

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS

NO. 202

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 27, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.”
Acts 26:14.

HOW marvelous the condescension which induced the Savior to take notice of such a wretch as Saul! Enthroned in the highest heavens, amidst the eternal melodies of the redeemed and the seraphic sonnets of the cherubim and all the angelic hosts, it was strange that the Savior should stoop Himself from His dignity to speak to a persecutor. Engaged as He is both day and night in pleading the cause of His own Church before His Father's Throne, it is condescension indeed which could induce Him, as it were, to suspend His intercessions in order that He might speak personally to one who had sworn himself His enemy.

And what grace was it that could lead the Savior's heart to speak to such a man as Saul, who had *breathed out* threats against His Church? Had he not hauled men and women to prison? Had he not compelled them in every synagogue to blaspheme the name of Jesus Christ? And now Jesus Himself must interpose to bring him to his senses! Ah, had it been a thunderbolt which quivered in its haste to reach the heart of man, we should not have marveled. Or had the lips of the Savior been heaving with a curse we should not have been astonished. Had He not Himself in His own lifetime cursed the persecutor? Did He not say, whosoever shall offend one of the least of these My little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were cast in the sea?

But now the man that is cursed by that language is yet to be blessed by Him whom he had persecuted. Who though he had stained his hand in blood and had now the commission in his hands to drag others to prison—though he had kept the clothes of those who had stoned Stephen—yet the Master, the King of Heaven, must Himself speak from the upper skies to bring him to feel the need of a Savior—and to make him partaker of precious faith. I say this is marvelous condescension and matchless grace.

But, Beloved, when we come to recollect the Savior's Character, it is but little wonder that He should do this for He has done far more than this. Did he not in Person leave the starry thrones of Heaven and come down to earth to suffer—and bleed and die? When I think of Bethlehem's manger, of the cruel Garden of Gethsemane and the yet more shameful Calvary, I do not wonder that the Savior should do any act of grace or condescension. That being done, what can be greater? If He has stooped from Heaven into Hades, what greater stoop can He accomplish? If His own Throne must be left empty, if His own crown must be relinquished, if His Godhead must be veiled in flesh and the splendors of His deity clothed in the rags of manhood, what wonder, I say, that He should stoop to speak even to Saul of Tarsus, to bring his heart to Himself?

Beloved, some of us do not wonder either, for although we have not had greater grace than the Apostle himself we have had no less. The Savior did not speak out of Heaven to us with a voice that others might hear, but He spoke with a voice that our conscience heard. We were not bloodthirsty, it may be, against His children, but we had sins both black and heinous. Yet He stopped us. Not content with wooing us or with threatening us, not content with sending His ministers to us and giving us His Word to warn us of duty, He would come Himself. And you and I, Beloved, who have tasted of this grace, can say it was matchless love that saved Paul—but not love unexemplified. For He has saved us also and made us partakers of the same grace.

I intend, this morning, to address myself more particularly to those who *fear not* the Lord Jesus Christ, but on the contrary, oppose Him. I think I may be quite certain that I have none here who go the length of desiring to see the old persecution of the Church revived. I do not think there is an Englishman, however much he may hate religion, who would wish to see the stake again in Smithfield and the burning pile consuming the saints. There may be some who hate

them as much, but still not in that fashion. The common sense of the age reviles against the gibbet, the sword and the dungeon. The children of God, in this country at least, are quite safe from any political persecution of that kind. But it is highly probable that I have here this morning some who go to the full length of their tether and who endeavor as much as lies in them to provoke the Lord to anger by opposing His cause.

You will perhaps recognize yourselves if I try to paint a picture. It is seldom that you ever go into the house of God—in fact you have a contempt for all the gatherings of the righteous. You have a notion that all saints are hypocrites, that all professors are cants and you do not at times blush to say so. However, you have a wife, and that wife of yours has been impressed under the sound of the ministry. She loves to go to the house of God—and Heaven and her heart alone know what grief and agony of mind you have caused her. How often have you taunted and jeered her on account of her profession?

