

THE ROOT OF THE MATTER

NO. 505

A SERMON
 DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, APRIL 12, 1863,
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“The root of the matter is found in me.”
 Job 19:28.*

FOR the last three or four Lord’s-day evenings, I have been trying to fish with a net of small meshes. It has been my anxious desire to gather in and draw to shore the Much-Afraid, the Fearings, the Dependancies, and those of Little-Faith who seem to think it scarcely possible that they could belong to the people of God at all. I hope those sermons which have taken the lowest evidences of Christian life, and have been adapted rather to babes in divine grace, than to those who are strong men in our Israel, will furnish comfort to many who beforetime had been bowed down with distress.

In pursuance of the same purpose this evening, I take up the expressive figure of our text to address myself to those who evidently have the grace of God embedded in their hearts, though they put forth little blossom and bear little fruit; that they may be consoled, if there is clear evidence that at least the root of the matter is found in them. Incidentally, however, the same truth may be profitable, not only to the saplings in the garden of the Lord, but to the most goodly trees; for there are times and seasons when their branches do not put out much luxuriant foliage, and the hidden life furnishes the only true argument of their vitality.

I. Our first aim then will be TO SPEAK OF THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL TO TRUE GODLINESS IN CONTRAST, OR, I might better say, IN COMPARISON WITH OTHER THINGS WHICH ARE TO BE REGARDED AS SHOOTS RATHER THAN AS ROOT AND GROUNDWORK.

The tree can do without some of its branches, though the loss of them might be an injury; but it cannot live at all without its roots—the roots are essential—take those away, and the plant must wither. And thus, my dear friends, there are things essential in the Christian religion! There are essential *doctrines*, essential *experiences*, and there is essential *practice*.

With regard to essential *doctrines*, it is very desirable for us to be established in the faith. A very happy thing it is to have been taught from one’s youth up the sound and solid doctrines which comforted the Puritans—which made blessed the heart of Luther and of Calvin, fired the zeal of Chrysostom and Augustine—and flashed like lightning from the lips of Paul! By such judicious training, we are no doubt delivered from many doubts and difficulties which an evil system of theology would be sure to encourage. The man who is sound in the faith, and who understands the higher and more sublime doctrines of divine revelation, will have wells of consolation which the less instructed cannot know. But we always believe, and are always ready to confess, that there are many doctrines which, though exceedingly precious, are not so essential. We believe a person may be in a state of divine grace, and yet not receive them. For instance—God forbid that we should regard a belief in the doctrine of *election* as an absolute test of a man’s salvation—for no doubt, there are many precious sons of God who have not been able to receive that precious truth of God; of course, the doctrine is essential to the great scheme of grace, as the foundation of God’s eternal purpose—but it is not, therefore, necessarily the root of faith in the sinner’s reception of the gospel.

And, perhaps, too, I may put the doctrine of *the final perseverance of the saints* in the same list. There are many who, no doubt, will persevere to the end, but who cannot accept the possibility of being assured of the fact; they are so occupied with the thoughts of their probation that they come not to the mature knowledge of their full salvation. They are securely kept while they credit not their security, just

as there are thousands of the elect who cannot believe in election. Though Calvinistic doctrine is so dear to us—we feel ready to die in its defense—yet, we would by no means set it up as being a test of a man’s spiritual state! We wish all our brothers and sisters agreed with us, but a man may be almost blind, and yet he may live; a man with weak eyesight and imperfect vision may be able to enter into the kingdom of heaven—indeed, it is better to enter there having but one eye, than, having two eyes and being orthodox in doctrine—to be cast into hell fire! But, there *are* some distinct truths of revelation that *are* essential in such a sense that those who have not accepted them cannot be called Christians, and those who willfully *reject* them are exposed to the fearful anathemas which are hurled against apostasy! I shall not go into a detailed list. Let it suffice, that I give you a few striking illustrations. *The doctrine of the Trinity, we must always look upon as being one of the roots of the matter.* When men go unsound here, we suspect that, before long, they will be wrong *everywhere!* The moment you get any suspicion of a man’s wavering about the divinity of Christ, you have not long to wait before you discover that, on all other points, he has gone wrong. Well did John Newton express it—

