

COMFORT FOR THE DESPONDING NO. 51

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 25, 1855,
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AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

*“Oh that I were as in months past.”
Job 29:2.*

FOR the most part, the gracious Shepherd leads His people beside the still waters and makes them to lie down in green pastures. But at times they wander through a wilderness where there is no water and they find no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul faints within them and they cry unto the Lord in their trouble. Though many of His people live in almost constant joy and find that religion's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace, yet there are many who pass through fire and through water—men ride over their heads—they endure all manner of trouble and sorrow. The duty of the minister is to preach to different characters. Sometimes we admonish the confident, lest they should become presumptuous. Oftentimes we stir up the slumbering, lest they should sleep the sleep of death. Frequently we comfort the desponding and this is our duty this morning—or if not to *comfort* them, to give them some exhortation which may, by God's help, be the means of bringing them out of the sad condition into which they have fallen, so that they may not be obliged to cry out forever—“Oh that I were as in months past!”

At once to the subject. *A complaint—its cause and cure.* And then close up with an *exhortation* to stir up your pure minds, if you are in such a position.

I. First, there is a COMPLAINT. How many a Christian looks on the past with pleasure, on the future with dread and on the present with sorrow! There are many who look back upon the days that they have passed in the fear of the Lord as being the sweetest and the best they have ever had. But as to the present, it is clad in a sable garb of gloom and dreariness. They could wish for their young days over, again, that they might live near to Jesus—for now they feel that they have wandered from Him, or that He has hidden His face from them and they cry out, “Oh that I were as in months past!”

1. Let us take distinct cases, one by one. The first is the case of a man who has *lost the brightness of his evidences* and is crying out, “Oh that I were as in months past!” Hear his soliloquy—“Oh that my past days could be recalled! Then I had no doubt of my salvation. If any man had asked for the reason of the hope that was in me, I could have answered with meekness and with fear. No doubt distressed me, no fear harassed me. I could say with Paul, ‘I know whom I have believed,’ and with Job, ‘I know that my Redeemer lives—

*My steady soul did fear no more
Than solid rocks when billows roar.’*

“I felt myself to be standing on the rock, Christ Jesus. I said—

*‘Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall!
Surely I shall safely reach my home,
My God, my Heaven, my All.’*

“But ah, how changed it is, now! Where there was no cloud it is *all* cloud! Where I could read my ‘title clear,’ I tremble to read my damnation quite as clearly. I hoped that I trusted in Christ, but now the dark thought rises up that I was a hypocrite and had deceived myself and others. The most I can attain to, is—‘I think I will hope in Him still. And if I may not be refreshed with the *light* of His Countenance, still, I will trust in the shadow of His wings. I feel that if I depart from Him, there is no other Savior. But oh, what thick darkness surrounds me! Like Paul of old, there have been days and nights wherein neither sun, nor moon nor stars have appeared. I have lost my roll in the Arbor of Ease. I cannot, now, take it out of my breast and read it to console me on my journey. And I fear that when I get to the end of the way, they will deny me entrance! I feel I came not in by the door to receive His Grace and know His love, but have been deceived. I have taken carnal fancies for the workings of the Spirit and have imputed what was but natural conviction to the work of God the Holy Spirit.”

This is one phase and a very common one. You will meet many who are crying out like that—“Oh that I were as in months past!”

2. Another phase of this great complaint, which it also very frequent, is one under which we are lamenting—not so much because our evidences are withered as because *we do not enjoy a perpetual peace of mind as to other matters*. “Oh,” says one, “Oh that I were as in months past. For then whatever troubles and trials came upon me were less than nothing. I had learned to sing—

*‘Father, I wait Your daily will,
You shall divide my portion still.
Give me on earth what seems to You best,
Till death and Heaven reveal the rest.’*

“I felt that I could give up everything for Him—that if He had taken away every mercy, I would have said—

*‘Yes, if You take them all away,
Yet will I not repine!
Before they were possessed by me,
They were entirely Thine.’*

“I knew no fear for the future. Like a child on its mother’s breast, I slept securely. I said, ‘Jehovah-Jireh, my God, will provide.’ I put my business into His hands. I went to my daily labor like the little bird that wakes up in the morning and knows not where its breakfast is to come from, but sits on the branch, singing—

