

GOD'S WORK UPON MINISTER AND CONVERT

NO. 1774

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 6, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“But rise, and stand upon your feet: for I have appeared unto you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of these things which you have seen, and of those things in which I will appear unto you; delivering you from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send you, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.”
Acts 26:16-20.

BEHOLD an amazing sight! Saul of Tarsus at the feet of Jesus of Nazareth! Listen! The persecutor's voice is changed into that of an inquiring disciple. He asks, “What will You have me to do?” If angels sang with delight over a new-made world, their song must have been seven times as joyous over a new-made apostle. The change was miraculous. At this distance of time we can hardly appreciate it, but if we had been living in daily fear of our lives, if we had seen our father or our brother dragged off to death by this ferocious enemy of the cross, and then had suddenly heard that he was converted to the faith which he opposed, we would have cried, “Incredible!” For the Ethiopian to change his skin or for the leopard to lose his spots, would be little compared with this cruel Pharisee bowing himself in lowly penitence before the Lord Jesus whom He had persecuted. Do you wonder that when Saul came to Jerusalem, and assayed to join himself to the disciples, they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple? My brethren, as in history, so in the grace of God, it is the unexpected which frequently occurs. The men and women whom I expected to confess Christ long ago have not yet come. I have seen Felix tremble, but I have not seen him converted. I have seen Agrippa almost persuaded, but he is not yet a Christian. Meanwhile, I have beheld a Saul of Tarsus, who before raged against the cross, bowing himself submissively before the Lord Jesus.

Let us never be discouraged, but let us expect to see signs and wonders in the world of grace. Though priestcraft is far too dominant in our land, we may yet hear that “a great company of the priests” has believed in Christ. Though free thought rides roughshod over everything, we may yet hear that the boldest freethinkers have been made truly free, and have felt the power of His thoughts, which are as high above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth. Who knows, good brother, but that son who has caused you the greatest grief may yet give you the greatest pleasure? That one among your relatives who seems most decidedly to take the wrong side may yet become a leader in the armies of Christ? Hope on! Hope always!

Note with care how men are converted. I shall show you God's preparation for it, in *a work worked upon the minister*, making him a fit witness for the truth. Then I shall speak upon *God's work worked in the convert* in opening his eyes, and turning him from darkness to light. And lastly, I shall call your attention to *a work which must be worked by the convert himself*, for Paul preached that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

I. First, let us notice A WORK WORKED BY GOD UPON THE MINISTER. “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” “Faith comes by hearing.” “How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they are sent?” In order to the conversion of the hearer, many processes must be experienced by the preacher. He must be made, called, sent, and afterwards delivered. All the work of the Lord upon him is a work of grace on behalf of those who shall be converted by his means.

The minister whom God sends is first of all *himself subdued*, and made to be obedient to the will of his Lord. While a man is a rebel the Lord does not appoint him to act as an ambassador. While he is dead in sin, He does not commission him to preach the way of life. Paul was struck down to the earth, if he had not himself fallen, he would not have known how to lift up others whom the Lord has laid low. There flashed into his face a light above the brightness of the sun, he declares, "I could not see for the glory of that light." He remained blind for three days, and this, also, was necessary, for if he had not been shut up in that darkness, he would not have been qualified to deal with others on whom the darkness of conviction had settled. An experience of breaking down and of soul-horror is necessary to prepare a man for later usefulness among the convicted, the desponding, and the despairing. It may be that some young man present this morning is undergoing a singularly severe discipline at the hands of the Holy Spirit. His sins are exceedingly heavy upon him, and relief does not come. A companion of his who was awakened at the same time has found rest, and is already rejoicing in the light, but this young brother finds the darkness thicken about him. Dear friend, it may be that your deeper conviction and more oppressive sense of sin are necessary because in your future life you are to be made largely helpful to troubled hearts. Do not think that everybody is blind for three days, as Paul was when he did neither eat nor drink during all that time, but conclude that some peculiar end is to be served by this remarkable experience. Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened to receive the truth, was not thus blinded and troubled, but then she was not called to be an apostle to preach the gospel from Jerusalem to Spain. The weapon which is to be most used in battle must be more completely hardened than that which is for peaceful service. Discipline in our own spiritual life is a part of ministerial education which the chosen of the Lord shall not miss. See then, how God may be working for the conversion of generations yet unborn in the deep and painful experience of individuals who are now being turned from darkness to light. See, my dear hearer, what God may have done already in the hearts of His chosen ministers to fit them to become the means of your conversion. In order to slay your sins the shaft has been polished. Another has groaned and wept, and cried out in bitter agony, in order that he may know how to speak a word in season to you. Each of the best locks made by our eminent locksmiths is unique and by itself, and when this is the case, each lock needs its own special key. So is it with human minds, there is a peculiarity about each one. Certain minds will never be reached until they come in contact with other minds constituted on purpose to touch them. I know that there is suitability in my experience to affect many of my fellow men, and they open to me when the Lord takes me in His hand, and uses me as His key. But I also feel that in all probability I shall never move certain other individuals, because my mental conformation excites prejudice in them. I do not fit them, and they will not permit me to be of use to them. Thank God, He has other servants, and by these I trust He will accomplish good for those to whom I am an unsuitable instrument. Assuredly I know that much of the experience through which I have passed has not been with a view to myself, but with a view to those persons to whom the Lord will make me His channel of blessing. Consider, then, how gracious is the Lord thus to be working upon His own servants, with the design of saving some of you who are far from Him.

