

## HEART PIERCING NO. 3094

A SERMON  
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*“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter  
and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?”*  
*Acts 2:37*

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text (together with verse 36.)  
is #2102, Volume 35—“PRICKED IN THEIR HEART—  
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

I DARESAY you have seen collections of celebrated sermons which have been chosen with more or less discretion. I suppose that the sermon of Peter, on the day of Pentecost, was one of the most celebrated discourses that was ever delivered, for it was the means of bringing 3,000 persons to conviction, to conversion, to profession of faith and to union with the visible church! Yet I do not believe that any library collector would ever have put this sermon by Peter among the most famous. It does not seem to me to be very eloquent—there is no climax in it, nothing of that fashionable thing called a “crowning achievement.” It is all plain speaking and hard hitting, very personal, very much to the point, very full of clear Scriptural reasoning—but there is nothing at all oratorical about it. It is just such a simple speech as you might expect from a fisherman as Peter had been! I should think that Peter’s discourse was delivered calmly and deliberately. He was at a white heat of earnestness and was altogether too earnest to lose his self-control. His whole being was so thoroughly possessed by what he had to say that he thought little of how he said it.

It was a very powerful sermon, but where did the power lie, do you think? Well, instrumentally and speaking after the manner of men, I think it lay partly in Peter’s vivid realization of what he was saying. He knew that his Lord and Savior had, with wicked hands, been crucified and slain—and that He had risen from the grave and had gone back again to heaven. You could see, by his whole manner, that he was not talking about myths and fancies, but about truths and things of which he knew for certain. There is always a power about a man’s message when his hearers know that he who delivers it believes what he is saying and has no latent doubts, no concealed skepticisms, but speaks what he knows and testifies what he has seen.

The next secret of the power of Peter’s discourse was, I think, that it was full of Scripture. There is a quotation, first of one Psalm, and then of another—David said this, and David said that—Peter’s superstructure of argument was built upon the solid rock of Holy Scripture. Peter had a great mass before him that day needing to be moved and I do not wonder that he got such good leverage with such a fulcrum as he had. The more of Scripture, yes, of the very words of Scripture that we can use in preaching, the better and, certainly, the more of such thing as can begin with, “Thus says the Lord.” Men will not care about what we say, or, “Thus says Mr. Wesley,” or, “Thus says John Calvin”—it is, “Thus says the Lord” that will have power over them! McCheyne says that you will generally notice that conversions are worked rather by the preacher’s text, or by some passage of Scripture quoted by him, than by his sermon, “For,” he adds, “it is God’s Word, not our comment upon God’s Word, which is usually blessed to the salvation of souls.” I think it is so, though the rule is not without many exceptions, and our Lord hints at that when He says, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word,” as if the message of God sent servants was not only God’s Word, but also *their* word—and men were led to believe on Jesus through hearing it.

But the real strength of Peter's sermon lay in this, that he had been that very day baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Sitting in that upper room with the rest of the disciples, he had heard "the sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind" which "filled the entire house where they were sitting." And the "cloven tongues like as of fire" had sat upon Peter as well as upon the rest—and he, too, had been "filled with the Holy Spirit," so that through him the Holy Spirit spoke. Therefore it was that when he delivered that very simple sermon, his hearers were pricked in their heart, and thousands of them cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Oh, that some such power might fall upon this congregation this evening, especially upon the unconverted part of it, that they might be "pricked in their heart" as Peter's hearers were!

**I.** My subject is the pricking in the heart and my first observation is that A SAVING IMPRESSION IS ALWAYS A PRICK IN THE HEART.

A prick in the heart is very painful. To be pricked anywhere is not a thing to be desired, but a prick in the heart would not merely be painful, but, in a natural and literal sense, it would be fatal. There are a great many different kinds of impressions made by preachers upon their hearers, but blessed is that preacher who makes a wound right in their hearts!

