

PREACH THE GOSPEL NO. 34

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 5, 1855,
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AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

“For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel.”
1 Corinthians 9:16

THE greatest man of Apostolic times was the Apostle Paul. He was always great in everything. If you consider him as a sinner, he was *exceedingly* sinful. If you regard him as a persecutor, he was *exceedingly* mad against the Christians and persecuted them even unto strange cities. If you take him as a convert, his conversion was the most notable one of which we read, worked by miraculous power and by the direct voice of Jesus speaking from Heaven—“Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” If we take him simply as a Christian, he was an extraordinary one, loving his Master more than others and seeking more than others to exemplify the Grace of God in his life. But if you take him as an Apostle and as a preacher of the Word, he stands out pre-eminently as the prince of preachers and a preacher to kings—for he preached before Agrippa, he preached before Nero Caesar—he stood before emperors and kings for Christ’s name’s sake. It was the characteristic of Paul that whatever he did, he did with all his heart. He was one of the men who could not allow one half of his frame to be exercised, while the other half was indolent. When he set to work, the whole of his energies—every nerve, every sinew—were strained in the work to be done, be it bad work or be it good. Paul, therefore, could speak from experience concerning his ministry because he was the chief of ministers. There is no nonsense in what he speaks. It is all from the depth of his soul. And we may be sure that when he wrote this, he wrote it with a strong unpalsied hand—“Though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me, yes, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel.” Now, these words of Paul, I trust, are applicable to many ministers in the present day—to all those who are especially called—who are directed by the inward impulse of the Holy Spirit to occupy the position of Gospel ministers. In trying to consider this verse, we shall have three inquiries this morning—First, *What is it to preach the Gospel?* Secondly, *Why is it that a minister has nothing to glorify of?* And thirdly, *What is that necessity and that woe, of which it is written, “Necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel?”*

I. The first enquiry is, WHAT IS IT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL? There are a variety of opinions concerning this question and possibly among my own audience—though I believe we are very uniform in our doctrinal sentiments—there might be found two or three very ready answers to this question—What is it to preach the Gospel? I shall therefore attempt to answer it, myself, according to my own judgment, if God will help me. And if it does not happen to be the correct answer, you are at liberty to supply a better to yourselves at home.

1. The first answer I shall give to the question is this—*To preach the Gospel is to state every Doctrine contained in God’s Word and to give every Truth its proper prominence.* Men may preach a part of the Gospel. They may only preach one single Doctrine of it. And I would not say that a man did not preach the Gospel at all if he did but maintain the Doctrine of Justification by Faith—“By Grace are you saved through faith.” I would put him down for a Gospel minister, but not for one who preached the whole Gospel. No man can be said to preach the whole Gospel of God if he leaves out, knowingly and intentionally one single Truth of the blessed God! This remark of mine must be a very cutting one and ought to strike into the consciences of many who make it almost a matter of principle to keep back certain Truths from the people because they are afraid of them. In conversation a week or two ago with an eminent professor, he said to me, “Sir, we know that we ought not to preach the Doctrine of Election because it is not calculated to convert sinners!” “But,” I said to him, “who is the man that dares to find fault with the Truth of God? You admit, with me, that it is a Truth of God, and yet you say it must not be preached? I dare not have said that thing. I would reckon it supreme arrogance to have ventured to say that a Doctrine ought not to be preached when the all-wise God has seen fit to reveal it! Besides, is the whole Gospel intended to convert sinners? There are some Truths which God blesses to the conversion of sinners. But are there not other portions which were intended for the comfort of the saint? And ought not these to be a subject of Gospel ministry as well as the others? And shall I look at one and disregard the other? No—if God says, ‘Com-