The next preparation for the Lord's minister was that *he should be encouraged*. The Lord Jesus said to him, "Rise, and stand upon your feet." As much as to say—"You are forgiven, you are chosen, you are beloved, therefore lie no longer prostrate, overwhelmed with fear. Give not way to despondency. Resign yourself into My hands, and be prepared with activity and diligence to spend the rest of your life in doing good. Arise, stand on your feet, for work is to be done at once which will need all your courage and might." Men can hardly be very useful till they cease to be despondent, diffident, and depressed, and become energetic and hopeful. Even good men need to be braced up that they may rise to bold attempts and believing labors for their Lord. Many are slow to take the encouragement which is offered them, and need to hear a voice, saying, "Shake yourself from the dust, O captive! Rise and serve your God." I wish that I could speak to any brother here whose heart is true and right, and who has the power to be exceedingly useful, but who has not yet the courage to proceed to his proper work. O my brother, rise and stand upon your feet. "Alas," you say, "I have tried to do good, but I have seen no effects following my endeavors. I have spoken to one or two about their souls, but I have not yet won a heart for Christ." Did you really expect to do so? I have noticed that those who do not believe that they will be successful seldom are so, but those who rise and stand upon their feet, and manfully expect that God will bless them are not disappointed. We are not to hope for success because there is anything in us, but because God has promised that His word shall not return unto Him void. And if we therefore sow in faith, a harvest

will assuredly follow. Faith receives promises, unbelief goes empty-handed. Arise, then, and stand upon your feet.

Who knows but somebody who shall receive encouragement this morning will from this day become the messenger of God to open the blind eyes of others? The strengthening of the worker is as necessary a part of God's work as the immediate operation of the Spirit with the message. The vessel must be prepared for the Master's use, and grace is to be clearly seen in the making and fitting of that vessel for so divine a purpose.

The uplifting work being done, it remained that Paul should now be *made, constituted, and ordained a minister*, and to this end he must see the Lord for himself. The Lord said, "I have appeared unto you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness." It is plain from these words that the right way to make ministers is for the Lord Jesus Christ to appear to them. We have heard of making men into ministers, but we have no belief in the result of such a manufacture. If one man makes another man a minister, he will be very badly made, and the sooner he is broken up again the better. The fabrication of man is not fit to be an instrument for the Lord. All the laying on of hands and all the fitness that can be given in College or University cannot possibly make a minister apart from the revelation of the Son of God to the heart. If God intends to use any man, he must be as much the creation of God as are the heavens and the earth.

The means which the Lord uses for the true preacher's education and ordination are here displayed before us. It is by Christ's appearing to the man that he is prepared to preach the Lord Christ among men.

Our Lord's appearing to a man operates two ways; first it makes him willing to be a servant, for that is the meaning of the word "minister." When the renewed mind beholds the Lord, it adores Him, and cries out, "What will You have me do?" A sight of the glory of Christ, of the love of Christ, of the sufferings of Christ, constrains a believer to render unto the Lord all that lies in his power of cheerful service. Who that has beheld the unrivalled beauties of Jesus can refuse Him honor? Having seen You, O my Lord, I become from then on Your servant, and feel it a privilege to minister to the very least of Your redeemed according as You may appoint.