*‘Mortal, cease from toil and sorrow
God provides for the morrow.’*

“I could have trusted Him with my very life—with wife, with children—with everything! I could give all into His hands and say each morning, ‘Lord, I have not a will of my own, or if I have one, still, Your will be done. Your wish shall be my wish. Your desire shall be my desire.’ Oh that I were as in months past! How changed am I now! I begin fretting about my business. And if I lose now but a five pound note, I am incessantly worried, whereas if it were a thousand, before, I could have thanked the God who took it away as easily as I could the God that gave it to me! How the least thing disturbs me. The least shadow of a doubt as to some calamity that may befall me rests on my soul like a thick cloud. I am perpetually self-willed, desiring always to have just what I wish. I cannot say I can resign all into His hands. There is a certain something I could not give up. Twined round my heart there is an evil plant, called, self-love. It has twisted its roots within the very nerves and sinews of my soul! There is something I love above my God. I cannot give up all, now. But, oh that I were as in months past! For then my mercies were real mercies, because they were God’s mercies. Oh,” he says, “that I were as in months past—I would not have to bear such trouble as I now have, for though the burden might have pressed heavily, I would have cast it on the Lord! Oh that I knew the heavenly science of taking the burdens off my own shoulders and laying them on the Rock that supports them all! Oh if I knew how to pour out my griefs and sorrows as I once did! I have been a fool, an arrant fool, a very fool, that I should have run away from that sweet confidence I once had in the Savior! I used to, then, go to His ear and tell Him all my griefs—

*‘My sorrows and my griefs I poured
Into the bosom of my God.
He helped me in the trying hour,
He helped me bear the heavy load!’*

“But now, I foolishly carry them, myself, and bear them in my own breast, Ah,—

‘What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!’

“Would that they would return to me.”

3. Another individual, perhaps, is speaking thus concerning *his enjoyment in the House of God and the means of Grace*. “Oh,” says one, “in months past, when I went up to the House of God, how sweetly did I hear! Why, I sat with my ears open to catch the words as if it were an angel speaking. And when I listened, how at times did the tears come rolling down my cheeks! And how my eyes flashed when some brilliant utterance, full of joy to the Christian, awakened my soul! Oh how I would awake on the Sabbath morning and sing,

*‘Welcome, sweet day of rest,
That saw the Lord arise!
Welcome to this reviving breast,
And these rejoicing eyes!’*

“And when they sang in the House of God, whose voice was so fond as mine? When I retired from worship, it was with a light dread. I went to tell my friends and my neighbors what glorious news I had heard in the sanctuary. Those were sweet Sabbaths. And when the Prayer Meetings came round, how was I found in my places and the prayers *were prayers*, indeed, to my spirit! Whoever I heard preach, provided it was the Gospel, how did my soul feed and fatten under it! For I sat at a very banquet of joy! When I read the Scriptures, they were always illuminated and the Glory of God did gild the sacred page whenever I turned it over! When I bent my knees in prayer, I could pour my soul out before God and I loved the exercise! I felt that I could not be happy unless I spent my time upon my knees. I loved my God and my God loved me. But oh, now how changed! Oh that I were as in months past! I go up to God’s House. It is the same voice that speaks, the same man I love so much, still addresses me. But I have no tears to shed. My heart has become hardened even under his ministry! I have few emotions of joy. I enter the House of God as a boy goes to school, without much love to it—and I go away without having my soul stirred. When I kneel down in secret prayer, the wheels are taken off my chariot and it drags very heavily. When I strive to sing, all I can say is, ‘I would, but cannot.’ Oh that I were as in months past!—when the candle of the Lord shone round about me!”

I trust there are not many of you who can join in this. For I know you love to come up to the House of God. I love to preach to a people who feel the Word, who give signs of assent to it—men and women who can afford a tear, now and then, in a sermon—people whose blood seems to boil within them when they hear the Gospel! I don’t think *you* understand much of the phase I am describing. But still, you may understand a little of it. The Word may not be quite as sweet and pleasant to you as it used to be. And then you may cry out—“Oh that I were as in months past!”

