

EYES OPENED NO. 681

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 18, 1866
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AT WESTBOURNE GROVE CHAPEL, BAYSWATER

*“And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water.”
Genesis 21:19*

*“And their eyes were opened, and they knew him.”
Luke 24:31*

THE fall of man was most disastrous in its results to our entire being. “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” was no idle threat, for Adam did die the moment that he transgressed the command—he died the great spiritual death by which all his spiritual powers became then and evermore, until God should restore them, absolutely dead.

I said all the *spiritual* powers, and if I divide them after the analogy of the senses of the body my meaning will be still more clear. Through the fall the spiritual *taste* of man became perverted, so that he puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. He chooses the poison of hell and loathes the bread of heaven. He licks the dust of the serpent and rejects the food of angels.

The spiritual *hearing* became grievously injured, for man naturally no longer hears God’s Word, but stops his ears at his Maker’s voice. Let the Gospel minister charm never so wisely, yet the unconverted soul like the deaf adder hears not the charmer’s voice. The spiritual feeling by virtue of our depravity is fearfully deadened. That which would once have filled the man with alarm and terror no longer excites emotion. Whether the thunders of Sinai or the turtle notes of Calvary claim his attention, man is resolutely deaf to both.

Even the spiritual *smell* with which man should discern between that which is pure and holy, and that which is unsavory to the most High has become defiled, and now man’s spiritual nostrils, while unrenewed, derives no enjoyment from the sweet savor which is in Christ Jesus, but seeks after the putrid joys of sin.

As with other senses so is it with man’s *sight*. He is so spiritually blind that things most plain and clear he cannot and will not see. The understanding, which is the soul’s eye, is covered with scales of ignorance, and when these are removed by the finger of instruction, the visual orb is still so affected that it only sees men as trees walking.

Our condition is thus most terrible, but at the same time it affords ample room for a display of the splendors of divine grace. Dear friends, we are naturally so entirely ruined, that if saved, the whole work must be of God, and the whole glory must crown the head of the Triune JEHOVAH.

If indeed the spiritual eyesight be dim, it is not sufficient for the Lord to open a fountain as He did in Hagar’s case. It is not enough for Christ to come and walk with men as He did in the case of the disciples. Our eyes must be opened, or else Hagar will die of thirst with the fountain unseen at her feet, and the disciples will still be pining in sadness after their Savior when that Savior is sitting at the board breaking bread with them. There must not only be a Christ lifted up of whom it can be said, “There is life in a look at the crucified One,” but that very look itself must be given to us, or else in vain should Christ hang upon the cross, there shall be no salvation by His death to us.

I. Taking HAGAR’S CASE first, I shall address myself this morning to certain unconverted ones who are in a hopeful condition.

1. Taking Hagar's case as the model to work upon, we may see in her and in many like her *preparedness for mercy*. In many respects she was in a fit state to become an object of mercy's help. She had a *strong sense of need*. The water was spent in the bottle, she herself was ready to faint, and her child lay at death's door. And this sense of need was attended by *vehement desires*.

It is a very hard thing to bring a sinner to long after Christ, so hard, that if a sinner does really long and thirst after Jesus, the Spirit of God must have been secretly at work in his soul begetting and fostering those desires.

Surely I may believe that among the crowd upstairs or down below there are some few who need not be exhorted to desire the Savior—you do desire Him. You can say, God being your witness, that you would gladly lose your eyes and all the joys of day if you could but look to Jesus and live. When the invitation is given, "Ho, every one that thirsteth," you can honestly say, "That means me." That precious Gospel invitation, "Whosoever will, let him come," is evidently yours, for you do will eagerly and vehemently.

