

TRAVELING EXPENSES ON THE TWO GREAT ROADS

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A SERMON
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*“So he paid the fare thereof.”
 Jonah 1:3*

AS a general rule, wherever we go, whatever we do, we must “pay the fare thereof.” Expenditure is connected with every act, work, and operation. The sun does not constantly flood this world, and all its sister spheres, with light and heat without some kind of consumption within itself. Nor does the earth yield her fruits of harvest except at the cost of the matter of which it is composed. By the force of wind and frost, the very “mountain falling cometh to nought, and the rock is removed out of his place” (Job 14:18).

The rivers do not reach the sea without wearing away their banks, and cutting channels in the earth through which their floods may flow. The rain-drops, the generous gifts of heaven, have first been loaned from the treasury of the great deep. The air itself is constantly in process of consumption, and were it not that a fresh supply is daily being produced, even the atmosphere would become exhausted.

All the processes of nature involve a constant expenditure of power. Ponderous as is the engine of creation, and little as it shows the fretting power of age, it is certain that in the whole of its machinery, from its most stupendous wheel down to its smallest valve, it is daily and necessarily experiencing an appointed amount of wear and tear.

It is assuredly so with regard to the lesser world of man. The body cannot move a limb or contract a muscle without expense. The lifting of my hand, the pointing of my finger, the motion of my tongue, the stirring of my brain in thought, all cost something, and make a draught upon the inner store of strength—you cannot so much as gaze upon the world around you without some wear of that marvelous optical instrument by which outward sights are brought to the inward mind.

Friction operates on flesh, and bone, and sinew, and a higher friction acts on mind, and intellect, and passion, for even these grow weak with strain and age. “The fare thereof” nature sternly demands before she will loose her cable or spread her sail to the breeze. He quarrels with God’s laws who expects something for nothing, and hopes to be served without offering a just remuneration, and to find friends without showing himself friendly. We *must* pay our fare, for the universe requires it—we *will* pay it *cheerfully*, for we are honest men.

This general rule of expenditure holds good when we enter the world of morals and commune with spiritual things. Man plucked the forbidden fruit, and dearly was that apple paid for in the fall of all our race. The Lord redeemed us in His boundless love, but not without a price—the free mercy of God cannot work its way among men except heaven’s best treasure is spent to purchase men from bondage.

Expense occurs everywhere in our salvation—“The price of pardon was the Saviour’s blood.” “To buy our souls it cost His own.”

*“There’s ne’er a gift His hand bestows,
 But cost His heart a groan.”*

Nor is it so in the kingdom of heaven only, for even if a man would pursue a foolhardy voyage across the sea of rebellion to the horrible land of perdition, in the ship of sin, he must “pay the fare thereof.” Sinners, for that which is not bread must spend their money, and for that which profits not,

must pay their labor. He who would be saved must take care to sit down and count the cost, lest, after having begun to build, he should not be able to finish it.

But let him not think that he is alone in his expendings, for the transgressor's bill of costs is no light one. War of any sort is costly, but ungodly men will find that a war with heaven is the dearest of all. God's house, like the palace of Solomon, needs a large income to sustain its daily feasting—but it is not like the house of evil which makes a beggar of every man that comes within its doors.

I. I shall this morning commence my discourse by endeavoring to direct your attention to THE COST OF TRAVELING ON THE BROAD ROAD TO HELL.

Phocian paid for the poison which killed him—and the sinner pays dearly for the sin which proves his ruin. The worldling often taunts the Christian because he expends his money on his religion. The Christian may well reply to the sinner, "I wish that your taunts were more true, for I fear that I do not spend one-tenth as much in the service of God as you do in the service of your vices." Very few except the most generous of Christians could venture to say that they spend as much upon their God as profligates squander upon their lusts.

1. Let us begin to reckon up the bill! We are met at once with a heavy item. The man who makes the world his idol and forgets God, has at once, at the start of his voyage, to pay down and place in a sinking fund *all hope of God's favor and all expectation of the blessings which it brings*. He cannot run contrary to God's will and command, and then expect that God will be his friend, and prosper his designs.

If I set myself up in rebellion against heaven's great King, I cannot suppose that He will make it His constant care to promote my interests, nor dare I dream that He will aid and abet me in my designs of evil. "With the froward thou wilt show thyself froward" (Psa 18:26), is the revelation of Scripture. "If ye walk contrary to me, I will walk contrary to you," is the voice of the God of Sinai.

