

THE FIRST SERMON IN THE TABERNACLE

NO. 369

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*“And daily in the temple and in every house, they ceased
not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”*
Acts 5:42.

I DO not know whether there are any persons here present who can contrive to put themselves into my present position and feel my present feelings. If they can effect that, they will give me credit for meaning what I say when I declare that I feel totally unable to preach. And, indeed, I think I shall scarcely attempt a sermon, but rather give a sort of declaration of the truths from which future sermons shall be made. I will give you bullion rather than coin. The brook from the quarry and not the statue from the chisel.

It appears that the one subject upon which men preached in the apostolic age was *Jesus Christ*. The tendency of man, if left alone is continually to go further and further from God and the Church of God itself is no exception to the general rule. For the first few years during and after the apostolic era, Christ Jesus was preached but gradually the Church departed from the central point and began rather to preach ceremonials and church offices rather than the Person of their Lord. So has it been in these modern times—we also have fallen into the same error, at least to a degree—and have gone from preaching Christ to preaching doctrines about Christ, inferences which may be drawn from His life, or definitions which may be gathered from His discourses.

We are not content to stand like angels in the Sun—our fancies disturb our rest and must needs fly on the sunbeams—further and further from the glorious source of light. In the days of Paul it was not difficult at once, in one word, to give the sum and substance of the current theology. It was Christ Jesus. Had you asked any one of those disciples what he believed, he would have replied, “I believe Christ.” If you had requested him to show you his Body of Divinity, he would have pointed upward reminding you that divinity never had but one body, the suffering and crucified human frame of Jesus Christ who ascended up on high.

To them Christ was not a notion refined, but unsubstantial—not an historical personage who had left only the savor of his character behind but whose person was dead. To them He was not a set of ideas, not a creed, nor an incarnation of an abstract theory—but He was a Person. One whom some of them had seen, whose hands they had handled—no, One of whose flesh they had all been made to eat and of whose blood they had spiritually been made to drink. Christ was Substance to them. I fear He is too often but shadow to us. He was a reality to their minds. To us—though, perhaps, we would scarcely allow it in so many words—rather a myth than a man—rather a person who was, than He who was and is and is to come—the Almighty.

I would propose (and O may the Lord grant us grace to carry out that proposition from which no Christian can dissent), I would propose that the subject of the ministry of this house, as long as this platform shall stand and as long as this house shall be frequented by worshippers, shall be the Person of Jesus Christ. I am never ashamed to avow myself a Calvinist, although I claim to be rather a Calvinist according to Calvin, than after the modern debased fashion. I do not hesitate to take the name of Baptist. You have there [pointing to the baptistery] substantial evidence that I am not ashamed of that ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But if I am asked to say what is my creed I think I must reply—“It is Jesus Christ.” My venerable predecessor, Dr. Gill, has left a body of divinity admirable and excellent in its way. But the body of divinity to which I would pin and bind myself forever, God helping me, is not his system of divinity or any other human treatise, but Christ Jesus, who is the Sum and Substance of the Gospel. Who is in Himself all theology—the incarnation of every precious Truth—the all-glorious personal embodiment of the Way, the Truth and the Life.

This afternoon I will try to describe *the subject, Christ Jesus*. Secondly, to speak for a little while upon *its comprehensiveness*. Then to enlarge upon *its excellencies*. And conclude by testing *its power*.

1. First, then, the SUBJECT.

They continued both to teach and preach *Jesus Christ*. To preach Jesus Christ aright we must preach Him in His *infinite and indisputable Godhead*. We may be attacked by philosophers who will either make Him no God at all, or one constituted temporarily and, I must add, absurdly a God for a season. We shall have at once upon us those who view Christ as a Prophet, as a great man, as an admirable exemplar. We shall be assailed on all sides by those who choose rather to draw their divinity from their own addled brains than from the simplicity of Holy Writ.

But what matters this? We must reiterate again and again the absolute and proper deity of Christ. Without this we are in the position of those described by the Prophet—their tacklings are loosed, they could not well strengthen their mast and soon will our enemies prevail against us and the prey of a great spoil shall be taken. Take away the divinity of Christ from the Gospel and you have nothing whatever left upon which the anxious soul can rest. Remove the Word who was in the beginning with God and who was God and the Joachim and Boaz of the temple are overturned.