A saving impression must be made in their heart, *because all their religion must begin there*. A great many attempts have been made to make men religious from the outside. Some have thought that a very low coat, reaching almost to the ground, and a strange kind of hat—a biretta, I think it is called—have a great deal of religion in them. It is amazing how much religion is supposed to depend upon tailors and hatters! But I fail to see how anybody's heart can be affected by the cut of his coat, or the shape of his hat! Some try to affect a man by the performance of certain ceremonies. They take him in his childhood and "regenerate" him after their fashion. And later they "confirm" him in something or other and external ceremonies of various kinds are performed upon him. They remind one rather of Babylon than of Jerusalem. But I have never heard of anyone being brought to Jesus Christ in that way, or of any conscience being awakened, or any man finding peace with God in that fashion!

Some have tried what could be done by advising abstinence from meats and drinks. This is a very proper thing in its place and may lead to useful results. But Christ's teaching is, "Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man, but that which comes out of the mouth that defiles a man." It is the *heart* which must be affected! And nothing that comes of man, or that can be manipulated by the human hand seems able to touch that. "Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God," is the demand even under the old law of God—and one of the first laws of pure spiritual religion is this—"God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." And, therefore, no impression can be of any saving use to a man unless it reaches his heart.

Many of you, dear friends, have made a profession of religion and you are moral enough to be reckoned consistent with that profession and attentive enough to outward religious duties to consider yourselves to be all that you should be. But, oh, I do implore you never to be satisfied with any religion which does not affect your heart, and with no religious exercise which is not true heart work. You might as well be sitting in your own homes as be here without your hearts. It is no more useful to sing a hymn than to sing a song unless you sing it with the heart and so make melody to God. The heart, the heart, the heart, the heart—that is the vital place! Out of it are the issues of life and unless it is savingly affected, the whole life will still be estranged from God!

If those who hear the gospel are to be blessed by it, they must be impressed and pricked in their heart *because other impressions may even be evil*. They may be powerful, yet they may be productive of no good results. Another of Peter's discourses made a very singular impression upon his hearers. If you turn to Acts 5:33 you will find these words, "When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them." That time, you see, the wound went just as far as the heart, but it stopped there—"they were cut *to* the heart." It was a deep cut—*to* the heart, but not *in* the heart! And the consequence was not that they cried out, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" but they, "took counsel to slay them." Oftentimes if the word is delivered earnestly and with power, men cannot help feeling the force of it. But what do they do after feeling it? They gnash their teeth for very rage, or they try to besmear and bespatter the preacher and to ridicule or misrepresent what he has said. If anything has pointedly

come home to them, they twist it into quite another form and say, “The preacher said such and such,” when he really said nothing of the kind! That is a way of taking counsel to slay him—they dare not kill his body, but they kill his reputation as far as they can. You may be deeply impressed by a sermon so as to feel under it in a way which you will never forget and yet, for all that, you may only be cut *to* the heart!

Yet I would rather that people were cut to the heart than not wounded at all, because I hope that the sword of the Spirit will penetrate a little further and really enter the heart. I have often been told this sort of story—“I came to hear you preach, sir, on such an occasion, and I went away very angry. I could not bear the doctrine that was proclaimed and I went out hating the man who had talked in that fashion. Yet I could not forget it. It rankled in my mind until; at last, I began to think there was something in it. By and by, I saw that it was true and then I said, ‘What a fool I am to struggle against it!’” I do not mind my hearers being angry with me because of my preaching, for it is a good deal like fishing. If you have a good large salmon at the end of the line, he will struggle and pull with all his might—and thus he will swallow the hook all the more deeply and there will be the less likelihood of his getting away. And an obstinate resistance to the gospel is sometimes an indication that the gospel is piercing and pricking the hearer—and making him snap at it as a wounded beast tries to bite the spear which has been thrust into him and which he cannot pull out. So, when a man is cut *to* the heart, I hope that he will soon be cut *in* the heart, but if the sword of the Spirit does not prick him in the heart, no permanent good will be effected.

