# GOOD EARNESTS OF GREAT SUCCESS

## NO. 802

**A SERMON**
**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 12, 1868**
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**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON**

***"And the word of God increased;***
***and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly;***
***and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."***
***Acts 6:7***

CERTAIN things preceded this prosperity—the counterpart of which I verily believe we have experienced among ourselves. There had been a little trouble in the church. Some had thought one thing, some had thought another. There appeared to have been a just cause for complaint.

The apostles, conciliatory in their temper, and earnest in their endeavor to keep the church together, as all true ministers should be, proposed the election of seven men who would distribute the contributions impartially among the poor. This was agreed to and acted upon by the entire assembly, and straightaway the multitude of them that believed were *of one heart and of one soul.*

Well might great grace rest upon them all, for *they loved each other with a pure heart fervently.* Such unanimity, as a rule, I consider essential to church prosperity. If there be divisions amongst you, and one shall say, "I am for this," and another, "I am for that," how can you expect that the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of peace, to be present with you, and working among you?

But when we are knit together in brotherly affection, the Lord commands the blessing, even life for evermore. Where brotherly love continues, and saints walk in holy unity, the witness they bear is powerful, and the increase they gather is palpable.

So I felt when I met with the brethren last Thursday night. The attendance at the church meeting was very numerous, and the unanimity that prevailed not only gratified me, but I must confess astounded me too. I think all of us who know anything of the history of churches, especially those of a democratic order where we recognize the rights of every member, understand how easy it is for thoughts to diverge, for counsels to vary, and for excellent brethren to conscientiously disagree.

A breach once made has a tendency to widen, and a rent, unless speedily repaired, may tear a church to pieces. But not so much as a single word was spoken, nor do I know that so much as a single thought crossed the breast of any one that evening, contrary to the general current of unanimous opinion with which you elected my brother to take upon himself the office proposed to assist me in my work.

I felt as if I could only weep my joy. I knew of no words by which I could express it, because I looked not only at the unity itself, but regarding it as one of the qualifications for future prosperity, I thought within myself, "Surely God will bless us. Surely He will bless us yet more abundantly than before."

Moreover, my dear brethren and sisters in Christ, you know that some two or three years ago, Baptist Churches of London scarcely knew each other. There might have been some secret love between them, but certainly there was no manifest display of it. But now for two years we have been associated together to the number of eighty or ninety. In fact, there are now nearly a hundred of the churches among whom union has been cemented.

We have been enabled to do some service for the Master by this incorporation, but whatever service we may have done or may not have done, this certainly has been the result of our meeting with each other, that the churches have come to feel themselves to be a whole, they keep rank, they walk together as a phalanx, they desire to be faithful to Christ, and to bear each others' burdens.

If anyone had told me, three or four years ago, that I should live to see, as I did last year, this house filled with the representatives of our Baptist Churches met together to pray, I would have said, "If the Lord will open windows in heaven, may such a thing be!" But it has been, and by God's grace it will be yet again, and we shall clasp hands next Tuesday and go on for another campaign against the common enemy, united as one man, first to Christ, and then to one another.

May we not look upon this as a sign that God is intending to bless all our churches, to pour us out a blessing such as we shall not have room enough to receive? The Lord send prosperity. Amen, say we, amen from our hearts. And amen we hope all God's saints will say. May the blessing speedily be sent. Since we have the first matter I am hopeful.

But many will urge discouragements. "How is it likely," says one, "that we can hope to make an impression upon the present age? What means have we but the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ?" We are certainly not among the wealthy, and we count not amongst us the great ones of the land. Our membership has always been, and still is, among the poor. How shall we expect to tell upon so huge a city as this, or to exert any influence upon so great a country? And above all, how shall we make any impress upon the population of the whole globe?

My dear brethren, we are weak, but we are not weaker than the first disciples of Christ. Neither were they learned, nor were they the wealthy of the earth. Fishermen, the most of them, by no means men of cultivated ability—their tramp was that of a legion that went forth to conquer as well as to fight.

Wherever they went and wielded the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, their enemies were put to confusion. It is true they died in the conflict. Some of them were slain by the sword, and others of them were rent in sunder by wild beasts. But in all these things they were more than conquerors through Him that loved them.

