

GOD'S WORK IN MAN

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A SERMON
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*“And it shall be at that day, says the LORD, that thou shalt call me, Ishi; and shalt call me no more, Baali.
 For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth,
 and they shall no more be remembered by their name.”*
Hosea 2:16

WITHOUT any preface or prelude, we shall draw from these words three or four lessons.

I. The first lesson from the text is this, that GOD SPEAKS CONCERNING HIS PURPOSES OF GRACE IN MAN, WITHOUT NOTICING EITHER MAN'S WILLINGNESS OR UNWILLINGNESS, AND WITHOUT ALLOWING HIS OWN PURPOSE TO BE CHANGED BY THE ONE OR THE OTHER.

According to the free-will plan of salvation, it would be absolutely necessary for God to put it thus—“At that day, says the Lord, if you are willing, you shalt call me, Ishi, and shall no longer call Me, Baali, and if you will believe and repent, if you are willing, I will take away the names of Baalim out of your mouth. And if you are willing, they shall no more be remembered by their names.”

But note that God puts in no “ifs” at all, but talks about men as if they had nothing to do in the matter, and as if He Himself did it all. One might object, “But suppose they are unwilling to forget the names of Baalim?” “Ah!” says God, “but I have their will in My hands. I have the key of man's will—I can open it and no man can shut it. I can shut it and no man can open it.” “But suppose they should be hard-hearted and will not repent?” “Ay!” says the Lord, “but I have the hammer that can break the heart in pieces and make it fly into shivers.” “But suppose they should be stony-hearted and will not melt?” “Nay,” says the Lord, “but I have a fire that will melt the most adamant rock that was ever known. Yea, that can consume the rock out of the heart and utterly burn it away.”

Therefore, speaking concerning the Israelites, who were serving Baalim, who were drunken with sin, who were desperately set on working iniquity, and who had gone far away from God, He puts in no, “if,” but distinctly says even concerning them, “I will take away the names of Baalim out of their mouth, *and they shall no more be remembered by their name.*”

Have you ever noticed, throughout Scripture, how positively God speaks with regard to His acts of salvation in men? “He *shall* call upon me, and I *will* answer him.” “All that the Father giveth me *shall* come to me.” “Him that cometh to me I *will* in no wise cast out.” “He *shall* see of the travail of his soul, and *shall* be satisfied.”

The free-willer might rise up and say, “But suppose they are not willing to be saved? Will God save them against their will?” To this we reply—There is nothing said about their will at all—the only reference is to God's will. It is evident that God has such a power over men that He can work in their hearts just what He pleases, apart from their willingness or unwillingness, so that, when I come into this pulpit to preach, if God the Spirit should so please, though you all should gnash your teeth in anger, yet He could, under the sound of the Word, convert you all—though you should set your hearts desperately against God's Word and enter His house with a curse upon you, yet He could, ere you left the place, change you to another mind.

And though you should have come here with all levity of spirit, hardened in heart, despising God, and His Gospel, yet He has such strength that He could, by one word of His mouth, by the breath of His Spirit, transform you into His living children who should do the very reverse of what you are now doing. It is in vain, then, for an infidel to say that he could never be converted, for God could convert him. It is in vain for a man to say, "God will never bend my knee in prayer." God knows how to make your knee bend, be it never so stiff.

"I never will, like a coward, cry for mercy," says one. But God knows how to create penitent cries in your heart and how to make them struggle for utterance, too. He has you in His hand, He has the bit even in your mouth. And desperately as you may be set against Him, yet He can turn you wherever He pleases. He who binds Leviathan and cuts the dragon in twain, will not be stopped by a poor puny mortal like you.

But if He has purposes of grace towards you, He will work those purposes out. If He be determined to save you, He will Himself lure you into the wilderness, and give you a new heart and a right spirit. And if He has so decreed it, struggle as you may against Him, the hour shall come when, with one blow from the hammer of His Word, your heart shall be broken in pieces. And with one sip of His blessed cordial of grace, your soul shall rejoice in pardon bought with blood.