The Searcher of all hearts knows that there is no objection in your heart either to be saved or to the way of being saved, nay, rather you sometimes lift your hands to heaven and say, "O God! would that I might say, 'Christ for me!'" Desire then, in your case is apparent, and so far your case is exceedingly hopeful. You understood aforesaid that only the blood of Jesus could wash you, but now you want to be washed. You know that the water of life is desirable. You know more than that, you pine with an inward desire to drink of it. Your soul is now in such a state that if you do not find Jesus you never will be happy without Him. Like Toplady you sing—

*"I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comfort me."*

God has brought you into such a condition that you are like the magnetized needle which has been turned away from the pole by the finger of some passerby, and it cannot rest until it gets back to its place. Your constant cry is, "Give me Christ! Give me Christ, or else I die!" This is hopeful, but let me remind you that it alone will not save you.

The discovery of a leak in a vessel may be preparatory to the pumping of the ship, and to the repair of the leak, but the discovery of the leak will not of itself keep the boat afloat. The fact that you have a fever is well for you to know, but to groan under that fever will not restore you to health. To desire after Christ is a very blessed symptom, but mere desires will not bring you to heaven. "If wishes were horses beggars might ride," and if desires were Saviors few would be lost.

You may be hungering and thirsting after Christ, but hungering and thirsting will not save you. You must have Christ, for your salvation does not lie in your hungering and thirsting, nor in your humblings, nor in your praying. Salvation is in Him who died upon the cross, and not anything in you. Yet these are hopeful signs, and so far am I thankful.

My dear friend, in your case your pride is removed. Like Hagar you are *humbled, and brought to self-despair*. There was a time when you did not admit your need of a Savior. You found comfort enough in ceremonies, and in your own prayers, repentances, and so on.

But now, my dear hearer, the water is spent in your bottle, and you are sitting down with Hagar wringing your hands and weeping in despair—a blessed despair! God bring you all to it! Self-despair is next door to confidence in Christ. Rest assured until we are empty, Jesus will never fill us. Till we are stripped He will never clothe us. Until self is dead Christ will not live in us.

You are brought to self-despair. You feel that spiritually you can neither lift hand nor foot. Legal duties which seemed so easy, you now find to be far too difficult for you. And those spiritual exercises which once you dreamed that you could perform acceptably without the help of God the Holy Spirit, now appear to be things quite impossible to you. Herein I greatly rejoice, but more, far more is needed.

It is quite certain that in Hagar's case *the will* was right enough with reference to the water. It would have been preposterous indeed to say to Hagar, "If there be water are you willing to drink?" "Willing?" she would say, "look at my parched lips, hear my dolorous cries, look at my poor panting, dying child! How can you ask a mother if she is willing to have water while her babe is perishing for thirst?"

And so with you, if I were to propose to you the question, "Are you willing to be saved?" you might look me in the face and say, "Willing! oh sir, I have long passed beyond that stage. I am panting, groaning, thirsting, fainting, dying to find Christ. If He would come to me this morning I would not only open both the gates of my heart and say, 'Come in,' but the gates are opened now before He comes, and my soul is saying, 'Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might even come to His seat!'"

You are not now the prodigal spending his substance riotously, but you are the prodigal saying, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare while I perish with hunger?" You are pausing in your career of sin, you are considering your ways, you are desiring to escape from the slavery of sin and to be reconciled unto God by the death of His beloved Son.

All this is hopeful, but I must again remind you that to will to be rich does not make a man rich, and that to will to be saved cannot in itself save you. Panting after health does not restore the sick man, though it may set him upon using the means, and so he may be healed. And with you, your panting after salvation cannot save you, you must get beyond all this to the great Physician Himself.

As yet I must say to you as did the angel to Lot, "Look not behind thee, stay not in all the plain, but haste to the mountain lest thou be consumed." See there the water is at Hagar's feet, she thirsts for it, she is willing to receive it, she is despairing as to anything which she can do for herself. And yet she will drop down famished for want of water unless something more be done than that which is done already.