The primitive church did tell upon its age, and left a seed behind which the whole earth could not destroy. And so shall we by God's grace if we are equally set upon it, equally filled with the divine life, equally resolved by any means and by all means to spread abroad the savor of Jesus Christ's name, our weakness shall be our strength, for God shall make it to be the platform upon which the omnipotence of His grace shall be displayed.

Keep together, beloved, keep close to Christ, close up your ranks. Heed the battle cry, hold fast the faith, quit yourselves like men in the conflict and the gates of hell shall not prevail against you. Only may the King Himself lead us onward to the fray, and we shall not fear the result.

Having thus looked at the precedents of that prosperity enjoyed by the church at Jerusalem, we shall this evening, with deep earnestness, *ask your attention to the means by which a like prosperity may be procured for such churches as do not enjoy it now.* Secondly, we shall have a word or two upon *the results of such prosperity.* And then, thirdly, upon *the alternative which is before every church, either to obtain such prosperity or else to mourn over grievous evils.*

**I.** WHAT ARE THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS PROSPERITY MAY BE PROCURED?

If we pant to see the Word of God increase, multitudes added to the disciples, and a great company of those who are least likely to be saved brought in, there must be an adequate instrumentality. Nothing can avail without the operation of *the Holy Spirit and the smile from heaven.* Paul planteth, Apollos watereth, and God giveth the increase.

We must never begin our catalog of outward means without referring to that blessed and mysterious potentate who abides in the church, and without whom nothing is good, nothing efficient, nothing successful.

***"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove,***
***With all Thy quickening powers."***

This should be our first prayer whenever we attempt to serve God, for if not, we begin with pride, and can little hope to succeed by prowess. If we go the warfare at our own charges, we must not marvel

if we return stained with defeat. O Spirit of the living God, if it were not for Thy power we could not make the attempt, but when we rely upon Thee we go forward in confidence.

As for the ostensible means, would any church prosper, *there must be much plain preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.* I have been struck lately in looking through the history of the Reformation, and of the times before the Reformation, with the remarkable downrightness of the testimony of the early preachers. If you look at the life of Farren you find him not preaching *about* the Gospel, but preaching *the Gospel.*

So it was with John Calvin. He is looked upon now, of course, as a theologian only, but he was really one of the greatest of Gospel preachers. When Calvin opened the Book and took a text, you might be sure that he was about to preach, "Through grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

And it was the same with Luther. Luther's preaching was just the ringing of a big bell, the note of which was always, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and live! It is not of works, lest any man should boast, but by faith are ye saved, and by faith alone." They spoke this, and they spoke it again. Neither did they couch the doctrine in difficult words, but they labored with all their might, so to speak, that the ploughman at the plough-tail should understand, and that the fish-wife should comprehend the truth.

They did not aim at lofty periods and flowing eloquence, of rhetoric they had a most contemptible opinion, but they just dashed right on with this one truth, "He that believeth hath everlasting life." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

And my brethren, if we are to see the church of God really restored to her pristine glory, we must have back this plain, simple, Gospel-preaching. I do believe that the hiding of the cross beneath the veil of fine language and learned dissertation is half the cause of the spiritual destitution of our country. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. I would sooner say these few words and then cease my testimony, than utter the most splendid oration that ever streamed from the lips of Demosthenes or of Cicero, but not have declared the Gospel of Christ.

We must keep to this. This must be the hammer that we bring down upon the anvil of the human heart again, and again, and again. God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord! God forbid that we should know anything among men save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified! look to Him—not to the priest, not to your good works, not to your prayers, not to your church-goings or your chapel-goings, but to Christ Jesus exalted. Look to Him in faith, and God is willing to forgive you, able to forgive you, to receive you, to make you His children, and forever to glorify you with Himself.

We must have much more of this plain preaching, and not only plain preaching but plain teaching. Sunday school teachers, *you* must teach this same Gospel. I know *you* do, but full many Sunday school teachers do not. A certain denomination has made the confession that after having had their schoolrooms crowded with children, they do not know that any of those children have afterwards come to be attendants at the places of worship. Miserable confession! Miserable teachers must they be!

And have we not known teachers who believed in the doctrines of grace, and upstairs in the chapel they would have fought earnestly for them, but downstairs in the schoolroom they have twaddled to the little children in this kind of way—"Be good boys and girls. Keep the Sabbath. Do not buy sweets on Sunday. Mind your fathers and your mothers. Be good, and you will go to heaven"!—which is not true, and is not the Gospel.