***“What you think of Christ is the test
To try both your state and your scheme!
You cannot be right in the rest,
Unless you think rightly of Him!”***

Almost all the forms of error that have sprung up since the days of Dr. Doddridge, when sundry gentlemen began to talk against the proper Deity of the Son of God—all the forms of error, I say, whatever department of the Christian system they may have been supposed to attack—have really stabbed at the Deity of our Redeemer! That is the one thing that they are angry at, as if their mother-wit taught them it was the true line of demarcation between natural and revealed religion! They cannot bear that the glorious Lord should be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, and so they try to do without Him; but their tacklings are loosed, they cannot well strengthen their mast, they cannot spread the sail! A gospel without belief in the living and true God—Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity—is a rope of sand! As well hope to make a pyramid stand upon its apex as to make a substantial gospel when the real and personal Deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is left as a moot or disputed point. But I ought to mention the strange incoherency of that discourse which sets forth the influences of the Spirit without a due regard to His Personal Agency. Oh, how little is the Holy Spirit known! We get beyond the mere exercise of opinions when we believe in Christ, know the Father, and receive the Holy Spirit. This is to have knowledge of the true God and eternal life. Likewise essential is the doctrine of *the vicarious sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Any bell that does not ring sound on that point had better be melted down at once! I do not think we have many in our denomination—we do have some who are not very clear—still, I think we have but few who are unsound in the doctrine of the real substitution of Christ. But there are plenty elsewhere; perhaps I need not indicate the locality, for in the denomination where they seem to be tolerably prolific, they have one earnest tongue, and one ready pen that is always willing at all times to expose the degenerates who thus do damage to the cause of Christ by giving up the precious blood of Jesus as the sole cause of the remission of sins, and the only means of access to God. Why, my brothers and sisters, we have nothing else left after we have given up this choice seal of the everlasting covenant, on which all our hopes depend! Renounce the doctrine of Jesus dying in our place? Better for us all to be offered as one great slaughter, one mighty sacrifice to God on one fire, than to tolerate for a moment any doubts about that which is the world’s hope, heaven’s joy, hell’s terror, and eternity’s song!

I marvel how men are permitted to stand in the pulpit and preach at all, who dare to say anything against the atonement of Christ! I find in the Dutch Church, in the French Church, and in the German Churches, that men are accepted as Christian ministers who will yet speak hard things against the atonement, itself, and even against the Deity of Him by whom the atonement was made! There is no other religion in the world that has been false to its own doctrines in the way that Christianity has been! Imagine a Muslim allowed to come forward in the pulpit and preach against Mohammed! Would it be tolerated for a single moment? Suppose a Brahmin, fed and paid to stand up in a temple, and speak against Brahma! Would it be allowed? Surely not! Nor is there an infidel lecturer in this country but

