

HEEDLESSNESS IN RELIGION

NO. 685

A SERMON
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*“But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart;
for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, who had made Israel sin.”
2 Kings 10:31.*

JEHU was raised up by God to be a great reformer in the kingdom of Israel. No sooner did he receive his commission than he was at his work with a daring and perseverance never excelled. He was commanded to cut off the whole house of Ahab, and the task was a very congenial one—he slew right and left, and spared none. Unlike Saul with the Amalekites, who spared Agag and the best of the cattle, Jehu utterly exterminated the race whom God had doomed. When full vengeance had been worked upon Jezebel and all Ahab’s brood, he scarcely paused by the way to congratulate himself and say to Jehonadab, “Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord,” but proceeded at once to gather together all the priests of Baal and to annihilate them at a blow. He was a thorough root-and-branch reformer in this matter, and cut off the Baalites without remorse and without exception. He was not one of those who of old were cursed for doing the work of God deceitfully, holding back their hands from blood, but he made a thorough and clean sweep of the abominations of Baal worship, and accomplished the work for which he was raised up with the most wonderful thoroughness and zeal. *But*—oh, that *but*!—How unhappily does it mar everything!—*but* while he was thus ready and earnest in a work which suited his furious taste, he had no true heart toward God; while he was a destroyer of Baal he was not a servant of Jehovah, he was an iconoclast of the very first order, breaking idols right and left, but he was no builder up of the house of the Lord. He did not yield his mind reverently and obediently to the worship of Israel’s God, neither did he care to know His mind and law. He followed a sort of animal impulse, which drove him forward in opposition to Baal and to Ahab’s race, but he knew nothing of that spiritual force which would have led him to inquire, “What more would God have me to do?”

His actions as God’s executioner were right enough, but his heart was wrong. He was impulsive and impetuous, and drove furiously when the work was to his mind, but had no heart to other service for Jehovah. Having overthrown the worship of Baal, he almost immediately established another form of idolatry in its stead, and bade the nation prostrate itself before the calves of Bethel. Hating one sin, he loved another, and thus proved that the fear of the Most High did not reign in his breast. He was merely a hired servant and received the throne as his wages, but a child of God he never was; he did God’s work, as did the lion who slew the wicked prophet, but he still remained a lion. Anxious care to know and serve God did not suit Jehu’s headstrong disposition; he was all flash and dash, but careful, humble obedience he knew nothing of. Do not suppose that this rash heedless Jehu was a man alone and without a companion, he was, alas, only one of a very numerous class! I have selected the text because of an impression upon my own heart that the Jehus are increasing in our land, and that there will be found thoughtless professors in this congregation to whom this text may cause great searching of heart. I only trust that such may really be led to examine themselves, and use fitting tests to discover whether they are truly believers in the great God of Israel, or are only hasty, inconsiderate, unrenewed imitators of Jehu. The fault of heedlessness of God’s will which is mentioned in the text is a very terrible one, fatal to all our professions of genuine piety, and all hopes of entering into eternal life. While I speak upon the holy caution and earnest heed which the text suggests, may the Holy Spirit enable us all to search ourselves, whether we have received from the Lord by faith in Jesus a renewed heart which is anxious to know and to do the will of the Lord, or are mere creatures of impulse, picking and choosing as to our Lord’s commands, and obeying or disobeying according as the circumstances of the hour may influence our thoughtless spirit.

In the first place this morning we shall have to speak upon *heedlessness in religion, showing the one peculiar point in which it mainly discovers itself*; then we shall proceed to testify, secondly, that *in this point heedlessness in religion is fatal*; we shall then, thirdly, go on to *show the usefulness of holy care and heedfulness*; and we shall close by *endeavoring to exhort you to practice that heedfulness before you leave this house of prayer*.