4. But I will tell you one point which perhaps may escape you. There are some of us who extremely lament that *our conscience is not as tender as it used to be*. And, therefore, does our soul cry in bitterness, “Oh that I were as in months past!” “When I first knew the Lord,” you say, “I was almost afraid to put one foot before another, lest I should go astray. I always looked before I leaped. If there was a suspicion of sin about anything, I faithfully avoided it. If there was the slightest trace of the trail of the serpent on it, I turned from it at once! People called me a Puritan. I watched everything. I was afraid to speak and some practices that were really allowable, I utterly condemned. My conscience was so tender, I was like a sensitive plant. If touched by the hand of sin, my leaves curled up in a moment! I was so tender, I could not bear to be touched—it was like I had wounds all over me! And if anyone brushed against me, I cried out. I was afraid to do anything, lest I should sin against God. If I heard an oath, my bones shook within me. If I saw a man break the Sabbath, I trembled and was afraid. Wherever I went, the least whisper of sin startled me. It was like the voice of a demon when I heard a temptation and I said with violence, ‘Get you behind me, Satan!’ I could not endure sin. I ran away from it as from a serpent! I could not taste a drop of it. But oh that I were as in months past. It is true, by His Grace, I have not forsaken His ways. I have not quite forgotten His Law. It is true, I have not disgraced my character, I have not openly sinned before men and none but God knows my sin. But oh, my conscience is not what it once was! It did thunder, once, but it does not now. O Conscience! Conscience! You are gone too much to sleep! I have drugged you with a tincture of opium and you are slumbering when you ought to be speaking! You are a watchman. But you do not tell the hours of the night as you once did. O Conscience! Sometimes I heard your rattle in my ears and it startled me—now you sleep—and I go on to sin. It is but a little I have done—still, that little shows the way. Straws tell which way the wind blows. And I feel that my having committed one little sin evidences in what way my soul is inclined. Oh that I had a tender conscience again! Oh that I had not this rhinoceros conscience which is covered over with tough hide through which the bullets of the Law cannot pierce! Oh that I had a conscience such as I used to have! Oh that I were as in months past!”

5. One more form of this sad condition. There are some of us, dearly Beloved, who *have not as much zeal for the Glory of God and the salvation of men as we used to have*. Months ago, if we saw a soul going to destruction, our eyes were filled with tears in a moment! If we did but see a man inclined to sin, we rushed before him with tears in our eyes and wished to sacrifice ourselves to save him! We could not walk the street, but we must be giving somebody a tract, or reproving someone. We thought we must be forever speaking of the Lord Jesus. If there were any good to be done, we were always first and foremost in it—we desired by all means to save some and we did think at that time that we could give up ourselves to death—if we might but snatch a soul from Hell! So deep, so ardent was our love to our fellow men, that for the love we bore Christ’s name, we would have been content to be scoffed at, hissed at and persecuted by the whole world if we might have done any good in it! Our soul was burning with intense longing for souls and we considered all things else to be mean and worthless. But ah, now souls may be damned and there is not a tear! Sinners may sink into the scalding pit of Hell and not a groan. Thousands may be swept away each day and sink into bottomless woe and yet not an

emotion! We can preach without tears. We can pray for them without our hearts. We can speak to them without feeling their necessities. We pass by the haunts of infamy—we wish the inmates better and that is all. Even our compassion has died out. Once we stood near the brink of Hell and we thought each day that we heard the yells and howls of the doomed spirits ringing in our ears. And then we said, “O God, help me to save my fellow men from going down to the pit of Hell!” But now we forget it all. We have little love to men. We have not half the zeal and energy we once had. Oh, if that is your state, dearly Beloved—if you can join in that, as your poor minister, alas, can do in some measure—then may we well say, “Oh that I were as in months past!”