And further, supposing the impression made should be good in itself, yet if the hearer is not pricked in the heart, *the impression will be only transient* and we shall have to say to the man, as the Lord said to Judah, “Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away.” Or if the impression lasts a little longer, it will only need enough of the fervent heat of the rising sun upon the blade which has begun to spring up, but under which there is no depth of earth—and in due season its verdure will vanish and it will perish. If it is not real heart work, it will not last. The reason why so many backslide is that they built on the sand—there was no deep foundation work. The soul saving work, the work which lasts, is that where God plows deeply into the conscience and sows the good seed of the kingdom in the heart. It is principle, not passion—full conviction, not merely a profession of faith—that will endure unto the end. If the impression made does not prick the heart, it will be only transient—and when it disappears, evil will come of it, for perhaps the people who are most difficult to be moved are those who have been impressed a great many times, yet not saved. The first time you heard God’s faithful servant preach, you felt ready to weep yourself away under the power of the truth of God which he proclaimed, but now his voice has grown so familiar that even when it is most pathetically earnest, you go to sleep under it! I have been in a mill when there has been such a clatter of wheels that I could not hear myself speak, yet the miller has told me that he was so used to the noise that he could go to sleep in it. And there are persons who have sat so long under a faithful minister that they have got used to his message and do not feel its force as they did when first they heard it. To use a common expression, they have become gospel hardened. And this is a very serious state for any man to reach. May God save us from that perilous condition by causing us to be pricked in the heart!

When the truth pricks the hearers of it in the heart, *the impression becomes operative*. In the case before us, if you read the narrative, you will find that these men became earnest enquirers. They said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren—what must we do?” Being told what to do, merely, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you,” they did repent. There was a change of mind which was followed by a corresponding change of life—and they were baptized—they obeyed the command of Christ and made an open declaration of their faith in Him in His own appointed way. Thus they were added to the church, “and they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

All this followed because they had been “pricked in their heart.” It was a sorrowful beginning, yet it was a good beginning, for it was God’s way of beginning the work of grace in their souls. I wish that all converts began in that way. Some seem to me to jump into religion as if they were going into a bath—and then jump out of it again just as quickly. I do not believe in the faith that is unaccompanied by

repentance. Some have spoken in disparagement of repentance by saying “that the original word means nothing more than a change of mind.” And you might imagine that it was a very unimportant change of mind. But their knowledge of Greek is not very deep and their experimental knowledge of true religion would seem to be still shallower. This change of mind, I believe, was never better pictured than in that verse of the children’s hymn—

*“Repentance is to leave  
The sin we loved before  
And show that we in earnest grieve,  
By doing so no more.”*

A faith that has no tears in its eyes is a blind faith, for where there is sight there will be weeping. Never did a soul look to Christ, whom it had pierced, without weeping and mourning because of its sin. Faith and repentance are twins—they are born together and they will live together—and as long as a Christian is in this world both will be needed. Rowland Hill used to say that the only thing that he would be sorry to leave when he went to heaven was that sweet, lovely, sorrowful Grace of repentance—he supposed he could not repent in heaven, but it was such a sweet experience to keep on repenting that he would wish to repent forever if such a thing might be.

**II.** Now, in the second place, let us notice WHAT TRUTHS GOD USES AS DAGGERS TO PRICK SINNERS IN THE HEART.

I have known some pricked in the heart merely *by discovering that the gospel, the Bible, was really true*. They have been skeptical—they have perhaps been blasphemers but, all of a sudden, being honestly convinced that the Bible was true, they have been broken down at once, just as Saul of Tarsus was. He would not have persecuted Christ if he had believed Him to be the Messiah, but he thought He was an impostor and, therefore, honestly determined to put down His followers. He says concerning himself, “I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.” The moment the Lord Jesus called to him out of heaven, and said, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?...I am Jesus who you persecute,” he was pricked in the heart and soon he became, as many others have become, just as earnest in the defense of the truth of God as he had before, in his ignorance, been in opposition to it!