The same heavenly vision qualifies the believer to act as a witness for Jesus. We cannot bear witness to that which we have never seen. Hearsay is of small value, we must see for ourselves. Christ must appear to His elect servant or he will not be able to go forth and tell what he has seen. The true prophet is a seer, he sees, and therefore speaks. "We speak what we know, and testify what we have seen." If you have had no vision, hold your tongue, for you have no message, but if you have seen, then tell carefully only what you have seen, adding nothing to it and taking nothing from it. Your message is that which God has revealed to you by His Holy Spirit in His Word, and in your own spiritual experience.

See then, dear friends, that in order to the conversion of those who are not yet saved, the Lord Jesus has been at work upon others, making them fit to be servants and witnesses, and He has used as His chief means of instruction the revealing of Himself. This is instructive, for it gives us a clear indication as to the best method of accomplishing the salvation of those around us. Beloved, if you want to win souls follow up this line of things. Soul-winning is generally accomplished not by argument, but by testimony. The best minister is a witness-bearer. "Butler's Analogy" is one of the most notable works in defense of revelation, and it is eminently calculated to impress the student with the truthfulness of our holy religion, but I should like to know whether there ever was a man, woman, or child truly converted to the Lord Jesus by "Butler's Analogy." I do not think so. Nor do I depreciate the work on that account, for it has other uses which it admirably serves. This, however, I am certain of, that a little book like the "Dairyman's Daughter," by Leigh Richmond, which is not worthy for a moment to be compared with "Butler's Analogy" as a display of intellectual power, has led thousands to saving faith in the Lord Jesus. That little biography of a peasant girl, a mere nothing as to thought, compared with the wonderful "Analogy," has brought tens of thousands to the Savior's feet, where the other has brought few, if any. What is the reason? The "Analogy" is a very clear and admirable argument, but the "Dairyman's Daughter" is a witness of what has been seen, and tasted, and handled by one like ourselves. Heads are won by reasoning, but hearts are won by witness-bearing. Our line of thought should be that of David—"I will declare what the Lord has done for my soul." Paul frequently repeated the story of his own conversion, for he knew of nothing more likely to convince and convert. I do not believe that people will ever be converted by gaudy rhetoric. Poetical expressions are too fine to draw men away from sin to holiness;

men do not come to Christ on the back of Pegasus. Argument which appeals only to the intellect is poor fuel with which to kindle the fire of love to Christ, and even sound instruction will not suffice without personal witness to vivify and support it. To convince men of the truth of a statement is one thing, to convict them of personal sin is another thing, and to convert them is a step higher still. Bear witness to what you know, to what you feel, to the power of Christ to pacify the conscience and to change the life, bear, I say, your witness to Jesus, and you will have done that which God will bless to the opening of the eyes of the spiritually blind.

Further, dear friends, the man who is to win a soul for Christ *must be continuously instructed of God*. He is to be a witness not only of those things which he has seen, but also of those things in which the Lord will yet appear unto him. The discipline and intuition which our Lord vouchsafes to His servant when he begins his witness will not suffice him for the whole of his life. He must continue to be taught that he may continue to teach. You who wish to win souls for Jesus—and I know many of you do—must always sit at His feet yourselves. Your eyes must always be fixed upon your Master, so that His dear image may photograph itself perpetually upon your heart. Our message, if it is to daily win souls for Jesus, must come to us daily. The manna of last year, where is it if we have hoarded it? In a day it bred worms—where is it after many days? As the manna fell fresh and fresh each morning, so must we each day learn more and more of Him. We should strive each day to obtain a closer, more tender, more experiential view of Him. We must feel our sinfulness more deeply, and therefore recognize more fully the power of His precious blood. We must grieve over our corruption more bitterly, and therefore understand better the power of the renewing Spirit who cleanses the heart. We need to live upon Jesus hourly so that we may talk of the tree of life with the flavor of its fruit upon our palates. It is poor work to talk of a Savior whom we have not communed with for months, but it is blessed to come forth from His presence to describe His beauties. Oh to live in Christ, and on Christ, and then to preach live sermons from live texts. Even the dead in sin will feel the force of so vital a ministry. God the Holy Spirit must work all this in those whom He prepares to be the implements of His gracious work. Herein He shows much love to sinners who as yet care nothing for His operations.