The man throws down the glove of battle against the Lord, and his Creator will let him know that it is, "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker." Long-suffering is JEHOVAH, and He does not smite the rebel with speedy ruin, but still it is written, "God is angry with the wicked every day: if he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow and made it ready."

The good man sees a gracious *providence* smiling at his side. He knows that, "All things work together for good to them that love God." And although the wheels of providence are too high for him to understand their revolutions, yet he knows that they are full of eyes, marking the wisdom and care of his Father in heaven.

He sings with rapture—

*"Thy ways, O Lord, with wise design,
Are framed upon Thy throne above;
And every dark and bending line
Meets in the centre of Thy love."*

The Almighty God is the believer's refuge and beneath His wings he finds perpetual shelter. Not so the sinner. In the court of providence he is an outlaw and can claim no right of protection. How shall providence care for him who cares not for God? He is under its ban, and he shall ere long learn that, "They that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed."

The ungodly cannot claim the privilege which Eliphaz ascribes to the righteous—"He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch you...At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh: neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth. For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee."

On the contrary, providence may justly remind him of his sins, and say, "Call now, if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?" Our gracious God has given no charge to His angels to keep the sinner in all his ways. Those ministering spirits have no commission to bear him up, lest he dash his foot against a stone. Rather, the forces of nature are restrained by almighty

mercy, or else the very stars in their courses and the waters in the rivers, would fight against the wicked, as they did against Sisera in days of yore.

The Christian has *the presence* of God also to rejoice in. Mungo Park, when lost in the wilderness, observed a tiny piece of moss, and marking how beautifully it was fashioned, he recollected, “God is here! My Father is here!” So does the Christian. He is never out of his Father’s house, and consequently he is evermore at home.

The lines of Thompson are ours, not merely as poetry, but as matter of fact—

*“Should Fate command me to the farthest verge
Of the green earth, to distant barbarous climes,
Rivers unknown to song; where first the sun
Gilds Indian mountains, or his setting beam
Flames on th’ Atlantic isles; ’tis naught to me;
Since God is ever present, ever felt,
In the void waste as in the city full;
And where He vital breathes, there must be joy.
When even at last the solemn hour shall come,
And wing my mystic flight to future worlds,
I cheerful will obey; there with new powers
Will rising wonders sing. I cannot go
Where UNIVERSAL LOVE not smiles around,
Sustaining all yon orbs, and all their sons,
From seeming evil still educing good.
And better thence again, and better still,
In infinite progression.”*

It is not so with the sinner? The presence of God is to him dreadful. If there were some valley of confusion where God’s power is not known, its congenial desolation would become the sinner’s heaven—the place where God’s presence shall gleam upon him with irresistible force will be his hell.

Moreover, the sinner gives up every *promise* of God in choosing the road to perdition. There is not a word in this Book of divine love which can breathe comfort into the sinner’s ear while he chooses his own ways. It is a book of threatenings and of curses to the impenitent. It woos as a mother would call her wandering child. It has a gentle voice forever broken, and contrite spirit, but it thunders like Sinai’s own self against every hardened sinner who will not turn from his wicked way.

O unbeliever, you have renounced, by the very fact of your remaining without God and without Christ, all possession in the rich promises of God. You have sunk the immense capital upon the interest of which the Christian lives in time, and in the enjoyment of which he hopes to be blest throughout eternity. You who know how to reckon, mark this one item of expenditure to begin with, and guess how heavy is the fare of sin!

2. In the next place, they who follow the course of sin make a great expenditure of their *time*. However, that I dare say they do not think much of, for time to them is a mere drug of no clear value. Many of the ungodly seek after pastimes, kill-times, and all sorts of inventions by which they may get rid of time, which to us appears sadly too little for our daily work.

The precious privilege of existence is to them a nuisance. The pictured gallery of life is to them a prison or corridor through which they would hasten as speedily as may be, forgetting its end and whereunto it leads. Ah! brethren, if they were wise, they would comprehend that time is the stuff which life is made of, and that this life is the only season in which we can be made meet for the enjoyments of eternity. If men understood it, they would sooner cast pearls to swine than give their days to sin and their nights to rioting. If time be the chrysalis of eternity, who but a fool would treat it with contempt! He is the worst of prodigals who wastes that most precious of all treasures, his time.