fort you, comfort you, My people,' if Election comforts God's people, then must I preach it." But I am not quite so sure that, after all, that Doctrine is not calculated to convert sinners! The great Jonathan Edwards tells us that in the greatest excitement of one of his revivals he preached the Sovereignty of God in the salvation or condemnation of man. He showed that God was infinitely just if He sent men to Hell! That He was infinitely merciful if He saved any. And that it was all of His own Free Grace—and he said, "I found no Doctrine caused more thought—nothing entered more deeply into the heart than the proclamation of that Truth." The same might be said of other Doctrines. There are certain Truths in God's Word which are condemned to silence. They, indeed, are not to be uttered, because, according to the theories of certain persons looking at these Doctrines, they are not calculated to promote certain ends. But is it for me to judge God's Truth? Am I to put His words in the scale and say, "This is good and that is evil"? Am I to take God's Bible and sever it and say, "This is husk and this is wheat"? Am I to cast away any one Truth and say, "I dare not preach it"? No—God forbid! Whatever is written in God's Word is written for our instruction—and the whole of it is profitable—either for reproof, or for consolation, or for edification in righteousness. No Truth of God's Word ought to be withheld, but every portion of it preached in its own proper order!

Some men purposely confine themselves to four or five topics continually. Should you step into their chapel you would naturally expect to hear them preaching, either from this, "Not of the will of the flesh, but of the will of God," or else, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." You know that the moment you step in, you are sure to hear nothing but Election and high Doctrine that day! Such men also err quite as much as others, if they give too great prominence to one Truth to the neglect of the others. Whatever is here to be preached, all in whatever name you please—write it high, write it low—the Bible, the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible, is the standard of the true Christian! Alas, alas, many make an iron ring of their doctrines and he who dares to step beyond that narrow circle is not reckoned orthodox. God bless heretics, then! God send us more of them! Many make theology into a kind of tread wheel consisting of five doctrines which are everlastingly rotated. For they never go on to anything else. There ought to be every Truth preached. And if God has written in His Word that, "he that believes not is condemned already," *that* is as much to be preached as the Truth that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Jesus Christ." If I find it written, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself"—that man's condemnation is his own fault—I am to preach that as well as the next clause, "In Me is your help found." We ought, each of us who are entrusted with the ministry to seek to preach all Truth. I know it may be impossible to tell you all of it. That high hill of Truth has mists upon its summit. No mortal eye can see its pinnacle. Nor has the foot of man ever trod it. But yet let us paint the mist if we cannot paint the summit. Let us depict the difficulty, itself, if we cannot unravel it! Let us not hide anything—if the mountain of Truth is cloudy at the top—let us say, "Clouds and darkness are around Him." Let us not deny it. And let us not think of cutting down the mountain to our own standard because we cannot see its summit or cannot reach its pinnacle. He who would preach the Gospel must preach all the Gospel. He who would have it said he is a faithful minister must not keep back any part of Revelation!

2. Again—am I asked what it is to preach the Gospel? I answer *to preach the Gospel is to exalt Jesus Christ*. Perhaps this is the best answer that I could give. I am very sorry to see very often how little the Gospel is understood, even by some of the best Christians. Some time ago there was a young woman under great distress of soul. She came to a very pious Christian man who said, "My dear girl, you must go home and pray." Well, I thought within myself, that is not the Bible way at all. It never says, "Go home and pray." The poor girl went home. She did pray and she still continued in distress. He said, "You must wait, you must read the Scriptures and study them." That is not the Bible way! That is not exalting Christ. I find a great many preachers are preaching that kind of Doctrine. They tell a poor convicted sinner, "You must go home and pray and read the Scriptures. You must attend the ministry." And so on. Works, works, works—instead of, "By Grace are you saved through faith," If a penitent should come and ask me, "What must I do to be saved?" I would say, "Christ must save you—believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." I would neither direct to prayer, nor reading of the Scriptures nor attending God's House—but simply direct to faith—the naked faith on God's Gospel! Not that I despise prayer—that must come *after* faith. Not that I speak a word against the searching of the Scriptures—that is an infallible mark of God's children. Not that I find fault with attendance on God's Word—God forbid! I love to see people there. But none of those things are the way of salvation. It is nowhere written—"He that attends Chapel shall be saved," or, "he that reads the Bible shall be saved." Nor do I read—"He that prays and is baptized shall be saved." But, "he who *believes*"—he who has a naked faith on the "Man. Christ Jesus"—on His Godhead, on His Manhood, is delivered from sin. To preach that faith, alone, saves is to preach God's Truth! Nor will I for one moment concede to any man, the name of a Gospel minister if he preaches anything as the plan of salvation except faith in Jesus