I have known others pierced in the heart *by shame through some particular sin*. I will give you an instance in which that was the case. A young man has been moral from his youth up. He has had much to thank God for with regard to what he has been. He has never mixed with the wanton or wicked world, yet there is always a danger as well as a benefit in this state of things. This young man becomes self-righteous. He thinks himself a great deal better than others. Perhaps he says that he is a sinner because everybody says that out of a sort of compliment to God, but he does not feel that he has ever done much that was wrong and he wishes that other people were half as good as he thinks that he is! But one day he commits a certain definite sin. I do not know whether the young brother is here, but he told me of a case of just this kind. He said that when he was in the workshop one day, he upset the oil can and an inquiry was made as to who had been so careless. He was asked—and he said that he had not done it. And from his usual character everybody believed his denial. “But,” he said, “as I went home that night, it came to my mind, ‘You are a liar. You are a liar.’ I felt so mean,” he said to me, “I never felt like that before. I had always acted like a man and like a good man, I thought, but now I felt that I had been a liar. When I got up in the morning, I did not like to go among the other men in the workshop. I thought they would all look at me and say, ‘You are a liar.’ I could not bear to think of it and a sense that I had lied brought me down on my knees before God.”

Now I do not say that I was glad that young man had told a lie, but I did feel thankful that he had discovered what a liar his heart had been all his life—for his heart had always been saying to him, “You are a good fellow,” yet he had not been so in reality! If there had not been lies in his heart, that lie would not have come out of his mouth. If there were rats under that floor, you might not know it was so until one happened to pop his head up through a hole in the boards—yet he only shows you what was there all the while! And so, sometimes someone sin has crept up into the light to let a man see what always was secretly in his soul—and that one sin has proved to be, in the hands of God, a sharp sword which has cut right into his heart and convinced him that he is a sinner in the sight of God.

In a great many other cases, God has used *teaching concerning His law as the means of pricking sinners in the heart*. A man reads the Ten Commandments and he says, “All these have I kept from my youth up.” But he is told, upon Christ’s authority, that every commandment contains within itself a great deal more than appears on the surface, as, for instance, “You shall not kill,” is a commandment which is broken by *anger*. “He that hates his brother” so that he wishes that there were no such person, is, in heart, the perpetrator of the crime of murder! Then take the command, “You shall not commit adultery.” “Oh,” says one, “I never sinned in that way!” And some excellent woman says, “I could not bear even to *think* of such a thing!” Yet there have been unchaste *desires, glances, thoughts, imaginations*—and the commandment covers all those. I do not need to go into the details of each command—it will suffice to sum all up as that “certain lawyer” did. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.” Did you ever do that? Has anyone among us come anywhere *near* to doing that? When the law of the Lord, in its wide sweep and wondrous compass of all our thoughts and imaginations and devices comes to be thoroughly understood by us, then it is that God causes us to be pricked by its sharp point!

I have known some also pricked in the heart when they have discovered that *there is to be a judgment about everything that we have done*—no, more than that—about everything that we have said and everything that we have thought—and that that judgment will be most solemn and its sentence most severe. There will be pronounced, from the lips of God, a sentence of condemnation upon the ungodly which will rest upon them forever and ever, so that they shall abide in a living death in which there shall be no gleam of light or joy, but all shall be a desolation and a ruin, where misery shall lift up its doleful notes forever proclaiming the infinite justice of God. Many have been “pricked in their heart” when they have found that though some preachers make our sin to be only a trifle, God’s Word does not. Man may try to make the penalty of sin seem small, but God’s Word does not. God’s scale of sin and man’s scale of sin differ very widely. God regards sin as a vast evil requiring an infinite atonement, while some who profess to be His servants treat it as quite an insignificant thing. I pray that the truth, as revealed in God’s Word, may be applied with power to every unwounded heart here, and that many may be “pricked in their heart,” and caused to cry out, as they did after Peter’s discourse on the day of Pentecost, “Men and brethren, what must we do?”