2. In the second place, *mercy was prepared* for Hagar, and is prepared for those in a like state. *There was water.* She thought it was a wilderness without a drop for her to drink, but there was water. Troubled conscience, there is pardon. You think it is all judgment, thunder and thunderbolt, curse and wrath, but it is not so. There is mercy. Jesus died. God is able justly to forgive sinners. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. He is a God ready to pardon, ready to forgive.

There is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared. There is water, there is mercy. What is more, there is *mercy for you.* There is not only that general mercy which we are bound to preach to every creature, but for many of you whom I have described I am persuaded that there is special mercy. Your names are in His book. He has chosen you from before the foundation of the world, though you do not know it. You shall be His, you are His. The hour is not far distant when, washed in the fountain and made clean, you shall cast yourselves at the Savior's feet, and be His captives in the bonds of love forever.

There is mercy, troubled sinner, there is mercy for you. *There is mercy for you now,* if you trust Jesus. The water was not created as a new thing to supply Hagar's thirst, it was there already. *If* she could have seen it she might have had it before, but she could not see it.

There is mercy, there is mercy for you. All that is wanted is that you should see it, poor troubled conscience, and if you could have seen it there would have been no necessity whatever that you should have been so long a time as you have been in despair, and doubt, and fear. There is forgiveness with God, and you shall certainly obtain it. God grant that you may obtain it now!

The water was near to Hagar, and so is Christ near to you, my dear friend, this morning. The mercy of God is not a thing to be sought for up yonder among the stars, nor to be discovered in the depths. It is nigh thee, it is even in your mouth and in your heart. The Savior who walked along the streets of Jerusalem is in these aisles and in these pews this morning, a God ready to forgive, waiting to be gracious.

Do not think of my Master as though He had gone up to heaven out of your reach, and had left no mercy behind Him. Let me tell you that He is as near in spirit now as He was to the disciples when He spoke to them at Emmaus. Oh that you could see Him! You think—"I wish I had lived in His day, that I

might have touched the hem of His garment! Oh that I had been among the sick that were laid in the streets, that He might touch them with His hand!”

Wherefore talk you thus? He is “the same yesterday, today, and forever.” He is passing by. Cry to Him, you blind man, and you shall receive your sight! Call to Him, you deaf, speak, even you whose lips are dumb, His ear can hear your soul’s desires. He is near, only believe in His presence, and trust His grace, and you shall see Him. But remember, that your seeing Him will not create the Savior nor the salvation. The Savior is here already, and the salvation is even now finished, but your seeing Him by faith will give you joy and comfort.

The water in Hagar’s case was not merely near, but *it was accessible*. She took the bottle and she dipped it in the stream, and filled it to the brim, and gave some to the child to drink. Poor awakened sinner, mercy is within your reach. God the Holy Ghost has placed you where mercy is within your immediate reach.

It is a notion abroad that the act of faith is very mysterious. Now faith so far as it is an act of man (and an act of man it most certainly is, as well as the gift of God, for “with the heart *men* believe”), is one of the simplest acts of the human intellect. To trust Jesus, to lean with the soul upon Him, just as with my body I am leaning on this rail, to make Him all my confidence and all my rest, needs no learning, no previous education, needs no straining or mental effort. It is such an action that the babe and the suckling may glorify God by it. While the faith of Sir Isaac Newton, with all his learning, is not a whit more saving or less simple than the faith of the child of three years old, if brought to rest on Christ alone.

This simple trusting of the Lord Jesus saves through the power of Jesus Christ. Nothing which goes before faith, and nothing which follows after faith, constitutes the essence of His saving work, faith alone is the saving grace. The moment the dying thief looked to the Crucified and said, “Lord remember me,” he was as saved as Paul when he could say, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course.” You are saved the moment you trust Christ.

I am very anxious to be understood, and therefore I am trying to speak very simply, and to talk right home to those whom I am driving at. My own case is to the point. I was for some few years, as a child, secretly seeking Jesus. If ever heart knew what the bitter anguish of sin was I did, and when I came to understand the plan of salvation by the simple teaching of a plain, illiterate man, the next thought I had after joy that I was saved, was this, What a fool I was not to trust Jesus Christ before! I concluded that I never could have heard the Gospel, but I think I was mistaken. I think I must have heard the Gospel thousands of times, but did not understand it. I was like Hagar with my eyes closed.