This is a great doctrine of the Gospel—the doctrine of the power of grace—the doctrine that God saves whom He wills, that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." "Ah," says one, "if I am willing to be saved, will not God save me?" Sir, He *has* saved you. If you are willing to be saved, God has made you willing, and therein He has given you the very germ of salvation, for your willingness to be saved in God's way is the very essence of being saved.

"But" says one, "if I am unwilling to be saved, will He save me?" No, sir, not while you are unwilling, but if He so pleases, He will make you willing, and then He will manifest in you His power to save. God saves no man against his will—and yet it is against his will. Ralph Erskine puts it thus—he says, "I was saved with full consent against my will." He means to say, "against my old will, that always willed to do evil, but yet with the full consent of all my powers, they being renewed, created anew in Christ Jesus, and therefore at once willing to submit to everything that God laid down."

Oh, how I rejoice to preach a Gospel that does not borrow strength from me, but gets its power from God! What a consolation that, go where we may to preach God's Word, if God wills it, that Word shall be rendered effectual among the very worst of men—amongst mockers, scoffers, and despisers! Why is it that men go not to preach the Word among the Romanists of Ireland? Because they say they will not hear them. Oh! but they would. And we should at least free ourselves from their blood if we did but stand up and testify the Word, and however unwilling they might be, God could yet, by His abundant grace, change their hearts.

"It is of no use," said one, "to go to the Bechuana in his kraal—he cannot be saved—he would never be willing to give up his old habits." But you do not depend upon his will at all. You go to him with the Gospel and God gives him a new will and the great change is wrought. All you have to do is to preach the Word. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," for, with the Word of God, there goes forth His Holy Spirit, which changes men, renews their characters and hearts, and makes them what they never were before.

Oh! I bless God's name that, though all the people in the world should lift their hands against the Most High and declare that they never would be saved, yet God could, in an instant, if so it pleased Him, make the whole of them bend their knees before Him, cry for the mercy they once rejected, and seek the Savior whom once they despised. Here lies the power of the Gospel, in that it gains the mastery over man's evil will and without his consent changes his nature, and then fully gets his consent after his nature has been changed.

That is the first doctrine, I think, we may fairly draw from the text.

II. Now for the second, which is, that GOD WILL MAKE THOROUGH WORK OF IT, WHEN HE SANCTIFIES A MAN.

Note that these Jews were idolaters, yet God says, "I will not only make them leave off their idolatries, but I will do more—I will take away the names of Baalim out of their memories, too—for they shall no more be remembered by their name." God's sanctifying work either is already, or it will yet be, a complete one. I said that it either is or it will be complete—it is so in yon bright spirits before the throne, and for the rest of us, if God has begun the good work, He will carry it on to ultimate perfection, until the very name of sin shall be clean taken out of our mouth and the remembrance of it shall be purged from our conscience and memory.

It is worthy of remark that this promise has had a literal fulfillment in the case of the Jews. They have many sins, but there is one sin that they have not—except spiritually—that is, they are not idolaters. Before the time of their captivity, they were constantly worshipping one false God or another. It was the hardest thing in the world to keep them from bowing down before blocks of wood and stone. But now, go where you may, you can scarcely find a Jew who is an idolater. Here and there, one or two of them have joined the Romish church and so have become idolaters by bowing down before images and saints' relics—cast clouts and rotten bones and such things.

But taking the Jews as a race, they are the last people in the world to become actual idolaters. That ancient message, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD," seems to have been burnt into them and you cannot get it out of them—neither will they acknowledge any form of faith that seems to deny the unity of the Godhead, or implies that worship is to be given to any save the incomprehensible and mysterious Being whom they, as well as we, worship as JEHOVAH. The name of Baalim has been taken clean out of their mouths—they do not remember it, neither do they call it to mind.

And it is also a very notable thing, which we have often seen, that men, when they are converted, usually become the most clear of the very sin with which they were once the most defiled. You will note that a man who has been, before his conversion, a great drunkard, will, in some instances, not only become exceedingly sober afterwards, but he will even carry his views, if possible, to an extreme. He will be so desperately set against everything that once injured him, that he will even look with suspicion on others who indulge themselves in moderation.