Where all this is done, there yet remains something more, namely, *that God should constantly preserve His messenger*; as He said to Paul, “Delivering you from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send you.” Paul’s life was always in danger, and yet never in real peril, for the Lord was His keeper. He was daily delivered unto death, and yet he was immortal till his life-work was complete. They stoned him and supposed that he was dead, but he rose up and began to cheer the brethren. Till his time came and his work was finished, the stormy sea could not drown him, the beasts of Ephesus could not devour him, the mob could not kill him, and even sworn conspirators could not slay him. When he had finished his course, he submitted his neck to the headsman’s sword, but till that moment he was delivered out of the mouth of the lion, and guarded from perils of robbers, perils of rivers, and perils by false brethren. So every true servant of Christ shall be kept as with a garrison from all evil. We do not nowadays run risks of the kind which beset the apostle, but ours are more subtle and insinuating, yet the true servant of God shall be preserved from all evil. He shall be kept from the pride which comes of visible success, and from the despondency which comes of apparent failure, he shall be delivered from the temptations common to man, and from the peculiar temptations which compass him as a minister of Christ. He shall be delivered from the strife of tongues, and from the tumult of the people. If God has sent him, the devil cannot withstand him; he shall perform his mission in the conversion of those whom the Lord intends to save.

I earnestly invite you to look at this portion of the machinery of grace, for some entirely overlook it. Conversion is a very simple business, and yet if I were to say that the heavens, and the earth, and all things that are, and are to be, are made subservient to its accomplishment, I should not go too far. Everything is laid under commission to save the chosen. Each elect soul might say, “You have given commandment to save me.” I have known the Lord bring men to Himself not only by His ministers, but by the simplest things and most common events. A young woman utterly careless and godless returned to her room one night where she had left her lamp burning, but, lo, it had gone out, and she was in darkness. As she sought for the lamp she remembered the parable of our Lord and the cry of the foolish virgins “Our lamps have gone out.” She reflected that her lamp had gone out because she had forgotten to put oil in it that morning, and then and there, under the power of the word of God, she knelt down and gave her heart to Christ! A funeral knell, a tempest, a faded flower, and a picture, have all been God’s

means of bringing His banished home to Himself. I am constantly meeting with instances of individuals who for years were careless, irreligious, dissipated, and vicious, and rose one Sabbath morning to waste the day as usual, but by some circumstance or other they were induced to hear Mr. Moody, or to turn in here, or to attend a theater service, and then and there the Lord met with them. That God who could control the crowing of a cock to work conversion in His servant, Peter, has servants everywhere, from the highest angel to the tiniest insect. It is delightful to think that God can put any man or any creature into commission to carry out His purposes of love. Is it not a wonderful proof of His great love, that He thus makes all things subservient to the salvation of men, and especially that He creates ministers, and leads, trains, and fits them to become the spiritual parents of others? Oh, sinners, how glad I should be if you would think of yourselves, for you see how practically God thinks of you!

II. And now, secondly, we come to describe THE WORK WHICH IS WORKED IN THE HEARER when God is saving him.

It usually begins *by illumination*. The Lord sends His servant "to open their eyes." Men are born blind, and continue blind till by the power of Jesus sight is given to them. Opening the eyes of the mind is not an operation which usually demands much time. In Paul's case we read, "Immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized." The mind sees truth all of a sudden, the aspect of everything is altered, and the man has obtained a new faculty. What a blessing it will be if the Lord has sent me to any of you this day, that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit! A film shuts out the light from your souls, so that you grope as blind men, but the Lord can remove it at once. Perhaps you are ignorant. If you did but know the truth, you would see by its light. Oh, that the Holy Spirit may teach you! Or your education and your surroundings have placed a film of prejudice over your eyes. If a candid, child-like spirit were given you, you would speedily see. Or possibly some favorite sin is like a cataract upon the eyes of your conscience, and you cannot see the evil of sin, or the beauty of holiness, or the desirableness of being renewed. The Lord can take away these scales. Oh, that the Lord would cause you to see sin in its true colors, and holiness in its own splendor! Or it may be that unbelief darkens your soul. Those who will not believe cannot see the salvation of God. What a difference is made by divine illumination! A moment ago the man was in the dark, and now he is brought into marvelous light. He was not in the dark because the sun was set or the shutters were closed, but because he was blind. What matters how bright the day when the eyes are sealed? If the light that is in us is darkness, no outside light can be of use to us. Jesus came on purpose to give eyes to the blind, and by a single word of the preacher, or a text of Scripture, or a verse of a hymn, the Lord can cause the darkened mind to enter upon the life of light and discernment—"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened."