We are bound to tell you every Sabbath that trusting Jesus Christ is the way of salvation, but after you have heard that fifty thousand times, you really will not even understand what we mean by it till the Spirit of God reveals the secret. But when you do but know it and trust in Jesus, simply as a child would trust his father’s word, you will say of yourself, “How could it be? I was thirsty with the water rippling at my feet. I was famishing and perishing for hunger, and the bread was on the table. I was fretting as though there were no entrance into heaven, but there stood the door wide open right before me, if I could but have seen it.”

If however, God the Holy Spirit enables you to understand this morning what trusting in Jesus Christ is, I do pray you at once obey the command and trust in the blood of the Lamb. He is God, is not He worthy of confidence? He has suffered unheard of agonies. Must there not be merit in innocent sufferings like His?

Trust yourself to Christ to save you, and He must save you. He never did refuse to save a single trustful spirit. Nay, I will alter what I say. I said, “Trust Christ, and He must save you.” I will improve upon it. “Trust Him, *you are saved*.” The moment you begin to live by faith in His dear Son, there is not a sin left in God’s book against you.

3. We pass on then in the third place to notice that although Hagar was prepared and mercy was prepared, yet *there was an impediment in the way*, for she could not see the water. There is also an

impediment in your way. Hagar had a pair of bright beaming eyes, I will be bound to say, and yet she could not see the water, and men may have first-rate understandings, but not understand that simple thing, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You do not suffer so much from lack of power to understand faith, as from a kind of haze which hovers over your eye to prevent its looking into the right place. You continue to imagine that there must be something for the priest or yourself to do. When we are driven out of all that, we think that there must be something very singular for us to feel in order to eternal life.

Now this is all a mistake. Simple trust in Jesus has this difficulty in it, that it is not difficult, and therefore the human mind refuses to believe that God can intend to save us by so simple a plan. What blindness is this! So foolish and so fatal! Is not this ignorance partly caused by *legal terrors*.

Master Bunyan, who had a keen insight into spiritual experience, says that Christian was so troubled with that burden on his back that in running he did not look well enough to his steps. And therefore being much tumbled up and down in his own mind, as he says, he also tumbled into the Slough of Despond.

You have heard the thunder of God's law so long that you cannot hear anything so soft and sweet as the invitation of the loving Jesus. "Come and welcome! Come and welcome!" is unheard because of the din of your sins. Oh but soul, I pray the Lord to deliver you from that dog of hell, and may you hear instead of the barking of the dog, the voice of the good Shepherd as He cries, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

The main reason I think, however, why some do not attain early to peace is because they are *looking for more than they will get*, and thus their eyes are dazzled with fancies. You have been reading somebody's life and you have said, "I should like to feel like that man," so you will one of these days, but you must not hope to be like that man before you are saved.

You are like the simpleton, who having seen a tree loaded with fruit, went home to his garden and tore up all the young plants because they were not as yet equally productive. Let the young plants alone, it is a matter of years for the tree to grow and produce that fruit.

You, dear friend, who dare not take Christ because you are not a full-grown Christian yet, be content to be a babe first. Be satisfied to go through the seed state, and the blade state, and the ear state, and then you will get to be the full corn in the ear. Be content to begin with Christ and with Christ alone.

I verily believe some of you expect that you will experience a galvanic shock, or a superhuman delirium of horror. You have an idea that to be born again is something to make the flesh creep or the bones shiver, an indescribable sensation, quite out of the compass of human feeling.