You cannot deny but that she is a better woman for it. You are obliged to confess that although she cannot go with you in all your sports and merriments, yet as far as she can go she is a loving and affectionate wife to you. If anyone should find fault with her, you would right manfully defend her character. But it is her *religion* that you hate. And it is but lately that you threatened to lock her up on Sunday. You say it is impossible for you to live in the house with her if she will go up to the house of God.

Moreover there is a little child of yours. You had no objection to that child going to the Sunday-School, because she was out of your way on the Sunday when you were smoking your pipe in your shirt sleeves. You did not want to be bothered with your children, you said, and therefore you were glad to pack them off to the Sunday-School—but that child has had her heart touched. And you cannot help seeing that the religion of Christ is in her heart—therefore you do not like it. You love the child, but you would give anything if she were not what she is. You would give anything if you could crush the last spark of religion out of her.

But perhaps I can put your case yet. You are a master. You occupy a respectable position, you have many men under you and you cannot bear a man to make a profession of religion. Other masters you know have said to their men, “Do as you like, so long as you are a good servant, I do not care about your religious views.” But perhaps you are a little the reverse. Although you would not turn a man away because of his religion you give him a jeer every now and then. And if you trip him up in a little fault, you say, “Ah, that is your religion! I suppose you learned that at Chapel.” You grieve the poor man’s soul, while he endeavors as far as he can to discharge his duty to you.

Or, you are a young man, employed in a warehouse or a shop and there is one of your shop mates who has lately taken to religion. He is to be found on his knees in prayer—what fine fun you have made of him lately, haven’t you? You and others have joined in like a pack of hounds after a poor hare and he being of rather a timid turn of mind, perhaps is silent before you. Or if he speaks, the tear is in his eye because you have wounded his spirit. Now this is the self-same spirit that kindled the firebrand of old—that stretched the saint upon the rack—that cut his body in pieces and sent him to wander about in sheep skins and in goat skins. If I have not exactly hit your character yet, I may do it before I have done. I wish to address myself especially to those of you, who in word or deed or in any other manner, persecute the children of God—or if you do not like so hard a word as “persecute”—laugh at them, oppose them—and endeavor to put an end to the good work in their hearts.

I shall in the name of Christ, first put the question to you, “*Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?*” In the second place, I shall in Christ’s name expostulate with you—“*It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.*” And then if God shall bless what is said to the touching of your heart, it may be that the Master shall give you a few words of comfort, as he did the Apostle Paul, when he said, “Rise and stand upon your feet. 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 the which I will appear unto you.”

I. In the first place, then, we will consider THE QUESTION WHICH JESUS CHRIST PUT OUT OF HEAVEN TO PAUL.

First, notice what a personal question it was, “Saul, Saul, why do *you* persecute Me?” When I preach to you, I am obliged to address you all as an assembly. It is not possible for me, except on rare occasions, to single out an individual and describe his character, although under the hand of the Spirit it is sometimes done. But in the main I am obliged to describe the character as a whole and deal with it in the mass. But not so our Master. He did not say out of Heaven.

“Saul, why does the synagogue persecute Me? Why do the Jews hate My religion?” No—it was put more pertinently than that—“Saul, Saul, why do *you* persecute Me?”

If it had been put in general terms, it would have glanced off from the heart of the Apostle—it could have been like an arrow which had missed the mark and barely grazed the skin of the man in whose heart it was intended to find a home. But when it came personally—“Why do *you* persecute Me?”—there was no getting off it. I pray the Lord to make the question personal to some of you. There are many of us here present who have had personal preaching to our souls. Do you not remember, dear Brother in Christ, when you were first pricked in the heart, how personal the preacher was? I remember it well. It seemed to me that I was the only person in the whole place, as if a black wall were round about me and I were shut in with the preacher—something like the prisoners at the Penitentiary—who each sit in their box and can see no one but the Chaplain.

I thought all he said was meant for me. I felt persuaded that someone knew my character and had written to him and told him all—that he had personally picked me out. Why, I thought he fixed his eyes on me. And I have reason to believe he did, but still he said he knew nothing about my case. Oh, that men would hear the Word preached and that God would so bless them in their hearing, that they might feel it to have a personal application to their own hearts!