I. First, may the Holy Spirit enable us to SHOW THE POINT IN WHICH HEEDLESSNESS MOST OF ALL DISPLAYS ITSELF.

Jehu took no heed to what? He took great heed to kill Ahab's family; he took great heed to totally destroy Baal's worshippers; but he took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart. This is the point in which a great many flaming professors show their lack of vital godliness, because they exercise no holy circumspection and show no anxiety to walk in the law of the Lord their God with all their heart; which they would be very desirous of doing if they were saved. There are many, nowadays, who would be greatly disgusted with me if I did not admit them to be Christians, *who take no heed to even know God's will*. Many professors never gave themselves an hour's study of the Scriptures with a serious desire to ascertain God's way of salvation, and God's rule for a believer's behavior in the Church and in the world. Multitudes of so-called Christians nowadays do not read their Bibles. My hearers, do you? I would not malign modern Christendom, but I am persuaded that crowds of professors treat the Book of God with very wicked neglect; for we frequently meet with mistakes which are so absurd that no habitual students of the Word of God could have fallen into them. So many of you take your religion secondhand; you borrow it from the preacher; you copy it from your grandmothers; you follow custom as your guide, and not the voice of God; you do not search the Book of the Lord to discover whether these things are so or not. Why, great multitudes of people go blundering on like Jehu, supposing that they must be right; the uncomfortable but very prudent thought that perhaps all may be wrong has never occurred to them, and a resort to the "law and to the testimony" appears to them to be altogether superfluous.

Now, my dear friends, I do not see how a servant can be thought to be faithful who is utterly careless as to his master's will. Solemnly I believe that some professors do not wish to know their Lord's will too thoroughly; there are certain duties whose performance would be unpleasant, and therefore they do not want to have their consciences too much enlightened upon the subject; they shun the light lest they should stand reprov'd. Brothers and sisters, if I am afraid of the light of God, let me rest assured that for some evil reason I have good cause to be afraid of it! If my doctrinal opinions or my daily actions are such that I dare not put them into the scale of God's Word, and give them a thorough pondering, I have reason to suspect that I shall be found wanting at the last. Oh that every one of us would diligently seek with humble and obedient spirit to sit at Jesus' feet and learn of Him! "Lord, what would You have me to do?" is the cry of the regenerate soul. Carnal religionists go driving on with headlong inconsiderateness, but spiritual minds pause, and ponder, and inquire, and all with the one aim—to be sound in the statutes of the Lord.

Furthermore, I am afraid that there are some who if they take any care to know, do not take heed to practice the Lord's will. If they think at all they come to the conclusion that certain commands are grievous, and they postpone all practical attention to them. They claim to be obedient in principle but not in practice; whereas a man who professes to hold a principle which he does not practice is a person without any principle whatever, except a shockingly bad one. My dear friends if I am truly the Lord's servant I shall feel that I must make haste, and delay not in all things to walk according to His will; and though mournfully conscious of many infirmities and imperfections, yet at any rate I shall heartily desire to practice what I know. Beware, dear friends, of letting the head grow at a great rate while the arm is shriveled. Knowledge involves a responsibility which will end in many stripes for disobedience. It is treason for a commander to be well-versed in military tactics, and to be great in arms, and yet to refuse to defend his country and allow the empire to go to ruin. Practical Christianity alone is true Christianity. The Lord give us such! May we sit down and solemnly say to ourselves, "What is that which I know to be God's will, which I have neglected to perform? Lord help me to attend to it now." Dear friends, we are saved by divine grace alone, but when saved we become obedient children, and are no longer as thoughtless Jehu.

But further, there are some who both know the will of God and practice it after a fashion; but they do not practice it as having divine authority about it. In submitting ourselves especially to the ordinances of the Christian religion, we bring a vain oblation if we merely submit to them because of custom or because of the authority of the church. We must bow to each command of this Book because it is God's command; and our course of life must not be guided by the impression that such-and-such a thing is respectable, but by the consciousness that we are the servants of the Most High, and that whatever He said unto us it is our privilege to perform. We ought to pray that we may run in the way of God's commandments, but in addition to that, that we may be moved to run in that way because it is the way of God's commandments. To obey mechanically is scarcely becoming in the servant of so great and gracious a God. It has been well observed that the early Christians did as much speak of *obedience* to Christ as of *devotion* to Him, which is far higher than obedience. Consecration to Jesus should be the ruling passion of our soul. Beloved, let the Word of Jesus be an irresistible force with us; let us follow because Jesus leads. That was a mighty cry which was once profaned to purposes of fanaticism under the preaching of Peter the Hermit, "*Deus vult*," "God wills it." It sounded through Christendom, it made monarchs exchange their crowns for helmets, it made the artisan throw down his hammer to grasp the spear, it changed men's plowshares into swords, and their pruning hooks into spears—and they rushed to die in Palestine, under the dominant idea of clearing that Holy Land from Pagan intrusion. Oh that such an impulse would go through Christendom again for a higher and a nobler purpose, "*Deus vult!*" The Lord wills it! Let truth banish error! Let superstition yield to the gospel! Let forms and ceremonies fly before the doctrines of free grace! Let every knee bow at the name of Jesus, because "*Deus vult!*" Let the crucified be everywhere adored, for God wills it. If this force shall not move all Christendom, at any rate let it influence our own hearts, and may we take heed to God's commandments because they express His will.