Now believe me, that to be born again involves the ending of superstition and living by feeling, and brings you into the world of plain and simple truth where fools need not err. "Whosoever believeth in him is not condemned." If you can understand that and claim it as your own, you are born again. But though you should understand all human mysteries, if you are not born again you could not truly understand that simplest of all teachings, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Again, I am afraid some persons with the water at their feet, do not drink it because of the *bad directions* that are given by ministers. When a minister closes up an address to the unconverted with this exhortation—"Now, my dear friends, go home and pray," that is a very right exhortation, but it is given to the wrong people, and in the wrong place. I do not say to you this morning, I dare not say to you, as though it were the Gospel message, "Go home and pray." I hope you will pray, but there is another matter to come before prayer, namely, faith in Jesus.

When Christ told His disciples to go and preach the Gospel to every creature, He did not say to them, "He that prayeth shall be saved," though that would be true if he prayed aright, but "he that believeth shall be saved." Your present duty is not praying, but believing. You are to look to Jesus Christ upon the cross just as the poor serpent-bitten Israelites looked to the brazen serpent and lived. Your prayings will not do you a farthing's worth of good if you refuse to trust Jesus Christ.

When you have trusted Jesus Christ prayer will become your breath, your native air, you will not be able to live without it. But prayer if put in the place of a childlike trust in Jesus, becomes an antichrist. It is not praying, but believing, which saves the soul. It is not going to places of worship, or Bible reading which saves. I am not depreciating these duties, but I am putting them in their proper position. It is depending upon the Lord Jesus Christ alone which is the true vital act by which the soul is quickened into spiritual life.

Now dear friend, I do not say to you, “Stop till you get home”—you may never get home, you may die in the street. I dare not say to you, “Wait till you feel a penitent heart”—you may die now, before your heart reaches the state of penitence. But I say to you, if now like Hagar you are hungering and thirsting, salvation is within your reach. Trust Jesus Christ, and His blood and righteousness are yours.

I am prepared to answer for that advice at the last great day at the bar of God, and I am prepared to answer for it at the bar of your consciences. If you, trusting in Christ, do not find peace and pardon, the Gospel which I preach is a lie, and I will renounce it. But then that Book would be false also, for it is from that Book my message comes. This is the Gospel which we have received, and which Christ has sent us to preach, that whosoever believeth in Him is not condemned.

Now why gad ye about after this and that? Why follow ye this man’s directions and that? Why look ye to your baptism and to your confirmation? Why go ye about to your church-goings and your chapel-goings, your Bible-readings and your praying, your good works about this and about the other—they are all but dross and dung if you put them in the place of Christ.

But Christ Jesus, if you rest on Him, is precious, and after you receive Him, your works and your prayings shall become precious too, because they will be performed through faith in Him. But till you come to Him they are all nothing and vanity, unacceptable in the sight of God, because you put them into the place which should be occupied by the Savior.

4. I feel certain that there are some here upon whom the Lord intends to work this morning, so we will speak, in the fourth place, upon *the divine removal of the impediment*. Hagar’s blindness was removed *by God*. No one else could have removed it. God must open a man’s eyes to understand practically what belief in Jesus Christ is.

That simple verity—salvation by trust in Jesus Christ—still remains a point too hard to be seen. Until the whole power of Omnipotence is made to bear upon the intellect, man does not really comprehend it. But while this was divinely removed, *it was removed instrumentally*. An angel spoke out of heaven to Hagar. It matters little whether it is an angel or a man, *it is the Word of God* which removes the difficulty.

Dear friend, I pray that the Word of God may remove your unbelief. May you see today the light of Jesus Christ by simply trusting Him! I believe there are some who are saved who still are afraid they will be lost. I have heard of a butcher who at his work was accustomed to put his candle in a little candlestick which was tied by a belt around his forehead. And one day he wanted his candle in his hand, and he looked all around his slaughterhouse for it by the light of the candle on his forehead. Looked about everywhere to find it, and of course he could not have looked at all if he had not had the light which he looked for already.

Many a man is looking within himself to see the evidence of grace when his anxiety, and the very light by which he looks, ought to be sufficient evidence. I hope there are many of you who are just on the verge of salvation without knowing it.