But note again—the Apostle received some information as to the persecuted one. If you had asked Saul who it was he persecuted, he would have said, “Some poor fishermen, that had been setting up an impostor. I am determined to put them down.” Why, who are they? “They are the poorest of the world. The very scum and draff of society. If they were princes and kings we perhaps might let them have their opinion. But these poor miserable ignorant fellows—I do not see why they are to be allowed to carry out their infatuation—and I shall persecute them.”

“Moreover, most of them are women I have been persecuting—poor ignorant creatures. What right have they to set their judgment up above the priests? They have no right to have an opinion of their own and therefore it is quite right for me to make them turn away from their foolish errors.” But see in what a different light Jesus Christ puts it. He does not say, “Saul, Saul, why did you persecute Stephen?” or “Why are you about to drag the people of Damascus to prisons?” No—“Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *Me*?”

Did you ever think of it in that light? You have got a poor man who works for you, who wears a fustian jacket. He is nobody. You may laugh at him. He will not tell anybody, or even if he does, you will not be called to book about it, because he is nobody. You dare not laugh so at a duke or an earl. You would mind your behavior if you were in such company as that—but because this is a poor man, you think you have a license given you to laugh at his religion. But remember, that beneath the fustian jacket there is Jesus Christ Himself.

Inasmuch as you have done this unto one of the least of His Brethren, you have done it unto Him. Has the thought ever struck you that when you laughed you were laughing, not at him, but at his Master? Whether it struck you or not it is a great truth that Jesus Christ takes all the injuries which are done to His people as if they had been done to Him. You locked your wife out the other night, did you, because she would frequent the house of God? When she stood there shivering in the midnight air, or entreating you to let her in, if your eyes had been wide open, you would have seen the Lord of Life and Glory shivering there. And He might have said to you, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *Me*?” And then you would have seen it to have been a very much greater sin than you imagine it now to be.

You laughed at a little child the other day, because the child sang its simple hymn and evidently sang it from its heart. Did you know—or if you did not know it then, know it now—did you know that you were laughing at Christ? That when you mocked her you were mocking her Master, and that Jesus Christ has set down that laugh in His great book, as an indignation done to His own real Person. “Why do you persecute *Me*?” If you could see Christ enthroned in Heaven, reigning there in the splendors of His majesty, would you laugh at Him? If you could see Him sitting on His great Throne coming to judge the world, would you laugh at Him?

Oh, as all the rivers run into the sea, so all the streams of the suffering Churches run into Christ. If the clouds are full of rain they empty themselves upon the earth—and if the Christian’s heart is full of woes it empties itself into the breast of Jesus. Jesus is the great reservoir of all His people’s woes and by laughing at His people you help to fill that reservoir to its brim. And one day it will burst in the fury of its might and the floods shall sweep you away. And the sand foundation upon which your house is built shall give way and then what shall you do when you shall stand before the face of Him whose Person you have mocked and whose name you have despised?

We will put the question in another way. It is a very reasonable one and seems to demand an answer. “Saul, Saul, *why* do you persecute Me?” “Saul,” the Master might have said, “what have I done to hurt you? When I was on earth did I say a word against your character—did I damage your reputation—did I injure your person—did I ever grieve you—did I ever say a hard word against you? What hurt have I ever done you? Why are you so provoked against Me? If I had been your bitterest enemy and had spit in your face, you could not have been more angry with me than now.

“But why, man, will you be angry against One who has never hurt you—who has never done you a displeasure? Oh, why do you persecute Me? Is there anything in My character that deserves it? Was I not pure and holy and separate from sinners? Did I not go about doing good? I raised the dead, I healed the lepers. I fed the hungry. I clothed the naked. For which of these works do you hate Me? Why do you persecute Me?” The question comes home to you in the same manner this morning. Ah, Man, why do you persecute Christ? What hurt has He ever done you? Has Christ ever despoiled you, robbed you, injured you in any way whatever? Has His Gospel in any way whatever taken away the comforts of life from you, or done you any damage? You dare not say that.

If it were the Mormonism of Joe Smith, I wonder not that you should persecute it, though, even then, you would have no right to do so, for that might take the wife of your bosom from you. If it were a filthy and lustful system that would undermine the foundations of society, you might think yourself right in persecuting it. But has Christ ever taught His disciples to rob you, to cheat you, to curse you? Does not His doctrine teach the very reverse and are not His followers, when they are true to their Master and themselves, the very reverse of this?