II. But now we are about to take these different characters and tell you the CAUSE AND CURE.

1. One of the causes of this mournful state of things is *defect in prayer*. And of course the cure lies somewhere next door to the cause! You are saying, “Oh that I were as in months past!” Come, my Brothers and Sisters. We are going into the very root of the matter. One reason why it is not with you as in months past is this—you do not pray as you once did! Nothing brings such leanness into a man’s soul as lack of prayer. It is well said that a neglected closet is the birthplace of all evil. All good is born in the closet—all good springs from it. There the Christian gets it. But if he neglects his closet, then all evil comes of it. No man can progress in Grace if he forsakes his closet. I care not how strong he may be in faith. It is said that fat men may, for a time, live on the flesh they have acquired. But there is not a Christian so full of flesh that he can live on old Grace! If he grows fat, he kicks, but he cannot live upon his fat. Those who are strong and mighty in themselves cannot exist without prayer! If a man should have the spiritual might of 50 of God’s choicest Christians in himself, he must die if he did not continue to pray! My Brothers and Sisters, can you look back and say, “Three or four months ago my prayers were more regular, more constant, more earnest than they are now—now they are feeble, they are not sincere, they are not fervent, they are not earnest”? O Brothers and Sisters, do not ask anybody what is the cause of your grief! It is as plain as possible. You need not ask a question about it. There is the cause! And where is the remedy? Why, in more prayer! Beloved, it was little prayer that brought you down. It is great prayer that will lift you up! It was lack of prayer that brought you into poverty. It must be increase of prayer that will bring you again into riches! Where no oxen are, the crib is clean. There is nothing for men to eat where there are no oxen to plow. And where there are no prayers to plow the soil, you have little to feed upon. We must be more earnest in prayer! Oh, Beloved, might not the beam out of the wall cry against us? Our dusty closets might bear witness to our neglect of secret devotion. And that is the reason why it is not with us as in months past. My Friends—if you were to compare the Christian to a steam engine, you must make his prayers, fed by the Holy Spirit, to be the very fire which sustains his motion! Prayer is God’s chosen vehicle of Grace and he is unwise who neglects it. Let me be doubly serious on this matter and let me give a home-thrust to some. Dear Friend, do you mean what you say and do you believe what you say—that neglect of prayer will bring your soul into a most hazardous condition? If so, I will say no more to you. For you will easily guess the remedy for your lamentable cry, “Oh that I were as in months past!” A certain merchant wishes that he were as rich as he used to be—he is desirous to send his ships over to the gold country—to bring him home cargoes of gold. But lately never a ship has been out of port and, therefore, can he wonder that he has had no cargo of gold? So when a man prays, he sends a ship to Heaven and it comes back laden with gold! But if he leaves off supplication, then his ship is weather-bound and stays at home—and no wonder he comes to be a poor man!

2. Perhaps, again, you are saying, “Oh that I were as in months past!” Not so much from your own fault as from *the fault of your minister*. There is such a thing, my dear Friends, as our getting into a terribly bad condition through the ministry that we attend. Can it be expected that men should grow in Grace when they are never watered with the streams that make glad the city of our God? Can they be supposed to grow strong in the Lord Jesus when they do not feed on spiritual food? We know some who grumble, Sabbath after Sabbath, and say they cannot hear such-and-such a minister. Why don’t you buy an ear-trumpet, then? “Ah, but I mean that I can’t hear him to my soul’s profit.” Then do not go to hear him, if you have tried for a long while and don’t get any profit! I always think that a man who grumbles as he goes out of Chapel ought not to be pitied, but whipped—for he can stay away if he likes and go where he will be pleased! There are plenty of places where the sheep may feed in their own manner—and everyone is bound to go where he gets the pasture most suited to his soul. But you are not bound to run away, directly, if your minister dies, as many of you did before you came here. You should not run away from the ship as directly the storm comes and the captain is gone and you find her not exactly seaworthy. Stand by her, begin caulking her—God will send you a captain—there will be fine weather, by-and-by, and all will be right. But very frequently a bad minister starves God’s people into walking skeletons, so that you can see all their bones. And who wonders that they starve out their minister, when they get no food and no nutriment from his ministrations? This is a second reason why men frequently cry out, “Oh that I were as in months past!”