I looked last Friday night at a very remarkable sight, the burning of a huge floor-cloth manufactory. I was just about returning home from my Master’s work, when I saw a little blaze, and in an incredibly short space a volume of fire rolled up in great masses to the skies. Why blazed it so suddenly? Why, because for months before many men had been busily employed in hanging up the floor-cloth and in saturating the building with combustible materials. I do not mean with the intention of making a blaze, but in the ordinary course of their manufacture, so that when at last the spark came, grew into a great sheet of flame all at once.

So sometimes when the Gospel is faithfully preached, a sinner gets present peace and pardon, and he is so full of joy his friends cannot make him out his progress is so rapid. But be it remembered that God has been mysteriously at work months before in that man's heart, preparing his soul to catch the heavenly flame, so that there was only a spark needed, and then up rolled the flame to heaven.

Oh that I could be that spark to some heart in whom God has been working this morning, but HE alone can make me so. I noticed when that factory was on fire from top to bottom that it seemed to glow like pure gold, or like transparent glass, and then I expected to see it fall, and by and by fall it did, for after about half-an-hour, all on a sudden, one timber went over and the whole mass fell with a tremendous crash.

I venture to compare that final crash with the actual salvation of a soul long prepared to receive it. The heart has been glowing with a divine desire, a heavenly flame for even months and years, and then at last in a moment the final movement is made, and doubts and fears and sins fall to the ground, and there is room to build a temple for the living God.

May it be so with you this morning! There has been much preparatory work in you, for you are brought to long after a Savior, you are desirous to be saved by Him. There He is, take Him! Take Him! The cup of water is put before you. Drink it! No need to wash your mouth first, or to change your garments. Drink it at once. Come to Jesus as you are this morning!

“Come and welcome, sinner, come!”

II. Oh that the Spirit of God would give me power from on high while I try to talk to the saints from THE SECOND CASE, viz. that of the apostles in Luke 24:31. This is no Hagar, but “Cleopas and another disciple.” And yet these two suffered under the same spiritual blindness as Hagar, though not of course in the same phase of it.

Carefully observe the case of these disciples, for I believe it is often our own. *They ought to have known Jesus* for these reasons. *They were acquainted with Him*, they had been with Him for years in public and in private, they had heard His voice so often that they ought to have recollected its tones. They had gazed upon that marred face so frequently that they ought to have distinguished its features. They had been admitted into His privacy, and they ought to have known His habits. That Savior walking there ought not to have been *incognito* to them though He was to the rest of men.

So it is with us. Perhaps you have not found Jesus Christ lately. You have been to His table, and you have not met Him there, and you are in a dark trouble this morning and though He says, “It is I, be not afraid,” yet you cannot see Him there.

Brother, we ought to know Christ; we ought to discover Him at once. We know His voice, we have heard Him say, “Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.” We have looked into His face, we have understood the mystery of His grief, we have leaned our head upon His bosom. Some of you have had an experience of fifteen or twenty years, some of forty or fifty years, and yet, though Christ is near you do not know Him this morning, and you are saying, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!”

They ought to have known Him because *He was close to them*. He was walking with them along the same road, he was not up on a mountain at a distance. Even then they ought to have known Him, but He was there in the selfsame way with them, and at this hour Jesus is very near to us, sympathizing with all our griefs.

*“In every pang that rends the heart,
The Man of Sorrows has His part.”*

He bears and endures with us still, though now exalted in glory's throne in heaven. If He be here, we ought to know Him. If He be close to His people every day and in all their affliction is afflicted, we ought to perceive Him. Oh! what strange purblindness is this, that Christ should be near, our own Well-beloved Redeemer, and yet we should not be able to detect His presence!