Without a Divine Savior your Gospel is a rope of sand, a bubble. A something less substantial than a dream. If Christ is not God, He is the basest of impostors. He is either one of two things—very God of very God, or else an arch-deceiver of the souls of men—for He made many of them believe He was God and brought upon Himself the consequences of what they called blasphemy. If He is not God, He is the greatest deceiver that ever lived. But God He is. And here, in this house, we must and will adore Him. With the multitude of His redeemed we *will* sing—

*“Jesus is worthy to receive,
Honor and power Divine.
And blessings more than we can give
He is Lord forever more.”*

To preach Christ, however, we must also preach *His true humanity*. We must never make Him to be less man-like because He was perfectly Divine. I love that hymn of Hart which begins—

*“A Man there was—a real Man,
Who once on Calvary died.”*

“*Real man!*” I think we do not often realize that manhood of Christ. We do not see that He was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh—feeling, thinking, acting, suffering, doing just like ourselves—one of our fellows and only above us because He is “exalted with the oil of gladness above His fellows.” We must have a human Christ and we must have one of real flesh and blood, too—not of shadows or filmy fancies. We must have one to whom we can talk, one with whom we can walk, one—

*“Who in His measure feels afresh
What every member bears,”*

who is so intimately connected with us in ties of blood that He is as with us one the head of the family, first-born among many Brethren.

I am never more glad than when I am preaching a personal Christ. A doctrinal Christ, a practical Christ or an experimental Christ, as some good men make Him to be according to the temper of their minds, I do not feel to be sufficient for the people of God. We want a *personal* Christ. This has been a power to the Romish church—a power which they have used for ill, but always a power. They have had a *personal* Christ, but then it has either been a baby Christ in His mother’s arms, or else a dead Christ upon the Cross.

They never reached the force of a real full-grown Christ, one who not only lived and suffered, but who died and rose again and sits at the right hand of God, the Head of the Church, the one ruler of men. Oh, we must bring out more and more clearly each day the real personality of the Redeemer in His complex Person. Whatever we fail to preach, we must preach Him. If we are wrong in many points, if we are but right *here*, this will save our ministry from the flames. But if we are wrong here, however orthodox we may pretend to be, we cannot be right in the rest unless we think rightly of Him.

But, further—to preach Christ Jesus it is absolutely necessary we should preach Him as *the only mediator between God and man*. Admitting the efficacy of the intercession of *living* saints for sinners, never for a moment denying that every man is bound to make supplication for all ranks and conditions of men—yet must we have it that the only Mediator in the heavens and the only direct intercessor with God is the “man Christ Jesus.” No we must not be content with making Him the *only* Mediator—we must set aside all approach to God in any way whatever, except by Him.

We must not only have Him for the priest, but we must bare Him for the altar, the Victim and the Offerer, too. We must learn in full the meaning of that precious text—"Christ is all." We must not see a part of the types here and a part there but all gathered up in Him, the one door of Heaven, the one crimson way by which our souls approach to God. We must not allow that approaches can be made in human strength, by human learning, or by human effort.

But in Him and through Him and by Him and in dependence upon Him must all be done between God and man. We have no wings, my Brethren, with which to fly to Heaven. Our journey there must be on the rounds of Jacob's ladder. We cannot approach God by anything *we have*, or know, or *do*. Christ crucified and He alone must lift us up to God.

And more—we must preach Christ in the solitariness of His redemption work. We must not permit for a moment the fair white linen of His righteousness to be stained by the patchwork of our filthy rags. We must not submit that the precious blood of His should be diluted by any offering of ours co-acting for our salvation. He has, by one Sacrifice, forever put away sin. We shall never preach Christ unless we have a real atonement. There are certain people nowadays who are making the atonement first a sort of compromise and the next step is to make the atonement a display of what ought to have been, instead of the thing which should have been.

Then, next—there are some who make it to be a mere picture, an exhibition, a shadow—a shadow the substance of which they have not seen. And the day will come and there are sundry traces of it here and there, in which in some churches the atonement shall be utterly denied and yet men shall call themselves Christians, while they have broken themselves against the cornerstone of the entire system. I have no kith nor kin nor friendship, nor Christian amity with any man whatever who claims to be a Christian and yet denies the atonement. There is a limit to the charity of Christians and there can be none whatever entertained to the man who is dishonest enough to occupy a Christian pulpit and to deny Christ.