It is added once more in the text that the heedlessness of Jehu showed itself in his not giving heed to all the law of the Lord God of Israel *with all his heart*. Shall I impeach the present age? No, but still might the impeachment well be against it, that the most of us do not serve God with all our hearts. Oh the ardor with which men pursue after fortunes! Oh the rages with which they covet wealth! Oh the power of that force which impels the man of science to spend his life in toilsome research! Why should not a rage of a nobler kind seize us? Why should we not be equally devoted to the Master's cause? The half-heartedness of the most of us is that which prevents our glorifying Christ. We preach, but not as dying men to dying men. We pray, but not as Jacob wrestled with the angel. We give, but not as bounteous givers. We seek to live in holiness, but not with that enthusiasm which becomes the cross of Christ. Dear friends, we fear that the text has a bearing upon us all; but there are some to whom it is almost a sentence of death, for though they know God's will and do it in a measure, yet they do not attend to it with their hearts. Remember, you may conscientiously carry out whatever you believe to be God's will externally, but unless the heart gives its obedience you have no evidence of being the subject of divine grace; for it is the heart which grace wins and which God claims—and till the heart is yielded nothing is yielded. You may be baptized, and re-baptized, you may come to the communion as often as you will, you may sit in your pew, you may hear, no, you may preach and even give your body to be burned, but if your heart does not give itself to God, if you love Him not, if you feel no attachment to His person—all that you have done is merely the natural effect of excitement or free will, and not the work of divine grace; but when the heart cleaves to God, when the soul is fixed upon Him, when we throw our whole being into every act of service, then it is that we are distinguished as the quickened, called, elect, the people of God who rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.

Thus I have tried to set forth where the mischief lay in the matter of Jehu—that he did not care to know the whole of God's will. If he knew it, he did not study to practice it; he did not yield obedience because it was God's will, and never yielded his whole heart to the love of God. Observe, before we leave this point, that Jehu was very angry at other people's sins, and that we may be too, and yet never be delivered from our own. It is a very fine sight to see a man work himself up into a furor against drunkenness—he himself never having been guilty of it. It is true that all the indignation which he pours upon it, it well deserves, for is it not an infamous sin, the great net of the devil in which he catches multitudes? But I may be a very earnest temperance man and hate drunkenness most fiercely, and I may be a

child of the devil notwithstanding all that. I may be very furious against adultery, or theft, or immorality of some other kind which I do not happen to practice myself, yet my own sins may cry out against me; and it will not be possible to justify my own sins by denouncing those of others. It is a very cheap sort of virtue that, bullying other people's vices; the easiest thing in the entire world is to be constantly denouncing popular faults; but to wring the neck of one of my own bosom sins is a harder work by far, and a much better sign of conversion. To be earnest against the sin of others may be praiseworthy, but it is no sign of divine grace in the heart; for natural men have been some of the greatest leaders in this matter. To loathe my own sin, to humble myself on account of my own personal faults, and to endeavor in the sight of God to renounce every false way, is a work of something more than human nature. Will you also notice Jehu was very bitter against one sin. The very mention of the name of Baal brought the blood into his face, and there are persons in the world that cannot bear some one sin to which they have aversion; they love to hammer away against that; their whole soul takes fire at the mention of it. This is all very well; but, unless you hate all sin, unless you hate especially the besetting sin which is most congenial to your own nature, you need to be converted. Christ does not make some things new, but all things new; and He does not teach us to cut off one lust and to indulge another, but a clean sweep must by God's grace be made of the love of all sin.