They ought to have seen Him because *they had the Scriptures to reflect His image*, and yet how possible it is for us to open that precious Book and turn over page after page of it, and not see Christ. They talked concerning Christ from Moses to the end of the prophets, and yet they did not see Jesus. Dear child of God, are you in that state? He feedeth among the lilies of the Word, and you are among those lilies, and yet you do not see Him. He is accustomed to walk through the glades of Scripture and to commune with His people, as the Father did with Adam in the cool of the day, and yet you are in the garden of Scripture but cannot see your Lord, though He is there and is never absent.

What is more, these disciples ought to have seen Jesus, *for they had the Scriptures opened to them*. They not only heard the Word, but they understood it. I am sure they understood it, for *their hearts burned within them* while He spoke with them by the way. I have known what it is, and so have you, to feel our hearts burn when we have been thinking of the precious truth of God, and yet we have said, “Oh that I could get at *Him!*”

You have heard of election, and you have wondered to yourself whether you should ever see again the face of God’s first elect one. You have heard of the atonement, and the mournful story of the cross has ravished you, but you have said, “Oh that I could see Him and call Him mine!” You have gone from page to page of Scripture doctrine, and have received it and felt its influence, and yet that best of all enjoyments, communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, you have not comfortably possessed.

There was another reason why the disciples ought to have seen Him, namely, that *they had received testimonies from others* about Him. “But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre: and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.”

There He was close to them. Oh! it is so strange that in the ordinances of God’s house Jesus should be there, and yet in sad intervals our hearts should get so cold and so worldly that we cannot see Him. It is a blessed thing to want to see Him, but oh! it is better still to see Him. To those who seek Him He is sweet, but to those who find Him, beyond expression is He dear.

In the prayer meeting you have heard some say, “If ever I loved You, my Jesus, ’tis now,” and your hearts burned within you as they thus spoke, and yet you could not say the same yourself. You have been up in the sick chamber, and you have heard the dying saint sing—

*“I will love Thee in life, I will love Thee in death,
And praise Thee as long as Thou lendest me breath;
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, ’tis now.”*

You have envied that dying saint because you could not just then feel the same confident love. Well this is strange, passing strange, it is full of wonder—a present Savior, present with His own disciples who have long known, and who long to see Him, and yet their eyes are holden so that they cannot discover Him. Now what is the reason for this? We should have seen Him. *Why do we not see Him?* I think it must be ascribed in our case to the same as in theirs, namely, *our unbelief*. They evidently did not expect to see Him, and therefore they did not discover Him.

Brethren, to a great extent in spiritual things we shall get what we expect. The ordinary preacher of the Gospel does not expect to see present conversion, and he does not see it. But there are certain brethren I have known, who have preached with the full faith that God would convert souls, and souls have been converted.

Some saints do not expect to see Christ. They read the life of Madame Guyon, and her soul-enchanting hymns, and they say, “Ah! a blessed woman this.” They take down the letters of Samuel Rutherford, and when they read them through, they say, “Enchanting epistles! a strange, marvelously good man this.” It does not enter into their heads that they may be as Madam Guyon, and that they may

have as much nearness to Christ, and as much enjoyment as Samuel Rutherford. We have got into the habit of thinking the saints gone by stand up in elevated niches for us to stare at them with solemn awe, and fancy that we can never attain to their elevation.

Brethren, they are elevated certainly, but they beckon us to follow them, and point to a something beyond. They invite us to outstrip them, to get greater nearness to Christ, a clearer sense of His love, and a more ravishing enjoyment of His presence. You do not expect to see Christ, and therefore you do not see Him, not because He is not there to be seen, but because your eyes are holden through your unbelief.

I do not know any reason why we should not be full of joy this morning, every believing soul among us. Why hang ye those harps on the willows, beloved? You have a trial, say you. Yes, but Jesus is in it. He says, "When thou passest through the rivers, I will be with thee, the floods shall not overflow thee." Why not rejoice then, since the dear Shepherd is with you? What matters it though there be clouds? They are full of rain when He is there, and they shall empty themselves upon the earth.