Christ. Faith, faith, nothing but faith in His name. But we are, most of us, very much muddled in our ideas. We get so much work stored into our brain, such an idea of merit and of doing worked into our hearts, that it is almost impossible for us to preach Justification by Faith clearly and fully. And when we do, our people won't receive it. We tell them, "Believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." But they have a notion that faith is something so wonderful, so mysterious, that it is quite impossible that without *doing* something else, they can ever get it. Now, that faith which unites to the Lamb is an instantaneous gift of God and he who believes on the Lord Jesus is that moment saved, without anything else whatever!

Ah, my Friends, do we not need more exalting Christ in our preaching and more exalting Christ in our living? Poor Mary said, "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him." And she might say so, nowadays, if she could rise from the grave. Oh, to have a Christ-exalting ministry! Oh, to have preaching that magnifies Christ in His Person, that extols His Divinity, that loves His Humanity! To have preaching that shows Him as Prophet, Priest and King to His people! To have preaching whereby the Spirit manifests the Son of God unto His children—to have preaching that says, "Look unto Him and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Calvary preaching, Calvary theology, Calvary books, Calvary sermons! These are the things we need and in proportion as we have Calvary exalted and Christ magnified, the Gospel is preached in our midst!

3. The third answer to the question is—to *preach the Gospel is to give every class of character his due*. "You are only to preach to God's dear people if you go into that pulpit," said a deacon once to a minister. Said the minister, "Have you marked them all on the back, that I may know them?" What is the good of this large Chapel if I am only to preach to God's dear people? They are few enough. God's dear people might be held in the vestry. We have many more here besides God's dear people and how am I to be sure, if I am told to preach only to God's dear people, that somebody else won't take it to himself? At another time someone might say, "Now, be sure you preach to sinners. If you do not preach to sinners, this morning, you won't preach the Gospel. We shall only hear you once. And we shall be sure you are not right if you do not happen to preach to sinners this particular morning, in this particular sermon." What nonsense, my Friends! There are times when the children must be fed and there are times when the sinner must be warned. There are different times for different objectives. If a man is preaching to God's saints—if it so happens that little is said to sinners—is he to be blamed for it? At another time when he is not comforting the saints, he should direct his attention specially to the ungodly! I heard a good remark from an intelligent friend of mine the other day. A person was finding fault with "Dr. Hawker's Morning and Evening Portions" because they were not calculated to convert sinners. He said to the gentleman, "Did you ever read 'Grote's History of Greece'?" "Yes." "Well, that is a shocking book, is it not? For it is not calculated to convert sinners." "Yes, but," said the other, "'Grote's History of Greece' was never meant to convert sinners." "No," said my friend, "and if you had read the preface to 'Dr. Hawker's Morning and Evening Portion,' you would see that it was never meant to convert sinners but to feed God's people! And if it answers its end the man has been wise though he has not aimed at some other end." Every class of person is to have his due. He who preaches solely to saints at all times does not preach the Gospel. He who preaches solely and only to the sinner and never to the saint does not preach the whole of the Gospel. We have amalgamation here. We have the saint who is full of assurance and strong. We have the saint who is weak and low in faith. We have the young convert. We have the man halting between two opinions. We have the moral man. We have the sinner. We have the reprobate. We have the outcast. Let each have a word. Let each have a portion of meat in due season. Not at every season, but in *due* season. He who omits one class of character does not know how to preach the entire Gospel. What? Am I to be put into the pulpit and to be told that I am to confine myself only to certain Truths to comfort God's saints? I will not have it so! God gives men hearts to love their fellow creatures and are they to have no development for that heart? If I love the ungodly, am I to have no means of speaking to them? May I not tell them of judgment to come, of righteousness and of their sin? God forbid I should so stultify my nature and so brutalize myself as to have a tearless eye when I consider the loss of my fellow creatures. Must I stand and say, "You are dead, I have nothing to say to you"? Must I preach, in effect, if not in words, that most damnable heresy that if men are to be saved they will be saved—that if they are not to be saved they will not be saved? So, then, they must sit still and do nothing whatever? And that it matters not whether they live in sin or in righteousness—some strong fate has bound them down with adamant chains? And their destiny is so certain that they may live on in sin? I believe their destiny *is* certain—that as Elect, they will be saved and if not Elect, they are damned forever! But I do not believe the heresy that follows as an inference that therefore men are irresponsible and may sit still! That is a heresy against which I have always protested as being a doctrine of the devil and not of God at all!