Once more, Jehu did obey God up to a certain point. It happened to be a profitable thing to him to exterminate the old royal house of Ahab, because it would confirm himself upon his own throne; but anything beyond that did not pay, and therefore Jehu did not touch it. Some virtues pay well, and prudent people go in for them at once. These remunerative graces are very much admired; but poverty-stricken virtues have few patrons. If it had paid Jehu better to save Ahab, he would have been slow to kill him; and when it answered his purpose to set up the golden calves, he had no scruples in doing so. Many men turn aside from religion when their interest would be compromised. If I see two men walking together, I cannot tell who is the master of the dog that is behind them, but I shall discover directly; one of them will turn to the right and the other to the left—now I shall know who is the master of the dog, for when it comes to the turning point, the dog will go with its master and leave the stranger. You cannot always tell whether it is God or Mammon that a man is serving when virtue is profitable; but when it comes to the turning point, and the man has to be a loser for Christ, in what he gives up for Christ's sake, then sincerity is tried. Turning points are places where we may judge ourselves, for they are the only true criteria of our real character.

II. HEEDLESSNESS IN THE POINT INDICATED IS FATAL. It is fatal because it manifests *that sin is not hated*. A particular form of sin is abhorred, but since another is indulged, it is evident that there is no hate towards sin itself. Jehu would have said, "I hate idolatry. See how I have broken the image of Baal!" Yes; but see how you have set up the golden calves. It was not hatred of idolatry, *per se* and in itself, but hatred to that particular form of it which consisted in the worship of Baal. So you do not hate sin if you only hate some one sin. All iniquity will be distasteful in your sight if God the Holy Spirit has really made you to loathe iniquity. If I say to a person, "I will not receive you into my house when you come dressed in such a coat," but if I open the door to him when he has on another suit which is more respectable, it is evident that my objection was not to the person but to his clothes. If a man will not cheat when the transaction is open to the world but will do so in a more secret way, or in a kind of adulteration which is winked at in the trade, the man does not hate cheating—he only hates that kind of it which is sure to be found out—he likes the thing itself very well. Some sinners say they hate sin. Not at all; sin in its essence is pleasing enough—it is only a glaring shape of it which they dislike.

Heedlessness indicates that *self is not subdued*. You say that you have given up a certain sin, but you will not attend to such-and-such a command of Christ—what does this prove? Why, that the great I is still predominating; self is never subdued unless it is subdued in all matters. Unless I can say, "Lord, I delight to do *all* Your will, and I long to be thoroughly conformed to it in *all* respects," self is not subdued. That is a proud spirit which says, "I shall do this but not that." A servant is not to pick and choose as to his duties; he then becomes the master; he has arrogated to himself a position to which he has no right if he makes any selection whatever in what his master bids him do. Self is unhumiliated and the soul is unrenewed, however high the pretensions, unless the man is willing to submit to Christ in *everything*.

Again; *your faith is not a living faith*. We are saved by faith in Christ, and not by our works, but if, my dear friend, you can harbor and pamper any one sin, and delight in it, you have not the faith of God's elect. If, my brother, there is some known command of God against which you set yourself, and say, "Though I know it to be the command of Christ, yet I shall not obey it," you are not acting consistently with the obedience of faith; for faith must obey her Master's will as well as trust His grace. I know that what I am saying is not very pleasant to certain of you; but we are not sent to preach pleasant things to you, we are to deliver the healthful truth of God. I pray it may be sanctified to my own soul and to yours also. You do not wish to be deceived, any of you. I am sure the most earnest Christian here is the one who is most willing to search himself. Better for us to have our eyes opened here than to go dreaming on, and find out our mistake in hell. The Lord give us never to be afraid of a cutting truth of God nor a cutting sermon; but rather to invite a heart-searching minister to deal faithfully with us. Beloved, I pray you to remember your spirit cannot have been humbled, and your faith cannot be a living faith if it makes exceptions with regard to the Master's will and kicks at this or that; you do really in fact rebel against God Himself when you rebel against His will.

