

THE HOSPITAL OF WAITERS VISITED WITH THE GOSPEL NO. 1211

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Jesus said unto him, Rise, take up your bed, and walk.”
John 5:8.*

IT was the Sabbath day! Where would Jesus spend that day and how? He would not spend it, we are quite sure, in any unhallowed manner or in any trifling sort. What would He do? He would do good, for it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Where would He do good? He knew that there was one sight in Jerusalem which was particularly painful—the sight of a number of poor persons, blind, lame and crippled, who were lying round a pool of water, waiting for a blessing which seldom came. He thought He would go and do good there, for there good was most needed. Would to God that all Christ’s servants felt that the most urgent necessity has the greatest claim upon them—that where there is the most need, there they ought to exercise the most kindness—and that no way of spending the Sabbath could be better than that of bearing the gospel of salvation to those who are most in need of it. But it was a feast day as well. It was a great festival of the Jews and Jesus had come up to Jerusalem to keep the feast. Where will He feast? Has someone asked Him to his house? There were Mary and Martha and Lazarus down at Bethany. Would they ask Him? Sometimes even Pharisees and Publicans would open their houses and make a banquet for Him. Where would He go? Was it a singular choice for Him to say to Himself, “My feast shall be kept among the blind and the crippled and the lame”? No, it was not singular, for He had said to one who had invited Him to his house, “When you make a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and you shall be blessed; for they cannot recompense you: for you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” What He urged others to do, He would be sure to do Himself. It was just like Him to say, “I shall spend My feast in a hospital. I will use this day, sacred both to joy and rest, by going where the sick lie thickly clustered together, for to Me to be merciful is to be glad—to bless men is to find rest for My heart.” Christ never feasts more joyfully than when He is doing good to others, and the greater the act of His liberality—the higher the deed of power which is worked by His love—the more is His blessed nature filled with rest and joy.

See you, then, the Savior going down to the pool of Bethesda, determining that in the spot where sorrow and disease reigned supreme, He would exercise His mercy and overcome evil. I shall ask you to go with me, and with the Savior, down to *Bethesda’s pool*. I shall call it THE HOSPITAL OF WAITERS. While we are there, we shall notice that *Jesus Christ fixes His eyes upon the most helpless person among that waiting company*. And then, thirdly, we shall have to note with joy *how our Lord dealt with the man after a gospel fashion*.

I. First of all, I said we would go down to the POOL OF BETHESDA with its five porches, which I have called the hospital of the waiters—for all those people who were there were doing one thing—they were waiting. They were waiting for the moving of the waters. There was nothing else they could do. They were lying sick, with anxious eyes gazing upon the little pool, hoping to see it bubble up—to see a widening circle coming upon its placid surface—waiting to plunge in immediately, for whoever plunged in first would receive a miracle—one and no more. Said I not truly that it was a hospital of waiters?

Too easily may we find a large company of waiters now-a-days. I wish it were not so, but great numbers are *always* waiting. I think I know enough to fill all the five porches.

Some are waiting for *a more convenient season* and they have a notion, perhaps, that this more convenient season will come to them on a sick bed. Possibly, they even think, upon a dying bed. It is a great mistake. They have heard the gospel and they believe it to be true, though they have not accepted it. They go to a place of worship, continually, and they say to themselves, “We hope that one of these days we shall be able to lay hold of Christ, and shall be healed of the disease of sin, but not now.” How many

years have you been waiting, some of you, for the convenient season—five, six, eight, ten, twenty? I know some who have been waiting 20 or more years. I remember speaking to them about their souls and they said, then, that they did not intend to neglect the matter. They were waiting and the time had not quite come. They did not exactly explain what stood in the way, but it was a something that was to be gone in a few months—maybe even weeks. But it has not gone and they are still waiting. And I fear that they will wait until the judgment day will come and find them unsaved. They always reckon upon a good tomorrow, but tomorrow is a day which you will not find in the almanac—it is found nowhere but in the fool’s calendar. The wise man lives today. What his hand finds to do, he does at once with all his might. Today is God’s time, and whenever we are saved it will be our time. But, alas, many lie waiting till their joints stiffen, their eyes fail, their ears are heavy and their hearts more and more insensible. O you simple ones, will it be so, forever? Will you wait till you are cast into hell?