But what hours does fashion demand! What days will the debauched and the profligate give to their sensual indulgence! But what am I saying, it is needless to single out the more bold of transgressors—the rule is universal—the sinner’s life is all waste, for it is unconsecrated by faith, unblest by God, and is therefore all lavished for nought on shadows and dreams.

3. It must not be forgotten that some ungodly men expend a deal of *labor* to gratify their evil desires. The way to hell may be downhill, but it is not all smooth. There are hill Difficulties even for the ungodly. “The way of transgressors is hard.” Therefore the Savior says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,” for sinners labor and their sins prove to be a heavy burden.

The same Hebrew word and the same Greek word, stands both for “labouring,” and for “sin,” for sinning is often hard. As the prophet says, “The people labour in the very fire, and weary themselves for vanity.” Though men call sin pleasure, who does not know that it often jades and wearies the man worse than the hardest toil! How the proud man toils for honor! How the miser pinches himself for gold! How the thief exhausts his ingenuity to get at another man’s wealth! How hard is the harlot’s drudgery! How heavy is the yoke of Satan!

4. Sinners, again, are frequently put by their sins to a great expense of *their actual substance*. Their money finds feather’s for its wings in the gratification of their desires. Who can be a drunkard without coming to poverty or lessening his estate? Who fills the cup to the brim without ere long clothing himself with rags and bringing his household to poverty? The prodigal wasted his substance in riotous living—who can do otherwise, if he entertains a host of greedy sins?

God only knows how much of the poverty of this land is due to nothing else but drunkenness. No doubt there always will be some poverty which may claim our charity, for the poor shall never cease out of the land. But still, it is to be feared that three-fourths of all the poverty of this great city is to be traced more or less directly to the gin palace and the beer shop.

Drunkenness is a greedy sin and like the horseleech it cries, “Give, give.” England, with all its liberality, does not give anything like so much to the cause of missions, or for the maintenance of religion, as men spend in intoxication.

Then look at other sins, how costly they are! Consider those amusements of the world which many defend as being no offense to public morals, but which the spiritual avoid as being unfit occupations for heirs of heaven. Even these are far from being inexpensive. I noticed yesterday an advertisement in the newspaper for boxes at the opera, for a certain term, to be let for two hundred guineas.

What would people think if a pew in any place of worship were only to be had on terms of so heavy a subscription? Why, that sum would pay the charges all the year round of full many a place of worship. And yet this amount represents probably but a portion of the expense involved in attendance at the theater. There are far greater drains upon the purse than those implied in missionary societies, ministers, chapels and Bible-women.

Who has not heard how fast debauchery burns the candle at both ends? Is it not said of the prodigal, that he devoured his living with harlots? This sin has brought many a man of wealth and fortune down to shiver like a beggar on a dunghill. “Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house...lest strangers be filled with thy wealth, and thy labours be in the house of a stranger.” He who sins must pay the fare thereof.

5. Nor is this all. Those men who go far into sin, and carry out the desires of their hearts soon find that there is an *expense of health*. How many a man has rottenness in his bones, and disease in his heart’s core brought on by gluttony, drunkenness, and vice! Well may men pray that they may be delivered from the sins of their youth and their former transgressions. For they are in a sad plight who mourn at the last when their flesh and their body are consumed.

It is not God who has thickly sown this world with disease and sorrow—man’s iniquity has done it. Men cast darnel and cockle into the furrows of life, and when they spring up, they complain of the appointments of God, whereas they are the result of their own sins. And there is no injustice in the rule, that whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.

“Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?” “His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust.” The fare, the full fare of sin’s voyage, must be paid.

6. Another expense, and that one which ought not to be forgotten, is the *loss of peace of mind*. A man cannot indulge in sin and yet go to his bed with a quiet conscience. At least, if he can do so, this callousness is of itself a still greater evil. For the most part, men start back at the ghosts of their own crimes. “Terrors make the wicked afraid on every side, and drive them to their feet.”

Even the respectable sinner whose life is outwardly moral, but whose heart is far from God, cannot avoid some qualms and disturbance of mind. If I am not one with God, if I am not washed in Jesus’ blood, if I am not sanctified by God’s Holy Spirit, there is an aching void within me which the world can never fill.

There is an inward monitor which tells me, “There is something that you want, a something that the world cannot give you, which you cannot earn for yourself. How is it that you are living in the neglect of it?” “A dreadful sound is in his ears: in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him...He wandereth abroad for bread, saying, Where is it? he knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand.”