You will find it is so with the man who has been an habitual Sabbath-breaker. So surely as he is converted, he will become the most precise Sabbath-keeper you ever knew. The sin that hurt him will be the sin that he will kill, if possible. The burnt child dreads the fire and it is just so with the man who has been burnt by sin. He does not like to touch it again. He must keep clean away from it, turn from it, pass by it, and utterly abhor it. So was it with the Jews—the worship of Baalim had been their favorite sin, so the name Baalim was to be taken out of their mouth and to be no more called to their remembrance.

But my brethren, what noble beings you and I will be when, not only has our sin been purged, when not only have our daily corruptions been kept under, but when all our sinful nature has been utterly removed! Well said the apostle, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." No, brethren, we can scarcely guess what we shall be, but we can for a moment contemplate it.

What a noble being man must be when he is thoroughly refined—when all his sin is gone—when there is not an evil passion left—when there is not a lust hid in a snug corner, but when his soul has become thoroughly pure and his heart entirely renewed! Oh, what a noble creature! And just remember this, poor, weak, and worthless, though we are, that faith which we have in us will ultimately purify us completely, and we shall be holy, like yon bright spirits before the throne.

What a grand man would he be who had no sin in him! Suppose him to come into this world, he would lead a life exactly like that led by our Lord Jesus Christ, and He was the grandest of all men. It is marvelous to consider the different attributes of His character, as they are manifested in His life, but remember that we, too, shall be like Him when we see Him as He is. We shall be as pure as Adam was in the garden, with this addition—that our purity shall be not merely spotless, but it shall be so white that it shall be beyond the possibility of ever being spotted. Our nature shall be not merely pure, but so pure that it can never be impure. God will stamp it so indelibly with the impress of purity that it will be pure throughout eternity.

Oh! what a blessed thought—the name of Baalim out of my mouth, sin out of my heart, the lustful glance from my eye, evil things from my imagination, all gone! Oh! will we not praise our Lord in the bright moment when we wake up in His likeness, when our glorified spirit shall be white as driven snow, in the glad companionship of the immaculate, the pure, the perfect? Oh, what joyous shouts we shall raise then! What choral symphonies, what bursts of song, what hallelujahs of gratitude! Verily, words fail to express the emotions we shall then feel, when, pure and holy, clean and purged, we shall be presented, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,” before the throne of God. “I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.”

I do think the first day in heaven will be a day full of surprises. We shall not know what to make of it. Never will there have been a day before, in our lives, when we had not some trouble, or some sin. The first day we are there, when we shall have no devil to tempt us, and no sin to pain us, and no trouble to grieve us—when we find ourselves all pure, I think we shall scarcely know what to do, we shall be so surprised. Mr. Medley's hymn has caught the right idea,

*“Then let me mount and soar away
To the bright world of endless day;
And sing with rapture and surprise,
His loving kindness in the skies.”*

We shall be almost like poor Caspar Hauser, who was kept for many years—in fact, from his childhood—in a dark dungeon, where a ray of light could scarcely enter, and was afterwards taken out by his keeper to see the light of the sun and to mingle amongst men, whom he had never seen before, and to hear their voices when there was scarcely an intelligible sound he had been taught to utter. Oh, what a delightful thing it would have been for him if he had been uninjured by his confinement!

But you and I, uninjured by our confinement in this cavern below, shall be at once snatched from the earth, set down in the streets of Paradise, and find ourselves pure. The surprise of a beggar, who should wake up and find himself a king, would not be one-half so great as the surprise of a saint, when he shall wake up in Christ's likeness and find himself transformed into the pure image of God.

Let us contemplate this with joy and gladness, and amidst all our daily conflicts, let us count upon the victory. Let us anticipate the conquest by faith and already let us seize the palm branch and put the crown upon our heads, with the ecstasy of hope, with the full assurance of faith, for if we fight, we shall reign. If we suffer, we shall triumph. If we endure, we shall obtain “the crown of life” that fadeth not away.

That is the second lesson of our text, that Christ will make thorough work of it, wherever He has begun to save and to sanctify.

