

“WHO IS THIS?”**NO. 3394****A SERMON****PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1914****DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON****AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON****ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 19, 1869**

*When he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?
Matthew 21:10*

THIS was not the first time that question had been asked, or asked concerning the same person. “Who is this?” is a common question in reference to our Lord. “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?” “Who is this king of glory?” and so on. Doubtless the angels, who are represented as standing on the mercy seat gazing down upon its golden brightness, desired to look into this very question in the olden times, and often said to one another, “Who is this?”

We hear the prophet speak of one who is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, and is therefore man, but He is called by the same prophet equal with God, fellow of the Eternal. How can this be? “Who is this?” The subject of the incarnation of a pure spirit such as God is in human flesh must have been staggering even to the intellect of seraphs, and again and again they must have said one to another, “Who is this?”

I can conceive that on that memorable night when the first Christmas carol made glad both heaven and earth, the angels came to Bethlehem’s manger and looked upon the new-born child and said, “Who is this?” Knowing that He was the same person to whom they had been obedient for many an age, the ever-glorious Son of God, they must have marvelled to find Him an infant sleeping there, where the horned oxen fed, or hanging on a woman’s breast, and they said to each other, “Who is this?”

And I can conceive that they followed Him through those twelve years of His childhood, or during the years in which He remained in solitude and obscurity, unknown to the sons of men, and though they knew Him as the Son of Mary, and the reputed Son of Joseph, yet as watchful spirits they must have seen the pure beams of deity in His character. And so the marvelous and supernal excellence of His secret life must often have compelled them to ask one of another, “Who is this?”

He is in the carpenter’s workshop, using the adze and the plane, and yet this is He who is to deliver Israel. How is this, and who is this? And I can imagine them following Him through the three years of His public ministry, in the wilderness beholding Him tempted of the devil, though Lord of all, and Prince and King. When they watched Him in His hunger, and cold, and nakedness, and saw Him in His sleepless nights upon the bare mountainside, when they beheld Him, and strengthened Him in His agony and bloody sweat, when they gathered around the cross, with all its terrors, could their eyes have known a tear, they would have wept it there and would have said, “Who is this?”

When He was buried, and after three days rose again from the grave, there must have been amazement through all the angelic host. They came, some of them, and sat, the one at the head and the other at the foot, where the body of Jesus had lain, still wondering much at the great mystery. We can well gather that they asked such questions onward through His life, since when that life had come to a close, and the issues of it had begun to be developed, when our Lord ascended up on high and led captivity captive, clothed with glory, when they came to meet Him, joined in the triumphal procession, and approached the golden gates, when the songs went up, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in!”

There was a wonder lingering amongst the watchers at the portals of heaven, for they said, “Who is the King of Glory?” and again a second time they said, “Who is the Lord of hosts? Who is the King of

glory?” and they had to receive the two answers, they had to be told who He was that was mighty in battle, and the Lord of hosts who was the King of glory.

Do they not even now marvel, as they cast their crowns upon the glassy sea, and mingle with the white-robed band—do they not now marvel that such as He should be born of a woman, that such as He should be tempted by the devil, that such as He should have known poverty, and nakedness, and death itself?

Those wounds, those scars, still visible, must be a theme still for holy admiration, and adoring questioning, and as they worship Him, recognizing in Him the wisdom that was with God in the beginning, and without whom was not anything made that was made. As they adore Him as the Eternal Word, the Preserver as well as the Creator of all things, they must still, as they look to His manhood taken into such union with His Godhead, think of Him with holy amazement, with joyous astonishment and ask, “Who is this?”

But we have not to do with the angels at this time, rather our business is with the sons of men, and among them there ought to be more of the asking of this question, and there ought to be less. There ought to be more of it, the asking in holy wonder, there ought to be less of the asking of it in ignorance or in derision. The question, I take it, can be asked in both ways. Endeavoring to understand the mystery, he that knows it best may still say, “Who is this?”