Until I was saved by grace, I can truly say I had no lasting peace, but now my peace is like a river. How a trumpet will often blanch the sinner’s cheek! The cholera comes, and how the man trembles because death is at work next door! How fearful he is when he stands at the grave’s brink, and looks down upon the coffin of some companion with whom he has spent many a roisterous hour!

Ah! you cannot have peace, you cannot have peace till you have Christ, you cannot be truly happy till you have given your souls to Jesus. The apple may look fair, but it is rotten within. You may talk of joy, but you know it not if you know not Jesus. Surely to lose this priceless pearl is an item in the bill of no mean magnitude.

*“Peace has sweets
That Hybla never knew; it sleeps on down
Cull’d gently from beneath the cherub’s wing.”*

Who would throw this away for vexing, mocking, deceiving, lying vanities?

7. The worst expense, however, we have only hinted at. The man who goes to hell must pay the fare in another way—*he loses his soul*. What that loss may be no mortal tongue can tell. If one could come again from the pit, as once the rich man proposed, perhaps he might tell us in dolorous tones what it is to be cast out from God into the place where there is not a drop of water to cool the fire-tormented tongue.

But it is not for us even to conceive what the place of torment may be. It is enough to hear and profit by the question of the Savior—“What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” What is Caesar the better for his dominions? What is Croesus the better for his wealth? What is the philosopher the better for his wisdom, now that he is cast away from the favor of God forever?

In fact, the greater the wretched beings were on earth, the more terrible will their doom be in eternity, when, looking from their beds of flame, the lesser sinners shall cry, “Art thou become like one of us? Is the lofty one brought low? Is the proud one humbled? Is the boaster made to feel in the torment of this fire that he is no greater than the rest of us?”

I say, the more honor, and dignity, and glory, the man obtained on earth, the more terrible his shame and disgrace when, his soul being lost, he is cast into the pit forever. Let us, then, if we have been deluded by the pleasures of sin, or have been tempted in any way to forget God because we have thought that the way of the flesh was easy—let us think awhile that we shall have to pay the fare thereof, and that the fare is far too expensive to be paid by men of understanding. We dare not risk soul and body, life and death, heaven and hell, judgment and eternity, merely for the sake of those paltry, passing, delusive joys, which are all that the world can pretend to offer.

II. Let us change our strain and say a little upon THE EXPENSE OF AVOIDING DUTY.

Jonah's duty was to go to Nineveh and preach the Word—he preferred not to go. He therefore shirked the work, went down to Joppa and paid his fare to go to Tarshish. I hope we are not in the habit of doing the same, but yet there are occasions when even God's servants shrink from duty, and seem willing to forget that where God calls they are bound to go.

Possibly this remark may apply to some minister who may come under the Word. He is called to bear his protest against a certain sin, and he thinks to himself, "If I so speak, some of those who hear me will never come again, I may lose rich subscribers. I will not say a word on that point." Or he has it laid upon him to cry against the monstrous evils in the state church—but he puts his finger to his lips and remains silent, inwardly calculating—"I had better hold my peace on that subject, for I may risk my popularity."

Such a minister should reflect that it is a very expensive thing to try to flee to Tarshish when you ought to go to Nineveh, for a man cannot avoid duty without expense. I have known good people who will say, "I know so and so is what I ought to do, but still you see the path is very difficult and I do not feel called upon to make so great a sacrifice."

Well, friend, if you do not make the sacrifice when God demands it of you, He has other ways of taking away your treasured goods. In the long run you will find it far more expensive to shun the work, and will of God than at once to give yourself to it. You will be a loser by your prudence. You shall find that the Scriptural rule holds good, "He that would lose his life shall save it, but he that would save his life shall lose it."

If you are willing to be a loser for Christ, you shall be a gainer. But if you insist upon being held harmless, and try at all hazards to make provision for the flesh, then you shall find that ere long you will have to pay the fare thereof to your own grievous hurt and injury.

What did Jonah lose? Jonah had to pay as part of his fare *the presence and comfortable enjoyment of God's love*. He went down into the bottom of the vessel and hid himself from sight. I think I see him, that Jonah, who a few days after walked with all the boldness of a lion through the streets of Nineveh, crying, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

That Jonah who bearded Nineveh's haughty monarch, and was not afraid to tell him that in forty days his city would be overthrown. That Jonah goes sneaking down among the goods at the bottom of the hold, for fear anybody should see him, and there hides his coward, craven head. Poor Jonah, you have lost the hallowed fellowship of your God, you have lost His presence, and consequently your courage has all oozed out of you.