would find his pay stopped at once, if, while pretending to be in the service of Atheism, he renounced the sentiments he was sworn to advocate! How is it? Why is it? In the name of everything that is reasonable and instinctively consistent, where can it be that men can be called Christian ministers after the last vestige of Christianity has been treacherously repudiated by them? How is it that they can be tolerated to minister in holy things to people who profess and call themselves sincere followers of Jesus, when they tread under foot the precious blood of Christ, and, “reduce the mystery of godliness to a system of ethics”? To use the words of a divine of the last century, “Degrade the Christian Church into a school of philosophy; deny the expiation made by our Redeemer’s sacrifice; obscure the brightest manifestation of divine mercy; undermine the principal pillar of practical religion; and to make a desperate shipwreck of *our* everlasting interests, they dash *themselves* to death on the very rock of salvation.” No; we must have the atonement, and that not quietly acknowledged, but openly set forth! Charity can go a good way, but charity cannot remove the altar from the door of the Tabernacle, or admit the worshipper into the most Holy Place without the blood of propitiation. So, again, the doctrine of *justification by faith* is one of the roots of the matter. You know Luther’s saying; I need not repeat it; it is the article of a standing, or falling church, “By grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast.” Do you preach that doctrine? My hand and my heart are stretched out to you! Do you deny it? Do you stutter over it? Are you half-afraid of it? My back must be turned against you; I know nothing of you; you are none of the Lord’s! What says the Apostle Paul to you? Would he have communed with you? He lifts his hand to heaven, and he says—“If any man preaches any other gospel than that you have received, let him be accursed!” That is Paul’s saintly greeting! That is Paul’s Apostolic malediction—an “Anathema Maranatha” upon the man who preaches not the Lord Jesus, and who does not vindicate the great doctrine of salvation by grace and not by works! Well now, friend, you may have come in here to listen to our doctrine, and to judge whether you can hold fellowship with us. We have been talking about the root of the matter. Permit me to say that if you are sound on these three points, the One God in Trinity, the glorious doctrine of the substitution of Christ in the place of sinners, and the plan of salvation by simple faith in Jesus, then, inasmuch as these roots of the matter are in you, God forbid that we should exclude you as heretical. If you are in other points unenlightened and groping about in uncertainty, doubtless the Lord will teach you—but we believe the root of the matter is in you as far as doctrine is concerned!

Turning to another department of my subject; *there are certain root matters in reference to experience*. It is a very happy thing to have a deep experience of *one’s own depravity*. It may seem strange, but it is so, a man will scarcely ever have high views of the preciousness of the Savior who has not also had deep views of the evil of his own heart! High houses, you know, need deep foundations; and when God digs deep, and throws out the mire of self-sufficiency, He then puts in the great stone of Christ’s all-sufficiency, and builds us up high in union and fellowship with Him! To read the guilt of sin in the lurid glare of Mount Sinai, to hear the thunder, and shrink back in wild dismay at the utter hopelessness of approach to God by the law is a most profitable lesson! Yes, and to see the guilt of sin in the mellow light of Mount Calvary, and to feel that contrition, which a view of Christ crucified alone can produce—this is to prepare the heart for such an ecstasy of joy in God, through whom we have now received the atonement, as surpasses, I verily believe, the common experience of Christians! Still I dare not make a criterion of the profound depths of anguish with which some of us have had the sentence of death in ourselves. But it is absolutely essential that you should be brought to the end of all perfection in the flesh—that all your hopes of legal righteousness should expire—that you should be dead to the law, in order that you may live unto God! This death may be with painful struggles, or it may be tranquil as a sleep; you may be smitten suddenly, as though an arrow from the Almighty were transfixed in your heart; or you may pine away by a slow and tedious consumption. Yet die you must, before you can be made partaker of resurrection! This much, however, I will venture to say—you may be really a child of God, and yet the plague of your own heart may be but very little understood; you must know something of it, for no man ever did or ever will come to Christ unless he has first learned to loathe himself and to see that in him, that is, in his flesh, there dwells no good thing! You may not be able to talk, as some do, of con-

flicts within, and of the fountain of the great deep of your natural sin—and yet you may be, for all that—a true child of God. It is a happy thing, too, to have an experience which *keeps close to Christ Jesus*. To know what the word “communion,” means, without needing to take down another man’s biography—to understand Solomon’s Song without a commentary; to read it through and through, and say, “Precious Book! You express just what I have felt, but what I never could have expressed.” But, dear friends, though all this is well, remember, it is not essential! It is not a sign that you are not converted because you cannot understand what it is to sit under His shadow with great delight. You may have been converted, and yet hardly have come as far as that. Always distinguish between the branches of the matter and the *root* of the matter. It is well to have branches like the cedars, and to send up your shoots towards heaven—but it is the root that is the all-important thing—the root of the matter!