Caring not to know Him, but scornfully turning aside from this great mystery of godliness, there are tens of thousands who will continue to say, “Who is this, and why make this noise about Him, and all this stir and hubbub about the man of Nazareth?” Because this question still is asked among the sons of men, because in one sense it ought to be more common, but because in another sense it ought never to be raised, I speak upon it tonight.

And first we shall take—

I. THE QUESTION AS IT STOOD IN REFERENCE TO THE PEOPLE OF JERUSALEM.

I suppose there was a pretty common knowledge of our Lord in Jerusalem. He spoke openly in the temple. He was no teacher in secret conventicles, hidden away in the dark. He had been seen in their streets. His miracles had been the subjects of admiring wonder and observation by tens of thousands. They knew who He was. Many of them rather delighted to remember His lowly origin. “His brethren, are they not all with us?” They knew His mother. They said they knew His father. “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” A knowledge of Christ was pretty general.

They did not ask the question out of ignorance, but it was asked for this reason, among others—by some it was asked because *now He came under quite a different aspect from that in which He had ever appeared before*. He never rode, that I know of, upon the land but that once. He never rode in anything like pomp or state. He had come into Jerusalem, He had gone out of it, a simple private individual, claiming no office, except that of preacher.

But on this occasion, He comes as a King, riding in pomp as one who claims to be honored amongst men, and even claims to be King, for He says, “Behold, thy King cometh, meek and lowly.” They, therefore, said, “Who is this?” What a change has come over the scene!

*“The lowly man before His foes,
The weary man and full of woes.”*

Does He ride, and ride amidst shouts of popular acclaim, He that did not strive, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets? He! does He come in this guise? Therefore, greatly struck and amazed by the change, they said, “Who is this?” Aye! and we may learn from this that when Christ, who is still amongst the sons of men as the meek and lowly Savior, bearing with their ill behavior, and saying, “Come ye weary, take my yoke and bear it, and ye shall find rest”—when He comes ere long as the King of kings and Lord of lords, the whole earth will then cry out, “Who is this?”

Is this the man that bled at Calvary? Is this the man that died praying for His enemies, and does He come with a rod of iron in His hand to break the nations and dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel? Oh! what astonishment will seize the sons of men when they see the King in His glory, whom they would not understand nor serve when He came in the meekness and gentleness of love!

Part of the reason why the people of Jerusalem asked the question was, no doubt, this—*they were struck with the remarkable enthusiasm with which the people received Him*. People had been enthusiastic at other times, but then it had been immediately after they had been fed with the loaves and fishes, and therefore, their enthusiasm was very easily accounted for. But on this occasion there had been no feeding with loaves and fishes, and yet here He was received by a most enthusiastic crowd. They could not, if they had all been sure that He was the very Messiah, have received Him outwardly with greater delight.

There were their garments for Him to sit upon, there were their garments in the road to carpet the ground, which was thought too coarse for Him to tread upon. There were the trees denuded of their branches, and the palm branches borne in front amidst general acclamations of “Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!” Aye, and the world may say whenever it sees an enthusiastic church, whenever it beholds a company of people treating Christ as He ought to be treated, “Who is this?”

The church, as we generally see it, never excites any wonderment among men. They quite understand what it is—a compact of people who have got enough religion to make themselves comfortable and form an association for mutual admiration. But a genuine church is a company formed for the admiration of Christ Jesus, a company of people who are melted into one because they are all red-hot, and flow like streams of molten metal into one mold, all united, loving Christ after such a sort that they would not merely put their garments in the road, but would themselves make a road, who would wish themselves that their blood could be shed if Christ might be glorious.

When the world sees such a church as this, then they begin to cry one to another, “Who is this? Who is this around whom such enthusiasm gathers?” Glory be to God, the day shall yet come to this world when the church shall wake from her slumbers. Then shall she be ashamed of herself to have treated her Bridegroom in such a scurvy manner, when she once loves Him as she ought, and puts the crown upon His head, as she should, then will the whole earth say, “Who is this?”