The next thing which the minister is made to do is *conversion*. Paul was sent "to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Much depends upon the direction in which a man's face is turned. Here stands a blind man with his face to the darkness, if he goes forward he advances into blacker night, how necessary then is that work of the blessed Spirit by which men are turned completely round, and their front is reversed! The darkness is now behind the convert, and the light is ahead, so that every step he takes he advances towards the light, which increases upon his vision as he nears it. He loves light, he seeks it, he sighs to get nearer and nearer to it, he runs towards it that he may read everything by its aid, and he turns away from darkness, which is now dreaded by him as an Egyptian plague. He has not received all the light he desires, but one thing he knows—whereas he was once blind, he now sees. What a blessed turning is that which makes us face truth, and goodness, and God, and heaven, and leave ignorance, sin, and hell behind. The soul is brought into a new element, light is its life, in which alone it flourishes and bears fruit, darkness is its death in which it shivers, pines, and withers.

As the soul is brought into a new element, so is it also brought under a new government. Translation has taken place. The man is translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, or, as our text has it, "from the power of Satan unto God." Notice, the man is turned "from the power of Satan," the tyrannical dominion, and crushing grasp of the evil, cunning, malicious, hateful prince of fallen angels. Once he was hopelessly under that power, but now he has clean escaped from the slavery of the devil, and has come into the liberty of a child of God. To the Lord whom he had forgotten he has turned, so that he thinks of Him, cares for Him, trusts in Him. His heart, his desire, his longing, his hope, all look toward his Savior, he longs to become more and more like his God, and to enjoy more and more

the favor of the great Father. What a blessed turning this is—from the power of Satan to the power of God! Happy are the men who are the means of converting their fellows in this fashion!

Somebody says, "Well, I know there is such a fact as conversion, but I do not understand how it can be performed in a minute." I reply that I do not understand how regeneration, which is the secret cause of conversion, could occupy so long as a minute. Should not goodness rule at once? Two men are fighting, and we beg them to stop. Do you recommend them to stop gradually! Shall they take an hour or two over it? Why, they might kill one another in that time. A fire is about to consume your house—do you say to the firemen, "Put it out gradually"? If my house were on fire, I should long to see the flame quenched at once. If anybody held a pistol at my head I should not say, "Take it away by degrees." I would wish him to remove the revolver at once. Yet all these things are matters which could be prolonged over a space of time without such risk as would be involved in a slow process of conversion. Changes of mind such as are necessary to conversion had need be quick when sin is to be forsaken, for every moment deepens the guilt. I grant you that in many persons conversion appears to be gradual, and many things lead up to it as by an inclined plane, but as to the new birth and the reception of the divine life, there is a distinct line of demarcation—on that side of the line all is death, and on this side of it all is life. I cannot tell you when any one man crosses that line, but there must be an instant when he does so. It may seem a very gradual process by which a man who was dead comes to life, but for certain there is a point at which he left the dead and became alive, and that point God sees very clearly even though we do not. Life to the body may at first be perceived only by some painful tingling sensation, or a gentle attempt at breathing, but there is a sharp division between life and death though we may not perceive it. The outward appearance of life may become gradually visible, but there must be an instant, and no more, in which life enters and death ends. Conversion may be effected by the power of the Holy Spirit in less time than it takes me to tell you of it. The man being regenerated straightaway turns to his God. Oh, that the Lord would work such a marvel of power here under our eyes. It can be done. I preach with the full conviction that it will be done. He who turned me to Himself has sent me to turn others in the name of Jesus by the power of His Spirit.