For the same Gospel is for little children as for grown-up men—not, "Do this and live," which is after the law that was given by Moses, but "Believe and live," which is according to the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. Teachers must inculcate the Gospel if they are to see the salvation of their classes, the Gospel, the whole Gospel, and nothing but the Gospel, for without this no great thing will be done.

And if we would see the Gospel spread abroad in London as once it did in Geneva, as once, under John Knox, it did in Scotland, as it did in Luther's day throughout Germany, we *must have much holy living to back it all up.* After we have done the sermon, people say, "How about the people that attend

there? What about the church members, are they upright? Are they such people as you can trust? What about their homes? Do they make good husbands? Are they good servants? Are they kind masters?" People will be sure to inquire of this, and if the report of our character be bad, it is all over with our testimony.

The doctor may advertise, but if the patients are not cured, he is not likely to establish himself as being well-skilled in his art. And the preacher may preach, but if his people do not love the Gospel, they kick down with their feet what he builds up with his hands.

As I told you this morning, the followers of the early Reformers were distinguished by the sanctity of their lives. When they were about to hunt out the Waldenses, the French king, who had some of them in his dominions, sent a priest to see what they were like, and he, honest man as he was, came back to the king and said, "As far as I could find, they seem to be much better Christians than we are. I am afraid they are heretics, but really they are so chaste, so honest, so upright, and so truly pious, that though I hate heresy—I hope Your Majesty does not suspect me on that account—yet I would that all Catholics were as good as they are."

Now, this was what made the Gospel victorious in those days—the stern integrity of those who received it, and thus it will be still. It cannot be otherwise. But if you become worldly, if you members of this church are just the same as other men who have no grace, and make no pretensions, what is the good of your profession? You are liars before God unless you live above the common life of the rest of mankind.

Oh! to get back to the simplicity of Christian manners! I cannot go into particulars, and ordain that this you shall do and that you shall avoid, but you know very well what the simplicity is, and were it carried out there is a great deal that is now practiced among professors that would have at once to be given.

As the books were burned when Paul preached, so there would be a great deal to be burned in the Christian church if we had the Spirit of God in all His power to bring us back to the old simplicity of the Christian faith. And why not? If you put the sword into the scabbard, you cannot kill with it. You must pull it out, and let it glitter in all its naked sharpness.

If you put the sword of the Gospel into the scabbard of worldly conformity, as some of you do, you cannot expect that there will be any power in it. Draw it away from your worldly company, and your pernicious customs, and then shall you see that it still has power to kill and to make alive. There must, then, be holy living as well as plain testimony.

Yet all this would not suffice if the church is to be multiplied and many are to be saved, unless we add *individual, personal exertion.* I am so full with one theme today, that if I plow in the same furrow this evening as I did this morning I cannot help it, for I am anxious to make that furrow very deep and broad.

I believe that no Christian church can have prosperity if only a part of the members are active for the conversion of souls. Why, sirs, it had got to be a thought among Christians that we ministers were to do all the work of bringing souls to Christ, and that you were to sit still and enjoy the sermon, and perhaps criticize it and pull it to pieces.

But this was not orthodox. According to Christ's law, every Christian is to be a minister in his own sphere. Every member of the church is to be active in spreading the faith which was delivered not to the ministers, but delivered to the saints, to every one of them, that they might maintain it and spread it according to the gift which the Spirit has given them.

Shall I venture a parable? A certain band of men, like knights, had been exceedingly victorious in all their conflicts. They were men of valor and of indomitable courage. They had carried everything before them, and subdued province after province for their king.

But on a sudden they said in the council chamber, "We have at our head a most valiant warrior, one whose arm is stout enough to smite down fifty of his adversaries. Would it not be better if, with a few such as he to go out to the fight, the mere men-at-arms who make up the ordinary ranks, were to stay at

home? We would be much more at our ease. Our horses would not so often be covered with foam, nor our armor be bruised in returning from the fray, and no doubt great things would be done."