I have no doubt also, that part of the question of the people of Jerusalem arose from *the singular nature of the pomp with which the enthusiastic multitude surrounded our Lord*. There was a great deal of beauty about it, but how very simple it was, how opposed altogether to the usual array, to the usual order of pomp! Why, my brethren, if you could see the pomp in which great priests—say, at Rome—are carried through the streets, with men all clad in liveries, with attendants in blue, and scarlet, and fine linen, and peacocks' feathers, and the high elevated throne on which the man is carried who claims to be “His Holiness,” you would see how artificial it all is.

And it is all the same if there be nobody there that cares about it. True, some may, but if they did not, it would be all the same, it would all be gone through, and the admiration that is poured on any of these kings and princes—well, it all comes as a matter of course. It is natural that we poor worms of the dust should clap our hands when we see a king, of course, it is the bounden duty of such ordinary mortals as we are to pay wonderful respect to all those who happen to have a peculiar kind of blood in their veins. That is the order of things, and as long as people are conventional fools, it always will be, and the men of the world will always remain so. We shall always reverence rank, whether it has any worthy character about it or not, and priests will always like such reverence as that.

But here was a different style of pomp altogether. Here was a plain, commonplace man, whose garment was merely the smock-frock of an ordinary peasant, a garment “without seam, woven from the top throughout,” a man who made no professions to rank, did not separate Himself at all from the people, and here they have extemporized for Him a pomp, in which every jot and tittle is true and real. There was not a shout raised here because it was the custom to raise shouts to Jesus of Nazareth. There

was not a garment strewed in the way because His office required Him to be esteemed. It was all genuine, true, real, and mark you, brethren, there is no pomp like it.

What a distinction there is between the honor given to a monarch who is beloved, such as we would give to ours, and the honor that is given to a monarch such as the one I spoke of just now, who is honored merely because he is a monarch, but whom men would honor just as heartily, or even more heartily, if he were gone!

Now, the honor given to our Lord Jesus Christ was all given because of His person, and the work that He had really done in the raising of Lazarus, out of—I will not say true spiritual affection, for the multitude did not understand Him in His deeper character so as to receive Him spiritually—but out of a real feeling of reverence for this wonderful Being. There was a natural pomp about the whole thing that quite distinguished it from anything that the inhabitants of Jerusalem had ever seen before.

Some of them might have seen a Caesar or a Pompey come home from the wars. Some of them might have seen the conquerors and their pageants, and their triumphal return into the capital, and all the imposing preparations that were made that everyone might join in the welcome. They hailed him as Rome’s greatest man, who trod Rome’s neck beneath his heels. But they had never seen anything like this, when the very children in the streets took up the cry and said, “Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.” And so they said, “Who is this?”

Now, mark you, this is always one of the points which should distinguish the triumphs of Christ. It is not the victory of officialism, it is not the splendor of outward dress, and form, and show. There is a real force over men’s hearts, so that they come to love Jesus for what He truthfully is to them. It is not a mock homage which they pay, which consists of genuflections and of pompous ceremonies, but it is that they exult at the very thought of Him, the heart invents, without being taught, its own method of praising Him, seeking out and straining after new songs, with which to sing unto the Lord, who has triumphed gloriously.

I do believe that the very beauty of the Christian religion is its simplicity, and the beauty of the church of God is its having simple worship, all its joys and all its pomp being that which comes out of the simple heart, which has no form, no ceremony, and needs no directorium, no rule by which to guide it, but just does what it feels to be the natural expression of that which is felt within, and wherever this is, the world cries, “Who is this?”

Still, there were some in that crowd who did not ask the question for that reason at all, but merely that they might say, “*Who is this? What is He? What is in it? It is all an imposture, He is not the Messiah, He comes not in the name of the Lord.*” They looked down upon the crowd who followed Christ, and they said, “It is a vulgar herd, have any of the rulers believed in Him? Did the Rabbis follow at His heels? Do the Scribes and chief priests accept Him? Who is this?” Well, and this too, is a part of the proof of the true Christ.