Together with conversion comes *complete forgiveness*. Read the passage—"that they may receive forgiveness of sins." When a man turns to God it is a proof that God has turned to him. When he hates his sins the Lord has put them away, as soon as ever he confesses and forsakes them they are blotted out forever. The complete turning of his mind from darkness to light is a proof to the convert that God the righteous Judge has turned away His wrath from him. When the love of sin has gone the guilt of sin has gone also. Full conversion carries with it full pardon. The same moment that we receive Christ, we "receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified." Think of that! Oh, that you may know all that it means! What a blessing to become an heir of God! Yet in the moment of forgiveness we receive power to become the sons of God. We are put among the children, and the children's portion is our portion. All that belongs to the sanctified belongs to you, poor sinner, the moment you turn to God, through faith in Christ Jesus, yes, all that belongs to the glorified belongs to you, for though as yet you cannot pass the golden gate, nor join in the celestial song, yet the glory is yours, reserved for you till the day of God's appointment. Therefore of good cheer, if you are indeed turned from darkness to light you have obtained an inheritance among them that are sanctified, and what more do you need? To what choice company is a sinner introduced when he believes in Jesus! He was only fit to herd with the profane, or to make his bed in hell with devils, but now he obtains an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. He is a freeholder among the burgesses of the New Jerusalem. What a wonderful procession it would be if all those who are sanctified could pass before us now! Martyrs—their noble army; confessors—their goodly fellowship; prophets and apostles and ministers of the word, of whom the world was not worthy, what a joy to be numbered among them! We are so numbered as soon as we take upon ourselves to trust ourselves with Jesus. We are akin to the perfect! Where they dwell we dwell, where they die we shall die, and where they live forever we shall live, for our inheritance is with all them that are sanctified. Oh, brethren, it is worth living, is it not, to become servants of God in any form, so as to introduce our poor sinful fellows into such society as this? May the Lord prepare all believers to deliver the life-giving message, that they may bring many heirs of wrath to be heirs of heaven.

And all this has for its certificate and mark of genuineness these words—"By faith that is in Me." Those words are not merely appended to sanctification, though it is worth noticing that sanctification is by faith, since so many look at it as if it were by effort rather than by believing. But the whole process of

salvation is by faith. The preacher is to preach in faith. Dear friends, you that teach in the Sunday school, do you always teach in faith, believing that God will save your children? You, dear brethren, that are going to hold a service in the streets, are you going to do it in faith? If not, you need not do it at all, because nothing will come of it. Without faith it is impossible to please God, and if He is not pleased with what you do no saving result can follow. All work is true when it is worked by faith in Jesus. Men's eyes are opened through their believing in Jesus—that is the great means of illumination. They are turned from darkness to light by God's giving them faith in Jesus. By faith they receive forgiveness of sins, and the divine inheritance. It is all of faith from first to last. May God work it in your souls.

I feel pleased at times to dig down to the old granite formation which underlies the gospel. You know there are certain topsoil truths which we have to plow, and out of which we raise harvests for the Lord, but every now and then, when things go rather hard with our little farm, I like to dig down to the underlying rock. Salvation is of the Lord, and He is omnipotent, and works out His eternal purposes. The child of God can get oil out of this flinty rock, for God will save His own elect, and all the skeptics in the world cannot prevent the operations of the Holy Spirit from being effectual. His purpose shall stand, and He will do all His pleasure. His miracles of grace shall be worked, and all the devils in hell shall not be able to prevent them. Neither skeptics nor fiends can hinder, even for a moment, the eternal purpose of God which must and shall be fulfilled, and this is it, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." This work in the hearts of men He must and will carry on to His own praise and glory—let who will, say no to Him.

III. Now, I close by the last point, which is A WORK WHICH MUST BE DONE BY THE HEARER HIMSELF. This text speaks of Paul being an instrument in the hands of God of opening men's eyes and turning them to God that they may receive pardon, and so forth, in all which they seem to be passive. But in this later verse they are called upon to be active—"That they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." Paul was commanded to go and do such-and-such things in the power of the Spirit, but when he commenced to do them it was by telling men that they should repent. God gives repentance, but men must themselves repent. We are created thinking, intelligent beings, and we are saved as such. If we were blocks of wood or masses of iron, God could carve or mold us most readily, and then He would have done no more than men commonly do with such materials. But if we remain free agents, and yet the Lord works His will upon us, it is an amazing miracle, worthy of the Lord who works it. Never let us forget either the free agency of man or the purposes of God. God leaves us free agents, and yet in infinite wisdom He accomplishes His purposes and fulfils His decree. Grace reigns not over slaves, but over obedient children. The will of the Lord is done, and yet the responsibility and freedom of men are left untouched. How the Lord does this I do not know, He has never deigned to explain His infinity to us, nor need we desire that He should. It is a great blessing to have something to wonder at. I had rather have reasons for adoration than temptations for indulging my pride.