We believe in destiny—we believe in Predestination. We believe in Election and non-election—but, notwithstanding that, we believe that we must preach to men, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, but believe not on Him and you are damned.”

4. I had thought of giving one more answer to this question but time fails me. The answer would have been something like this—that to preach the Gospel is not to preach certain truths *about* the Gospel, not to preach *about* the people, but to preach *to* the people. To preach the Gospel is not to talk about what the Gospel is, but to *preach* it into the heart, not by your own might, but by the influence of the Holy Spirit—not to stand and talk as if we were speaking to the angel Gabriel and telling him certain things, but to speak as man to man and pour our heart into our fellow’s heart. This I take it, is to preach the Gospel and not to mumble some dry manuscript over on Sunday morning or Sunday evening. To preach the Gospel is not to send a curate to do your duty for you. It is not to put on your fine gown and then stand and give out some lofty speculation. To preach the Gospel is not, with the hands of a bishop, to turn over some beautiful specimen of prayer and then to go down again and leave it to some humbler person to speak. No. To preach the Gospel is to proclaim with trumpet tongue and flaming zeal the unsearchable riches of Christ Jesus so that men may hear and understanding, may turn to God with full purpose of heart! This is to preach the Gospel.

II. The second question is—How IS IT THAT MINISTERS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO GLORY? “For though I preach the Gospel I have nothing to glorify in.” There are some weeds that will grow anywhere. And one of them is Pride. Pride will grow on a rock as well as in a garden. Pride will grow in the heart of a shoe-black as well as in the heart of an alderman. Pride will grow in the heart of a servant girl and equally as well in the heart of her mistress. And pride will grow in the pulpit. It is a weed that is dreadfully rampant. It needs cutting down every week or else we would stand up to our knees in it! This pulpit is a shocking bad soil for pride. It grows terribly. And I scarcely know whether you ever find a preacher of the Gospel who will not confess that he has the greatest temptation to pride. I suppose that even those ministers of whom nothing is said but that they are very good people and who have a City Church, with some six people attending it, have a temptation to pride. But whether that is so or not, I am quite sure wherever there is a large assembly and wherever a great deal of noise and stir is made concerning any man there is a great danger of pride. And, mark you, the more proud a man is, the greater will be his fall at last. If people will hold a minister up in their hands and not keep hold of him, but let him go, what a fall he will have, poor fellow, when it is all over! It has been so with many. Many men have been held up by the arms of men, they have been held up by the arms of *praise* but not of *prayer*. These arms have become weak—and down they have fallen! I say there is temptation to pride in the pulpit. But there is no ground for it in the pulpit. There is no soil for pride to grow on. But it will grow without any. “I have nothing to glorify of.” But, notwithstanding, there often comes in some reason why we should glory, not real, but apparent only to ourselves!

1. Now, how is it that a true minister feels he has “nothing to glorify of.” First, *because he is very conscious of his own imperfections*. I think no man will ever form a more just opinion of himself than he who is called constantly and incessantly to preach. Some man once thought he could preach and on being allowed to enter the pulpit he found his words did not come quite so freely as he expected. In the utmost trepidation and fear, he leaned over the front of the pulpit and said, “My Friends, if you would come up here it would take the conceit out of you all.” I verily believe it *would* out of a great many, could they once try themselves whether they could preach. It would take their critical conceit out of them and make them think that after all it was not such easy work! He who preaches best, feels that he preaches worst. He who has set up some lofty model in his own mind of what eloquence should be and what earnest appeal ought to be, will know how much he falls below it. He, best of all, can reprove himself when he knows his own deficiency. I do not believe when a man does a thing well, that therefore he will glory in it. On the other hand, I think that he will be the best judge of his own imperfections and will see them most clearly. *He* knows what he ought to be—other men do not. They stare and gaze and think it is wonderful, when he thinks it is wonderfully absurd and retires wondering why he has not done better! Every true minister will feel that he is deficient. He will compare himself with such men as Whitefield, with such preachers as those of Puritan times and he will say, “What am I? Like a dwarf beside a giant, an anthill by the side of the mountain.” When he retires to rest on Sunday night, he will toss from side to side on his bed because he feels that he has missed the mark, that he has not had that earnestness, that solemnity, that death-like intensesness of purpose which became his position. He will accuse himself of not having dwelt enough on this point, or for having shunned the other, or not having been explicit enough on some certain subject, or expanded another too much. He will see his own faults, for God always chastises His own children at nighttime when they have done something wrong. We need not others to re-