III. And now I bring to you a third lesson. THERE ARE SOME THINGS, WHICH ARE NOT EVIL IN THEMSELVES, THAT A CHRISTIAN MUST HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH, BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH EVIL THINGS.

I will explain what the Lord meant when He said, “You shalt call me, Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali.” Was Baali a bad name? Not at all—God calls Himself Baali in two or three places in Scripture. You remember that blessed passage, “Thy Maker is thy Husband”? It is really, “Thy Maker is thy Baali.” And there are several other instances where the word Husband is used in reference to God, which might have been left untranslated—and they would have read like this, “Thy Maker is thy Baali.”

Why, then, is God not to be called, Baali? The Jews did at one time call Him so. They did pray to Him under that title—why might they not continue to do so? Because the heathen had made a wrong use of the word—they called their false God, Baali, and therefore God said, “Do not apply the title to Me, because they have used it for their false gods.”

I can suppose a Jew, like some young man in these times, saying, “Now, no man is going to step between me and my conscience. I believe the name Baali is a very good one. I have always used it and

many good men have used it. I use it very sincerely in prayer and it is nothing to me that other people make a bad use of it—I cannot help that. I know that it expresses my thought—it means husband, lordly husband—and I cannot be quite so particular as the prophet Hosea, and I shall keep on using it.”

That is how many argue in these days. Says one, “I am a Christian. I intend to serve God, but there are certain pleasures that stand on the boundary line between the allowable and the unallowable.” “I intend,” says one young man, “to follow them, because I do not see that there is any harm in them. I confess that they are the cause of great injury to others, but they do me no hurt. I used to practice them when I was in the world, but they are no hurt to me now—you cannot bring anything in Scripture to prove they are wrong. There is such-and-such a place, I sometimes truly worship God there. I may be mistaken, but I cannot see why I should not do such-and-such a thing, when I see nothing exactly wrong in it, though I admit that it has a connection with wrong and others are thereby injured.”

That is just it—you are not to use the title Baali, not because it is a bad name, but because others have used it for an evil purpose. So, Christian, there are many things you are not to do, and many places you are not to frequent—not because they are absolutely wrong, but because they have a connection with wrong—and if you tolerate them, you will be sharing in the sin which is committed by them. And moreover, whether you know it or not, your going there is but the little and little of which it is written, “Ye shall fall by little and by little.” So that the best way is to stand out against the littles—to be rather too strict than too loose—and in so doing, God will give you a reward, for He will make it become a greater happiness to you to abstain from fleshly pleasures than it would have been to have partaken of them. “Thou shalt call me no more, Baali,” because, though the name may be all right in itself, others have misused it.

I can never look upon dice except with abhorrence. If you ask me why, I reply—Because the soldiers at the foot of the cross threw dice for my Savior's garments, and I have never heard the rattling of dice but I have conjured up the dreadful scene of Christ upon His cross, and gamblers at the foot of it with their dice spattered with His blood. I do not hesitate to say that, of all sins, there is none that more surely damns men, and worse than that, makes them the devil's helpers to damn others, than gambling. And yet many say, “Well, I only play for the fun of it—you know there is nothing in it.” Of course there is nothing in it, but look at the connection of it. Lord So-and-So thinks it a very nice thing for him to go and see a horserace, he says that I cannot prove it to be wrong. Nice company he will meet there! They don't speak very well for the thing.

Another says, “I can do this, that, and the other. It does not hurt me.” I daresay you can, but look at the connection of the affair. You are to avoid a thing, not merely from the moral wrong of it, or the injury it is to you, but because it encourages others in their sins. A good pious Jew kneels down to pray and cries to God, “Baali, hear me!” There is a poor idolater by his side and he says, “That good, venerable-looking man just now prayed to Baal, so may I.” “Quite a mistake, my dear fellow,” says the Jew. “I did not pray to Baali. I was praying to God Almighty, not to your Baal.” “But you said, Baal, my dear sir.” “Ah, my friend, but you do not understand me. I was praying to the God of heaven and earth, and not to that poor, paltry idol which you call, Baal.” Yet the poor heathen naturally thought the Jew was worshipping the false god.