Dear hearer, if you would be saved, you must *repent*. It is not the work of God the Holy Spirit to repent for you, but to lead *you* to repent. The Holy Spirit has nothing to repent of, and it is not a work which can be done by proxy. We cannot give you repentance as a doctor may inject morphine under the skin, it must be your own act and deed, your own feeling and emotion. You cannot be saved unless you personally turn from sin. It is the work of God's Holy Spirit to bring you to do so, but you have to repent with your own heart and mind. Observe this carefully. You have sinned, and you must repent of it and turn from it. You must undergo a change in your mind about everything. You think little of sin—you must thoroughly change your mind on that matter. You think little of Christ—your mind must be totally changed upon that point. You must loathe sin and grieve over it; there can be no forgiveness unless there is a confessing and forsaking of sin. Remember your child's verse and attend to it—

*"Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before;
And show that we, in earnest, grieve
By doing so no more."*

This is demanded of you by the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. "The time of this ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to repent."

The next thing necessary is that you *turn to God*. Your prayer may be, "Turn me, and I shall be turned," but the command is, "Turn you, turn you, why will you die?" God will turn you, but you have to willingly yield, and thus turn yourself. A number of texts indicate that there can be no turning of a

man's heart to God by any force put upon him, the turning which God grants us is a perfectly willing and delighted turning on our part, we do it as freely as if there were no such thing as the grace of God operating upon us, and yet we do it because grace is sweetly working in us to will and to do. We cannot take you by the ears and drag you into heaven. No person can be unwillingly holy, or unwillingly happy, or go to heaven unwillingly. The great turn needed is to turn to God. Now you turn away from Him, you do not like to think of Him, this morning you have heard quite as much as you can bear, and you will try and forget it, and so turn away from God. Would not it be grand news for some of you if there were no God, no law, no judgment to come, no heaven, and no hell? It would create in you a sense of liberty, would it not? But as for some of us, it would be slavery to us and the worst calamity that could possibly happen, for we should have lost our joy, our comfort, our all. O sirs, you must turn to God, thinking of Him, trusting Him, loving Him, longing for Him, living for Him, delighting in Him. Your aversion must be removed by conversion, God the Holy Spirit will work this in you, but you must become willing in the day of His power. What do you say to this? If you live and die without this turning, you must be turned into hell, I dare not set before you any other prospect.

And then to conclude, it is added they must *do works meet for repentance*, for wherever there is true faith there will be corresponding works. Now what are "works meet for repentance"? They are such as these—restitution if you have wronged anyone, reconciliation if you are at enmity with anyone, acknowledgment if you have spoken falsely, giving up of evil habits and an earnest endeavor to be pure and holy. If you run into temptation willfully, that is not a work fit to go with repentance. If you commit again the sin which you have committed before, and return to it as a dog to its vomit, that is not a work meet for repentance. If you live in neglect of the means of grace, if you disregard the Sabbath, if you neglect prayer, if you omit the study of God's word, these are not works that will agree with repentance. If you live wholly for yourself and your own personal aggrandizement that is not a work meet for repentance. But if you do indeed repent, you must pray the Lord to change your whole life. "If any man is in Christ he is a new creature," that is the whole of it. You must be new from head to foot, new in every thought and word and deed. The saved man is a creation, and none can create him but God Himself. Oh, that we may each one of us, feel His transforming power that we may henceforth "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure."

After all, it turns on this, *Will you have Christ or not?* Dear hearers, I would like to press that question home upon you. I pray that you may be enabled to say, "I will put my trust in Him, I will at once accept Him as my Lord and Savior." I am afraid you get so used to my voice that it does not strike you now as it used to do, but still the truth is the same whoever speaks it. If I talk nonsense, forget it, but if this is truth to which you are listening, I implore you to attend to it. Do not hear it and say, "Oh, yes," and then go away, and think no more of it. May God grant you grace at once to really repent, to turn to God, and to do works meet for repentance, through faith which is in Christ, for His dear name's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ACTS 26.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—84 (PART 2), 448, 489.**

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