3. But there is still a better reason that will come more home to some of you. *It is not so much the badness of the food, as the seldomness that you come to eat it.* You know, my dear Friends, we find, every now and then, that there is a man who came twice a day to the House of God on the Sabbath. On the Monday night he was busy at work. But his apron was rolled up and if he could not be present all the while, he would come in at the end. On the Thursday evening he would, if possible, come to the sanctuary to hear a sermon from some Gospel minister and would sit up late at night and get up early in the morning to make up the time he had spent in these religious exercises. But by-and-by he thought, “I am working too hard. This is tiring. It is too far to walk.” And so he gives up, first, one service and then another—and then begins to cry out, “Oh that I were as in months past!” Why, Brothers and Sisters you need not be amazing at it! The man does not eat so much as he used to do! Little and often is the way children should be fed, though I have given you a great deal this morning. Still, little and often is a very good rule. I do think, when people give up weekday services, unless it is utterly impracticable for them to attend them, farewell to religion! “Farewell to practical godliness,” says Whitefield, “when men do not worship God on the weekday!” Weekday services are frequently the cream of all. God gives His people pails full of milk on the Sabbath, but He often skims off the cream for the weekday! If they stay away, is it any wonder that they have to say, “Oh, that I were as in months past”? I do not blame you, Beloved. I only wish to “stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.” A very plain fellow that is—is he not? Yes, he always tells you what he means and always intends to do so! Stand to your colors, my men! Keep close to the standard if you would win the battle! And when there seems to be the slightest defection, it is simply our duty to exhort you, lest by any measure you depart from the soundness of your faith!

4. But frequently this complaint arises from *idolatry*. Many have given their hearts to something else besides God and have set their affections upon the things of earth instead of the things in Heaven. It is hard to love the world and love Christ. It is impossible—that is all. And it is hard not to love the creature. It is hard not to give yourself to earth. I had almost said, it is *impossible* not to do that. It *is* difficult and only God can enable us! He, alone, can keep us with our hearts fully set on Him. But mark—whenever we make a golden calf to worship—sooner or later it will come to this—we shall get our golden calf ground up and put into our water for us to drink and then we shall have to say, “He has made me drunk with wormwood.” Never a man makes an idol for himself to worship, but it tumbles down on him and breaks some of his bones! There was never a man, yet, who departed to broken cisterns to find water, but instead, thereof, he found loathsome creatures therein and was bitterly deceived! God will have His people live on Him and on none else! If they live on anything else but Him, He will take care to give them of the waters of Mara, to embitter their drink and drive them to the Rock of purest streams. Oh, Beloved, let us take care that our hearts are wholly His, only Christ’s, solely Christ’s! If they are so, we shall not have to cry out, “Oh that I were as in months past!”

5. We scarcely need, however, detail any more reasons. We will add but one more and that is the most common one of all. We have, perhaps, become *self-confident and self-righteous*. If so, that is a reason why it is not with us as in months past. Ah, my Friends, that old rascal, self-righteousness—you will never get rid of him as long as you live! The devil was well pictured under the form of a serpent because a serpent can creep in anywhere, though the smallest crevice. Self-righteousness is a serpent—for it will enter anywhere. If you try to serve your God, “What a fine fellow you are,” says the devil. “Ah, don’t you serve your God well! You are always preaching. You are a noble fellow.” If you go to a Prayer Meeting, God gives you a little gift and you are able to pour out your heart. Presently there is a pat on the back from Satan. “Did not you pray sweetly? I know the Brethren will love you! You are growing in Grace very much.” If a temptation comes and you are able to resist it, “Ah,” he says at once, “you are a true soldier of the Cross. Look at the enemy you have knocked down! You will have a bright crown, by-and-by. You are a brave fellow!” You go on trusting God implicitly. Satan says, “Your faith is very strong—no trial can overcome you—there is a weak Brother, he is not half as strong as you are!” Away you go and scold your weak Brother because he is not as big as you! And all the while, Satan is cheering you up and saying, “What a mighty warrior you are! So faithful—always trusting in God—you have not any self-righteousness.” The minister preaches to the Pharisee—but the Pharisee is not fifty-ninth cousin to you! You are not at all self-righteous in your own opinion—but all the while you are the most self-righteous creature in existence! Ah, Beloved, just when we think ourselves humble, we are sure to be proud! And when we are groaning over our pride, we are generally the most humble! You may just read your own estimate backwards. Just when we imagine we are the worst, we are often the best. And when we conceive ourselves the best, we are often the worst. It is that vile *self-righteousness* who creeps into our souls and makes us murmur, “Oh that I were as in months past!” Your candle has got the wick of self-righteousness upon it. You need to have that replaced, and then you will burn all right. You are soaring too high! You

require something that will bring you down, again, to the feet of the Savior as a poor lost and guilty sinner—nothing at all. Then you will not cry any longer, “Oh that I were as in months past!”