In a second porch, a crowd of waiters are waiting *for dreams and visions*. You, perhaps, think these are very few, but they are not so few as you imagine. And they have a notion that perhaps one of these nights they will have such a vivid dream of judgment that they will wake up alarmed—or such a bright vision of heaven that they will wake up fascinated by it. They have been reading in somebody’s biography that he saw something in the air, or heard a voice, or had a text of Scripture “laid home to him” (as it is called). They are waiting, I say, till the same signs and wonders shall happen to them. I bear them witness that they are very anxious to have this thing happen. But their mistake is that they want it, or expect it to happen at all, and lie there by the Pool of Bethesda waiting, and waiting, and waiting, as though they cannot believe God, but they can believe in a dream—they cannot confide in the teaching of Holy Scripture, but they can believe in a voice which they imagine to be sounding in their ears, though it might be the chirp of a bird, or might be nothing at all. They could trust their imagination, but they cannot trust the word of God as it is written in the inspired volume. They want something over and above the sure word of testimony. The witness of God is not enough for them. They demand the witness of fancy, or the witness of feeling—and they are waiting on the porch by the pool till that comes. What is this but an insulting unbelief? Is not the Lord to be believed until a sign or a wonder shall corroborate His testimony? Such waiting provokes the Most High.

A third porch full of people will be found waiting *for a sort of compulsion*. They have heard that those who come to Christ are drawn by the Spirit of God. They believe the doctrines of grace and I am glad they do, for they are true. But they misconstrue those doctrines. They suppose the Spirit of God makes men do this or that altogether against their wills, by exercising force. Their notion seems to be that men are taken to heaven by their ears or dragged by force and because we speak of cords of love and bands of a man, they pick out the imagery and mistranslate it. Now, believe me, the Spirit of God never acts by the human heart as you and I might act by a box of which we have lost the key. He does not wrench it and break it open. According to the laws of our nature, He acts with men *as men*. He draws with cords, but they are cords of love—with bands, but they are bands of a man. It is by enlightening the judgment that He influences the will. He leads us to see things in a different light by the instruction which He gives us and by that clearer light He influences the understanding and the heart. The things we love, we see to be evil, and we hate them. And the things we once hated, we see to be good, and we choose them. These persons fancy that they will be made to repent whether they will or not—made to believe in Jesus Christ whether they will or not. But it is not so that the Holy Spirit acts. Let me warn you of the great sin and of putting the Holy Spirit into contrast or rivalry with Jesus Christ. Now, the gospel is, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” But for you to say, “I am waiting for the Holy Spirit,” is to set up Jesus in a kind of opposition with the Holy Spirit—whereas the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit agree in one; no, they *are* one, and the testimony of Jesus is the testimony of the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit works in men, He works with the things of Christ, not with any new things. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. If a man rejects the gospel which says, “Believe and live,” he rejects the Holy Spirit, who will not bring any other gospel, but leaves him shut up to believe in Jesus or to die in his sins. You must have Christ, or perish. And if you refuse to obey His gospel word, neither will God the Father nor God the Spirit interpose to deliver you. Jesus Christ has the Spirit to bear witness of Him and when He comes, He convinces men of sin because

they believe not on Christ. And then He leads them, not to trust in some work over and above the work of Jesus, but to rest simply and alone on the atonement which Christ has furnished. Woe to those who linger anywhere short of this.

A fourth porch is attractive to many people, especially at this peculiar time. They are waiting *for a revival*. We have heard glad tidings, in which we rejoice, of great revivals in different parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland. And there are some who say, "Oh, if a revival would come here, I would be converted." Or it runs thus, "If the two honored servants of God were to come here and hold services, then, surely, we would be converted." They look to men and excitements. I thank God for every genuine revival and, whenever He works, I rejoice in it. But for any man to suppose that the gospel command is suspended for a time until a revival comes, is to suppose a lie. The gospel says, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you." So said Peter on the day of Pentecost. Or, in other words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." The gospel call is, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." It does not say, "Wait, wait, wait till times of refreshing. Wait till a revival." I am inclined to think that even if a revival should come, persons who are now making it an excuse for delay would be in a very unlikely state to get a blessing from it. Or if they thought they got a blessing it would, in all probability, be a mistake, for they could be depending upon men, or upon fleshly excitement, and not looking away to Jesus Christ, who is as able to save them now as He will be in a revival. And He is just as able to save them by my voice, now, or by no voice at all, as He would be by any other man, however useful he may have been. I fear there are many waiting on that porch.