Why hate a man who has done you no injury? Why hate a religion that does not interfere with you? If you will not follow Christ yourself, how does it injure you to let others do so? You say it injures your family. Prove it, Sir. Has it injured your wife? Does she love you less than before? Is she less obedient? You dare not say that. Has it hurt your child? Is your child less reverent to his father because he fears God? Is he less fond of you because he loves his Redeemer best of all? In what respect has Christ ever hurt any of you?

He has fed you with the bounties of His Providence. The clothes you wear today are the gifts of His bounty. The breath in your nostrils He has preserved for you and will you curse Him for this? It was but the other day that an avenging angel seized the axe and the Master said, “Cut it down, why cumberst thou the ground?” And Jesus came and put His hand upon the auger’s arm and said, “Stay, stay yet another year until I have dug about it and fed it.” Your life was spared by Him and you curse Him for this? You blaspheme Him because He has spared your life—and spend the breath which His own grace has given you in cursing the God that allows you to breathe?

You little know from how many dangers Christ in His Providence protects you. You can little guess how numerous the mercies which, unseen by you, are poured into your lap every hour. And yet, for mercies innumerable, for grace that cannot be stopped by your iniquity, for love that cannot be overpowered by your injuries, do you curse the Savior for all this? Base ingratitude! Truly, you have hated Him without a cause. You have persecuted Him though He has loved you and has done nothing to injure you.

But let me picture the Master to you once more and methinks you will never, never persecute Him again, if you do but see Him. Oh, if you could but see the Lord Jesus, you must love Him. If you did but know His worth you could not hate Him! He was more beautiful than all the sons of men. Persuasion sat upon His lips, as if all the bees of eloquence had brought their honey there and made His mouth the hive. He spoke and so did He speak, that if a lion had heard Him, it would have crouched and licked His feet. Oh, how roving was He in His tenderness! Remember that prayer of His when the iron was piercing His hand—“Father, forgive them.”

You never heard Him, all His life long, once say an angry word to those who persecuted Him. He was reviled, but He reviled not again. Even when He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, He was dumb before His shearers and He opened not His mouth. But though fairer than the sons of men, both in Person and in character, yet He was the Man of Sorrows. Grief had plowed His brow with her deepest furrows. His cheeks were sunken and hollow with agony. He had fasted many a day and often had He thirsted.

He toiled from morning to night. Then spent all night in prayer. Then rose again to labor—and all this without reward—with no hope of getting anything from any man. He had no house, no home, no gold, no laver. Foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but He, the Son of Man, had not where to lay His head. He was the persecuted man, hunted by His enemies from place to place, with scarce a friend to help Him. Oh, had you seen Him! Had you seen His

loveliness and His misery united, had you seen His kindness—and yet the cruelty of His enemies—your hearts must have melted!

You would have said, “No, Jesus, I cannot persecute You! No, I will stand between You and the burning sunshine. If I cannot be Your disciple, yet at any rate I will not be Your opposer. If this cloak can shelter you in Your midnight wrestlings, here it is. And if this water pot can draw You water from the well, I will let it down and You shall have enough. For if I love You not, since You are so poor, so sad and so good, I cannot hate You. No, I will not persecute you!” But though I feel certain if you could see Christ, you must say this—yet you have still persecuted Him in His disciples, in the members of His spiritual body—and I therefore put to you the question, “Saul, Saul, *why* do you persecute Me?” God help you to answer that question and the answer must be shame and confusion of face.

II. This shall bring me to the second point—EXPOSTULATION. “It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.” There is a figure here. There is an allusion to the ox goad. When the ox was yoked for plowing, if he did not move on in as sprightly a manner as was desired, the husbandman pricked him with a long rod that ended with an iron point. Very likely, as soon as the ox felt the goad, instead of going on, he struck out as hard as he could behind him. He kicked against the goad, sending the iron deep into his own flesh.

Of course the husbandman who was guiding him kept his goad there still. And the more frequently the ox kicked, the more he was hurt. But go he must. He was in the hand of man who must and will rule the beast. It was just his own option to kick as long as he pleased—he did no harm to his driver—only to himself. You will see that there is a beauty in this figure, if I pull it to pieces, and ask you a question or two.