III. And now, the closing up is to be an EXHORTATION.

An exhortation, first of all, to *consolation*. One is saying, “Oh, I shall never be happy again, I have lost the light of His Countenance. He has clean gone away from me and I shall perish.” You remember in John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, the description of the man shut up in the iron cage? One said to him, “Will you never come out of this cage?” “No, never.” “Are you condemned forever?” “Yes, I am.” “Why was this?” “Why I grieved the Spirit and He is gone. I once thought I loved Him, but I have treated Him lightly and He has departed. I went from the paths of righteousness, but now I am locked up here and cannot get out.” Yes, but does John Bunyan tell you that the man never did get out? There have been some in that iron cage that have come out. There may be one here, this morning, who has been for a long while sitting in that iron cage, rattling the bars, trying to break them, trying to file them through with his own little might and strength. Oh, dear Friend, you will never file through the iron bars of that terrible cage! You will never escape by yourself. What must you do? You must begin to sing like the bird in the cage does. Then the kind Master will come and let you out. Cry to Him to deliver you! And though you cry and shout and He shuts out your prayer, He *will* hear you, by-and-by. And like Jonah, you shall exclaim in days to come, “Out of the belly of Hell I cried unto the Lord and He heard me.” You will find the roll under the settle, although you have dropped it down the Hill of Difficulty. And when you have it, you will put it in your bosom, again, and hold it all the more tightly because you have lost it for a little season—

*“Return, O wanderer, return,
And seek an injured Father’s face.
Those warm desires that in you burn
Were kindled by reclaiming Grace!”*

And now another exhortation, not so much to console you as to stir you up more and more to seek to be what you ought to be. O Christian men and women, my Brothers and Sisters in the faith of Jesus Christ! How many there are of you who are content just to be saved and merely to enter Heaven. How many do we find who are saying, “Oh, if I can but just get in at the door—if I can simply be a child of God!” And they literally carry out their desires, for they are as little Christian as possible! They would have moderation in religion! But what *is* moderation in religion? It is a lie! It is a farce! Does a wife ask her husband to be moderately loving? Does a parent expect his child to be moderately obedient? Do you seek to have your servants moderately honest? No! Then how can you talk about being moderately religious? To be moderately religious is to be *irreligious*. To have a religion that does not enter into the very heart and influence the life is virtually to have *no religion* at all! I tremble, sometimes, when I think of some of you who are mere professors. You are content, you whitewashed sepulchers, because you are beautifully whitened! You rest satisfied, without looking at the morgue beneath! How many of you make clean the outside of the cup and platter. And because the Church can lay nothing to your charge and the world cannot accuse you, you think the outside of the cup will be sufficient. Take heed! Take heed! The Judge will look at the inside of the cup and platter one day. And if it is full of wickedness, He will break that platter and the fragments shall forever be cast about in the pit of Hell! Oh, may God give you Grace to desire to be real Christians! Waxen-winged professors! You can fly very well, here. But when, like Icarus, you fly upwards, the mighty Sun of Jesus Christ shall melt your wings and you shall fall into the pit of destruction! Ah, gilded Christians, beautifully painted, varnished, polished—what will you do when you shall be found, at last, to have been worthless metal? When the wood, hay and stubble shall be buried and consumed, what will you do if you are not the genuine coin of Heaven? If you have not been molten in the furnace, if you have not been minted from on high? If you are not real gold, how shall you stand the fire in that “great and terrible Day of the Lord”? Ah, and there are some of you who *can* stand the fire, I trust. You are the children of God. But, Beloved, do I charge you wrongfully when I say that many of us know that we are the children of God, but we are content to be as little dwarf children. We are always crying out, “Oh that I were as in months past!” That is a mark of dwarfishness. If we are to do great things in the world, we must not often utter this cry! We must often be singing—