On the other hand, a great many have been “pricked in their heart” *by a sense of the great goodness of God*. They have said, “Has God been so good, so kind, so tender to us and have we never loved Him or sought His glory?” And they have felt ashamed as they have thought of their base ingratitude. There is one thing I often feel—I do not know whether you feel as I do and I do not know whether I can quite make you see what I mean—I often feel a great pity for God, I feel as if I could weep tears of blood because God is so shamefully treated by His own creatures. God Himself feels their ingratitude, for He says, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner, and the donkey his master’s crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.” He feels that it is a hard case that He should be treated thus, and when *men* feel that it is a hard case, it is a proof that they have been “pricked in their heart.”

But the chief instrument, I think, that God uses for pricking sinners in their heart is *the dying love of Jesus Christ*. Nothing wounds like the cross of Christ, just as nothing heals like the cross. When we discover that out of infinite love and pity, Jesus came to this earth and took upon Him our sins, our sorrows, our sicknesses and died in our place upon Calvary’s cross, we say, “How can we stand out against one who is so disinterested, so condescending and so kind?” Looking to Him whom we have pierced by our sin, we are made to weep on account of it. Are not your hearts, my fellow Christians, always most tender when you get nearest the cross? I am sure you agree with the poet who wrote—

*“My sins, my sins, my Savior,  
How sad on You they fall!  
Seen through your gentle patience  
I tenfold feel them all.  
I know they are forgiven,  
But still their pain to me*

*Is all the grief and anguish  
They laid, my Lord, on Thee."*

Yes, a bleeding Savior makes men's hearts bleed. When He is pieced, they also are pierced. Of one thing I am sure, that nothing ever pierced my heart like the discovery of God's boundless love in giving His well-beloved Son to die for me. I will put it to any man here, even if he is living this day an ungodly life, even if he has plunged into the very worst and most infamous of sins—if tonight he could know that God had loved him from before the foundation of the world—that long before the stars began to shine, electing love had pitched on him to be its peculiar object—that Christ died especially for him; that for him there was appointed pardon and acceptance; and for him a crown already made in heaven and a white robe which would fit no one but himself, and a harp which no hand but his could ever play, oh, I think he would loathe himself, and say, "I did not know this, or else I would not have lived as I have lived. I did not know that I was the favorite of heaven; I did not know that I was bought with the precious blood of Jesus! I did not know that God had ordained me unto eternal life, else had I long ago fled into my Father's arms and cried, 'I have sinned against heaven, and before You.'" O Spirit of the living God, make such a revelation to some of God's elect here now! Wound thus their hearts and then lead them to the wounded Savior, and let them know that whoever believes in Him was loved of God before time began and shall be loved of God when time shall be no more!

**III.** Now I want to notice very briefly, in the third place, WHOSE HAND USES THESE SHARP DAGGERS SO THAT SINNERS GET "PRICKED IN THEIR HEART."

Not Peter's, my brothers and sisters, nor mine, nor the hand of any gospel minister! It must be a more powerful hand than any of these—even *the hand of the Holy Spirit*. The fact is that He who wrote these truths in the Bible must Himself write them on men's hearts, or else they will forever remain inoperative except to condemn! There is one who knows all about the human heart—the Holy Spirit searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men—and He knows how to apply the truth of God so as to make it quick and powerful, and to drive home to the heart that sword which, because He uses it, is called "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." I pray that He may take the truth this very moment and use it thus. A sword hanging on the wall does not wound anybody. Our daily prayer ought to be, "O almighty Spirit, gird Your sword upon Your thigh and wield it in Your omnipotent might, that sinners may be 'pricked in their heart,' and so be brought to repentance and salvation!"