prove us. God, Himself, takes us in hand. The most highly honored before God will often feel himself dishonored in his own esteem.

2. Again—another means of causing us to cease from all glory is the fact that God reminds us that all our gifts are borrowed. And strikingly have I, this morning, been reminded of that great Truth—that *all our gifts are borrowed*—by reading in a newspaper to the following effect—

“Last week, the quiet neighborhood of New Town was much disturbed by an occurrence which has thrown a gloom over the entire neighborhood. A gentleman of considerable attainment who has won an honorable degree at the university, has for some months been deranged. He had kept an academy for young gentlemen, but his insanity had obliged him to desist from his occupation and he has for some time lived alone in a house in the neighborhood. The landlord obtained a warrant of ejection. And it being found necessary to handcuff him, he was, by sad mismanagement compelled to remain on the steps, exposed to the gaze of a great crowd, until at last a vehicle arrived which conveyed him to the asylum. One of his pupils (says the paper) is Mr. Spurgeon.”

The man from whom I learned whatever of human learning I have, has now become a raving lunatic in the Asylum! When I saw that, I felt I could bend my knees with humble gratitude and thank my God that not yet had my reason reeled—not yet had those powers departed! Oh, how thankful we ought to be that our talents are preserved to us and that our mind is not gone! Nothing came nearer and closer to me than that. There was one who had taken all pains with me—a man of genius and of ability. And yet there he is! How fallen! How fallen! How speedily does human nature come from its high estate and sink below the level of the brutes! Bless God my Friends, for your talents! Thank Him for your reason! Thank Him for your intellect! Simple as it may be, it is enough for you, but if you lost it, you would soon mark the difference. Take heed to yourself lest in anything you say, “This is Babylon that I have built.” Remember, both trowel and mortar must come from Him. The life, the voice, the talent, the imagination, the eloquence—all are the gifts of God! And he who has the greatest gifts must feel that unto God belongs the shield of the mighty, for He has given might to His people and strength to His servants!

3. One more answer to this question. Another means whereby God preserves His ministers from glorying is this—*He makes them feel their constant dependence upon the Holy Spirit*. Some do not feel it, I confess. Some will venture to preach without the Spirit of God, or without entreating Him. But I think that no man who is really commissioned from on high will ever venture to do so. He will feel that he needs the Spirit. Once, while preaching in Scotland, the Spirit of God was pleased to desert Me—I could not speak as usually I have done. I was obliged to tell the people that the chariot wheels were taken off. And that the chariot dragged very heavily along. I have felt the benefit of that ever since. It humbled me bitterly, for I could have crept into a nutshell and I would have hidden myself in any obscure corner of the earth. I felt as if I should speak no more in the name of the Lord and then the thought came, “Oh, you are an ungrateful creature—has not God spoken by you hundreds of times? And this once, when He would not do so, will you upbraid Him for it? No, rather thank Him, that a hundred times He has stood by you—and, if once He has forsaken you, admire His goodness, that thus He would keep you humble.” Some may imagine that lack of study brought me into that condition, but I can honestly affirm that it was not so. I think that I am bound to give myself unto reading and not tempt the Spirit by unthought-of effusions. Usually, I deem it a duty to seek a sermon of my Master and implore Him to impress it on my mind. But on that occasion, I think I had even prepared more carefully than I ordinarily do, so that unpreparedness was not the reason. The simple fact was this—“The wind blows where it wishes.” And winds do not always blow hurricanes. Sometimes the winds themselves are still. And, therefore, if I rest on the Spirit, I cannot expect I should always feel His power alike.