This is a dear price which you have paid for shunning Nineveh. When you and I serve our Lord Jesus as believers should do, we can remember that our God is with us, and though we have the whole world against us, if we have God with us what does it matter? But oh! the minute we start back, and begin to seek our own inventions and appeal to our own wisdom, we are all at sea without a pilot, and our great Helper withdraws from us.

Then may we bitterly lament and groan out, "O my God, where have You gone? How could I have been so foolish as to shun Your service, and in this way to lose all the bright shinings of Your face? This is a price too high. Let me return to my allegiance, and to Your presence."

In the next place, Jonah lost *all peace of mind*. When he was in Nineveh, crying, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," he was not afraid of the edge of the sword, nor of the tyrant's rage—he felt that he was doing God's work and he knew that when on God's errands he was perfectly safe. His heart beat gently, like that of a man in a happy, tranquil frame of mind, wearing the herb called heart's-ease in his bosom.

But now, down there, in the hold of the vessel, his heart is palpitating—he does not know what may happen, and until sleep happily comes in to ease the distress of his mind, he is like a poor hunted stag, panting with alarm.

These were two great things to lose—God's presence and his own peace of mind—but these were not all his damage and injury. He was now *brought into great peril*—he must be thrown into the sea. In

all likelihood he will meet with a watery grave. Had he gone to Nineveh, that would not have occurred, he would have been under the care of God's special providence there, but now the winds and waves threaten him.

With what a splash he falls into the deep! As we see him engulfed, let us with holy caution shun the dangerous way of disobedience. Other men may escape the chastisements of God in this world, but not the Lord's own children. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities."

Now, too, *he is brought into great affliction of soul*. He tells us that he "cried by reason of affliction." He compares his state to the "belly of hell," He was brought into such depths of distress. A miracle interposed to save his life, but not to cheer his spirit. Like the Savior, of whom he was a type, he was exceedingly sorrowful and very heavy, almost unto death. Sin soon destroys a believer's comfort. It is the deadly upas tree from whose leaves distil deadly drops which destroy the life of joy and peace.

Jonah, too, had *lost everything upon which he might have drawn for comfort in any other case*. He could not turn to the promise of God that He would keep him, for he was not in God's ways. He could not say, "Lord, I am thy servant," for then conscience would have said, "Yes, and a pretty servant, too!" He could not say, "Lord, I am on Thy errand!" for conscience would have said, "No, you are on your own!"

He could not say, "Lord, I meet with these difficulties in the discharge of my duty, therefore help me through them"—no, for there would have been a reply, "You are not here in the discharge of duty. you flew in the teeth of the Most High. You sought to escape from a little difficulty—you tried to get away from the presence of God altogether, and you have prepared all this for yourself. If the draught is bitter, you mixed it. If the fruit is sharp, you planted the tree. If this harvest is terrible, you sowed the seed—you are reaping your own deeds—you are being filled with your own ways." Poor Jonah! poor Jonah! to be in such a state as this.

Then here is another point, *he had to go to Nineveh after all*—and so will you. You may kick, but when God means you to do His work, you will be made to do it. The ox-goad has been thrust into you already because you hate the yoke. You do not like it, and you kick against it, and the only result is that it is driven further into you.

Saul, Saul, it is hard for you to kick against the pricks, for with all your kicking and rebelling, you will have to go where you were originally ordered to go. you might as well go at first—you will go with better grace. You will go with your Master's comfortable presence, but you will have to go one way or another.

Many men have found this true. They have struggled against duty, and perhaps, year after year they have drawn back from it, finding miserable excuses for their consciences. But they never prospered in business, they could not get on in the world, they had trouble on trouble, and at last it came to this—they had to go back to the very place where they were ten or twenty years ago, and there they discharged the duty which they had been so long seeking to avoid, which had proved a burdensome stone to them until they were rid of it by yielding to its demands.

Now, my dear brother, do not play the Jonah, for you will have to pay the fare of it. If you know your duty, do it. I may be speaking very pointedly to some of you. "I would have to sever the bonds of many a fond connection." Do it for Christ's sake. "I should have to leave the camp and go outside of it, take up a very heavy cross, and bear Christ's reproach." You may as well do it now as by and by, for you will have to do it.