Now, what is the root of the matter *experientially*? Well, I think the real root of it is what Job has been talking about in the verses preceding the text—“I know,” he says, “that my Redeemer lives.” We talked of that this morning—(See #504, Volume 9—I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES—by the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, visit: www.spurgeongems.org). The root of the matter in Christian experience is to know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is able to save to the uttermost all them who come unto God by Him, and to know this by a personal appropriation of His power to save *by a simple act of faith*. In other words, dear friend, you have the root of the matter in you if your soul can say—

***“My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness!
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name—
On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.”***

There must be in connection with this the *repentance of sin*, but this repentance may be far from perfect, and your faith in Christ may be far from strong; but, oh, if you hate sin, if you desire to be rid of it, if it is your plague, your burden, your grief; if Christ Jesus is your only comfort, your help, your hope, your trust—then understand—this is the root of the matter! I wish there were more than the root, but inasmuch as that is there, it is enough—you are accepted before God—for the root of the matter is in you. A living faith in a living Savior, and a real death to all creature merit, and to all hope in creature strength—this, I take it, is that which is the root of the matter in spiritual experience!

Did I not say that there was a root of the matter *practically*? Yes, and I would to God that we all practically had the branches and the fruits! These will come in their season, and they must come, if we are Christ’s disciples; but nobody expects to see fruit on a tree a week after it has been planted. You know there are some trees that do not bring forth any great fruit till they have been in the ground some two or three years; and then at last, when the favorable season comes, they are white with blossoms, and by-and-by are bowed to the earth with luscious fruit. It is very desirable that all Christians should be full of zeal, should be vehemently earnest, should go about doing good, should minister to the poor, should teach the ignorant, and comfort the distressed; yet, these things cannot be called the real root of the matter! The real root of the matter practically is this—“One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see; the things I once loved I now hate; the things I once hated I love; now, it is no more the world, but God; no more the flesh, but Christ; no more pleasure, but obedience; no more what I will, but what Jesus wills.” If any of you can, from your souls, say that you desire the tenor of your life to be, “Lord, not as I will, but as You will,” you have got the root of the matter practically!

Let me guard this part of my subject with one further remark. There are those who do certain duties with a conscientious *motive*, in order to *make* themselves Christians—such as observing the Sabbath, holding daily worship of God with their families, and attending the public services of the Lord’s house with regularity. But they do not distinguish between these external acts—which may be but the ornaments that clothe a graceless life, and those fruits of good living that grow out of a holy constitution, which is the root of genuine obedience. Some habits and practices of godly men may be easily counter-

feited. Yet, I think that there are certain virtues of God's children which defy imitation. "To bear reproach for Christ, and to suffer wrong patiently," is, to my mind, very much like the root in practical godliness. Perhaps there is a timid girl now present who has braved for many a month the persecution of her father and mother to serve that Savior whom her parents never knew. Nobody knows what rough words and harsh treatment she has had to encounter—all because she will come to chapel, and she will steal away into her own room, sometimes, always with her Bible in her hand when she goes in, and she generally looks as if she had been crying when she comes out. Ah, poor soul! I doubt not the root of the matter is in you! Or, see there a young man who has risked losing his employment because he will not conceal his attachment to Christ. Such as these are sometimes brought into great straits; they do not see any precept that plainly says, "You shall do this," or, "You shall not do that," but they find they must be one thing or the other. They make their choice, and it is against their worldly interests—it is done for the love they bear to the Savior's name. Their gentle courage I admire. Their little faith takes a strong grip. Oh, I cannot doubt the root of the matter is found in them! There is practical evidence of it.