What could I do without the Celestial influence, for to that I owe everything? By this thought, God humbles His servants. God will teach us how much we need it. He will not let us think we are doing anything ourselves. “No,” He says, “you shall have none of the glory. I will take you down. Are you thinking ‘I am doing this’? I will show you what you are without Me.” Out goes Samson. He attacks the Philistines. He fancies he can slay them. But they are on him. His eyes are out. His glory is gone because he trusted not in his God, but rested in himself!

Every minister will be made to feel his dependence upon the Spirit. And then will he, with emphasis, say, as Paul did, “If I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glorify of.”

III. Now comes the third question, with which we are to finish—WHAT IS THAT NECESSITY WHICH IS LAID UPON US TO PREACH THE GOSPEL?

1. First, *a very great part of that necessity springs from the call, itself*—If a man is truly called of God to the ministry, I will defy him to withhold himself from it! A man who has really within him the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit calling him to preach cannot help it. He must preach. As fire within the bones, so will that influence be until it blazes forth. Friends may check him, foes criticize him, despisers sneer at him—the man is indomitable. He must preach if he has the call of Heaven. All earth might forsake him. But he would preach to the barren mountaintops! If he has the call of Heaven—if he has no congregation—he would preach to the rippling waterfalls and let the brooks hear his voice. He could not be silent. He would become a voice crying in the wilderness, “Prepare you the way of the Lord.” I no more believe it possible to stop ministers than to stop the stars of Heaven. I think it no more possible to make a man cease from preaching, if he is really called, than to stop some mighty waterfall by seeking, with an infant’s cup, to drink its waters! The man has been moved of Heaven, who shall stop him? He has been touched of God, who shall impede him? With an eagle’s wings he must fly—who shall chain him to the earth? With seraph’s voice he must speak, who shall stop his lips? Is not His Word like a fire within me? Must I not speak, if God has placed it there? And when a man does speak as the Spirit gives him utterance, he will feel a holy joy akin to Heaven. And when it is over, he wishes to be at his work again and longs to be once more preaching. I do not think young men are called of God to any great work who preach once a week and think they have done their duty. I think if God has called a man, He will impel him to be more or less constantly at it and he will feel that he must preach among the nations the unsearchable riches of Christ!

2. But another thing will make us preach—we shall feel that woe is unto us if we preach not the Gospel. And that is *the sad destitution of this poor fallen world*. Oh, Minister of the Gospel! Stand for one moment and think of your poor fellow creatures! See them like a stream, rushing to eternity—ten thousand fly to their endless home each solemn moment fly! See the termination of that stream, that tremendous waterfall which dashes streams of souls into the pit of Hell? Oh, Minister, think of the fact that men are being damned each hour by thousands and that each time your pulse beats, another soul lifts up its eyes in Hell, being in torments! Think how men are speeding on their way to destruction, how “the love of many waxes cold” and “iniquity does abound.” I say, is there not a necessity laid upon you? Is it not woe unto you if you preach not the Gospel? Take your walk one evening through the streets of London when the dusk has gathered and darkness veils the people. Mark you not yon profligate hurrying on to her accursed work? See you not thousands and tens of thousands annually ruined? Up from the hospital and the asylum there comes a voice, “Woe is unto you if you preach not the Gospel.” Go to that huge place built around with massive walls, enter the dungeons and see the thieves who have for years spent their lives in sin. Wend your way, sometimes, to that sad square of Newgate and see the murderer hanged. A voice shall come from each house of correction, from each prison, from each gallows, saying, “Woe is unto you if you preach not the Gospel.” Go to the thousand deathbeds and mark how men are perishing in ignorance, not knowing the ways of God! See their terror as they approach their Judge never having known what it was to be saved, not even knowing the way. And as you see them quivering before their Maker, hear a voice, “Minister, woe is unto you if you preach not the Gospel.” Or take another course. Travel round this great metropolis and stop at the door of some place where there is heard the tinkling of bells, chanting and music—where the whore of Babylon has her sway and lies are preached for the Truths of God! And when you come home and think of Popery and Puseyism, let a voice come to you, “Minister woe is unto you if you preach not the Gospel.” Or step into the hall of the infidel where he blasphemes your Maker’s name. Or sit in the theater where plays, libidinous and loose, are acted and from all these haunts of vice there comes the voice, “Minister, woe is unto you if you preach not the Gospel.” And take your last solemn walk down to the chambers of the lost. Let the abyss of Hell be visited and stand and hear—