It is only in the Christian Church that such a thing can be tolerated. I appeal to you—was there ever known a Buddhist acknowledged in the temple of Buddha who denied the basis doctrine of the sect? Was there ever known a Mohammedan Imam who was sanctioned in the mosque while he cried down the Prophet? It remains for Christian churches only to have in their midst men who can bear the name of Christian, who can even venture to be Christian teachers, while they slander the Deity of Him who is the Christian's God and speak lightly of the efficacy of His blood who is the Christian's atonement.

May this deadly cancer be cut out root and branch and whatever tearing of the flesh there may be, better cut it out with a jagged knife than suffer to exist, because no lance is to be found to do it daintily. We must have, then, Christ in the efficacy of His precious blood as the only Redeemer of the souls of men and as the only Mediator, who, without assistance of ours, has brought us to God and made reconciliation through His blood.

Our ministry will scarcely be complete unless we preach *Christ as the only Lawgiver and Rabbi of the Church*. When you put it down as a canon of your faith that the Church has right and power to decree rites and ceremonies, you have robbed Christ at once of His proper position as the only Teacher of the Church. Or when you claim the office of controlling other men's consciences by the *decree* of the Church, or the *vote* of a synod, apart from the authority of Christ, you have taken away from Christ that chair which He occupies in the Christian Church as the Teacher in the great Christian school, as the Rabbi and the only Rabbi of our faith.

God forbid that we should hold a single Truth except on His authority. Let not our faith stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. You refer me to the writings of Doctor this and Doctor the other—what are these? The words of *Christ*—these are Truth—and these are wisdom. You bring the authority from the practice of a church three or four centuries removed from the crucifixion as the proof of the existence of a certain ceremony and the righteousness of certain ecclesiastical offices. What is your proof worth?

If Christ has not specially ordained it and if He has not commanded His people to obey it, of what value is any rite whatever? We acknowledge Christ is ordaining all things for His Church and presenting that Church with a finished code of law from which any deviation is a sin and to which any addition is a high crime. Any Church officer who is not ordained of Christ occupies an office which he ought to resign. Any person who practices a ceremony for which he has not Scriptural authority should renounce it and any man who preaches a doctrine for which he has not Christ as his Certifier, should not demand for it the faith of men.

But I fear there are times coming when the minister will not be true to his duty unless he goes further and preaches Christ as *the sole King of the Church*. There has been a disposition on the part of the State, especially with regard to the Free Church of Scotland, to exercise power and judgment over Church decrees. No king, no queen that ever lived, or can live, has any authority whatever over the Church of Christ. The Church has none to govern and rule over her but her Lord and her King. The Church can suffer, but she cannot yield. You may break her confessors alive upon the wheel, but she, in her uprightness, will neither bend nor bow. From the sentence of our Church there is no appeal whatever on earth.

To the court of Heaven a man may appeal if the sentence of the Church is wrong, but to Caesar never. Neither the best nor the worst of kings or queens may ever dare to put their finger upon the prerogative of Christ as the head of the Church. Up, Church of God! If once there are any laws of man passed to govern you, up—dash them in pieces! Let us each catch up the war cry and uplift the lion standard of the tribe of Judah. Let us challenge the kings of the earth and say, “*Who shall rouse Him up?*” The Church is queen above all queens and Christ her only King. None have jurisdiction or power in the Church of Christ save Jesus Christ Himself.

If any of our acts violate the civil laws, we are men and citizens and we acknowledge the right of a State to govern us as individuals. None of us wish to be less subjects of the realm because we are kings and priests unto God. But as members of Christian churches we maintain that the excommunication of a Christian Church can never be reversed by the civil power, or by any State act, nor are its censures to be examined, much less to be removed, mitigated, or even judged.

We must have, as Christ’s Church, a full recognition of His imperial rights and the day will come when the State will not only tolerate us as a mere society, but admit that as we profess to be the church of Christ, we have a right by that very fact to be self-governing and never to be interfered with in any sense whatever, so far as our ecclesiastical affairs are concerned.

Christ must be preached and exalted in all these respects or else we have not preached a full Christ. But I go one step further. We have not yet mounted to the full height of our ministry unless we learn to preach *Christ as the King of kings*. He has an absolute right to the entire dominion of this world. The Christian minister, as ordained of God to preach, has a perfect right in God’s name to preach upon any subject touching the Lord’s kingdom and to rebuke and exhort even the greatest of men.