Now the foremost champions, with fear and trembling, undertook the task and went to the conflict, and they fought well, no one could doubt it. To the best of their ability they unhorsed their foe and they did great exploits. But still, from the very hour in which that scheme was planned and carried out, no city was taken, no province was conquered, and they met together and said, "How is this? Our former prestige is forgotten. Our ranks are broken, our pennons are trailed in the dust, what is the cause of it?"

When out spoke the champion and said, "Of course it is so! How did you think that some twelve or fifteen of us could do the work of all the thousands? When you all went to the fight, and every man took his share, we dashed upon the foe like an avalanche, and crushed him beneath our tramp. But now that you stay at home and put us, but a handful, to do all the work, how can you expect that great things should be done?" So each man resolved to put on his helmet and his armor once again, and go to the battle, and victory returned.

I speak to you tonight, I, one of the rank of God's servants, and I say, my brethren, if we are to have the victory you must be every one of you in the fight. We must not spare a single one, neither man nor woman, old nor young, rich nor poor, but you must each fight for the Lord Jesus according to your ability, that His kingdom may come, and that His will may be done upon earth even as it is in heaven. We shall see great things when you all agree to this and put it to practice.

Combined with this *there must be much earnest prayer.* The prayer of faith! have we not held it in high esteem, have we not made some considerable proof of it in this place? We hope to have more faith—a great increase both of volume and power. Nothing is impossible to the man who knows how to overcome heaven by wrestling intercession.

When we have seen one, two, or ten, or twenty penitents converted, and when we have sometimes been heartily thankful that a hundred have been added to this church in a month, ought we to have been satisfied? Should we not have felt that the prayer which was blessed to the conversion of a hundred, had it been more earnest, might, in the divine purpose, have been answered with the conversion of a thousand? Why not?

I do not know why London should not be shaken from end to end with Gospel truth before this day twelve months. You will say, "We have not enough ministers." But God can make them. I tell you, sirs, He can find ministers for His truth—ay, if He willed it, among the very offscourings of the earth. He can take the worst of men, the vilest of the vile, and change their hearts, and make them preach the truth if He pleases. We are not to look to what we have. The witness of the senses only confuses those who would walk by faith.

See what He did for the church in the case of Saul of Tarsus. He just went up to the devil's army, and took out a ringleader and said to him, "Now, sir, you preach the Gospel which once you despised." And who preached it better? Why, I should not wonder if ere long in answer to prayer we see the Ritualistic clergy preaching the Gospel! Who can tell—the Romish priests may yet do it, and repeat the tale of Luther and Melancthon. Were not Luther, and Melancthon, and Calvin, and their comrades, brought out of Papal darkness to show light unto the people? We have heard with our ears, why may we not see with our eyes, the mighty works of God?

The Lord can find His men where we know nothing about them. "Of these stones," said the Baptist, as he pointed to the banks of the Jordan, "Of these stones God can raise up children unto Abraham." And as He could then, so He can now. Let us not despair. If we will but *pray* for it, our heavenly Father will deny His children nothing. Come, do but come, in simplicity of heart, and *according to your faith* shall it be done unto you.

Would you see the church greatly increase and the kingdom come to the throne of the Son of David? then *we must all get a more intense glowing spiritual life.* Do you understand me? There are two persons yonder. They are both alive, but one of them lies in bed. He wakes, but he says, with the sluggard—

and when he gets up he gazes round with vacant wonder and strange bewilderment. He has no energy, he is listless, and we say of him, "What a lifeless creature he is!" "He is living, but with how little vitality!

Now, you see another man. His sleep is short. He wakes soon. He is out to his business, takes down the shutters, he is standing behind the counter waiting upon this customer and that. He is all active, he is here, there, and everywhere, nothing is neglected. His eyes are wide open, his brain is active, his hands are busy, his limbs are all nimble. Well, what a different man that is!

You are glad to get this second man to be your employee. He is worth ten times the wages of the first. There is life in them both, but what a difference there is between them! The one is eagerly living, the other is drawling out an insipid existence.

And how many Christians there are of this sort! They wander in on a Sunday morning, sit down, get their hymn book, listen to the prayer without joining in it, hear the sermon, but might almost as well not have heard it, go home, get through the Sunday, go into business. With them there is never any secret prayer for the conversion of men, no trying to talk to children, or servants, or friends, about Christ, no zeal, no holy jealousy, no flaming love, no generosity, no consecrating of the substance to God's cause! This is too faithful a picture of a vast number of professing Christians. Would it were not so.