Wherever He is fully preached, and His power is known, there is sure to be stirred up a company of men who, knowing nothing of the real power of the Gospel, will be quite sure to sneer at it, will say it is only the poor who come to it, as though that were not said of old, “The poor have the gospel preached to them,” will say it is only the illiterate, as though they had not known that the apostle Paul himself blessed God that He “had chosen the foolish things of this world, and things that are not, to bring to nought the things that are.” There will always be those who, not caring to enjoy themselves the blessings of the Great Shepherd’s reign, will sneer at all those who would. Let us accept their sneers as the only tribute they can render to Christ, and as true a proof of His excellence and His glory as the admiration of His followers.

I will not detain you further about the people of Jerusalem, but now just observe that—

II. THIS QUESTION WILL ALWAYS BE ASKED WHENEVER JESUS CHRIST COMES INTO ANY PLACE THROUGH THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

Ah! my brethren, I am not about to criticize that which is called the preaching of the Gospel, so as to condemn it in any wholesale way, but I will say this, that wherever the Gospel has been preached

simply, not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but with the plain words of the common tongue, wherever Christ has been preached affectionately, wherever the whole Gospel has been delivered with fervor and with impartiality, it has never failed in any place, or in any time, to draw attention to itself, to excite inquiry, and to compel men to take sides about it one way or the other. We need never be afraid that the Gospel is not suitable to any village, that the inhabitants are too degraded. Take it there, and they must, and shall receive it, or else, at their peril, shall they reject it, but they must hear it, it shall attract them, they shall be found, if not willing acceptors of it, yet at least willing hearers of it, willing critics of it, and that is something.

We need not, on the other hand, be afraid to take the Gospel among the most enlightened classes. Whatever they may know, they know nothing superior to the Word of Jesus Christ, and it shall command even their attention. They shall be compelled to examine it, and if it be not a savor of life unto life to them, still it shall be a savor of death, and to God in either case, a sweet savor of Jesus Christ.

Let us never think that the Gospel needs to be rendered attractive by some additions of our own. It is like a sword that cuts just as well without the diamonds in the hilt, for the cut of it lies not in the handle, but in the sword itself. The Gospel will cut and clear its own way. I scarcely think we shall need to come down to the use of so-called popular lectures on Sundays. I think we shall never need to come down to catchwords for sermons. The Gospel will, after all, if it is but drawn out of its scabbard and lifted up as the bare and naked sword of the Lord, be pretty sure to cut its own way.

And ah! how have we learned in the past, when the Gospel has come to a place, and it has begun to be the means of the conversion of sinners, what a stir it has made! The little village was snug enough in the darkness that had gathered around the old tower, and there it lay all asleep and in the death, but some Methodists came and preached upon the Green, a few were converted and gathered into a little room, and what a noise there was about it! The squire-archy would put it down. How there were threats against those poor cottagers and others. They must lose their work, certainly their Christmas gifts, but all that only proved that the Gospel had power still, a power, at any rate, to irritate the ungodly, which is something, and to bless the simple men and women that were willing to receive it.

Before long we have sometimes seen those very persons who were the most determined opponents of the Gospel sit at its feet, some of them have become its preachers, more and more the kingdom of Christ has spread and grown, from village to village, from town to town the sacred ardor has spread.

In the days of Whitfield and Wesley the whole nation was aroused, as from a long sleep our land started up. Then there were found a multitude whom God had chosen, who began to sing glad hymns, and to chant the praises of God in every town and street, and this land which seemed fast going down in sin and wickedness to the very gates of hell, took a start on the road to heaven, which, thank God! has never been altogether lost, nor shall be, for still will God raise up others who will preach Jesus Christ, and the leaven shall still continue to permeate, the salt shall still work for Christ amongst the putrefying mass, until He comes, who shall end the battle in a glorious victory.