It is hard for you to kick against the goad. For, in the first place, you do not really accomplish your purpose. When the ox kicks against the goad it is to spite the husbandman for having goaded him onward. But instead of hurting the husbandman it hurts itself. And when you have persecuted Christ in order to stop the progress of His Gospel, let me ask you—have you ever stopped it at all? No. And ten thousand like you would not be able to stop the mighty onward rush of the host of God’s elect. If you think, O Man, that you can stop the progress of Christ’s Church, go and first bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades and bid the universe stand still instead of circling round those fair stars!

Go, stand by the winds, and bid them cease their wailing, or take your station upon a hoary cliff and bid the roaring sea roll back when its tide is marching on the beach. And when you have stopped the universe—when sun, moon and stars have been obedient to your mandate, when the sea has heard you and obeyed you—then come forth and stop the omnipotent progress of the Church of Christ. But you can not do it. “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us.”

But what said the Almighty? He did not even get up to combat with them. “He that sits in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath and vex them in His sore displeasure. Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion.” The Church cares not for all the noise of the world. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. Though waters thereof roar and be troubled, and though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.” Ah, in your hosts you have not prevailed. Think you, O puny Man, that one by one, you shall be able to conquer? Your wish may be strong enough, but your wish can never be accomplished. You may desire it anxiously, but you shall never attain thereto.

But put it as a personal matter—have you ever succeeded in stopping the work of grace in the heart of anyone? You tried to laugh it out of your wife, but if she really was converted, you never would laugh it out of her. You may have tried to vex your little child. But if grace is in that child, I defy you and your master the devil to get it out. Yes, young man, you may laugh at your shop mate, but he will beat you in the long run. He may sometimes be abashed, but you never will turn him. If he is a hypocrite you will—and perhaps there will be no great loss—but if he is a true soldier of Christ, he can bear a great deal more than the laugh of an empty-headed being like yourself.

You need not for a moment flatter yourself that he will be afraid of you. He will have to endure a greater baptism of suffering than that. And he will not be cowed by the first shower of your poor, pitiful, malicious folly. And as for you, Mr. Merchant, you may persecute your man, but see if you will get him to yield. Why, I know a man whose master had

tried very hard to make him go against his conscience. But he said, “No, Sir.” And the master thought, “Well, he is a very valuable servant. But I will beat him if I can.”

So he threatened that if he did not do as he wished he would turn him away. The man was dependent on his master and he knew not what he should do for his daily bread. So he said to his master honestly at once, “Sir, I don’t know of any other situation. I should be very sorry to leave you, for I have been very comfortable, but if it comes to that, Sir, I would sooner starve than submit my conscience to anyone.” The man left and the master had to go after him to bring him back again. And so it will be in every case. If Christians are but faithful they must win the day. It is no use your kicking against them. You cannot hurt them. They must, they shall, be conquerors through Him that has loved them.

But there is another way of putting it. When the ox kicked against the goad, he got no good by it. Kick as he might, he was never benefited by it. If the ox had stopped and nibbled a blade of grass or a piece of hay, why, then he would have been wise, perhaps, in standing still. But to stand still simply to be goaded and to kick—simply to have iron stuck into your flesh—is a rather foolish thing. Now, I ask you, what have you ever got by opposing Christ? Suppose you say you don’t like religion—what have you ever got by hating it? I will tell you what you have got. You have got those red eyes sometimes on the Monday morning, after the drunkenness of the Sunday night.

I will tell you what you have got, young man. You have got that shattered constitution, which, even if you had now turned it to the paths of virtue, must hang about you till you leave it in your grave. What have you got? Why, there are some of you who might have been respectable members of society, who have got that old broken hat, that old ragged coat, that drunken, slouched manner about you—and that character that you would like to let down and run away from, for it is no good to you. That is what you have got by opposing Christ.

What have you got by opposing Him? Why, a house without furniture—for through your drunkenness you have had to sell everything of value you had. You have got your children in rags and your wife in misery. And your eldest daughter, perhaps, running into shame—and your son rising up to curse the Savior, as you yourself have done. What have you got by opposing Christ? What man in all the world ever got anything by it? There is a serious *loss* sustained—but as for gain—there is nothing of the sort.