And again, a presumptuous lack of care as to serving God *is very dishonoring to the Most High*. This kind of harum scarum religion, this hit or miss godliness, this do the thing that anybody else does, but never stop to look at it, has in it a sad lack of true reverence to God. True reverence to God makes me stop every now and then, and say, "Is this my Master's will?" It makes me go to the Record to see whether I am comporting myself according to the Master's orders; it brings me to a solemn position of inquiry where I have to look on the right hand, and on the left, and say, "Am I really right here? Am I serving myself or my God? Am I now under a divine impulse, or only subject to my own human passion?" If you do not thus pause, I do not think you have a proper regard for the Most High. If one of us should be sent as an ambassador from the Queen on some important business, when we received our orders we would be very diligent to know what they were; and I can suppose our putting our hand into our bosom, for we would be sure to keep the document there close to our heart, taking it out often and looking at it to know exactly what was to be done. I am sure we would say, "If I should make a mistake here it shall be through lack of power, it shall not be through deficiency of care and caution." Dear hearers, we ought not to be serving God blunderingly, we ought not to rush into His service and rush out again without setting our hearts toward Him. The Lord does not require of us to serve Him with half our heads or half our hearts; but the service of God is worthy of all the light which my understanding can give me. I would not only serve Him with my heart having a good motive, but feeling that He bought my head with His precious blood, I would try to obey Him with my understanding, saying to Him, "Lord, teach me what You would have me to do, and how You would have me to do it." Jesus deserves our whole man in the most educated state; and the true Christian will not be satisfied to give to Jesus merely passion, and impulse, and excitement, but he will put himself under the instruction of the great Teacher, and say, "Lord, teach me Your statutes, that I may run in the way of Your commandments."

Once more, after all, dear friends, if we are heedless in the service of God, and will not think it worth our while to find out or to do our Master's will, is there not grave cause for suspicion that *the very heart of our religion is rotten*? Do not think me harsh, but I must again press it upon you; it is the easiest thing in the world, beloved, for you and for me to think that we are converted, and to get into the notion that we have enjoyed such-and-such experiences. It is very easy for some to say they are Christians, but it will not be found so easy *to be one*. Hear the words of Paul: "If the righteous are scarcely saved." "For strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads unto life eternal." Now, if I wickedly in my soul say that I will not desire to know my Lord's will, or if I know it, but will not yield it obedience; if I practice it, I will do it lightly without giving my soul to it. What worse heart can any mere worldling have than this? How can corrupt nature be more thoroughly discovered? Of the two I think I would sooner see you lay down your profession than hold it with a reserve. It were better for you to be ostensibly the enemies of God than to be nominally His friends only up to a certain point. God save us from the shadow of hypocrisy!

I am conscious that I have been touching some sore points here, for with a great many even in our own churches, let alone those who are in the Church of England and so on, it really is not with them a question as to what the Lord would have them to do. Some are guided by their family connections—

“Why do I do so-and-so? Well, you see it is a thing I was brought up to do.” The same theory would render all the heathen heathens forever, and every man would go down to hell whose father went there. Many persons receive their religion as they received their names; they got their names when they were unconscious, and they obtained their religion, or rather *irreligion*, at the same time. I do not believe I am bound to do what my grandmother did. She was, I doubt not, an admirable woman, and has gone to heaven, but I do not believe God put the brains that were to guide me into her head. I think He put my understanding and my brains into my head, and that under the guidance of His Holy Spirit I am myself, to search this Bible. God did not put the Bible into my father’s hands that He might construct certain notions which should bind his son, but He placed the Bible in each Christian’s own hands that he might come there and say, “Lord, what would You have *me* to do?” It is a very ill reason to give for a practice, “I do so-and-so because my family did the same before me,” and it is a worse reason, if possible, to say, “We do it because you see it is a general thing, and a respectable thing.” The general thing is the wrong thing in nine cases out of ten. Christ’s Church is not so predominant yet anywhere as that the general thing shall ever become the right thing. It is folly to be singular, except when to be singular is to be right, but that happens to be very, very often, indeed.

Some, on the other hand, who do not follow tradition, follow mere excitement. They happen to be what they now are as professors because they were persuaded into it by an eloquent preacher; they were excited, and they did so. Besides, they did it, they say, from a good motive which is certainly better than no excuse at all; but my doing wrong from a good motive does not make the wrong right, especially when I might have enlightened myself and have found out what was the right. If I persistently shut up my Bible and say, “Now I shall do whatever I think to be right,” I am like a person who at night puts out his lantern and cries, “Now I shall walk whichever way I think to be right.” If he tumbles into a ditch, it will be very little consolation that he followed his best judgment. Why did he not follow the light which he had about him?