One very comforting thought is that *He who alone can pierce sinners' hearts, is named "the Comforter."* Catch at that, sinner, catch at that! He who wounds the heart is also the Comforter! He who kills is the Quickener who makes alive! The Spirit who convicts is also the Spirit who consoles! He has come to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, but it is also His office to take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us; though one of His hands holds a sharp dagger, the other hand bears the remedy with which to heal the wound, for still is that saying true, "I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal." Only He who kills can make alive, but blessed be God that the same divine Spirit both wounds and heals!

Therefore let us, who are the children of God, cry mightily unto the Spirit and entreat Him to make the preaching of the gospel, here and everywhere else, to be like a sharp sword piercing the hearts of sinners! How many preachers, nowadays, are using a sword without either edge or point? I recollect hearing a sermon and before it was preached there was a prayer offered that souls might be saved by it, yet I could not see how any soul could have been saved by that sermon unless the hearer had misunderstood what the preacher said and then, perhaps, he might have been converted. Yet many people called it "a very fine sermon." The man had put the sword of the Spirit into a splendid scabbard decorated all the way up with gold and diamonds—and then he waved it about and prayed the Lord to kill somebody with it! But the Lord could not do it unless He acted directly contrary to His usual method of working! He often uses our weakness and our infirmity to glorify Himself, but He cannot do many mighty works with some instrumentality. Brothers and sisters pray to God to send us the Holy Spirit—that is what we need above everything else! Pray day and night for this and believe and expect that God will grant your request. If the preacher does not happen to be the man you like best to hear, say to yourself, "God can use that man," and then pray, "O Lord, give him Your Holy Spirit!" I remember that

Mr. Matthew Wilkes once preached from the text, “You are our epistle written in our hearts...written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.” He compared the preacher to a pen and said that some pens needed mending now and then, and that all pens, however good they were, must be dipped in the ink if they were to do any writing at all. And he added, “You ought to pray all the more for your preacher when he does not write well, ‘Lord, dip him in the ink! Give him more of the unction of the Holy Spirit, and then his word will have power over the hearts of men!’”

**IV. Our last inquiry must be, HOW CAN THESE PRICKS IN THE HEART BE HEALED?**

You had the answer in the first hymn we sang tonight—

*“When wounded sore the stricken soul  
Lies bleeding and unbound.  
One hand only, a pierced hand,  
Can salve the sinner’s wound.  
When sorrow swells the laden breast,  
And tears of anguish flow,  
One heart only, a broken heart  
Can feel the sinner’s woe.”*

Is your heart bleeding? Then bring it to the bleeding heart of Jesus, for that will halt its wound! Does your brow ache? Then put it near that brow which was crowned with thorns and its aching will soon be gone. Are you sorely wounded? Then lay your wounds close to the wounds of Jesus and they shall be healed.

This is the whole story. You are guilty and God must punish sin. He cannot be a just God and yet not exact the penalty for sin. But Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and He has stood as the substitute for His people, bearing their sins in His own body up to the tree and on the tree. And there He endured the wrath of God against sin, “being made a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree.” You ask, “Did Christ bear *my* sins?” Let me ask you—do you believe in Him? Do you trust Him as your Savior? Will you confide your everlasting destiny into His dear hands? Will you abandon your self-righteousness and will you rest in Jesus alone? Will you take Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to be your soul’s only confidence? If you can truly say, “Ah, that I will, and glad will I be to have such a Christ to trust in,” then I can assure you that He did die for you—and that your sins are pardoned and shall never be mentioned against you any more forever! Go in peace, for you are justified by faith, and you are dear to the heart of God. Remember that glorious declaration, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Go away singing of substitution—the richest word in all our language—Christ standing in my place that I may stand in Christ’s place! Christ on the cross for me, Christ in the grave for me, and now I in heaven where Christ is, for God “has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” I at the right hand of God, beloved and honored because Christ has gone there to prepare a place for me that where He is, there I may be also!