Many are waiting on the porch of *expected impressions*. They want an impression, and they wish the minister to preach a very alarming sermon. They want him to be very warm-hearted and earnest, as he ought to be, but they want him to fix them—to shoot the arrow into their flesh, that they may be pierced in the heart—for this they are waiting. They come here every Sunday. They have been touched a great deal and rendered very uneasy. They have felt as if they could hardly sit through the sermon, but they have managed to do it—and they have managed to wait—and wait. When shall I reach you? In what way am I to preach? Surely, if I knew in what way I could bring you to Jesus. It would be my delight to follow it. But I cannot preach any other gospel than the one I preach. And I cannot do it more plainly. Neither do I think I can do it more earnestly, for I desire the salvation of sinners with my whole soul. Many may preach it better, but none more from the heart. If you are looking for me to do something more, you will look in vain, for I have nothing better to bring. I have pointed you to a Savior's flowing wounds and bid you look to Him and live. If you will not accept His salvation, then, I have no other hope to set before you. If you will not trust my Lord, not even an angel from heaven, if he should come, could give you any other hope. If men will not hear the gospel which I have preached, neither could they be converted though one rose from the dead.

Thus, I have shown you five porches of waiters. I will tell you why I am sure they are wrong in waiting. I will set before you their theory. Those people were waiting because an angel would come and stir the water—and whoever stepped in first would get healed. That was their idea. They were not looking to Jesus, any of them. Had they not heard that Jesus was healing the sick? Had they never heard of the woman who came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment and had the issue of blood stopped? Had they never heard of a nobleman's son who was on the point of dying, and was made to live? Had they never heard of all this? I do not know, but certain it is they never tried to get to Jesus, nor did they cry to Him. They trusted wholly to the pool, and the angel, and the stirring of the water. Ah, I think had they been wise, they would have said, "This is uncertain and only happens now and then. But Jesus says, 'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out,' and He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. Had we not better crawl as best we can to those dear feet and look up into His face and say, 'You, Son of David, have mercy upon us'?"

There is the theory—the opposition theory to the gospel. I want to knock it to pieces, if God the Holy Spirit will help me—the waiting theory, the theory of looking for something, but not looking to Christ and to Him alone. These people attached great importance to *the place*. They stayed at the pool of Bethesda. There was the place. If ever they got any good, they would get it there. And so I find waiters often attach great importance to the place of worship—they expect to find salvation only there. Do you not

know that Jesus can save your souls tomorrow morning in the tan-yard, quite as well as next Sunday in the Tabernacle? Do you not know that Jesus is just as much a Savior on a Saturday as on a Sunday? Do you not know that when you are walking in the streets, in Cheapside or in the Borough, if you breathe a prayer to Him, He is just as mighty to save you as He would be if you were on your knees, or at home, or sitting here and listening to the gospel? He is wherever there is a heart that needs Him. Wherever there is an eye that desires to look to Him with the glance of faith, there is Jesus. There are no pools of Bethesda now—no places set apart to monopolize the dispensation of divine mercy—

*“Where ever we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”*

Oh, get to *Him*, then, in these pews, for this is a place where He is. And if you were lying on your sick beds, I would tell you He was there. And if you were at a carpenter’s bench driving the plane, or out in the fields driving the plow, I would have nothing more to say to you but this, “The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart, that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.” This theory that we are to wait at the pool of ordinances is antichrist’s gospel. Christ’s gospel is, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