"But" says one, "this business of mine—I have nothing left to live upon. I feel it is a bad business, but I do not want to give it up just yet." You will have to do so sooner or later, you may as well do it now, before, like Jonah, you have had to pay for your wit. Remember that, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and a good understanding have all they that keep his commandments."

May God the Holy Spirit give you the wisdom which comes from above, which will lead you to sit as a child at the feet of Jesus, and learn His ways. "Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have

no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.” “But hearken diligently unto his commandments, and then shall thy peace be like a river, and thy righteousness like the waves of the sea.”

III. A few words upon another point—there is AN EXPENSE CONNECTED WITH GOING TO HEAVEN.

It is estimated at a very high rate by some who say that the road is good enough, but the tolls are too high. Others pretend to believe that religion is only a scheme for putting money into ministers’ pockets, whereas I can truly say for one, that what I receive for my ministry is not a tenth of what I could readily earn in an engagement infinitely less laborious and harassing than my present position. Although, be it added, I would not leave my ministry for ten thousand worlds.

Let us think over this matter of expense and begin with an old story. An aged couple, in the vicinity of London, who, in the early part of life, were poor, but who, by the blessing of God upon their industry, enjoyed a comfortable independency in their old age, were called upon by a Christian minister who solicited their contributions to a charity.

The old lady was disposed to make out some excuse and to answer in the negative, both for her husband and herself. And therefore replied, “Why, sir, we have lost a great deal by religion since we began. My husband knows that very well.” And being wishful to obtain her husband’s consent to the assertion, she said, “Have we not, Thomas?”

Thomas, after a long and solemn pause, replied, “Yes, Mary, we *have* lost a great deal by our religion! I have lost a great deal by my religion. Before I got religion, Mary, I had got a water pail in which I carried water, and *that* you know I lost many years ago. And then I had an old slouched hat, a patched old coat, and mended shoes and stockings, but I have lost them also long ago.

“And Mary, you know that poor as I was, I had a habit of getting drunk and quarrelling with you, and that you know I have lost. And then I had a burdened conscience and a wicked heart. And then I had ten thousand guilty feelings and fears, but all are lost, completely lost, and like a millstone, cast into the deepest sea.

“And Mary, you have been a loser too, though not so great a loser as myself. Before we got religion, Mary, you had a washing-tray in which you washed for hire. And God Almighty blessed your industry. But since we got religion you have lost your washing-tray. And you had a gown and bonnet much the worse for wear, though they were all you had to wear, but you have lost them long ago.

“And you had many an aching heart concerning me, at times. but those you happily have lost. And I could even wish that you had lost as much as I have lost, and even more, for what we lose by our religion, Mary, will be our eternal gain.”

We need not add, the preacher did not go away without substantial proof that Thomas deemed his losses for religion his most weighty obligations to the goodness of Almighty God as the richest boon of grace on earth, and the most authentic pledge of glory in the world to come.

If some of us were to look back upon what religion has cost us, we might cast up the amount with very much the same result. Where were you wont to spend your Sundays once, some of you? Where would some few of you have been on other occasions?—at the race course, at the theater—ay, and in the brothel.

But now you are washed, and cleansed, and sanctified, and rejoicing in Christ Jesus. This is what your religion has cost you—the giving up of nothing that made you truly happy, but only renouncing that which pretended to make you happy, but which was ruining your soul forever. The first expense of religion is that *it takes away from men spurious joys* and gives them real ones. Takes away from them shadows and gives them substance.

Then, again, the expense of your religion has been this—some of you have given a good deal of your *time* to the cause of Christ. Others of you have devoted a considerable portion of your money to it, but after all that you or any of us have ever given, I am sure we can say, religion has cost us nothing which we did not give cheerfully—and it has asked of us nothing which it was not our happiness to render.

We have felt a greater joy in giving than in withholding—a greater bliss in serving God than in being idle. Moreover our liberality has always been repaid to us with interest, for our God will be in no man's debt. Here is a specimen of what has been our experience from the pen of a tradesman, "Some years ago I heard a sermon from the words, 'Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse' (Mal 3:10). I cannot describe how my mind was impressed with the manner in which JEHOVAH here condescended to challenge His people when He says, 'And prove me now herewith,' etc.