We are to take care not to do what appears wrong in the sight of others, so as to lead them astray. We are not to be judged by other men's consciences, but at the same time, we are not to lead others to offend. As far as we can possibly do it, we must seek to cut off those things that are likely to do injury to others.

If I were to hear of any of my members going to a theater, I think I would go after them, but they would never go again as church members. I might perhaps do as Rowland Hill did. He took a box-ticket for the theater and saw some of his members there. “There you are,” he said, “I never would believe it from hearsay.” And then he walked away and turned them out of the church immediately.

It may be that I may have the misery of looking after some of you who make a profession of religion and do not carry it out. I am not now speaking to you worldly men, who choose to frequent these places.

But I say to you who profess to be Christ's followers, "Put away even the name of such things. Your business is not to talk of its being allowable, but to put it away, because others make a bad use of it."

You may say, "Baal," perhaps, without any very great sin, but by doing so you encourage others in sin. A man who makes a profession of religion ought to be something more than other people. He who talks about being saved by grace and washed in the precious blood of Jesus, he who expects to live up yonder and wear the white robe, and sing the praise of the Eternal before the throne, must be different from others. The things which another might do with impunity, he must not dare to do.

A native of India might live in a jungle and not die, but we, who are not natives of the country, might very soon die of the jungle fever. So, the man who is not a Christian may, peradventure, go into many amusements and yet not become any the worse for them—but a Christian must not go there, because he is not an inhabitant of that land. It is not his native air, it is not his proper place, and he knows it is not. Therefore, his business is to go as far away from it as he can.

I have read of a lady who wanted a coachman. She advertised for one. Three presented themselves. She called them in, one by one, and she said to the first, "My good man, you want a coachman's place, do you?" "Yes, ma'm." "Well, there is one question I want to ask you—How near to danger could you drive me?" "Well, ma'm, I think I could drive within a yard." "You won't do for me," said she. A second one was brought in and she said to him, after asking other questions, "How near to danger could you drive?" "Well ma'm, for the matter of that, I could drive you within a hair's breadth." "You won't do for me," she said, "you are not the sort of driver I want."

The third was introduced. He was a careful soul and when the question was put to him, "How near could you drive to danger?" He said, "If you please, ma'm, I never tried that. I always drive as far off as ever I can." Said she, "You will do very well. You are just the coachman I want." I would recommend you all to imitate that coachman—not to try how near you can drive to danger, but say, "My business is to drive as far off as I can," not to try how much you can endure of that which is not right, but how much you can avoid it, pass it by, and not mingle with it.

IV. Now we come to the last lesson from the text. **GOD HAS PRECIOUS TITLES TO BE USED ONLY BY BELIEVERS.** "It shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me, Ishi; and shalt call me no more, Baali."

I left this part of the subject to the last, because I am not sure that what I am about to say has all the weight that some would attach to it. There is a difference between the words Ishi and Baali. The word, Ishi means "my husband." So does the word Baali, but the word Ishi is the word that the wife would use to the husband as a fondling expression, expressive of her love.

The word Baali is the word she uses to him as a humble expression, on those very rare occasions in which she feels herself to be subject to him for a moment. It is expressive of her humility. It is the kind of word Sarah used, when, rather out of the ordinary way, she did reverence to her husband "calling him lord."

The word, Ishi, is the term she would have used when she called him simply by the loving epithet of "my own dear husband," her man, her beloved. She would most likely have used the word Baali when her husband had spoken a little sharply to her and claimed a little of the headship that the husband has. But when they sat down together, in their softer moments, she would not call him Baali any longer, but it would be Ishi, my much-loved—not feared, but much-loved husband.

"Now," says God to His church, "thou shalt no more call Me, Baali—'my Master, my Lord, my haughty Husband,' yet, after all, having all the right attributes of a husband too, but thou shalt call me, Ishi—'my loving Husband.'" Mark, there is nothing wrong in the word Baali, as I said before, because it is applied to God in that very passage, "Thy Maker is thy Husband." And there it has a kind meaning, as well as the aspect of superiority, but still, the word Ishi is the fonder title of the two and is by far the better. It is the one which we would always wish to use towards God.