Yet, before you go, let me urge you, if you are trusting in Christ, to confess your faith as the converts did on the day of Pentecost—

*“Stand up! Stand up for Jesus!  
The trumpet call obey!  
Forth to the mighty conflict,  
In this, His glorious day!  
You that are men, now serve Him,  
Against unnumbered foes  
Your courage rise with danger  
And strength to strength oppose.”*

You who really love the Lord ought to be ashamed to make any difficulty of confessing your faith in Him. I remember when I was a lad of fifteen, resolving that as a believer in Christ, I ought to join the church in the place where I was then living. I asked the deacon about it and he said that I must see the pastor. I remember well going to see him on a Monday and receiving a reply that he could not see me. I called again on Tuesday and Wednesday and got an answer that he was busy and could not see me. But

when I made up my mind to do a thing, even in those days, I meant to do it. So I managed to get to the door of his study, and I said to him, “As I have come three times to see you, sir, and the church meeting is to be held tomorrow evening, I will go to the church meeting and propose myself as a member. I mean to be united to the visible church of Christ. So if you cannot see me, I will go to the members and ask them to receive me.”

When he saw how determined I was, he found time to see me directly, and I was very soon admitted into the church. Now, you will not have as much trouble as I had, for you will find many Christians ready to welcome you into our fellowship. It is no trouble at all compared with what Christians found it in the olden times. I think I see, in the early days of Christianity, a good old saint at one of the meetings down in the catacombs, talking with a young man who says to him, “I wish to be a follower of Christ.” The old saint says, “I rejoice, brother, to give you the right hand, but do you know what it means to be a follower of Christ?” “Well,” he says, “I think I do.” “Come with me,” says he, “and we will take a walk to the Coliseum.” And in the dead of night, while the moon is shining upon that vast amphitheater, the old man says to him, “Do you see there tens of thousands of seats?” “Yes.” “Well, if you do become a follower of Christ, it is very likely that every one of those seats will be filled with a cruel spectator who will gaze upon you one of these days.” “But, brother, what would happen to me then?” “Come with me,” he says, “across this great arena. Do you see those bones? They are the bones of some of the soldiers belonging to the army that you wish to join. Now step across to this low arch. Can you hear those growls?” “Yes, brother, what animals are those?” “Lions, tigers and other savage beasts from Africa and Gaul.” “Why are they there, brother?” “To tear the Christians limb from limb when they shall be placed in the middle of that amphitheater. If you are with them, there will be tens of thousands looking down upon you, eager for your death, and not one of them will pity you. Are you prepared to follow Christ here?” I think I can hear the young Christian hero, when he thoroughly appreciates the risk, saying, “It will be hard for flesh and blood to die like that, yet, by the grace of God, I will never bow before an idol. My hope is fixed on Jesus Christ who bled and died for me. Brother, put my name down! Introduce me to the pastor of the church and let me be immersed into Christ, for His I am, and if I am called to die here, by His Spirit’s help I will not draw back! I will face the lions and die the martyr’s death, that I may wear the martyr’s crown.”

You young men and young women who have lately been converted here, are not called to such a death as that. Will you shrink from the little trials and petty persecutions of the present time? Are you afraid of someone who will point the finger of scorn at you and say, “There goes a Christian”? Then, what poor stuff you must be made of and how little of the Spirit of God can be in you! You have grave need to question whether you have been born again, for if you are, indeed, the Lord’s own—if He has bought you with His blood—you will come forward and say, “His I am, and I am not ashamed to admit it! No, but I even glory in it.”

The Lord bless you, dear friends! If you have been wounded in heart, may He heal you! And if you never have been thus wounded, may there be such a wound produced in your heart right speedily that only the pierced hand of Christ shall be able to salve—and to Him shall be the Glory forever and ever! Amen.

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