, conversing with her, told her there yet was hope that Jesus Christ was able to save to the uttermost, those who come unto God by Him. Grasping a Venice glass that stood on the table, made of the thinnest material that can be conceived, the woman dashed it down on the ground and said—“I am lost, as sure as that glass is broken into a thousand pieces!” To her infinite surprise, the glass suffered no damage whatever—remained whole without a crack! From that instant she believed that God had spoken to her. She opened her ears to hear the words of the minister and peace poured into her spirit. I mention that as an extraordinary and singular instance—perhaps the like is not to be found on record anywhere else. But God has His ways and means. He will by some means—by every means, by the strangest and

most miraculous means—bring His people to a sense of pardon. If they reject all other ways, He will sooner work a miracle than that His banished ones shall not be brought home!

Permit me to dwell for another minute or two upon the *joy* which this sense of pardon creates. I speak now from experience. That happy day when my soul first found a Savior and learned to cling to His dear feet was a day never to be forgotten by me. An obscure child, unknown, unheard of, I sat and listened to the Word of God. And that precious text, “Look unto Me and be you saved all you ends of the earth,” lead me to the cross of Christ. I can testify that the joy of that day is utterly indescribable! I could have leaped, I could have danced! There was no expression, however fanatical, which would have been out of keeping with the joy of my spirit at that hour! Many days have passed since then, of Christian experience, but there has never been a day which has had that full exhilaration—that sparkling delight which that first day had! I thought I could have sprung from the seat on which I sat and have called out with the wildest of those Methodist brothers and sisters who were present, “I am forgiven! I am forgiven! A monument of grace! A sinner saved by blood!” Concerning that day all other occurrences are dim in my remembrance. I know nothing of what was said to me, or of what happened, but just this—that my spirit saw its chains broken to pieces and that I walked an emancipated man, an heir of heaven, a forgiven one—accepted in Christ Jesus, plucked out of the miry clay and out of the horrible pit, with my feet set upon a rock and my goings established! The joy of the heart, when it receives pardon, may be *imagined* by some of you who have never tasted it, but if you ever come to *know* it, you will say with the queen of Sheba, “The half has not been told me.” Men, when they are in this delightful state, are very communicative; they cannot hold themselves in. They are like John Bunyan who wanted to tell the crows on the plowed land about it! They speak to the very trees. They think the world is in harmony with them; they go forth with joy and they are led forth with peace. The mountains and the hills break forth before them into singing and the trees of the fields clap their hands. The birds sing, to be in tune with their hearts—the sun shines more brightly that day than he ever did before! Or if the rain descends, it is but the very emblem of those showers of mercy which have made glad the spirit. On that day, at least, if never before, the man becomes the world’s great priest! He stands in the midst of all his fellow priests, the great high priest of the world’s universe! He walks in his white garments; he wears about him the belle of the music of praise. He offers the sacrifice which is acceptable to God, and his own heart is the chief offering which he presents. Oh, on that day the world seems to be a great organ and the fingers of the pardoned man run along the keys and wake the music even to thunder—till the eternal sonnets of the ages long past dwindle into mere silence before the hallelujahs of that acclaim of praise, to which the pardoned sinner wakes the worlds!

Do not think I am fanatical in this—I speak but sober sense. In fact, I fall *short* in my descriptions of the joy of the spirit in which God has shed abroad a glimpse of His love and a token of His grace. Do I hear some friend whisper that such feelings are fanatical? Ah, my friend, if it were so, it would be a fanaticism devoutly to be sought for! It were one for which the most sober mind might strain itself forever! Do you tell us this is fanaticism, for a man to be sure that he is pardoned? But pause awhile. Will you venture to say that this book is itself fanatical, that the Bible is a book full of enthusiasm and vain conceits? Oh, no, you believe this to be a book written in sober earnest! Well, then, the feelings of a pardoned man are but the necessary and natural consequence of the truths of this book. Is there such a thing as pardon taught here? Are there not such words as these?—“Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven”?—“Blessed is he to whom the Lord imputes not his iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile”?—“You have cast all my sins behind Your back”? Are there not words here which tell us that Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save that which is lost; that there is such a thing as salvation, such a thing as regeneration, such a thing as passing out of darkness into marvelous light; such a thing as being transplanted from the kingdom of darkness and taken into the kingdom of God’s dear Son? If the Bible teaches us that there are such things and if such things are realities in the experience of Christians—it were a libel upon that book if men were not happy when they received them! In fact, if the experience of a Christian at the time of his conversion were not singularly, no—*excessively* joyful—

it might be a contradiction to the teaching of this word! But I say it, and say it boldly, all the transports that the most joyous spirit ever knew in the hour of its pardon are warranted by this Word; no, not only warranted, but they fall short of what the Bible would warrant us in receiving!