But I hasten from that to notice that the same wonderful effect in another form is produced—

III. WHEN THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST COMES INTO A SINGLE HEART.

Do not some of you remember when Jesus Christ first came to your heart? Oh! I do remember when Moses came into mine, with the law and the great commands, when I saw myself a sinner in the light of the law, when the fiery light of Sinai made me see my multitude of spots, yea, discover that I was covered all over with filthiness and blackness. Then the minister came to my gate, and I heard the Word preached, preached affectionately too. Then parents taught me the Word with tears and prayers, but I got no comfort, and my soul continued in bondage under a sense of sin.

But what a mercy it is when Jesus Christ Himself comes, when it is no longer the coming of the minister or of the preacher, but the coming of Jesus Christ Himself, when Jesus passes by! I know some of you can remember right well the time when He passed by you, and came into your heart. You believed Him—it was but a small action—you believed in Jesus, you gave up all trying to save yourselves by your doings, you renounced once for all your reliance upon ceremonies, past or future,

and you cast yourselves down before that cross whereon the Master shed His atoning blood. You remember that. Now, do you not remember what peace there was that came into your spirit, a peace that passes all understanding? The promises of God could not comfort you until Jesus came with them, and applied them to your soul. They were full of power when He brought them in His hand, but they were nothing until He brought them.

Do you recollect too, how your doubts and fears all fled? They had been hooting in your soul, but when that light shone in, full upon you, they soon took to their wings, and there was not one of them left. You could then rejoice where so lately you had been mourning, and you now had songs instead of groanings. And do you remember those sinful habits of yours which you could not break off? You had struggled against them, but you were like a man who is bound fast in iron, you could not snap the fetter by any means, you tried, and tried, and tried again, but always in vain.

But when Jesus came, how free you were, how delivered you were! (Here someone shouted, “Hallelujah! Glory be to God. Jesus is passing by.”) I wish our friends would not be at all troubled with our brother, who simply spoke out of the affection of his heart. We are not Methodists, and do not quite like it, but when a brother does it, it does not disconcert me, and it ought not to trouble you. I wish sometimes that there were interruptions like that which came at Pentecost, “What must I do to be saved?” I wish sometimes that we did feel that we must tell all that Jesus was passing by, and was entering into our hearts, as our brother told us just now.

Well, you recollect the moment when Christ came to those bad habits of yours, when you had striven against them, but could not overcome them, but when He came they dropped off as though they were tow. Those great ropes of sin were snapped, and were gone, and you recollect the joy you felt within when you could say, “I’m forgiven! I’m, forgiven!” When you sat down in holy wonder alone, you could not help it, but the tears came fast and thick, one after the other, as you said, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, that ever I was led to receive Christ, and to find peace in Him!”

Oh! beloved, I know that you said to yourselves, “Who is this? What a matchless Christ is this? Who is this that could have wrought such a wonderful change in me, that could have made my dead heart live, could have thawed the iceberg, could have made the mountain of snow that is in my soul dissolve, could have brought me up from the valley of the shadow of death into the land of light and exceeding brightness and glory?” I know you said, “Who is this?”

And let me add, your wonder at Christ has not ceased since then. It is not long ago since you had sore trouble in business, and your heart was very heavy. But you got alone with God in prayer, and you saw Christ as suffering with you, standing in the furnace with you, and how happy and quiet your mind was! You could not help saying to yourself, “What manner of man is this that has made me to rejoice, even in tribulation, and to be calm in the midst of my afflictions?” You lost a child not long ago, and you thought your heart would break under that trial, but you took the case to Jesus, and you were resigned to it, and you said, “What manner of man is this, again, that could so have comforted me?”

Or it may be you are like some of us watching day by day the slow but steady progress of disease in one dear to you as your life, and the only comfort you can get is by feeling that Jesus Christ being with you, it still is easy to bear and to be resigned. And perhaps, you have been slandered for Christ’s sake, and misrepresented in all you have tried to do, but when you have told it to Him, you have said, “I’ll hail reproach and welcome shame for Jesus’ sake,” and the calm you have had has made you say, “Who is this?”