Let me pause here for a moment, before leaving this first point, to notice that you may generally ascertain whether you have got the root of the matter by its characteristic properties. You know a root is a *fixing thing*. Plants without roots may be thrown over the wall; they may be passed from hand to hand; but a *root* is a fixed thing! How firmly the oaks are rooted in the ground! You may think of those old oaks in the earth—ever as far off you have seen the roots coming out of the ground, and then they go in again, and you have said—"Why, what do these thick fibers belong to?" Surely they belong to one of those old oaks ever so far away; they had sent that root there to act a good hold, so that when the March winds come through the forest, and other trees are torn up—fir trees, perhaps—trees that have outgrown their strength at the top, while they have too little hold at bottom—the old oaks bow to the tempest, curtsy to the storm, and later, they lift up their branches again in calm dignity; they cannot be blown down. Well now, if you have got the root of the matter, you are fixed; you are fixed to God, fixed to Christ, fixed to things divine! If you are tempted, you are not soon carried away. Oh, how many professors there are who have no roots! Get them into godly company, and they are such saints, but get them with other company, and what if I say that they are devils? There you have them! Their mother is come up from the country, and she asked them to come tonight to hear Spurgeon. Here they are. Mother does not know but what John is one of the best lads anywhere while she is in town. Ah, but if it happens to be Uncle William who comes up to London in a month's time, and *he* should ask John to go to a theater, O yes, he will go there, too; and you would never know that John had any religion, for he will put that by until mother comes back again! He has no roots. Give me the man that is bound hard and fast to Christ; lashed to the cross by cords that even the knives of hell cannot sever—lashed to the cross forever! You have no roots unless you can say, "O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed! By stern resolve and by firm covenant I am Yours; bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar."

Again, a root is not only a fixing thing, but a *quickenning thing*. What is it that first sets the sap flowing in the spring? Why, it is the root! Down below, beneath the earth, it begins to feel the genial influence of the coming spring, and it talks to the trunk and says, "It is time to set the sap flowing." So the sap begins to flow, and the buds begin to burst. Ah, and you must have a vital principle; you must have a living principle. Some Christians are like those toys they import from France, which have sand in them; the sand runs down, and some little invention turns and works them as long as the sand is running, but when the sand is all out, it stops. So on Sunday morning, these people are just turned right, and the sand runs, and they work all Sunday; but the sand runs down by Sunday night, and then they stand still, or else go on with the world's work just as they did before. Oh, this will never do! There must be a *living principle*—something that shall be a mainspring within—a wheel that cannot help running on, and that does not depend upon external resources!

A root, too, is a *receiving thing*. The botanists tell us a great many things about the ends of the roots; they can penetrate into the soil hunting after the particular food upon which the tree is fed. Ah, and if you have got the root of the matter in you, when you come to hear a sermon, you will be sending out your root to look after the particular food which your soul needs. You will send those roots into the pag-

es of Scripture—sometimes into a hymn book—often into the sermon; even into a brother’s experience, and into God’s providence, seeking that something upon which your soul can feed.

Therefore, it follows that the root becomes *a supplying thing*, because it is a receiving thing. We must have a religion that lives *upon* God, and that supplies us with strength to live *for* God. Oh, how divinely blessed are those men in whom the root of the matter is found!

II. Let me briefly notice, in the second place, that **WHEREVER THERE IS THE ROOT OF THE MATTER, THERE IS VERY MUCH GROUND FOR COMFORT.**

Sounds there in my ears, the sigh, the groan, the sad complaint—“I do not grow as I wish; I am not as holy as I want to be; I cannot praise and bless the Lord as I desire; I am afraid I am not a fruitful bough whose branches run over the wall”? Yes, but is the root of the matter in you? If so, cheer up, you have cause for gratitude! Remember, *that in some things you are equal to the greatest and most full-grown Christian*. You are as much bought with blood, O little saints, as are the holy brotherhood. He who bought the sheep, bought the lambs, too. You are as much an adopted child of God as any other Christian! A babe of a span long is as true a child of its parents as is the full-grown man. You are as truly justified, for your justification is not a thing of degrees. Your little faith has made you clean every whit; it could have done no more had it been the strongest faith in the world! You have as much right to the precious things of the covenant as the most advanced believers, for your right to covenant mercies lies not in your *growth*, but in the covenant itself, and your faith in Jesus may not attempt to measure the extent of your inheritance in Him. So then, you are as rich as the richest, if not in enjoyment, yet in real possession! You are as dear to your Father’s heart as the greatest among us! If there is a weakling in a family, the father often loves it the most, or at least indulges it with the most caresses, and when there is a child that has lost one of its senses, be it sight or hearing, you will notice with what diligent care the parents watch over that one! You are possibly such a tender one, and Christ is very tender over you. You are like the smoking flax—anybody else would say, “Put out that smoking flax; what a smell! How it fills the room with a foul and offensive odor!” “But the smoking flax He will not quench.” You are just like a bruised reed. There used to be some music in you, but now the reed is broken, and there is no tuneful note at all to be brought out from the poor, bruised, crooked and broken reed. Anyone else but the Chief Musician would pull you out and throw you away. You might think He would be sure to say, “I do not want a bruised reed; it is of no use at all among the pipes.” But He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax! Instead of being downcast by reason of what you are, you should begin to triumph in Christ. Am I but little in Israel? Yet in Christ I am made to sit in heavenly places! Am I poor in faith? Still, in Christ, I am heir of all things! Do I sometimes wander? Yet Jesus Christ comes after me, and brings me back! Though, “less than nothing I can boast, and vanity confess,” yet if the root of the matter is in me, I will rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the God of my salvation!