Sometimes I have heard it said, when we have canvassed the acts of an emperor or senator, “These are politics.” But Christ is King of politics as well as theology. “Oh, but”—they say—“what have you to do with what the State does?” Why, just this—Christ is the Head of all States and while the State has no authority over the Church, yet Christ Himself is King of kings and Lord of lords. Oh, that the Church would put her diadem upon her head and take her right position! We are not slaves. The Church of God is not a groveling corporation bound forever to sit upon a dunghill—never queen was so fair as she and never robe so rich as the purple which she wears.

Arise, O Church! Arise—the earth is yours, claim it. Send out your missionary, not as a petitioner to creep at the feet of princes, but as an ambassador for God to make peace between God and man. Send him out to claim the possession which belongs to you and which God has given to you to be yours forever and ever by a right which kings may dispute, but which one day everyone of them shall acknowledge.

The fact is we must bring *Christ Himself* back into camp once more. It is of little use having our true Jerusalem swords and the shields and the banners and the trumpets and the drums—we want the King Himself in the midst of us. More and more of a personal Christ is the great lack of the time. I would not wish for less doctrine, less experience, or less practice—but more of all this put into Christ and Christ preached as the sum and substance of it all.

II. But, secondly, I am now to speak, for a short time, upon the COMPREHENSIVENESS OF THE SUBJECT which the text announces.

It is an old and trite saying that the ministers of the Gospel may be divided into three kinds—the doctrinal, the experimental and the practical. The saying is so often repeated that very few would contradict it. But it betrays at once, if it is true, the absence and lack of a something essentially unnecessary for the church’s success. Where is the preacher of Christ without *all* of these?

I propound this, that if a man be found a preacher of Christ, he is doctrinal, experimental and practical. The *doctrinal* preacher generally has a limited range. He is useful, exceedingly useful. God constitutes him a barrier against the

innovations of the times—he preaches upon his subjects so frequently that he is well versed in them and becomes one of the armed men about the bed of Solomon. But suppose the doctrinal preacher should have it all his own way and there should be none others at all—what would be the effect?

See it in our Baptist churches about one hundred and fifty years ago. They were all *sound* and sound asleep. Those doctrines had preached them into a lethargy and had it not been for some few who started up and proposed the missions for the heathen and who found but little sympathy at first, the Church would have been utterly inactive. Now, I would not be hard with any, but there are some Brethren still whose preaching might justly be summed up as being doctrinal, nothing more than doctrinal and what is the effect of their ministry? Bitterness.

They learn to contend not only earnestly for the faith, but savagely for it. Certainly we admire their earnestness and we thank God for their soundness. But we wish there were mingled with their doctrine a somewhat else which might tone down their severity and make them seek rather the unity and fellowship of the saints than the division and discord which they labor to create.

Again—I will refer you to the next class of preachers, the *experimental*. How delightful it is to sit under an experimental preacher! Perhaps of all ministries this one is the most useful. He who preaches the doubts, the fears, the joys, the ecstasies of the people of God. How often do the saints see the footsteps of the flock and then they find the shepherd under an experimental minister! But do you know the effect of an experimental minister, purely so, I mean—when all else is put aside to make room for experience?

There is one school of divines always preaching the corruption of the human heart. This is their style—“*Except you be flayed alive by the Law; except you are daily feeling the utter rottenness of your heart. Except you are a stranger to full assurance and do always doubt and fear. Except you abide on the dunghill and do scrape yourself with a potsherd, you are no child of God.*”

Who told you that? This has been the preaching of some experimental preachers and the effect has been just this—men have come to think the deformities of God’s people to be their beauty. They are like certain courtiers of the reign of Richard III, who is said by history to have had a hump upon his back and his admirers stuffed their backs that they might have a graceful hump, too. And there are many who, because a minister preaches doubts and fears, feel they must doubt and fear, too, and then that which is both uncomfortable to themselves and dishonoring to God comes to be the very mark of God’s people.

This is the tendency of experimental preaching, however judiciously managed, when ministers harp on that string and on that alone. The tendency is either to preach the people into a soft and savory state, in which there is not a bit of manliness or might—or else into that dead and rotten state in which corruption outswells communion and the savor is not the perfume of the king’s ointments, but the stench of a corrupt and filthy heart.