I can only say tonight, though I hope I have known my Lord these one and twenty years, that I do marvel more and more at Him, that ever He could do such marvels for me, a poor worthless worm, and I think the more you know of yourselves, and the deeper you sink in self-abasement, the more will the question rise in your soul, “What a glorious Christ must this be! What power there must be in His blood, what prevalence in His plea, what tenderness in His heart! what might in His arm, what immutability in His nature, that ever He should continue to look down on me, and bless me as He does!” “Who is this?” your soul will say.

Now, I must not detain you on that, and therefore, again with great brevity, remark that—

IV. THE TIME IS COMING WHEN THIS QUESTION MAY BE ASKED BY SOME HERE WITH GREAT FEAR AND ALARM.

Unless we ask it now in loving wonder, we shall soon have to ask it in most fearful terror. We know not when the time shall be, for times and seasons are not committed to us, but certain it is that within a short time, Christ will come upon the clouds of heaven. When the time appointed by the Father shall arrive, that very man who was crucified on Calvary, and who was taken up from among His disciples upon the Mount of Olives, shall so come in like manner as He went up to heaven.

Now, He went up in person, and He will come in person too, and when He comes it will not be alone, as first He came, but in the glory of His Father, and all His holy angels with Him. What astonishment and confusion will seize the minds of those who doubted His very existence, who denied His Godhead, who stood out against His power!

What will the Jew say when he looks on Him whom he pierced? What will the Gentile say when he looks on Him whom he despised? What will the great men of the earth say as they rise from their graves, and find themselves so little, and Him, whom they thought so little, to be so great? What will the rich men of the earth say, as they find themselves naked and poor as beggars, and the King, whom they thought nothing of, clothed with glory? Oh! what then will the pleasure seeker say who said, “As for Christianity, I care not the snap of my finger for it”? What will the blasphemer say, who even poured contempt and curses upon Christ’s name?

There He sits, in majesty that out blazes the sun. There He is surrounded by immortals, each one of them shining forth like the sun, for so the promise is to all the righteous. There rings the trumpet that every ear must hear, and all the dead start up from sea and land, a countless multitude. There are the books, they are opened amidst a blaze of light, and there is the voice that reads out the doom of the sons of men. Jesus, Jesus it is, who says, “Depart, ye cursed,” as well as, “Come, ye blessed.”

Oh! how the multitude will wring their hands in amazement when they discover that the Man of Nazareth and the Son of Mary is the Everlasting Son of the Father, and those His enemies who would not that He should reign over them shall be utterly destroyed by the glory of His presence when He comes in His power.

Oh! how will the question be asked, and how terrible will be the answer, “Who is this?” I would rather that you should ask tonight, humbly and inquiringly, “Who is this?” and if you do so ask, these few words shall tell you, and may God tell you to your heart what I can only tell to your ears. Who is this? It is Jesus Christ, God over all, blessed forever. He so loved the sons of men that He would rather die than they should die. He came into the world, and took our flesh, and became Emmanuel, God with us, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.

*“He bore that we might never bear
The Father’s righteous ire.”*

And whosoever trusts in this man, this God, the appointed Substitute for man, shall be saved. But if you trust Him, you must take Him to be your Monarch, you must henceforth, by His grace, yield Him service, and His service is pleasure, His service is holiness, and holiness shall to you be a delight. Oh! that you would, finding that He is such a Savior, divine and human blended in one, a dying Savior risen from the dead, and living at the right hand of God, oh! that you would say, “I know who He is,” then, “I will accept Him, He shall be mine forever.” God grant to you the willing mind to do this, and yours shall be the blessing, and His shall be the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

2 TIMOTHY 2:15-26

Verse 15. *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

This is a metaphor taken from the action of the priest at the sacrifice. The priest cut up the bullock, and then laid it in its different pieces according to order. Or as some think, it is taken from the part of the father at the table, when he carves the meat and gives to every child its portion. Old Master Trapp says that “there are some ministers who are only fit to be Gibeonites, and certainly not to be Levites, for they hardly understand the cutting of wood, much less the art of cutting up the sacrifice of God.”