If we are His people, He does not like us to come crouching and cringing before Him. He does not wish us to come and cry, "Baali," but He wants us to come to Him as to a loving friend and Father, with

the sweet word, "Ishi," upon our lip. He wishes us to come, speaking of Christ as Emmanuel Ishi—"God with us"—not as Emmanuel Baali—"God our Ruler." He wishes us to speak of Him as "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh"—"our Man, our Husband"—and not as, "our Man, our Lord."

There is a very blessed distinction here. I think the Christian can perceive it, though the worldling cannot. When a sinner is in his sin, he sometimes attempts to serve God. Conviction of sin works in him some kind of legal repentance—he tries to be better, but the sinner always tries to be better with Baali on his lips—"O Lord, I must do right, else I shall be punished for it. I must mend my ways, or hell stares me in the face. I must grow better, or else I shall die and share eternal torment."

So he tries to do better through fear. Not so the Christian. He tries to serve his God, but he puts the name Baali right away. "O my blessed God!" he says, "You have done so much for me, I do truly love You. I must love You, I will serve You, I will live for You, I will die for You. It is a pleasure to serve You. If heaven were quenched and hell blotted out, I would still serve You, for You are my Ishi, my loved one, whom with all my heart I serve."

But it is not so with the sinner, when he first seeks mercy. He kneels down and prays to God to have mercy upon him, but all the while it is Baali to whom he speaks. He can never spell Ishi while he is under conviction of sin. His cry is, "O Lord, I the chief of sinners am." "I am not worthy to be called Your son." That is all Baali. But so soon as the Lord has appeared to him and told him, "I have put away your sin," he offers no such prayer as he did before. He comes with boldness and says, "Lord, I am Your child. For Jesu's sake give me these things," and he prays out of his heart with a fullness of confidence, for it is Ishi now, not Baali. It was the same God before, but under a different aspect. He was a kind God before, but He was the Baali God. Now He is a kind God, but He is kinder still—He is the Ishi God to all believers.

O beloved brethren and sisters, I would you could all keep this word Ishi on your lips! It is a Hebrew word. I bless God for having kept a few Hebrew words in the Bible to make us remember the Jews. But besides this, there is something very sweet in this old term, Ishi—my Man, my Husband! Go home, beloved, sit down and think of this title. God bids you come to Him boldly tonight and call Him Ishi.

Sit down and begin to think of the Son of God, who became man. When you see Him in His cradle, call Him Ishi, and fondle the infant to your breast. When you see Him a man grown, go up to Him and by faith clasp Him in your arms, and call Him Ishi while He preaches to you the sermon on the Mount. Find Him out in the garden. Stand and look at Him, not as some marvelous man, far above you, your superior, a Baali to you—but come and kneel by His side, and as you kneel, see, in contemplation, the bloody sweat still streaming from His brow. Bend over Him and say, "O Ishi, You are my Man, my Husband, paying the costly price for me by this awful sweat of blood!"

Then follow Him along the pavement, see His back all gory with the lash of Pilate's whip, and call Him Ishi then. And when you see Him on the cross, oh! it is there that Ishi is spelt more clearly than ever. When His heart is opened, when His veins are bleeding, then you can see written in His blood that name Ishi—Man with you, your Husband.

And then see Him in His grave and call Him Ishi there. Track Him up to heaven in His ascension and call Him Ishi as He leads captivity captive. See Him pleading before the throne of God with outstretched hands. Look on His breastplate, read your own name and call Him Ishi. And then look forward—see Him as He comes in the clouds of heaven—and call Him Ishi then.

See Him when He and all His people shall be gathered home to glory. He shall be your Ishi then—not your Baali, your Lord, your superior—but your Ishi, your Man, your Husband—to be embraced and loved, to be in sweet communion with you, to be your Acquaintance, your Friend, your "Fellow," as His Father and yours has been blessedly pleased to call Him.