Then they say that they are to wait for *signs and wonders*. Those who waited at Bethesda waited for an angel. I do not know whether they ever did see an angel, or whether the water was stirred mysteriously by an invisible wing. But they waited for an angel—a mystery. People like a mystery, but the craving is evil, for albeit that the gospel is, in one respect, the mystery of godliness, yet as far as you sinners are concerned, it is the plainest thing in the entire world. It is this, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” He has God set forth to be a propitiation for sin. The blood of Jesus is a substitutionary offering to God’s justice, instead of our death. And whoever trusts Christ to stand instead of him and so accepts Christ to be his substitute, is a saved man. Priests try to make a mystery out of everything, now-a-days, and this is that word which is written upon the forehead of the whore of Babylon, according to the Book of Revelation—“Mystery, Mother of Harlots.” Her mass is a mystery and her ceremonies are all mysteries; the Latin tongue is used to make the service a mystery; the priest, himself, is a mystery; baptism is a mystery. Now, in the gospel of Jesus Christ, the essential truth is as plain as a pikestaff. Legible only by the light they give, stand the soul-quickenings words—“Believe and live.” A man who is almost an idiot may understand this. Trust Christ. Accept Christ to be your substitute before God and you are saved on the spot—saved in an instant. But no, they wait for a mystery. They pine for a mystery. They even suppose that the Holy Spirit, Himself, is to come upon them to confuse the gospel, whereas, what He does is to make the gospel yet more plain to us. And when He comes, He tears the mystery away, removes the scales from our eyes, and makes us see that it is a simple matter to receive Jesus and become the sons of God.

Again, these waiters who attach so much importance to place and are waiting for mysteries, appear to be waiting, also, for an *influence which is intermittent*. It was only at a certain season that the angel stirred the pool. So they seem to fancy that there are certain times and seasons when Christ is willing to receive sinners—and occasional intervals when they may hope to find salvation. Whereas the mercy of my God is not like the pool of Bethesda, stirred now and then; it is a well of water always springing up, and whoever believes in Jesus, whether it is sixteen minutes to eight, or whether it is eight o’clock, shall find that Christ is ready to receive sinners. “All things are ready, come unto the supper,” is one of the gospel proclamations. Ready, and ready now, not sometimes, but at all times—not now and then, not occasionally, on Sundays and high days and revival days, but—“Today, if you will hear His voice.” “Today is the accepted time; today is the day of salvation.” Therefore, because these people think that there is a certain intermittent influence; they believe that all they have to do is to wait for it in a very singular way. Oh, if I were to be hanged tomorrow morning, and I knew that an application had been made for pardon, I would wait for the result—but how do you think I would wait? Suppose I had no hope of heaven, and knew I would be hanged tomorrow, but I had a bare hope that perhaps a pardon might come, I would wait for it—but how would I wait? Would I go to sleep tonight? Would I make a feast and make myself drunk with the drunken? Oh no, my life, my life, my life is in jeopardy. I cannot

trifle. How do sailors on the wreck wait for the lifeboat? Are they idle, do you think? No, they are straining their eyes with looking and bursting themselves with their signals of distress, imploring help. Do they go to sleep on the wreck and say, "If we are to be saved we shall be saved; let us go to sleep"? No, they are waiting, but if there should come a rocket to the ship with a rope, they would be ready to lay hold of it in a minute and wait no more. It is a lie, nine times out of ten, when men say they are waiting for Christ, because they have not that awful anxiety, that sorrowful uneasiness of mind which goes with true waiting. It is only a make-believe waiting, a mere excuse. Whatever sort of waiting it is, it is clean opposite to the gospel which never says a word about waiting, but which commands men to believe and live.