But you say though you have opposed Christ, still you are moral. Again I will put it to you. Have you ever got anything even *then* by opposing Christ? Has it made your family any the happier, do you think? Has it made you any the happier yourself? Do you feel after you have been laughing at your wife, or your child or your man, that you can sleep any sounder? Do you feel *that* to be a thing which will quiet your conscience when you come to die? Remember, you must die. And do you think that when you are dying, it will afford you any consolation to think that you did your best to destroy the souls of other people? No. You must confess it is a poor game. You are getting no good by it. You are doing yourself a positive injury.

Ah, drunkard, go on with your drunkenness—remember that every drunken fit leaves a plague behind it—and you will have to feel one day. It is pleasant to sin today, but it will not be pleasant to reap the harvest of it tomorrow. The seeds of sin are sweet when we sow them, but the fruit is frightfully bitter when we come to house it at last. The wine of sin tastes sweet when it goes down, but it is as gall and vinegar in the bowels. Take heed, you that hate Christ and oppose His Gospel, for as certainly as the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God and His religion is true—you are heaping on your head a load of injury, instead of deriving good. “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.”

But kick as the ox might, it had to go forward at last. We have seen a horse stand still in the street and the driver, who had not very much patience with him, has so belabored him that we wondered how the poor horse could stand still under such a torrent of blows. But we have observed at last that the horse is obliged to go on and we wondered what he got by standing still. It is just the same with you. If the Lord means to make a Christian out of you, you may kick against Christianity, but He will have you at last. If Jesus Christ intends your salvation you may curse Him, but He will make you preach His Gospel one day, if He wishes you to do so. Ah, if Christ had willed it, Voltaire who cursed Him, might have made a second Apostle Paul.

He could not have resisted Sovereign Grace if Christ had so determined. If anyone had told the Apostle Paul when he was going to Damascus, that he would one day become a preacher of Christianity, he would no doubt have laughed at it

as ridiculous nonsense. But the Lord had the key of his will and He wound it up as He pleased. And so it will be with you—if He has determined to have you as one of His followers—

*“If, as the eternal mandate ran
Almighty grace arrest that man,”*

almighty grace will arrest you. And the bloodiest of persecutors will be made the boldest of saints. Then why do you persecute Him? Perhaps you are despising the very Savior you will one day love. Trying to knock down the very thing that you will one day try to build up. Maybe you are persecuting the men you will call your Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

It is always well for a man not to go so far that he cannot go back respectably. Now do not go too far in opposing Christ. For one of these times it may be you will be very glad to come crouching at His feet. But there is this sad reflection—if Christ does not save you, still you must go on. You may kick against the pricks, but you cannot get away from His dominion. You may kick against Christ but you cannot cast Him from His Throne—you cannot drag Him out of Heaven.

You may kick against Him, but you cannot prevent His condemning you at last. You may laugh at Him, but you cannot laugh away the Day of Judgment. You may scoff at religion. But all your scoffs cannot put it out. You may jeer at Heaven. But all your jeers will not take one single note from the harps of the redeemed. No, the thing is just the same as if you did not kick. It makes no difference except to yourself. Oh how foolish must you be, to persevere in a rebellion which is harmful to none but your own soul—which is not injurious to Him whom you hate—but which, if He pleases, He can stop, or if He does not stop, He can and will revenge.

III. And now I close up by addressing myself to some here whose hearts are already touched. Do you this morning feel your need of a Savior? Are you conscious of your guilt in having opposed Him and has the Holy Spirit made you willing now to confess your sins? Are you saying, “Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner”? Then I have GOOD NEWS for you. Paul, who persecuted Christ, was *forgiven*. He says he was the very chief of sinners, but he obtained mercy. So shall you. No, more—Paul not only obtained mercy—he obtained honor. He was made an honored minister to preach the Gospel of Christ—and so may you. Yes, if you repent, Christ may make use of you to bring others to Him. It strikes me with wonder when I see how many of the very greatest of sinners have become the most useful of men.