*“The sullen groans, the hollow moans,
And shrieks of tortured ghosts.”*

Put your ear at Hell’s gate and for a little while listen to the commingled screams and shrieks of agony and feel the despair that shall never end. And as you come from that sad place with that doleful music still frightening you, you will hear the voice, “Minister! Minister! Woe is unto you if you preach not the Gospel.”

Only let us have these things before our eyes and we must preach. *Stop preaching? Stop preaching?* Let the sun stop shining and we will preach in darkness! Let the waves stop their ebb and flow and still our voice shall preach the Gospel! Let the world stop its revolutions, let the planets stay their motion—we will still preach the Gospel. Until the fiery center of this earth shall burst through the thick ribs of her brazen mountains we shall still preach the Gospel! By God’s Grace, till the universal conflagration shall dissolve the earth and matter shall be swept away, these lips, or the lips of

some others called of God shall still thunder forth the voice of Jehovah. We cannot help it. “Necessity is laid upon us, yes woe is unto us if we preach not the Gospel.”

Now, my dear Hearers, one word with you. There are some persons in this audience who are verily guilty in the sight of God because they do *not* preach the Gospel. I cannot think how, out of the fifteen hundred or two thousand persons now present within the reach of my voice, there are none who are qualified to preach the Gospel besides myself. I have not so bad an opinion of you as to conceive myself to be superior in intellect to one half of you—or even in the power of preaching God’s Word. And even supposing I should be, I cannot believe that I have such a congregation that there are not among you many who have gifts and talents that qualify you to preach the Word. Among the Scotch Baptists it is the custom to call upon all the Brothers to exhort on the Sabbath morning. They have no regular minister to preach on that occasion but every man preaches who likes to get up and speak. That is all very well, only, I fear, many unqualified Brothers would be the greatest speakers, since it is a known fact that men who have little to say will often keep on the longest. And if I were chairman, I should say, “Brother, it is written, ‘Speak to edification.’ I am sure you would not edify yourself and your wife. You had better go and try that, first, and if you cannot succeed, don’t waste our precious time.”

But still I say I cannot conceive but what there are some here this morning who are flowers “wasting their sweetness in the desert air, gems of purest ray serene,” lying in the dark caverns of ocean’s oblivion. This is a very serious question. If there is any talent in the Church at Park Street, let it be developed! If there are any preachers in my congregation let them preach! Many ministers make it a point to check young men in this respect. Here is my hand, such as it is, to help anyone of you if you think you can tell to sinners what a dear Savior you have found. I would like to find scores of preachers among you—would to God that all the Lord’s servants were Prophets! There are some here who ought to be Prophets, only they are half afraid—well, we must devise some scheme of getting rid of their bashfulness. I cannot bear to think that while the devil sets all his servants to work, there should be one servant of Jesus Christ asleep! Young man, go home and examine yourself. See what your abilities are and if you find that you have ability, then try in some poor humble room to tell to a dozen poor people what they must do to be saved. You need not aspire to become absolutely and solely dependent upon the ministry, but if it should please God, even desire it. He that desires a bishopric desires a good thing!

At any rate seek in some way to be preaching the Gospel of God. I have preached this sermon especially because I want to commence a movement from this place which shall reach others. I want to find some in my Church, if it is possible, who will preach the Gospel. And mark you, if you have talent and power, woe is unto you if you preach not the Gospel.

But oh, my Friends, if it is woe unto us if we preach *not* the Gospel, what is the woe unto *you* if you hear and receive not the Gospel? May God give us both to escape from that woe! May the Gospel of God be unto us the savor of life unto life and not of death unto death!

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