Besides, these people are waiting for an influence supposed to be *very limited*. Only one person was healed at a time at Bethesda, and he was the first who plunged in. And so when the waiters hear of anyone being saved, they think that he was in more favorable circumstances than themselves, that he was placed in a better position for obtaining salvation. They seem to be in the rear of the ranks and unable to get to this wonderful pool of theirs. It is all a mistake. Jesus Christ is as near to one seeker as another. If a man has been moral, the gospel says to him, "believe." If a man has been immoral, the gospel cries to him, "believe." If a man is a king, the gospel commands him to, "believe." If he is a beggar, it bids him, also, "believe." If a man is full of self-righteousness, the gospel points him to Christ, and tells him to give up his righteousness. And if a man is full of vice and rotten with sin, it points him to Christ and bids him give up his sin and look to Jesus. The footing upon which the gospel addresses sinners is the same at all times. It has neither less nor more to say to the child of the harlot than to the child of the Christian matron. It presents the same pardon to the great sinner and the little sinner, (if such there is), and comes with the same rich blessing to the chief of sinners, as it does to the children of godly parents. Do not get false notions in your head. The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. Like faith obtains a like blessing. There is a limit, for, "The Lord knows them that are His," but in the preaching of the gospel, we are not bound by the decree which is secret, but by our marching orders, "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believes and is baptized shall be saved." He who bade me preach to every creature did not bid me exempt *one soul* from my message.

Thus, I have tried to show why so many wait and I will add but one thing more on this point. Some of these people who are waiting put a good deal of reliance *on other people*, even as this poor man said, "I have no one to put me in the pool." I have letters every week from persons in distress of mind who ask me to pray for them, which I very cheerfully do. But as a general rule, I say to them, "My dear friends, I beseech you do not try to quiet your mind by asking me to pray for you. That is not your hope. 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved,' whether prayed for or not." I try to get them away from all reliance in anybody's prayers and to look to Jesus alone. Oh, do not say, "I will ask my friends to pray for me, and then be easy." You may say it if you like, but do not rest in that, I pray you. Remember Jesus Christ is to be looked to—not the best people's prayers. If you look to Jesus you shall have immediate salvation. But if the whole church of God were to go down on its knees at once and stay there for the next 50 years praying for you, you would be damned to a certainty if you did not believe in Jesus. If you pray for yourself and look alone to Jesus, you shall most assuredly be saved. Is not this enough about that dreary hospital full of waiters?

II. Now, a few minutes on the second head. Jesus Christ has entered the hospital, and He looks about Him. And He picks out THE MOST HELPLESS MAN IN THE WHOLE WORLD. I was pleased to notice on the bill of the services at the theatres a line which says, "The poorest people are the most welcome." That is a gospel sentence. Even thus is it with Christ. He always loves to give His mercy to those who need it most. There lay that man and he did not think of Christ, but Christ stood and looked at him. He did not know Jesus Christ, but Jesus Christ knew him, and He knew that he had been a long time in that condition. He knew that he had been sick 38 years. He knew all that—and He knew before the man told him—that he had often been disappointed, and, indeed, that poor wretch *had* been. He had often tried, as well as his paralyzed body would enable him, to get into the water. But somebody, even some blind man who had managed to get nearer the edge and had the use of his limbs, plunged in first and came up with his eyes open—while this poor nervous creature could not get into the water at any time.

He had seen a great many others cured and that had made the disease more painful to him. But it had not encouraged him, but rather made him sadder. He was the most irresolute, soft kind of a man that you ever met with. Read the story of the man whose eyes were opened by Christ, who said, “One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.” There is a fine hard-headed fellow. He might have been a Scotchman. But this man was all irresolution, shiftless, weak in mind. You know some such people—perhaps you have such in your family. You cannot help them. If you set them up in business, they are sure to fail. Whatever they do, it never succeeds. They are a poor, weak, childish sort of people who need to be put in a basket and carried on somebody else’s back all through the world. There are people of this sort as to religion—and this man was a type of them. He sorely longed to be healed, but he did not hardly say that, for when Jesus said to him, “Will you be made whole?” he did not say “O Lord, I desire it with all my heart,” but he went on with a rambling story, saying, “I have no man to put me into the water,” and so on. When our Lord did heal him, if you notice, he did not ask Christ His name, and, when he found that out afterwards, he went like a stupid, to the Pharisees, and told them directly who his benefactor was, and so got the Lord into trouble. There are still people about of this kind. They scarcely know their own mind. They know they need to be saved, but they hardly say as much as that. They are rightly impressed, but they get impressed the other way almost as easily. They are irresolute and unstable. Now, my Lord and Master picked out this very man to be the subject of His healing energy. To God belong wonders of grace. Did Jesus not say, Himself, “I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight”? “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. And God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are.”