III. This brings me to the third and closing part—**WHEREVER THE ROOT OF THE MATTER IS, THERE WE SHOULD TAKE CARE THAT WE WATCH IT WITH TENDERNESS AND WITH LOVE.**

Some of you may have the notion that you are advanced in knowledge, that you have much skill in interpreting the Word of God, and that you understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. It is highly possible that your notion is correct. You go out into the world, and you meet with people who do not know quite as much as you do, and who have not yet learned all the doctrines of grace as they are threaded together in the divine plan of salvation. May I persuade you not to get into controversy, not to be continually fighting and quarrelling with people who do not hold to just your sentiments? If you discover the root of the matter in any man, say at once—“Why should I persecute you? Why should we fall to quarrelling with each other, seeing that the root of the matter is in us both?” Save your swords for Christ’s *real* enemies! The way to make men learn the truth of God is not to abuse them. We shall never make a brother see a doctrine by smiting him in the eye! Hold your lantern up and let him see. I remember, when in my boyhood, I sometimes held a candle at night for a man sawing who was a worldling. He used to say to me—“Now, my lad, hold the candle so that you can see yourself, and you may depend upon it that I can see, too.” And I have generally found that if you hold up the doctrines in such a way

that you can see them yourselves, and just tell to others the way in which you have been *led*, by His grace, to see them—and how you see them now—you will often give a light to other men, if they have the root of the matter in them. Quarrel not—fight not with them—but be friends and especially show yourself friendly.

Then, again, if you meet with young professors who have the root of the matter in them, do not begin condemning them for lack of knowledge. I have heard of some old believers, yes, and of some not very old, too, who had read a great deal and had, perhaps, more in the head than in the heart; and when young inquirers came to see them, they began to ask them—“Which theory do you hold, sublapsarian or supralapsarian?” I do not mean that they exactly said those very words, but they suggested some knotty points or something of that sort; and the young people have said—“I am sure I do not know, sir.” It has sometimes been the case that these young inquirers have been dealt very harshly with. I remember one case where a certain brother—a good man, too, in his way, said—“Well, now, I am sorry to tell you that you are no child of God; if you die as you are, you will be lost”—only because the poor child did not exactly know the difference between two things that are amazingly alike after all! I do not think we ought to do this; it is not for us to go about killing all the lambs, for if we do this, where will the sheep come from? If we are always condemning those who have only begun as yet to learn their letters, we shall never have any readers! People must begin to say, “Two times two are four,” before they can ever come to be very learned in mathematics! Should we stop them at once, and say—“You are no child of God, because you do not know how to compute the logarithms of divine grace”? Why, then at once we have put out of the synagogue those who might have been its best ornaments! Remember, my dear friends, that wherever we see the root of the matter, Christ has accepted the person, and therefore, we ought to accept him, too.