On the other hand, we see another kind of man—one who is renewed in the spirit of his mind. Though he has to be in the world, his main thoughts are how he can use the world to promote the glory of Christ. If he goes into business, he wants to make money that he may have wherewith to give bountifully for the spread of the Gospel. If he meets with friends, he tries to thrust a word in edgeways for his Master, and whenever he gets an opportunity he will speak, or write, but he will be aiming to do something for Him who has bought him with His precious blood.

Why, I could pick out, if it were right to mention names, some here who are all alive, till their bodies seem to be scarcely strong enough for the real vitality and energy of their souls. Oh! these are the cream of the church, the pick and choice of the flock, the men who are true men, and the women who are the true daughters of Jerusalem. The Lord multiply the number of such, yea, may He make every one of us to be such, for I am afraid that we all of us need quickening. I know I do myself.

It is a long time since I preached a sermon that I was satisfied with. I scarcely recollect ever having done so. You do not know, for you cannot hear my groanings when I go home, Sunday after Sunday, and wish that I could learn to preach somehow or other, wish that I could discover the way to touch your hearts and your consciences, for I seem to myself to be just like the fire when it wants stirring. The coals have got black when I want them to flame forth.

If I could but say in the pulpit what I feel in my study, or if I could but get out of my mouth what I have tried to get into my own soul, then I should preach indeed, and move your souls, I think. Yet perhaps God will use our weakness, and we may use it with ourselves, to stir us up to greater strength.

You know the difference between slow motion and rapidity. If there were a cannon ball rolled slowly down these aisles, it might not hurt anybody. It might be very large, very huge, but it might be so rolled along that you might not rise from your seats in fear. But if somebody would give me a rifle, and ever so small a ball, I reckon that if the ball flew along the Tabernacle, some of you might find it very difficult to stand in its way. It is the force that does the thing.

So, it is not the great man who is loaded with learning that will achieve work for God. It is the man, who, however small his ability, is filled with force and fire, and who rushes forward in the energy which heaven has given him, that will accomplish the work—the man who has the most intense spiritual life, who has real vitality at its highest point of tension, and living, while he lives, with all the force of his nature for the glory of God. Put these three or four things together, and I think you have the means of prosperity.

**II.** Time flies, and therefore while I briefly hint, I must leave you largely to meditate, THE RESULTS WHICH FLOW FROM THIS PROSPERITY—*Souls are saved.*

John Owen said that if you had to preach to a whole nation for twelve months in order to win one soul, it would be good wages, for a soul is so priceless that to redeem it from going down to the pit would be worth the expenditure of all human strength.

Richard Knill once said that if there were only one unconverted person in the wilds of Siberia, and that God had ordained that every Christian in the world must go and talk to that one person before he would be converted, it would be an exceedingly little thing for us all to do, to go all the way there through the cold, and frost, and snow, to win that one soul. And he was right, and I may well stir you up to energy when the result will be the conversion of souls.

*The name of our Lord Jesus Christ is glorified.* Who would not wish to live, or even to die, for this?

***"Let Him be crowned with majesty,***
***Who bowed His head in death,***
***And let His praise be sounded high,***
***By all things that have breath."***

If you have not forgotten what He suffered for you, dear friends, do you not wish to see Him crowned with many crowns? He wore the crown of thorns for you, would not you wish to see the fruit of His soul's travail, the removal of the curse, the extension of His kingdom, the honor of His fame, the growing enthusiasm of His subjects—to make His excellency apparent, and His praise more and more famous to the very end of time? I know you would, and therefore I ask you to strive together with us in your prayers and your efforts, that the number of His disciples may be multiplied greatly.

Moreover, the result will be *to build up the church itself*, for there is no good done in the name of Jesus which does not redound to the satisfaction of His bride. If you do good to another, you are taking the shortest way to do good to your own soul.

As those who promote sanitary measures for the benefit of the neighborhood are thereby favoring the conditions of their own health. So the promulgation of saving knowledge throughout the world is augmenting the peace and the welfare of our own hearts, and of all who are already saved.

Truly, I believe, that some persons are never comfortable in religion because they are selfish in it. If they began to live with some object, their constant distress of mind would soon be rolled away. May God, therefore, stir us up, that the whole church may thereby be blessed.