Some professing Christians also give themselves up to their taste. They believe a doctrine because they like it, or they follow a practice because they think it is very appropriate, or perhaps pretty. As if taste could be any better than a mere Will-o’-the-wisp as a guide in religion. It is not possible for me to be a servant of God at all while I set up my own whims to be my rule of action. beloved, there are many others whose religion is one constant piece of thoughtlessness—they never consider at all—and though this matter may not strike you as important, I am persuaded the message I am delivering is needed by the great mass of Christians. Do not serve God thoughtlessly; do not come to any devout exercises merely because it is the time and season for them, but take heed, weigh the matter, see what you are doing, do not rush into God’s presence, do not worship because others do so, but take heed and consider, and then, deliberately in God’s strength, whether others do so or not, perform the Lord’s will with your whole heart.

III. I will now come to the third point, and that is that CAREFUL THOUGHT WITH REGARD TO ALL GOD’S WILL IS MOST USEFUL.

Because, in the first place, a man who gives heed to walk in all the Lord’s will with all his heart proves that he has the true serving spirit. He has become a servant, for his eyes were up to God as the eyes of the handmaiden towards her mistress. He has the true child-like spirit, for he says to his Father, “Father, tell me what You would have me do and be.” He has the true believing spirit, for he no longer walks by the sight of his eyes and the will of the flesh, but desires to be conformed to the mind of the invisible God. And he has evidently a humbled spirit, since he puts his own will in subjection to divine grace, to the will of God, and his desire is, “Not my will, but Yours be done.” Cultivate, beloved, cultivate carefulness with regard to God’s will for you, because it will be to you one of the best and clearest evidences that divine grace reigns in your heart.

In the next place, this heedfulness is precious because *it will prevent much evil*. There are scores of things which are now done that never would be done again if Christians would only think. If we could once get a thoughtful believing church, we should not be long without having a reformed church. Beloved, it was because Luther was led by God to proclaim that doctrine of justification by faith that we received the Reformation. Do not think there was nobody in the world who believed that when Luther preached it; there were thousands of holy men and women who had trusted in Christ and were trusting in

Christ; but they did not see the necessity of proclaiming on the housetops that truth of God which in secret they lived upon; and it was only when Luther made them think whether they ought to be in communion with a church which denies this vital point—it was only then that they dreamed of coming out from the old Romish church, and began to declare more boldly the truth as it is in Jesus. You will be saved all sorts of troubles in providence, if like David, you will stay awhile, and say, “Bring here the ephod.” If instead of running right on without looking, you will say, “Lord, where does the cloud lead me? Where does the finger of providence direct me?” You will be saved many bitter tears, and your path will be more happy and pleasant to yourself.

A heedful spirit, moreover, finds out God’s will. God’s will is not such a mystery as some would have us think. This is such a book that he who wills to understand it, by God’s grace shall understand. Come here in spirit, willing to know, and you will know. Come here with a desire to do what God would have you do, and you shall soon be well taught. You need not submit to a priest, nor allow the judgment of another to domineer over your intellect—

*“This is the judge that ends the strife,
Where wit and reason fail;
My guide to everlasting life
Through all this gloomy vale.”*

A heedful spirit is particularly necessary to certain persons. A man with a quick spirit like Jehu ought to be the more heedful. Some brothers and sisters are born with a passionate disposition. Certain men are readily subject to impulses. Those of us who are cool and calculating will probably not err here; but the more impulsive brethren should look well to this duty of taking heed to the whole of God’s will, or else before they know it, they may be the dupes of imposters. Under the notion of duty you may run into all sorts of mischief. If men would go to God about every matter, they would not talk so many crude things nor do so many absurd things as they now do. How necessary this heedfulness is to the preacher! If he does not take care what he publishes he will do much more mischief than he will do good. How heedful you Sunday school teachers and you who are teachers of any sort should be. If you do not look to your actions, you may have good motives, but your example will not be very good. How necessary this is to the parent, because if the parent falls into an error, his children will imitate him in his vices far sooner than his virtues. How necessary is this in certain positions! You who work with ungodly men, you who are thrown into worldly company, how heedful should you be! You will never be right unless you are watchful. “What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.” Watchfulness will be sure to take this turn of an anxious desire to give heed to the Lord’s entire will. Would I have you precise? “Yes,” said a Puritan, “I am precise, for I serve a precise God.” Would I have you careful and jealous? Yes, you serve a jealous God! There is no fear in this age that I can draw this string too tightly; for laxity is, alas, too much the common practice. Oh, beloved, may we come back again, not to the gloom of Puritanism, but still to the rigidity of its obedience, to its stern tenacity of all its convictions, and its determination sooner to die than to yield the very least point of the will of God! If we had more of this the church would be much more blessed than it is.