“But,” says one, “I cannot understand that a man can be sure that he is pardoned!” That great and excellent man, Dr. Johnson, used to hold the opinion that no man ever could know that he was pardoned—that there was no such thing as assurance of faith. Perhaps if Dr. Johnson had studied his Bible a little more, and had had a little more of the enlightenment of the Spirit, he, too, might have come to know his own pardon. Certainly he was not a very excellent judge of theology—no more than he was of porcelain—which he once attempted to make and never succeeded. I think both in theology and porcelain his opinion is of little value. You say, how can a man know that he is pardoned? There is a text which says—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ—is it irrational to believe that I am saved? “He who believes has eternal life,” says Christ, in John’s gospel. I believe in Christ—am I absurd in believing that I have eternal life? I find the apostle Paul speaking by the Holy Spirit and saying—“There is, therefore, now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” If I know that my trust is fixed on Jesus only and that I have faith in Him, were it not ten thousand times more absurd for me *not* to be at peace than for me to be filled with my unspeakable joy? It is but taking God at His Word, when the soul knows as a necessary consequence of its faith, that it is saved! But, besides that, suppose it should be true that God, Himself, stepping as you think out of the order of nature, absolutely speaks to every individual man and seals on their hearts the witness that they are forgiven—suppose it to be so, however hard you think the supposition to be—would it be unnatural then, that the spirit should rejoice? Now, such is just the fact, literally and positively; for the Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are born of God! And I will tell you this, though I am censured for fanaticism in it, there are times with every child of God when he could not doubt of his acceptance with Christ—when his being saved is a more palpable and sure truth than even the fact that he is in existence! All the arguments you could possibly bring could not shake him, because he has the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit that he is born of God. Have you never seen some poor servant girl accosted by a clever infidel, who begins to cut her down in all her principles, and laugh at her and tells her she is a poor deluded thing? She answers him, bears with him, and answers him again and again in her own simple style. You can see that her arguments are not conclusive or logical. But wait till she gets to the end, and you hear her say—“Well, sir, you know a great deal more than I do, and I am not able to speak as you can; I do not wish to think as you think; but, sir, if what you have said is true, you cannot disprove what I feel *in here*. I feel that I am a child of God; I know I am, and you may as soon reason me out of the fact that what I see, does exist, and what I feel has a real cause, as reason me out of this fact, which I know in my inmost soul, namely, that I have passed from death unto life and am a child of God.” Come here, blind man! His eyes are opened. Now try and convince that man he does not see! “No,” he says, “that is one thing I know; other things I may be mistaken about, but one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.” Here, bring up that sick man who has been in bed this last 15 years a cripple, a miracle is worked—he is restored and he begins to leap! Bring up our friend of the academy and let him argue against him—“Your leg is not in a sound state; I tell you, you are not well, you are not cured! You don’t feel happy; you don’t feel restored and recruited in strength.” “Oh,” he says, “I don’t care about all your arguments, nor about all the Latin phrases that you use; *I am cured!* That is a matter of consciousness with me, and I am not to be beaten out of it.” So it is with the Christian; there are times when he can say—“I am saved, I am forgiven.” The Lord has said to him—“I am your salvation,” and no reasoning, however sophisticated—no argument, however omnipotent it may seem to be—can shake him, or make him renounce his confidence, “which has great recompense of reward.”