Take also the *practical* preacher. Who would say a word against this good man? He stirs the people up, excites the children of God to holy duties, promotes every excellent object and is in his way an admirable supplement to the two other kinds of ministers. But sit under the practical preacher—sit under him all the year round and listen to his people as they come out. There is one who says, “*the same thing over again—Do, do, do, nothing but do.*”

There is a poor sinner yonder just gone down the front steps. Follow him. “Oh,” says he, “I came here to find out what *Christ* could do for me and I have only been told what I must do for myself.” Now this is a great evil and persons who sit under such a ministry become lean, starving things. I would that practical preachers would listen to our farmers who always say it is better to put the whip in the manger than upon the horse’s back. Let them feed the people with food convenient for them and they will be practical enough but all practice and no promise, all exhortation and no sound doctrine will never make the man of God perfect and zealous for good works.

But what am I driving at in bringing up these three sorts of ministers? Why, just this—to show you that there is one minister who can preach *all* this—without the dangers of any one of the others but with the excellencies of the whole. And who is he? Why, any man in the world *who preaches Christ*. If he preaches Christ’s Person he must preach *doctrine*. If I preach Christ I must preach Him as the Covenant Head of His people and how far am I then from the doctrine of election?

If I preach Christ I must preach the efficacy of His blood and how far am I removed then from the great doctrine of an effectual atonement? If I preach Christ I *must* preach the love of His heart and how can I deny the final perseverance of the

saints? If I preach the Lord Jesus as the great Head and King, how far am I removed from Divine Sovereignty? Must I not, if I preach Christ personally, preach His doctrines? I believe they are nothing but the natural outgrowth of that great root thought, or root substance rather, the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He who will preach Christ fully will never be lax in doctrine.

And what better *experience* can you preach than in preaching Christ? Would you preach the sufferings of the saints—preach *His* agony and bloody sweat, His Cross and passion. For the true sufferings of the saints are in fellowship with Him. If you would preach their joys—preach *His* resurrection, *His* ascension and *His* advent. You are never far from the joys of the saints when you are near to the joys of Christ. For did not He say, “*My* joy shall be in them that their joy may be full”?

And what better *practice* can be preached than preaching Christ? Of every virtue He is the Pattern. Of the perfection of human character, He is the very mirror of everything that is holy and of good report. He is the abiding incarnation. He cannot fail, then, to be a good doctrinal, experimental, practical preacher who preaches Christ. Did you ever know a congregation grow less spiritual by a minister preaching Christ? Did you ever know them get full of doubts and fears by preaching Christ? Did you ever hear of their getting lax in sentiment by his preaching Christ? Did you ever hear a whisper that men became unholy in their lives because they heard too much about Christ?

I think that all the excellence of all ministers may be gathered up into the teaching of the man who preaches Christ every day in the week. And there will not be any of the evil connected with the other forms of preaching.

III. I shall now pass on to notice some of the surpassing excellencies of the subject.

First, he will always have a *blessed variety* in his preaching. In Australia I have heard that the only change for the backwoodsmen is to have one day damper, tea and bread—the next day, bread, damper and tea. And the next day, tea, bread and damper. The only variety some ministers give, is one Sunday to have depravity, election and perseverance and the next Sunday, election, perseverance and depravity. There are many strings to the harp of the Gospel. There are some Brethren who are so rightly charmed with five of the strings, which certainly have very rich music in them, that they never meddle with any of the other strings. Cobwebs hang on the rest, while these five are pretty well worn out.

It is always pretty much the same thing from the first of January to the last of December. Their organ has very few keys and upon these they may make a very blessed variety, but I think not a very extensive one. Any man who preaches Christ will ensure variety in his preaching. He has all manner of precious perfume, myrrh and aloes and cassia. He has all sorts of music, he has everything that is sweet to the ear—he has all manner of fruits.

This Tree of Life bears twelve manner of fruits. *He* is all manner of raiment. *He* is golden raiment for beauty. *He* is the warm raiment for comfort. *He* is the stout raiment for harness in the day of battle. There are all things in Christ and he that has Christ will have as great a variety as there is to be found in the scenery of the world where are no two brooks alike and no two rivers wind in precisely the same manner and no two trees grow in precisely the same form.