Let me say once more that this heedful spirit will be a great blessing to you Christians because of that which it will lead to. If I do not take heed to do the Lord’s will, I shall soon miss the friendship of Jesus. Christ walks most closely with those who walk most closely with the divine will. If I set up an idol in my heart, I cannot expect Jesus Christ to come and talk familiarly with me, and sup with me in the presence of that idol. If I am knowingly, or even through a willful ignorance, unknowingly doing that which He does not approve of, I cannot expect His smile. We are not saved by works, we repeat it, but still much of our communion with Christ does depend upon the hearty sincerity of our obedience. “If you keep My commandments you shall abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love.” May the Holy Spirit bring us, then, for all these reasons, into a heedful and careful spirit!

IV. We must finish by trying to urge you TO PRACTICE CARE AT ONCE. And I would appeal to all present in these few words—Dear friends, may I ask you all to answer to yourselves this question, Is my hope which I possess at the present moment truly placed where all true hope must be? Are you giving heed in the matter of your hope to walk according to the commandment? What is the command-

ment? This is the commandment, That you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent. No question can be more important than this. Are you resting and depending upon Jesus Christ alone, and with all your heart? If not, you may as well give up all pretensions to godliness, for you have not got any if you have not begun on this foundation. “Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid.” Come, there can be no exceptions here! That excellent disposition, that charitable action, that devout ceremony—all that is nothing at all unless you begin by disclaiming all good works and all human merits, and come to rest upon the Lord Jesus, and upon His finished work and righteousness. Now, that is the first question to begin with. Christian, if you can get over that, and say, “Yes, blessed be God, I do in that respect walk according to the commandment,” then next I want you, Christian, to answer this—Is there anything in which you are now indulging which you know to be wrong, or which you might know to be wrong if you took the trouble to search? Then I charge you, by your allegiance to Christ, give it up now! One leak sinks a ship, and one sin really harbored will be a proof that the grace of God is not in you. You may fall into one sin, no, fall into 50 sins and yet be a Christian; but *you cannot live in one sin, and love one sin and be a Christian*, for it is indispensably necessary to vital godliness that all sin should be the subject of your heart’s disapproval. What about this? My dear brothers and sisters saved in Christ—is there any *one* command of your Master which you have neglected? I shall give no hints about what it may happen to be, for it may be a different one in every case. But is there one thing that you might do for Christ which you have not done? Is there one service which you might render to your Master which you have not rendered? Then I charge you, as you hope to be found approved in the day of judgment, and by the sincerity of your attachment to your Lord, see that that one thing is done, and done at once with all your heart.

How I wish that I had the power to press home this matter! I feel as if I had one of the largest subjects to handle, and had the very smallest power to bring it home. Beloved, do not let us be among those who have the name to live and are dead, and who prove that they are dead by lacking the heart which clings to God! I know you cannot be perfect in life, but you must be desirous to be perfect. You cannot give up every sin, practically, I know; through infirmity we fall into some sin or another; but the heart must give up every sin, or else it is a rotten heart in which God does not dwell; and the heart must be obedient to every command, or else it is not a heart in which Jesus Christ has come to reign. The Lord purge the inside and the outside will soon be right enough. May He make clean the inside of the cup and the platter, then the exterior will be cleansed, too; but may the Lord grant that this work be seen to at once!

As for you professors who have felt this sermon cut you, may it cut you; may it kill your hopes, may it drive you to self-despair, and may it lead you to Christ; and when you come to Christ and trust in Him, then I know you will cry—

*“Loved of my God, for Him again
With love intense I’d burn!
Chosen of Him before time began,
I choose Him in return.”*

God bless this sermon of admonition, and make it profitable to every hearer, and His shall be the praise. Amen.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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