And Christian, when you go forth to labor tomorrow, take care not to do it as a slave. Practice this "Ishi" out every day. Do not serve Him because you dare not do other than serve Him. Do not serve Him because you are afraid not to serve Him. Do not do it from fear. Do not work like a slave, under his

master's lash, but go out and serve your Master from pure delight, because He is also your Ishi, your Man, your Husband.

*“We would no longer lie,
Like slaves beneath the throne,
Our faith would ‘Ishi, Jesus,’ cry,
And Thou the kindred own.”*

Go forth to your work, serving your Lord in love and joy and gladness.

*“’Tis love that makes our willing feet
In swift obedience move.”*

And now, in conclusion, my friends, there are many here who cannot say Ishi, for Christ is not Ishi to them. Baali is the only word they can use to God. What shall we do for them, dear friends, those who know the Lord here? What shall we do for these? We have a little sister—what shall we do for her, against the day that she shall be spoken for unto the King? If she is a wall, we will build upon her with many prayers, precious as silver. If she is a door, we will enclose her with the cedar of our supplication. We will day and night pray for these poor souls who are not yet brought in, but many of whom must be brought in, that there may be one fold and one Shepherd.

Poor sinner, I will preach the Gospel to you before I send you away. Are you trembling and shivering, crouching and cowering before God? Are you afraid of Him? Do you think His sword is out of its scabbard, hunting after you? Do you see the arrow of vengeance, athirst for blood and winged to slay? Do you see the law of God after you? Then you have got as far as Baali. Ah, soul, if you know what sin is in all its blackness, and if you weep on account of it, and if you desire to be pardoned, if you are willing to abjure all sin and all self-righteousness, here is the way of salvation.

Ishi bids me tell it to you, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” “Let me go, sir. Let me go home and pray.” No, sir. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. “Let me go out of this chapel and I will run home, and read a chapter.” No, sir. As you are standing there, if you know your need of a Savior, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.

Look at the jailor. He had made the feet of Paul and Silas fast in the stocks and shut them in the inner prison, like a brute as he was. But when there came the earthquake that shook the prison, he said, “What must I do to be saved?” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” said Paul. He did believe and became a child of God, and was baptized directly afterwards, walking in the fear of Jesus. I believe conversion is very often gradual, but there is no reason why it should be so. If God has put you now in such a condition that you know yourself to be lost and ruined, you have every reason to believe that Christ died for you and to cast yourself upon Him, just as you are, without one plea, but that Jesus died for you.

Are you under conviction of sin? Do you feel that God would be just if He were to destroy you? Do you ask, “Can it be possible that all my sins could be blotted out in a moment?” Possible, sir! It is certain that they may be. It is certain that they will be. It is certain that they are, if you now believe in Christ.

A lady called upon me, last Monday, with this trouble upon her. She said she had not heard me preach, but she had been reading my sermons and God had been pleased to bless them to her—not only to her conviction, but to her conversion. She went to the clergyman of the parish, full of joy at having found the Savior. She began to tell him of her gladness and how she rejoiced that all her sins were blotted out. He stopped her and said, “My good woman, that is all a delusion. You have no right to believe that your sins are pardoned till you have led several years of piety and devotion.” She went away sad—and she came to ask me if what the clergyman said was true. And when I quoted that verse,

“The moment a sinner believes,

*And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Redemption in full through His blood.”*

“Oh,” she said, “I see it clearly now.” And when I went on to tell her that many, who had believed in Christ, had been black sinners one moment, and white as snow the next—had cast themselves simply on Christ and had instantly found peace—she could not but take to her heart the precious promises of Christ and believing in Jesus, being justified by faith, she had the peace of God that passes all understanding.

I pray the Lord may give it to you right now. As many of you as shall now look to Christ, as many of you as shall lift up your hearts to Him, as many of you as God has ordained to eternal life and who, therefore, believe in Him, so many of you shall go out of this house, like the publican of old, “justified rather than the other,” triumphing that you, who came in here to confess your guilt, crying, “Lord, have mercy on me a sinner,” can go out calling Jesus Ishi, and clasping Him in your arms, as the death of sin, and as the death of deaths, as your Redeemer, your Savior, and your All-in-All.

May the Lord give all of you such faith, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.