Any other subject you may preach upon till your hearers feel satisfied—but with Christ for a subject, you may go on and on and on, till the sermon swells into the eternal song and you begin to sing, “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.”

There is yet another excellence about this subject, namely, that *it suits all sorts of people*. Are there rebels present? Preach Christ. It will suit them. Are there pardoned sinners present? What is better to melt their hearts than the blood of the Lord Jesus? Are there doubting Christians? What can cheer them better than the name of Christ? Are there strong believers? What is stronger meat than Jesus crucified? Are there learned, polite, intellectual hearers? If they are not satisfied with Christ, they ought to be. Are there poor, ignorant, unlettered men? Jesus Christ is just the thing to preach to them—a naked Christ to their simple ears.

Jesus Christ is a topic that will keep in all climates. Land in New Zealand in the midst of uncivilized men. Move off to another post and stand in the midst of poetical Persia or fickle France—the Cross is adapted to all. We need not inquire into the doctrinal opinion of our hearers. If they are high, I am sure Christ will suit *them*. If they are low, if they are true believers, I am sure Christ Jesus will suit. No Christians will reject such meat as this. Only prepare it and with a hot heart and serve it up on the table and they will be satisfied and feed to the full so that there is adaptation as well as variety in this subject.

IV. But more than this, I must add and this will bring me to my last point, for my time flies—there is a power about this subject when it is preached with the demonstration of the Spirit, which is not found in any other. My Brethren, what power there is in this subject to promote *the union* of the people of God! There is a man there, he is almost a Puseyite. “I do not like him,” says one. Stop till I tell you something more about him and you will. There is another man there, a Presbyterian—true blue. He cannot bear Independence, or anything but Presbytery—a covenant man. “Well,” says one, “I like him a little better. But I do not suppose we shall get on very well.”

Stop! I will tell you some more about him. There is another man down there. He is a very strong Calvinist. “Humph,” says one, “I shall not admire *him*.” Stop, stop! Now, here are these three men. Let us hear what they say of each other. If they know nothing of each other except what I have stated, the first time they meet there will be a magnificent quarrel. There is yonder clergyman—he will have little fraternity whatever with the ultra-Evangelical, while the Presbyterian will reject them both, for he abhors black prelacy. But, my dear Brethren, all three of you, we of this congregation will approve of you all and you will approve of one another when I have stated your true character.

That man yonder, whom I called almost a Puseyite, was George Herbert. How he loved the doornails of the Church! I think he would scarce have had a spider killed that had once crept across the church aisles. He was a thorough churchman, to the very center of the marrow of his bones but what a Christian! What a lover of his sweet Lord Jesus! You know that hymn of his which I have so often quoted and mean to quote a hundred times more—“How sweetly does my Master’s sound,” and so forth? I hear a knock at the door. “Who is that?” “Why, it is a very strong churchman.” “Do not show him in. I am at prayer. I cannot pray with him. “Oh, but it is George Herbert!” “Oh, let him in, let him in! No man could I pray better with than Mr. Herbert. Walk in, Mr. Herbert. We are right glad to see you. You are our dear companion—your hymns have made us glad.”

But who was that second man, the Presbyterian, who would not have liked George Herbert at all? Why, that was Samuel Rutherford. What a seraphic spirit! What splendid metaphors he uses about his sweet Lord Jesus! He has written all Solomon’s Song over without knowing it. He felt and proved it to be Divine. The Spirit in him re-dictated the song. Well now, I think, we will introduce Mr. Rutherford and Mr. Herbert together and I am persuaded when they begin to speak about their Master they will find each other next of kin. And I feel sure that, by this time, Samuel Rutherford and George Herbert have found each other out in Heaven and are sitting side by side.

Well, but then we mentioned another. Who was that high Calvinist? He was the man who was called the Leviathan of Antinomians. That he was a leviathan I will grant, but that he was an Antinomian is false. It was Dr. Hawker. Now, I am sure George Herbert would not have liked Dr. Hawker and I am certain that Dr. Hawker would not have liked George Herbert and I do not suppose that Samuel Rutherford would have had anything to do with either of them. “No, no,” he would say, “your black prelacy I hate.” But look at Hawker, there is a sweet spirit, he cannot take up his pen but he dips it in Christ and begins to write about his Lord at once. “Precious Immanuel—precious Jesus.” Those words in his morning and evening portions are repeated again and again and again.