This poor, hapless, helpless, paralyzed man—almost as paralyzed in his brains as he was in his body—was pitied by our gracious Lord. Now, who is the most helpless man in this place? Who is the most helpless woman in this place? I know you are saying, some of you, “I am afraid that is myself.” I have good news for you. You are just the sort my Lord loves to begin with. Do not be offended at the description, but be willing to take it home to yourself. Very probably, looking back upon your past life, you are compelled to say, “Well, that is really what I have been. I have plenty of wits about me in my business. I am sharp enough there. But when it comes to religion, I fear I am just that kind of fool. I have no resolution. I have no fixed determination. I am always being pulled by the ear by a temptation, or drawn the wrong way by evil companions.” Now, my poor friend, lie down before Jesus Christ in all your helplessness, in all your stupidity—and pray the Lord to look upon you. A brother once said to me, “My dear sir, I wish you would never speak to anybody but *sensible* sinners.” I said, “Well, I am very glad to preach to sensible sinners when they come to hear me, but so many stupid sinners come along with them that I am bound to preach to them, as well.” And I do. I put the gospel to those that feel themselves to be insensible and stupid in everything—and who write themselves down among the fools. Jesus has come to seek and save poor lost, ruined, dead sinners, and I pray Him to look on you at this time.

III. Now, the third point is HOW JESUS CHRIST DEALT WITH HIM. If Jesus Christ had belonged to a certain class of ministers, He would have said, “Right, my man, you are lying at the pool of ordinances, and there you had better lie.” He did not belong to that persuasion and, therefore, He did not say anything of the sort. Neither did He say, as some brethren do, “My dear friend, you should pray.” Very proper advice in some respects, you know, but Jesus did not give it—He knew better. He did not say, “Now, you must begin to pray and wait before the Lord.” That is a very good thing to say to some people, but it is not the gospel for sinners. Jesus Christ did not say to His disciples, “Go you into all the world, and tell people to pray.” No. “Preach the gospel to every creature; he that believes and is baptized shall be saved.”

Well, what did Jesus Christ do to him? *He gave him a command.* “Rise, take up your bed, and walk.” The words sounded like three thunderclaps. “But he cannot. But he cannot. He is paralyzed, good sir. He is paralyzed.” Yes, but the gospel is a command, for we read of some who disobey the gospel. Now, a man cannot disobey what is not a command. He cannot be disobedient unless, first of all, there is a

command. Jesus Christ brought the gospel blessing of healing to him as a command. “Rise,” He said, “take up your bed, and walk.” It was *a command which implied faith*, because the man could not rise and could not take up his bed—and could not walk of himself. But if he believed in Jesus Christ, he could rise and could take up his bed—and could walk. So it was really a command to exercise faith in Jesus and to prove it by practical works. “But the man could not do it.” That has nothing to do with it. The power is not in the sinner, but in the command. He could not rise, but Jesus Christ could make him do so. And when I, or any other minister of the Lord Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, address you, chosen sinner, and say to you, “Trust Jesus Christ,” we do not do so because we believe there is any strength in you, any more than there was in the paralyzed man, but because we speak in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, who has sent us to say to you, “Rise up and walk.” I trust my Lord to send His power with the gospel.

I know right well that I have no power of my own, but He that sent me will bless His own message as He pleases. If you are to get salvation, you will get it by believing in Jesus and rising, at once, out of the state in which you now are. By His power, through the simple act of believing in Him, you will be made whole. The man believed in Jesus. That was all he did. Soft simpleton as he was. Irresolute, and all that, he had enough sense, and God gave him grace enough to simply believe in Jesus. He resolved that he would try his legs and to his surprise—oh, how astonished he must have been—those poor legs worked. He stood and found he could stoop and, rolling up his mattress, he took it up and walked away with it. What joy went through his frame. You have been ill, but the Lord has restored you and you have got up and found yourself able to walk. Was it not a delight to you? I know the sensation well. What must it be to be paralyzed 38 years? And then to be able to stoop and roll up a bed, and put it on your back, and walk away. It must have been a delight to feel new life leaping through his nerves and sinews and veins. Now, if a sinner says, “Well, I never did try it before, but by the grace of God I will trust my soul in the hands of Jesus—

*“I do believe, I will believe,
That Jesus died for me,
And on the cross He shed His blood
For sin, to set me free.”*

Sinner, you will rise up and walk directly. You will be surprised, yourself, to find the mighty change which God is working in you by His blessed Spirit through that simple act of faith. And you will go down those Tabernacle steps hardly knowing where you are, singing for joy because the Lord has taken you out of the hospital of waiters and put you among the believers. Has He not said, “Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert”?