Up, my brother, up! With everything that may discourage and cast you down, you have ten times as much to encourage and lift you up. He loved you, and gave Himself for you. His blood has cleansed you, His righteousness has clothed you, His grace has bedecked you with jewels. This world is yours and worlds to come, and Christ who is better than both worlds is yours forever and ever. Take down those harps and strike the strings with gladsome fingers, and wake them into melodies of joy.

Now, dear friends, I am sure it is the duty of every Christian, as well as his privilege, to walk in the conscious enjoyment of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it may be that you came here this morning on purpose that you might begin such a walk. The disciples had walked a long way without knowing Christ, but when they sat at His table, it was the breaking of bread that broke the evil charm, and they saw Jesus clearly at once. Do not neglect that precious ordinance of the breaking of bread. There is much more in it than some suppose.

Sometimes when the preaching of the Word affords no joy, the breaking of bread might, and when reading the Word does not yield consolation, a resort to the Lord's table might be the means of comfort. It may even happen that some other neglected means may be that which God intends to bless to your soul. I am afraid many of God's servants are in darkness because they have neglected known duties.

The windows of Christ's palace are many, and He would not have one of them blocked up. And if you block up one window, it may be that He will say, "I will never show My face at any but that. I will make My servants take down that shutter, that the light may shine through." There is nothing in any ordinance of itself, but there may be much sin in your neglecting it. There is nothing, for instance, in the ordinance of believers' baptism, and yet, knowing it to be a prescribed duty in God's Word, it may be that the Lord will never give you a comfortable sense of His presence till you yield to your conscience in that matter.

But waiving all that point, what you want is to see Him. Faith alone can bring you to see Him. Make it your prayer this morning—"Lord, open Thou mine eyes that I may see my Savior present with me, and after once seeing Him may I never let Him go. From this day forth may I begin like Enoch to walk with God, and may I continue walking with God till I die, that I may then dwell with Him forever."

I find it very easy to get near to God compared with what it is to keep near. Enoch walked with God four hundred years, what a long walk that was! What a splendid journey through life! Why should not you begin, dear Christian brother, today, if you have not begun, and walk with God through the few years which remain?

What if God should spare you for forty years. I do not see that there is any necessity that your communion with God should be broken from now till death or the Lord's coming. "Ay," you say, "you talk in a Utopian fashion." Perhaps I do, but I believe that high-toned Christian experience is to a great extent what common Christians think to be quite out of their reach.

Oh to get up above yon mists which dim the valley! Oh to climb the mountain's top which laughs in the sunlight! Oh to get away from the heavy atmosphere of worldliness and doubt, of fear, of care, of fretfulness, to soar away from the worldlings who are always earth-hunting, digging into its mines and

prying after its treasures, and to get up there where God dwells in the innermost circle of heavenly seclusion, where none can live but men who have been quickened from among the dead. Where none can walk but men who are crucified with Christ, and who live only in Him.

Oh to get up there! where no more question concerning our security can molest us. Where no carking care can disturb because all is cast upon the Lord, and rests wholly with Him. Oh to live in such an entireness of confidence and childlike faith that we will have nothing to do with anything now except with serving Him and showing forth the gratitude we owe to Him who has done so much for us!

Get ye up, believers, get ye up to your high mountain! Leave your dunghills and assume your thrones. Cast off your sackcloth, throw away your ashes, put on your scarlet apparel! Christ has called you to fellowship with Himself, and He is not in the grave now. He is risen! Rise you! He is ascended! ascend with Him and learn what this meaneth, "He hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

I know you will say you cannot see this. However it is there, most surely there. It is just the same as in Hagar's case with you, the same but with a difference. The fullness of fellowship with Christ is attainable, it is close to your feet, and if you have but the eye opened to see it, as it has been given you to see Jesus as your Savior, you may rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. God do so to you and more also according to His covenant goodness in Christ Jesus. Amen and Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
GENESIS 21:9-19, LUKE 24:13-31**

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.