“I the chief of sinners am. But Jesus died for me,”

and with cheerful countenance we must be able to say that we “know whom we have believed.” Do you wish to be useful? Do you desire to honor your Master? Do you long to carry a heavy crown to Heaven, that you may put it on the Savior’s head? If you do—and I know you do—then seek above all things, that your soul may prosper and be in health—that your inner man may not be simply in a living state, but that you may be a tree planted by the rivers of water, bringing

forth your fruit in your season, your leaf never withering and whatever you do, prospering! Ah, do you want to go to Heaven and wear a starless crown there—a crown that shall be a real crown, but that shall have no star upon it because no soul has been saved by you? Do you wish to sit in Heaven with garments of Christ's, but without one single jewel that God has given you for your wages here, below? Ah, no! I think you wish to go to Heaven in full dress and to enter into the fullness of the joy of the Lord! Five talents well improved, five cities. And let no man be satisfied with merely his one talent, but let him seek to put it out at interest. "For unto him that has, shall be given, and he shall have abundance."

And finally, to many of you what I have preached about has no interest whatever. Perhaps you may say, "Oh that I were as in months past! For then I was quite well and I was a jolly fellow! Then I could drink with the deepest drinker anywhere! Then I could run merrily into sin, but now I cannot. I have hurt my body. I have injured my mind. It is not with me as it used to be—I have spent all my money. I wish I were as I used to be!" Ah, poor Sinner, you have good reason to say, "Oh that I were as in months past!" But wait four or five months and then you will say it more emphatically and think even today better than that day! And the further you go on, the more you will wish to go back again. For the path to Hell is down, down, down, down—always down—and you will be always saying, "Oh that I were as in months past!" You will look back to the time when a mother's prayer blessed you and a father's reproof warned you—when you went to a Sunday school and sat upon your mother's knee, to hear her tell you of a Savior. And the longer the retrospect of goodness, the more that goodness will pain you! Ah, my Friends, you have need to go back, some of you. Remember how far you have fallen—how much you have departed. But oh, you need not turn back! Instead of looking back and crying, "Oh that I were as in months past," say something different! Say, "Oh that I were a new man in Christ Jesus!" It would not do for you to begin again in your present state. You would soon be as bad as you now are. But say, "Oh that I were a *new man in Christ Jesus!* Oh that I might begin a new life!" Some of you would like to begin a new life—some of you reprobates, who have gone far away! Well, poor mortal, you may! "How?" you say? Why, if you are a new man in Christ Jesus you *will* begin again! A Christian is as much a new man as if he had been no man at all, before! The old creature is dethroned. He is a new creature, born-again and starting on a new existence! Poor Soul! God can make you a new man! God, the Holy Spirit, can build a new house out of you, with neither stick nor stone of the old man in it! And He can give you a new heart, a new spirit, new pleasures, new happiness, new prospects and, at last, give you a new Heaven! "But," says one "I feel that I need these things, but may I have them?" Guess whether you may have them, when I tell you—"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save *sinner*s." It does not say it is worthy of *some* acceptance, but it is worthy of *all* the acceptance you will ever give it! If you now say, "Jesus came into the world so save sinners, I believe He did! I know He did! He came to save *me*," you will find it, "worthy of all acceptance." You still say, "But will He save *me*?" I will give you another passage—"Whoever comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." "Ah, but I do not know whether *I* may come!" "Whoever," it says. "*Him* that comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." "Whoever will, let him come," it is written. Do you will? I only speak to such as will, who know their need of a Savior. Do you will? Then God, the Holy Spirit says, "Whoever will, let him come and take the Water of Life freely"—

*"The feeble, the guilty, the weak, the forlorn,
In coming to Jesus, shall not meet with scorn!
But He will receive them and bless them and save
From death and destruction, from Hell and the grave."*

And He will lift them up to His Kingdom of Glory. God so grant it! For His name's sake. Amen

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