Jesus Christ treated this man in a gospel way, for the way in which faith came into that man is very remarkable. The man did not know Jesus Christ—why was it he believed in Him? Why, it was this—he did not know who He was, but he knew He was somebody very wonderful. There was a look about Him, a majestic gleam about those eyes, a wonderful force in the tone of that voice, a power in the lifting up of that finger which was very different from what the man had ever seen before. He knew not who He was and did not know His name—yet somehow confidence was born in his soul. How much more, then, may faith come to you who know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? You know that He died and made a full atonement for sin. You know that He has risen from the dead and that He sits on the right hand of God, even the Father—that all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth, and that—“He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” Do not say, “I will try and get faith.” That is not the way. If I want to believe a statement, how do I go to work? Why, I hear it and faith comes by hearing. If I have any doubt about it, I hear it again and ask to have it repeated to me more fully and, when I have heard it again, conviction flashes upon me. So Jesus, in the gospel, says, “Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” “Hear Me. Believe Me”—this is, in brief, the gospel which Jesus preaches to men’s hearts. Now God gives His witness concerning Christ that He is His Son, for out of heaven He spoke and said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Will you not believe Him? The Spirit, the water, and the blood are always bearing wit-

ness, and these three agree in one. Believe Jesus Christ. The evidence is strong, yield up your soul to it and you shall find joy, peace, and eternal life.

The man's belief in Jesus, actively proved by his rising, settled the matter. A very different case is that from lying and waiting. Why, I should think this man, if he had wits enough, would go back and say to others lying and waiting, "What? Still lying and waiting? Why, I was lying and waiting for 38 years, and I got, by lying and waiting, just nothing at all. Neither will you." Simple as he was, he would have said, "I will tell you what is better than lying and waiting. There is a man among us, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and if we trust Him, He will heal us, for He heals all manner of diseases. If you cannot go to Him, send a messenger to Him, for He healed a nobleman's son many miles away. Only believe Him and virtue will go out of Him, for it is not possible that any should trust Him and not be healed." I think I should like to have been that man, simpleton as I might have been, to have gone to tell those poor souls who were lying and waiting, the difference between lying and waiting and immediately believing. I would put it in the simplest way I could, for I was, myself, waiting when I was a child. I heard much preaching that led me to wait—and I think I should have kept on waiting had I not heard that poor Primitive Methodist brother cry, "Look, young man, look now." I did look, then and there, and I found salvation on the spot—and I have never lost it.

I have nothing else to say to you, but, "There is life in a look at the Crucified One," and every man that looks shall have it *here, now* and *at once*. Oh, that many would look. Do you understand it? Christ bore the wrath of God instead of those who trust Him. Jesus Christ took the sins of all who trust Him and was punished in the place of every believer, so that God will not punish a believer because He has punished Christ for him. Christ died for the man who believes in Him, so that it would be injustice on the part of God to punish that man, for how shall He punish twice for the same offense? Faith is the seal and evidence that you were redeemed nineteen hundred years ago upon the bloody tree of Calvary. And you are justified and who shall lay anything to your charge? "It is God that justifies you: who is he that condemns you? It is Christ that died; yes, rather, that is risen again." This is the gospel of your salvation. "Oh, but I do not feel." Did I say anything about feeling? You shall have feeling after you have faith. "But I am not right." I do not care what you are or are not. Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes in Me has everlasting life." "Oh, but—" Away with your "buts." Here is the gospel—"Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely. The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.'" And what both the Spirit and the bride of Christ say, surely I may say and do say. And may God bless the saying of it. And may you accept it, you waiting ones. May you look, believe, and live, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 4:46; 5:1-16.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—538, 505, 546.

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