**III.** But I must now come to the point with which I proposed to finish, namely, THE ALTERNATIVE WHICH I THINK STANDS BEFORE THIS CHURCH AND EVERY OTHER CHURCH.

Either we must get a high state of prosperity, or else we shall lack what is to be dreaded to the very uttermost. How many churches there are which have proved the truth of what I am now going to say! They have not tried to increase. They have not cared about conversions, and very soon there has been murmuring.

One did not like the minister, another did not like the deacons, a third objected to a brother that was introduced. And all this, perhaps, was quietly hushed up because they were too respectable to come to an open disturbance, but still there it was—the fire in the embers, and thus it kept on till, by and by, they come to one of two things, either lethargy or else division.

They settled down as quiet and sober religious people. The minister was not excited, not he! The people could not be stirred. The boast was that there were so many carriages on a Sunday outside the chapel. Some trusted in chariots and some in horses—but there was nothing about conversion. Why, I know churches whose baptismal pool would have been green by now if the water had been standing in it, so few have there been added to their number. And yet they are not at all dissatisfied. "No," the good deacon says, "you know our pew-rents keep up very well. We have not a seat to let in the gallery!"

"Ah!" and says the minister, "And while we have the most respectable people in the town come among us, we do not approve of these revivalists down the back street who are trying to catch those poor sinners. At least, if they want them, they may have them, for we do not want them." That is the style in which some of these people talk. If they do not say it in words, they think it in their hearts.

Well, and when a church does get into that dreadful state, it becomes noxious as a very dunghill. And when there is very little spiritual animation there soon comes to be the ferment of very great division. Somebody or other cannot bear this. Some young and fervent spirit speaks out about it, and the minister does not like it, the deacons do not like it, and they try to put him down. Then half-a-dozen more of the members think that he is right, and the life that is in the church wakes up. The trumpet is sounded, and there is a troop led off to establish a healthy organization somewhere else, and the old corpse is left to rot as it may and to decay as many churches do.

Now, were I a prophet, I might tell you what should come to pass in latter days. But speaking as a monitor, rather than as a seer, I should not wonder but I could almost tell what you will come to by-and-by. In my day may it never, never be.

You will get to be very respectable over at the Tabernacle. After I die you will have an organ, I dare say, and you will get a fine parson to deliver the most polished discourses to you, and where you will then drift I can readily guess. The Lord have mercy upon you, and save you from it.

This is the tendency however, of every church. it matters not what it is. Where the most honest, simple, faithful preachers have been, the people have got to be too great for the Gospel, and too proud to receive the truth in the love of it.

May it never happen in our days, however, and if earnest prayer can prevent it, may it never happen as long as the world stands, but till Christ comes may you be an honest, truth-loving people, striving together for the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and never departing from the earnest simplicity of the faith. But unless we keep up the earnest spirit among us, we shall very soon degenerate into the ordinary dead-alive Christianity, which is only half as good as nothing at all, because it gives men a name to live when they are dead.

The picture I have drawn may seem to you too highly colored, but I assure you that I have seen such things. I am not old, but I have lived long enough to see churches go in this way. Ay, and churches, too, that were once warm-hearted. I have seen young members who were once earnest grow cold. I have seen old members who were once content to worship with the humble ones, get a little up in the world. Then "of course" they must go to *church*!

I have seen congregations broken to pieces and churches split up, and the bottom of it all has been because the vital godliness has been drained out of the system. The love of God has not remained in the heart, for when the rich man has the love of God in his heart, he delights to see the multitude gathered together. He is glad to do his part and help in all he can.

And the learned man, if the preaching does not always suit him, yet he is glad to think that the unlearned have a preacher whom they can understand. Whoever the man may be, or however great and famous, if he loves Christ he is satisfied with the simple truth. "Give me that," says he, "and that is enough. I can get my fine thinking and my fine reading in the weekdays if I want it. But on the Sabbath let me hear of Jesus. Let me hear the story of the cross. Let me see sinners led to Calvary—it is all I want, and I am well content if I have this."