This is why I love to think that, when we break bread at this table, we always receive among us, as far as we know, all those who have got the root of the matter in them. I have heard a story of the late good Dr. Stedman, when he was tutor of Bradford College. It appears he was a very strict-communion Baptist, and carried it out conscientiously. One day, he preached for some Independents, and in the afternoon, after the service, there was to be the communion. Now Mr. Stedman prayed most earnestly that the Lord would be pleased graciously to vouchsafe His presence to the dear brothers and sisters when they met around His table. After the service was over, he was going to the vestry to put on his great coat, intending to go home. One of the deacons said—“Doctor, you will stop with us, will you not, to the communion?” “Well, my dear brother,” he said, “it is no lack of love, but, you see, it would compromise my principles. I am a strict-communion Baptist, and I could not well stop and commune with you who have not been baptized; do not think it is any want of love, now, but it is only out of respect to my principles.” “Oh,” said the deacon, “but it is not your principles, because what did you pray for, Doctor? You prayed your Master, the Lord Jesus, to come to our table; and if according to your principles, it is wrong for you to go there, you should not ask your Master to come where you must not go yourself. But if you believe that your Lord and Master will come to the table, surely where the Master is, it cannot be wrong for the servant to be.” The deacon’s reasoning appears to me very sound. And it is in the same spirit I say of any, or to any whose sincere faith I have no reason to doubt—if they have got the root of the matter in them, “Come and welcome!” We are sorry that when our friends ought to keep the feast of tabernacles with great branches of trees, they only pull small twigs, and so do not get the benefit of the broader shadow. We are sorry that when Christ tells them to be immersed, they go and sprinkle—but that is their own business and not ours. To their own Master they must stand or fall. But if the root of the matter is there, why persecute them? Seeing that the root of the matter is found in them let them come! God has received them, and let us do the same.

That matter about encouraging young believers and not putting stumbling blocks in their path may seem to some of you decidedly unimportant, but I am persuaded that there are many young Christians who have been made to suffer for years through the roughness of some more advanced believers. Christians, you who are strong—be very tender towards the weak—for the day may come when you will be weaker than they! Never did bullock push with side and shoulder the lean cattle of the herd when they came to drink, but what the Lord took away the glory from the fat bull of Bashan, and made him willing

to associate with the very least of the herd. You cannot intimidate a child of God without making his Father angry; and though you are a child of God yourself—if you deal harshly with one of your brothers and sisters—you shall smart for it! The Master’s rod is always ready, even for His own beloved children, when they are not tender with the sons and daughters of Zion, who are kept as the apple of God’s eye. Remember, too, brothers and sisters that the day may come when you will need consolation from the very friend whom you have treated so roughly. I have known some great people—some very great people—that have at last been made to sit at the feet of those whom before they called all sorts of ill names. God has His ways of taking the wind out of men’s sails. While their sails were full, and the wind blew, they said, “No, no! We do not care about that little port over yonder; we do not care to put in there; it is only a miserable little fishing village.” But when the wind came howling on, and the deep rolled heavily, and it seemed as if the dread artillery of God were all mustering for the battle, ah, how with the reef sail they have tried to fly, as best they could, into the little harbor! Do not speak ill of the little harbor! Do not be ashamed of little Christians! Stand up for the weaklings of the flock, and let this be your motto, you strong Christians—

*“There’s not a lamb amidst Your flock
I would disdain to feed;
There’s not a foe before whose face
I’d fear Your cause to plead.”*

Now, I ask you, by way of solemn searching investigation, have you the root of the matter in you? I have spoken for your encouragement, in case you have the root of the matter in you. If you have not, there awaits you nothing but destruction—but, by His grace, you are not hopelessly lost! The root of the matter is still to be had! The Holy Spirit can yet give you a new heart and a right spirit! Jesus Christ is still able and willing to save! Oh, look there! I see His five wounds; they flow with rivers of blood! Look there, sinner! And as you look, by His grace, you shall live! Whoever you may be, though you are the worst sinner out of hell, yet—

*“While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return.”*

Look there, sinner, look, and look and live! I think I have closed my sermon each night lately with those words, and I will do so again tonight. There is life in a look at a crucified Savior. There is life at this moment for you. Oh, look to Him, and you shall find that life for yourself! God bless you, for Jesus’ sake.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God our Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all who love Jesus, now and eternally. Amen. Amen.

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