And, now, my dear hearers, before I leave this point, to dwell for a few minutes on the second part of my subject, I want to ask you a question or two. Have you ever had this consciousness of pardon in your lives? “No,” says one, “I never had. I wish I had; I mean to wait for it.” You may wait till you are lost

before you will ever have it by waiting for it! Your business is to go to Christ as you are and trust Him and you shall have it. To sit still and not to obey that great commandment, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” is the very way to make your damnation doubly sure! I doubt that you will find this precious pearl unless you sell all that you have and buy that divine field, Christ Jesus, and there find this pearl of great price. “Yes, but” says another, “I feel I have never had it and I don’t need it.” Mark this, my hearer—as God’s witness, I speak to you today, and if you now reject my warning, in that hour when you lie quivering on a dying bed, perhaps this uplifted finger and these eyes may be a vision for you then! If you shall never have in your soul a consciousness of pardon on this side of the grave, I fear that you shall come to your grave full of sin and after death shall be the *judgment*, and after the judgment, the wrath to come. This which you think to be enthusiasm and fanatical is essential to your soul’s salvation! Oh, put it not from you. Despise it not. Long for it! Cry for it! Pant after it! And may the Lord God grant you to know that you are His child and that you are passed from death unto life! A better wish no heart can wish you. A larger benediction than that, no minister’s lips could pronounce on you. God bring you out of your state of lethargy, and slumber, and darkness, and bring you to seek and find the Savior—whom to know is to receive pardon in the conscience—and joy in the soul!

II. And now I shall need your patient attention but for a few moments while I take the second part of my subject and dwell upon it briefly. I have sometimes heard uninstructed Christians ask how it is that when a man is once pardoned, he is nevertheless to ask every day that his sins may be forgiven. We teach and we are bold to affirm it again and again and confess the teaching, that the moment a sinner believes; all his sins are put away—past, present and to come! They are all gone as far as God, the Judge, is concerned. There is not left one sin against any of His people, nor shall there be. “He sees no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel.” And yet our Master tells us to bow our knees and say, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” How can we ask for that we already possess? Why seek a pardon which we already enjoy? The difficulty lies in a forgetfulness of the relationship which Christians sustain to God. As a sinner, I come to Christ and trust Him. God is then a Judge; He takes the great book of the court, strikes out my sins and acquits me. At the same moment, out of His great love, He adopts me into His family. Now I stand in quite a different relationship to Him from what I ever did before; I am not so much His subject as His *child*. He is no longer to me a Judge, but has become to me a *Father*. And now I have new rules, new laws. Now I have a new discipline. Now I have new treatment. Now I have new obedience. I go and do wrong. What then? Does the Judge come and at once summon me before His truth? No, I have no Judge! He is a Father, and that Father brings me up before His face and frowns on me—no, takes the rod and begins to scourge me. He never scourged me when He was a Judge! Then, He only threatened to use the axe. But He has buried the axe, now. Now that I am His child, He has no axe to put me to death with—He cannot destroy His own children! But He uses the rod upon me; if I do that which is wrong, as I am doing every day towards Him as a Father, I am bound to go to Him as to a Father, on a child’s knees and say, “Our Father which are in heaven, forgive me these trespasses as I forgive them who trespass against me.” As each day you and I, if we are children of God, are continually sinning, not against Him as Judge, but against Him as Father, it behooves us to seek daily pardon. If we do not obtain that pardon daily, at last the Father lays on the rod, as He did in Hezekiah’s case. He smote Hezekiah till he was sick even to death. Hezekiah repented; the rod was taken away. And then Hezekiah felt in his soul, “You have cast all my sins behind Your back.” This was David’s case. David’s sin with Bathsheba had been forgiven years ago and put away, through the expected blood of Christ. But when he sinned it, God put him away for a while—took away His presence from him—as a father angry against his child. When David, however, repented, after he had been smitten, the Father took him again to His bosom, and David could sing once again, “You have cast my sins behind Your back.”

Now notice that this pardon differs from the first. The first was the pardon of a Judge—this is the pardon of a father. The first quenched the flames of hell; this only removes the paternal rod. The first made the rebel into a pardoned criminal and reversed the sentence; the second receives the erring child