"Suffice it to say that the subject made such an impression, that I found it my duty to do more for the cause of God than I ever had done. I did so, and on closing that year's accounts, I found that I had gained more than in any two years preceding it. Some time afterwards I thought the Redeemer's cause had an additional claim, as the place in which we worshipped Him needed some repairs. The sum I then gave was £20, and in a very little time afterwards, I received £40 which I had long given up as lost."

Our Master's service is our liberty. We count it our joy to run in the way of His commandments. And if the worldling pities us, and says, "Poor man, how he must deny himself!" We reply, "In one sense it is true, but in another, our best self is fed, and satisfied, and feasted, when we deny self. The duties we perform are not performed as duties, but as privileges. We do not run into them at all because we feel forced to do so, but because we love them. We confess that religion has cost us our spirit, our soul, our body. And our only regret is we have not more that we can give to the cause of Christ.

"We think we can stand at the foot of the Savior's cross and say—

*"Now for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count my loss,
My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to His cross.*

*"Yes, and I must and will esteem
All things but loss for Jesus' sake;
O may my soul be found in Him,
And of His righteousness partake!"*

Religion, then, takes away from us nothing but what we are glad to lose, and it asks nothing of us but what we are too glad to give, and it returns to us in ten thousand ways all that it takes from us. It gives us blessings of the upper and of the nether springs, it comforts us in life, it cheers us in death. It makes us so happy that we can say with Watts—

*"I would not change my bless'd estate
For all the world calls good or great;
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold."*

IV. In the last place, THE TRUE FARE OF GODLINESS IS ALREADY PAID—NOT BY US, BUT BY OUR LORD JESUS.

Jonah paid his fare from Joppa to Tarshish, but I never find that he paid any fare back. The conveyance which brought him to land was far cheaper than the ship of Tarshish, though not quite as comfortable. He came back to land with no expense to himself whatever. So we must pay much and do much in order to be cast away, but the way of eternal life and salvation is perfectly free.

When Jonah was thrown out into the midst of the sea, the whale did not swallow him because he was a man of money or because he was a man of merit. He was just a needy, destitute sinner, subject to the wrath of God as expressed in that tempest, and in that storm, and in that boiling sea. And there came the friendly fish, which carried him into a living grave for three days, that his life might be preserved.

And this is very much like our salvation—salvation by death and burial with Jesus. We flee away. We trust by our self-righteousness to escape from the tempest of God’s wrath, but we cannot. At last we feel that we are cast right out into the sea to perish, and God’s anger, as we think, is hot against us. There is no good thing in us, nothing upon which we can rely, we see no hope of escape.

Just then the death of Christ, which was our greatest crime—which seems as though it would destroy us—takes us into its friendly shelter, and in it we go to the bottoms of the mountains. In it we descend till all the waves and billows of God’s wrath have rolled over us. And in it we are securely landed, to praise the name and love of God. When our extremity comes, and there is none to help, then God prepares the way of deliverance for us, His people.

Hear me for one moment, my brethren, this morning. We have sinned. God help us to feel the sin! Grievously have we offended against God by flying in His face and going whither He would not have us go. Can we return? We have paid our fare to go to the place of destruction, but we have no means to pay our fare to heaven.

Penniless, stripped of all hope in ourselves, is there any way by which we can return—by which we can find eternal life? There is! There is!—if we give ourselves up wholly to God, confessing our sin, and if our soul rests alone upon the finished work of the great salvation provided in Christ Jesus. We need not fear because we have nothing. Our God, who has everything, asks nothing from us.

He does not save us because *we* are righteous, but because *He* is gracious. He will not deliver us because there is something good in *us*—but because there is everything good in Himself. Let me say to those of you who are sleeping this morning, careless of your fate—if you sleep much longer, you may wake up where your waking will be terrible.

What mean you, O you sleepers! Rise! Bethink you! Bethink you of your future doom, of your present danger. O Spirit of God, arouse them. And if awakened, you cry, “What must I do to be saved?”—the answer comes, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Though you can see no means of escape, yet there is a means provided by God.

And when you are cast out from the ship, have left all other confidence, and think that God’s sea of wrath will cover you up—then Christ, who has been prepared of old as our great Deliverer, shall take you and bear you safely to the land of eternal glory. I would God that you were made to forsake the way of the destroyer, and led in the way of peace, that He might have all the praise forever.

May He bless these poor, feeble, but well-intended remarks, 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.