I recollect hearing of Mr. Rowland Hill, that he said to a young man who was at tea with him one night when he was about to go—“Where are you going to?” “Oh,” said he, “I am going to hear Dr. Hawker, at St. George’s in the Borough.” “Oh, go and hear him,” he said, “He is a right good man, worth hearing. But there is this difference between him and me—my preaching is something like a pudding, with here and there a plum. But Dr. Hawker’s is all plum.” And that was very near the mark, because Dr. Hawker was all Christ. He was constantly preaching of his Master. And even if he gave an invitation to a sinner, it was generally put in this way—“What say you? Will you go with *this Man* and be married and espoused unto *Him*? It was the preaching of a personal Christ that made his ministry so full of marrow and fatness.

My dear Friends, let a man stand up and exalt Christ and we are all agreed. I see before me this afternoon members of all Christian denominations—but if Christ Jesus is not the topic that suits you, why then I think we may question your Christianity. The more Christ is preached, the more will the Church prove and exhibit and assert and maintain her unity. But the less Christ is preached and the more of Paul and Apollos and Cephas, the more of strife and division and the less of true Christian fellowship.

We will only mention the power of the preaching of Christ *upon the heart of sinners*. There is a person, now a member of my church, whose conversion was owing to the reading of that hymn—

“Jesus, lover of my soul.”

“Ah,” said he, “does Jesus love my soul? Then how vile I have been to neglect Him.”

There are scores whose conversation is distinctly and directly traceable, not to doctrine—though that is often useful—nor experience, nor practice, though these are fruitful, but to the *preaching of Christ*. I think you will find the most fertile sermons have always been the most Christly sermons. This is a seed which seldom rots under the clod. One may fall upon the stony ground, but it more often happens that the seed breaks the stone when it falls and as Christ is a root out of a dry ground, so this finds root for itself even in dry, hard, stony hearts. We ought to preach the Law, we ought to thunder out the threats of God, but they must never be the main topic. Christ, Christ, Christ, if we would have men converted.

Do you want to convince yonder careless one? Tell him the story of the Cross. Under God it will arrest his attention and awaken his thoughts. Would you subdue the carnal affections of yonder profligate? Preach the love of Christ and that new love shall uproot the old. Would you bind up yonder broken heart? Bring forth Christ, for in Him there is a cordial for every fear. Christ is preached and we do rejoice, yes, and will rejoice, “for He is the power of God unto salvation unto everyone that believes.”

Judge not, my dear Brethren, any man’s ministry. The world has too often condemned the man whom God intended to honor. Say not of another, “He can do no good, for his language is rough and rude.” Say not of another that his style is too often marred with flippancy. Say not of a third that he is too erudite or soars too high. Every man in his own order. If that man preaches Christ, whether he is Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, we wish him God speed. For God will bless the Christ he preaches and forgive the error which mingled with his ministry.

I must even frankly admit the Truth of many a criticism that has been uttered on my ministry. But I know it has been successful and under God it has been because I *have* sought to preach Christ. I say that without boasting or egotism. If I had not done so I had no right to be a minister of Christ at all and as I claim to be God’s minister, I will and must declare it—whatever I have not preached, *I have preached Christ* and into whatever mistakes I have fallen, I have sought to point to His Cross and say, “Behold the way to God.”

And if you see others preaching Christ, be not their foe. Pray for them, bear them in your arms before God, their errors may yet be outgrown, if they preach Christ. But if not, I care not what their excellency may be, the excellency shall die and expire like sparks that go out in darkness. They have not the fuel of the flame, for they have not Christ Jesus as the substance of their ministry.

May I entreat, in closing, your earnest prayer, each one of you, that in this house as well as in all the places of worship round about, Christ may evermore be preached. And I may add my own sincere desire that this place may become a hissing and the abode of dragons and this pulpit be burned with fire if ever any other Gospel be preached here than that which we have received of the holy Apostles of God—of which Jesus Christ Himself is the chief cornerstone. Let me have your incessant prayers. May God speed every minister of Christ. But where there is so large a field of labor may I claim your earnest and constant intercessions, that where Christ is lifted up, men may be drawn to hear and afterwards drawn to believe, that they may find Christ the Savior of our soul.

“He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.” “Repent and be converted, every one of you,” said Peter. Yet again said Paul to the jailer, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved and your house.” God give us grace to believe and unto Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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