Do you see John Bunyan yonder? He is cursing God. He goes into the belfry and pulls the bell on Sunday, because he likes the bell ringing, but when the Church door is open, he is playing bowls upon the village green. There is the village tap. And there is no one that laughs so loud there as John Bunyan. There are some people going to the meeting house. There is no one curses them so much as John. He is a ringleader in all vice. If there is a hen roost to be robbed, Jack’s your man. If there is any iniquity to be done, if there is any evil in the parish—you need not guess twice—John Bunyan is at the bottom of it.

But who is it stands there in the deck before the magistrate? Who is it I heard just now say—“If you let me out of prison today, I will preach the Gospel tomorrow, by the help of God”? Who was it that lay twelve years in prison? And when they said he might go out if he would promise not to preach, replied, “No, I will be here till the moss grows on mine eyelids, but I must and will preach God’s Gospel as soon as I have liberty”? Why, that is John Bunyan, the very man who cursed Christ the other day! A ringleader in vice has become the glorious dreamer, the very leader of God’s hosts! See what God did for him! And what God did for him He will do for you, if now you repent and seek the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. “He is able, He is willing, doubt no more.”

Oh, I trust I have some here who have hated God, but who are nevertheless God’s elect. Some that have despised Him, but who are bought with blood. Some that have kicked against the pricks, but yet Almighty Grace will bring them onward. There are some here, I doubt not, who have cursed God to His face, who shall one day sing hallelujahs before His Throne. Some that have indulged in lusts all but bestial, who shall one day wear the white robe and move their fingers along the golden harps of the glorified spirits in Heaven. Happy is it to have such a Gospel to preach to such sinners! To the persecutor, Christ is preached. Come to Jesus whom you have persecuted—

“Come and welcome, Sinner, come.”

And now bear with me one moment if I address you yet again. The probability stares me in the face that I may have but very few more opportunities of addressing you upon subjects that concern your soul. My Hearer, I shall arrogate nothing to myself, but this one thing—“I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.” And God is my wit-

ness with how many sighs and tears and prayers, I have labored for your good. Out of this place I believe thousands have been called. Among you whom I now see there is a large number of converted persons. According to your own testimony you have had a thorough change and you are not now what you were.

But I am conscious of this fact—there are many of you who have attended here now almost these two years who are just what you were when you first came. There are some of you whose hearts are not touched. You sometimes weep, but still your lives have never been changed. You are yet “in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.” Well, Sirs, if I never address you again, there is one favor that I would crave of you. If you will not turn to God, if you are determined to be lost, if you will not hear my rebuke nor turn at my exhortation, I ask this one favor at least—let me know and let me have this confidence—*that I am clear of your blood.*

I think you must confess this. I have not shunned to preach of Hell with all its horrors, until I have been laughed at, as if I always preached upon it. I have not shunned to preach upon the most sweet and pleasing themes of the Gospel, till I have feared lest I should make my preaching effeminate, instead of retaining the masculine vigor of a Boanerges. I have not shunned to preach the Law. That great Commandment has wrung in your ears, “You shall love the Lord your God and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” I have never feared the great, nor have I courted their smile. I have rebuked nobility as I would rebuke the peasantry and to every one of you I have dealt a portion of meat in due season.

I know that this much can be said of me—“Here stands one that never feared the face of man yet.” And I hope never will. Amidst contumely, rebuke and reproach I have sought to be faithful to you and to my God. If then, you will be damned, let me have this one thing as a consolation for your misery, when I shall think of so frightful a thought—that you are not damned for the want of calling after. You are not lost for the want of weeping after—and not lost, let me add—for the want of praying after in the name of Him who shall judge the quick and dead according to my Gospel. And of Him that shall come in the clouds of Heaven and by that fearful day when the pillars of this earth shall totter, and the heavens shall fall about your ears—by that day when, “Depart, you cursed,” or “Come, you blessed,” must be the dread alternative—I charge you, lay these things to heart!

And as I shall face my God to account for my honesty to you and my faithfulness to Him, so remember—you must stand before His bar to give an account of how you heard and how you acted after hearing. And woe unto you if, having been lifted up like Capernaum with privileges you should be cast down like Sodom and Gomorrah, or lower still than they, because you repented not. Oh, Master! Turn sinners to Yourself. For Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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