more tenderly to a Father's breast. There are essential differences, because the pardon of the second does not relate so much to the punishment and the guilt, as it does to the root of iniquity within and the removing of that from which was only cast upon us in order to make us sick of self and fond of Christ. But when this sense of pardon is obtained by the Christian, it gives him a joy; not as tumultuous as the first one he had; but still, and deep, and unruffled, and calm. He does not, perhaps, partake of that roaring sea of rapturous delight on which he sailed when first he was forgiven; but his peace is liken to a river and his righteousness like the waves of the sea. And this peace produces in him the most blessed and salutary effects. He becomes grateful to God for the chastisement he has received, which taught him his need of Jesus afresh. He henceforth avoids the sins which made him grieve his God; he walks more cautiously and tenderly than he did before—lives nearer to God—cultivates greater acquaintance with the Holy Spirit. He is more in prayer, more humble—and yet at the same time—more confident than he was before. The light of God was withdrawn that he might receive a double portion of it, by-and-by; the joy was taken away that his holiness might be increased. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, are you laboring this morning under desertion of soul? Was there a time when you could read your title clear? Have clouds and darkness beset you? Do not doubt your Father's love for all that! Do not distrust Him; do not go creeping on your knees as you did when you first went, as one who had never received pardon. Come boldly, yet humbly, to your God! Plead His promise; rely upon the precious blood of Christ and look up and say, "My Father, my Father, restore unto me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your free Spirit" And you shall have back the confidence of your youth and you shall again feel that the Holy Spirit dwells within you! You shall once again mount above the trials and troubles of this mortal life and begin to enter into the rest which remains for the people of God!

One solitary sentence or so and I will dismiss the present congregation. Have I a man here who declares that he is pardoned and yet indulges in the sins which he pretends are forgiven? Sir, you have either deceived yourself, or else you are uttering what you know is untrue! He who is forgiven *hates* sin! We cannot be washed clean if we still persist in living up to our neck in filth. It cannot be possible that a man is pardoned while he still continues to wallow in abominable sin. "O yes," but he says, "I am no legalist! I believe the grace of God has made me clean, though I do go on in sin." Sir, it is clear you *are* a legalist, but I will tell you what else you are—you are no child of God; you are no Christian; for the Christian is a man who uniformly hates sin! There never was a believer who loved iniquity—such a strange thing as a pardoned sinner who still loves to be in rebellion against his God. "Yes," but I hear another say, "Sir, that may be true; but I do not profess to be pardoned in any such way as you speak of. I believe my sins to be so small and little; that I have no need to go seeking mercy. Or if I seek it, I do not expect that I shall find it here. I dare say I shall fare as well as the best when I go into another world." Poor fool! Poor fool! You are condemned already! The sentence of God has gone out against you—"Whoever believes not on the Son of God is condemned because he believes not." And yet you, when your sentence is written out, and your death-knell, perhaps tolling now, say your sins are little? They are so great, sir, that the fires of hell shall never expiate them, and your own misery, in soul and body forever, shall never be a full equivalent for the iniquity you have committed against God! And so you don't want to know that you are forgiven; you are content to take your chance with the rest? A chance, indeed, it is! But know, sir, I feel so differently in my heart from you in that respect, that had I a doubt at this time about my sins being forgiven, I could not give sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids, till I was assured that I had received God's love in my heart. If at any time a doubt crosses my soul, I am the most wretched of beings! For surely, this is like light to the eyes, like friendship to the spirit, like drink to the thirsty and bread to the hungry—to know one's self forgiven! Go out of this hall and say, "I am walking over the mouth of hell and may slip in at any moment; I am hanging over hell by a single hair, and into a flame may be speedily hurled, yet I do not care whether I am damned or not." Say it right out in broad English—say you are in doubt as to whether you shall go to heaven or hell—say, if you must go home today and in your upper chamber lie down on your narrow bed to die—say

you are not sure whether you shall see the face of your God with acceptance, and yet you are content! Speak like an honest man and like a fool, for such language is only the raving of a madman and a fool!

Oh, I beseech you, never be content until you have sought and found a Savior! Yes, and until you are sure you have found Him, do not be happy with a, “perhaps,” or a, “maybe.” Do not rest your soul on chances, but make sure work for eternity. I bid you, sirs, by the solemnities of eternity, by the fires of hell, and by the joys of heaven—get your foot on a rock and know it is there! Do not make guesswork of it. Put it beyond all chance. O dying sinner! Do not let it be a question with you whether you shall be saved or whether you shall be damned! O frail man, tottering on the brink of the grave; do not let it be a matter of uncertainty as to whether heaven shall receive you, or hell engulf you! Be sure of it one way or the other. If you can make your bed in hell; if you can endure the everlasting burning; if you can suffer the anger of God when He shall tear you in pieces like a lion, then go on in your folly! But if you would have a portion among them who are sanctified; if you would see the face of Christ, and walk the golden streets—be sure that you are in Christ—be certain that you trust Him, and be not satisfied till that is put beyond all question, beyond all argument, and all contention!

The Lord add His blessing to my feeble words, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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