Are there not many here tonight who are unconverted? They will wonder perhaps what I am making all this stir about. Let me address myself personally to you. O ye unconverted women, it *is about you* that we are concerned. And *you*, you unconverted men, it *is about you* that we are anxious. We are seeking after you. Why, for our own sakes, if there were none to be saved, we might be content to hear far different doctrine from this. The doctrines of grace are sweet in our ears, and our souls would be well enough fed by them. But because we want to see you saved we have to talk with you, and attend to these practical matters since we want to see you brought to Christ.

Now, look at the text, and it may give you some comfort if you are willing to lay hold on Christ. Do you notice it is said that, "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith"? Now, these priests were they that conspired to crucify Christ. They were once the bigoted enemies of the Gospel, but they became obedient to the faith. Why should not you, then?

I know the devil tells you that you have been too great a sinner. That cannot be. Perhaps he reminds you that you have been a scoffer, or have lived in immorality, or have been self-righteous, which is as heinous a sin as any other. Ah! well, but the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from *all* sin.

A young woman wrote to me the other day—I do not know who she is, but she said, "I cannot tell anybody, but I have done so-and-so, a dreadful sin indeed, if my mother knew it, it would break her heart." I do not know her, and therefore her mother will never know it from me, but she asks, "Can I be saved?"

Young woman, you can! She says that she is worse than Magdalene, for Magdalene did not know Christ when she was a sinner, but she did know the Gospel, and yet sinned. Oh! well, if you are worse than Magdalene, Christ will be glorified in saving such a one as you are. Only come with all your sin about you, and throw yourself at His feet. Trust Him! Trust Him! Do Him the honor to believe that He can save even such an abominable sinner as you have been.

Though you have gone to the utmost extremity of human guilt, and looked over the gulf of endless misery, yet still believe Him. Trust Him, and He will be as good as ever you can think Him to be, for when you think your highest thoughts of Him, He is higher than your highest thoughts, and can save even to the uttermost.

The priests were obedient to the faith, why not you? They believed in Christ, saw the fold, entered in, and were saved. Why should not you be like them? Did you notice how it is described? They were "*obedient to the faith*." Then it seems that the Gospel is all summed up in that word "faith." To be obedient to the faith, to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, to trust Him because He has suffered in your stead, to believe that the divine justice is satisfied with the death of Christ, and to rely upon that satisfaction which Christ has rendered, that is to be saved, to be obedient to the faith.

We sang at the Lord's table this morning, that sweet verse which really is the quintessence of the Gospel, and therefore I will repeat it to you, though you already know it so well—

***"Nothing in my hand I bring:***
***Simply to Thy cross I cling;***
***Naked, come to Thee for dress;***
***Helpless, look to Thee for grace;***
***Foul, I to the fountain fly;***
***Wash me, Savior, or I die.***

Yes, just as you are, come and depend upon the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. And this is what the stir is all about, we cannot bear that you should drift down to destruction, we cannot bear that there should be cataracts of souls leaping down the eternal gulf. We cannot endure that Satan should gloat his malicious soul with the prey of tens of thousands of mankind. We cannot bear that Christ should stand neglected, that His cross should be despised, that His blood should be trampled on.

O come to Him! He will not reject you. He that cometh to Him He will in no wise cast out. Breathe a silent prayer to Him now. Cast your soul upon Him, sink or swim.

***"Venture on Him, venture wholly,***
***Let no other trust intrude,***
***None but Jesus***
***Can do helpless sinners good."***

But He can do it. Rely on Him, and eternal life is yours.

Brethren and sisters, as we are in the New Year now, and have only reached the second Sabbath in it, let us begin and sweep out of the house the old leaven of ease and self-indulgences and lukewarmness, and let it be our cry, before we go to our beds tonight, that the Lord would make us to be real living Christians, make us flames of fire from this time forth truly to serve Him who served us even to the death.

You will never get to be too warm. I am persuaded you will not be too zealous. I only wish I could get into such a devout enthusiasm myself as that of the apostle Paul when, constrained by the love of Christ, he said, "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God." When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants. How much more unprofitable when we have done so little! The Lord quicken this church.

The February meetings are coming on, when we shall be specially and earnestly seeking the ingathering of souls. Believers, you who are mighty with God in secret, pray for these February meetings, that the month may be a holy month to us, the best month we have ever had, that more may be gathered into the church than ever have been in our times.

Make that a point of prayer, and prove God now whether He will not hear you, and you shall find He will to your soul's comfort. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ACTS 6 AND 7:54-60**

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Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.