Brethren, it is well so to handle the Word as to be able to give rebuke when rebuke is wanted, exhortation when it is needed, and comfort when consolation is required, for otherwise we do mischief. As it is said in the old fable of the simpleton, that he gave to the ass a bone and to the dog hay, so there are some who give wrong exhortations, not because they are wrong in themselves, but because they are wrong in their application.

16-17. *But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as does a canker:*

Now, there are some people who can never be content except they make their religion a sort of wrangling match. They get ahold of a word in Scripture, and away they go with it. Here shall be another opportunity for finding fault with all the church of God, here shall be another occasion for railing against all the preachers of the truth. How delighted they are when they can do this! Shun profane and vain babblings.

Martin Luther said that there were some in his day so nice and precise about the letter of Scripture that when one of them had delivered an exposition upon the Book of Job, Luther said that by the time the man had got to the tenth chapter Job had been a thousand times more plagued by the expositors than he had ever been by the losses which he suffered upon the dunghill, and doubtless there are many truths of Scripture which are turned to mischief because men will be forever making them opportunities for strife, not bonds of love.

Brethren, hold the five points of the Calvinistic doctrine, but mind you do not hold them as babbling questions. What you have received of God do not learn in order to fight with it, and to make contention and strife, and to divide the church of God, and rail against the people of the Most High, as some do. But on the contrary, love one another as brethren, and hold the truth in love, and seek after the unity of the Spirit and the perfect bond of charity. The word of those who raise these questions will eat as does a cancer, which eats till it gets to the bones, and turns the sound flesh into rottenness. Oh! there are many contentions which have done this mischief in the church of Christ.

17-19. *Of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.*

How careful the apostle is lest we should think that any have turned aside who were the Lord’s people. He says the faith of some was overthrown, but nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure. Oh, brethren, whenever we see apparent apostasy, let us not therefore think that any of God’s people have perished. Oh, no, for the Lord knoweth them that are His.

19-21. *And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.*

When Mr. Philpot, the martyr, was addressing a young man about to die for Christ, he said to him, “Brother, thou art a vessel in the great house of thy Master, and this day He will scour thee, scour thee hard, but remember thou shalt soon stand upon the shelf, shining bright and glorious.” Well, sometimes pains, and troubles, and tribulations do have this effect of scouring the vessels of God to make them

bright for heaven. We must all be purged and scoured from sinful lusts, from all the contamination of the flesh and of the creature, and then we shall be fit for the Master’s use.

22. *Flee also youthful lusts:*

Run away from them, it is no use contending with them. Fight with the devil. Resist the devil, and make him flee, but never fight with the flesh. Run away from that. The only way to avoid the lust of the flesh is to keep out of its way. If you subject yourself to carnal temptations and fleshly lusts, remember it is almost certain that you will be overcome by them. “Flee youthful lusts,” and as you must keep going and have something after which to follow—

22-23. *But follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.*

It is generally a good thing to avoid all questions that gender strife, except they be upon vital and important matters. For oh! brethren, it is so important to keep the unity of the Spirit, it is such a blessed thing to preserve love among Christian brethren, and there be some who, in order to create disunion, go about the land, and tear, and rend the body of Christ as much as they can. Beware of such, seek not their company, come not nigh unto them, lest their cancer pollute you also.

24-26. *And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient. In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.*

We have here laid down, then, the duty of the Christian minister, and the duty of each Christian too, and let us seek, in the Holy Spirit’s grace, to carry it out, being at once firm, and gentle, and loving of heart, and yet honest for the truth as it is in Jesus.

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