

THE PLAIN MAN'S PATHWAY TO PEACE

NO. 1560

A SERMON
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON.

“And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, You Son of David, have mercy on us. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus said unto them, Believe you that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no one knows it.”
Matthew 9:27-30.

I AM not about to expound this incident, nor to draw illustrations from it, but only to direct your attention to one single point in it, and that is, its extreme simplicity. There are other cases of blind men, and we have various incidents connected with them, such as in one instance, the making of clay, and the sending of the patient to wash at the pool of Siloam, and so forth. But here the cure is extremely simple, the men are blind, they cry to Jesus, they come near, they confess their faith, and they receive their sight straightway.

In many other cases of miracles that were wrought by Christ there were circumstances of difficulty, in one case a man is let down through the tiling, being borne of four; in a second case a woman comes behind Him in the press, and touches the hem of His garment with great effort. We read of another who had been dead four days already, and there seemed to be a clear impossibility in the way of his ever coming forth from the tomb, but everything is plain sailing here. Here are blind men, conscious of their blindness, confident that Christ can give them sight, they cry to Him, they come to Him, they believe that He is able to open their eyes, and they receive their sight at once.

You see there was, in their case, these simple elements—a sense of blindness, a desire for sight, then prayer, then coming to Christ, then an open avowal of faith, and then the cure. The whole matter lies in a nutshell. There are no details, no points of care and nicety which might suggest anxiety, the whole business is simplicity itself, and upon that one point I want to dwell at this time.

There are cases of conversion which are just as simple as this case of the opening of the eyes of the blind, and we are not to doubt the reality of the work of grace in them because of the remarkable absence of singular incidents and striking details. We are not to suppose that a conversion is a less genuine work of the Holy Ghost because it is extremely simple. May the Holy Spirit bless our meditation.

I. To make our discourse useful to many I will begin by remarking, in the first place, that it is an undoubted fact that **MANY PERSONS ARE MUCH TROUBLED IN COMING TO CHRIST.**

It is a fact which must be admitted, that all do not come quite so readily as these blind men came. There are instances on record in biographies—there are many known to us, and perhaps our own cases are among them—in which coming to Christ was a matter of struggle, of effort, of disappointment, of long waiting, and at last of a kind of desperation by which we were forced to come.

You must have read Mr. John Bunyan's description of how the pilgrims came to the wicket gate. They were pointed, you remember, by Evangelist to a light and to a gate, and they went that way according to his bidding. I have told you sometimes the story of a young man in Edinburgh who was very anxious to speak to others about their souls, so he addressed himself one morning to an old

Musselburgh fishwife, and he began by saying to her, "Here you are with your burden." "Ay," said she. He asked her, "Did you ever feel a spiritual burden?" "Yes," she said, resting a bit, "I felt the spiritual burden years ago, before you were born, and I got rid of it too, but I did not go the same way to work that Bunyan's pilgrim did."

Our young friend was greatly surprised to hear her say that, and thought she must be under grievous error, and therefore begged her to explain. "No," she said, "when I was under concern of soul, I heard a true Gospel minister, who bade me look to the cross of Christ, and there I lost my load of sin. I did not hear one of those milk-and-water preachers like Bunyan's Evangelist." "How," said our young friend, "do you make that out?" "Why, that Evangelist, when he met the man with the burden on his back, said to him, 'Do you see that wicket gate?' 'No,' he said, 'I don't.' 'Do you see that light?' 'I think I do.' Why, man," said she, "he should not have spoken about wicket gates or lights, but he should have said, 'Do you see Jesus Christ hanging on the Cross? Look to Him, and your burden will fall off your shoulders.' He sent that man round the wrong way when he sent him to the wicket gate, and much good he got by it, for he was likely to have been choked in the slough of despond before long. I tell you, I looked at once to the cross, and away went my burden." "What?" said this young man, "Did you never go through the slough of despond?" "Ah," said she, "many a time, more than I care to tell. But at the first I heard the preacher say, 'Look to Christ,' and I looked to Him. I have been through the slough of despond since that, but let me tell you, sir, it is much easier to go through that slough with your burden off than it is with your burden on."

And so it is. Blessed are they whose eyes are only and altogether on the Crucified. The older I grow the more sure I am of this, that we must have done with self in all forms and see Jesus only if we would be at peace. Was John Bunyan wrong? Certainly not, he was describing things as they generally are. Was the old woman wrong? No, she was perfectly right, she was describing things as they ought to be, and as I wish they always were.

Still, experience is not always as it ought to be, and much of the experience of Christians is not Christian experience. It is a fact which I lament, but nevertheless, must admit, that a large number of persons, ere they come to the cross and lose their burden, go round about no end of a way, trying this plan and that plan, with but very slender success after all, instead of coming straightway to Christ just as they are, looking to Him and finding light and life at once. How is it, then, that some are so long in getting to Christ?

I answer, first, in some cases it is *ignorance*. Perhaps there is no subject upon which men are so ignorant as the Gospel. Is it not preached in hundreds of places? Yes, thank God, it is, and illustrated in no end of books, but still men come not at it so, neither hearing nor reading can of themselves discover the Gospel. It needs the teaching of the Holy Spirit, or else men still remain in ignorance as to this simplicity—this simplicity of salvation by faith. Men are in the dark, and do not know the way, and so they run hither and thither and oftentimes go round about to find a Savior who is ready there and then to bless them. They cry, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" when, if they did but understand the truth, His salvation is nigh them, "in their mouth and in their heart." If with their heart they will believe on the Lord Jesus, and with their mouth make confession of Him, they shall be saved there and then.

In many cases, too, men are hindered by *prejudice*. People are brought up with the belief that salvation must be through ceremonies, and if they get driven out of that they still conclude that it must certainly be in some measure by their works. Numbers of people have learned a sort of half-and-half Gospel, part law and part grace, and they are in a thick fog about salvation. They know that redemption has something to do with Christ, but it is much of a mixture with them, they do not quite see that it is all Christ or no Christ. They have a notion that we are saved by grace, but they do not yet see that salvation must be of grace from top to bottom, they fail to see that in order that salvation may be of grace it must be received by faith and not through the works of the law, nor by priestcraft, nor by any rites and ceremonies whatever.

Being brought up to believe that surely there is something for them to do, it is long before they can get into the clear, blessed sunlight of the Word, where the child of God sees Christ and finds liberty. "Believe and live" is a foreign language to a soul which is persuaded that its own works are in a measure to win eternal life.

With many, indeed, the hindrance lies in downright *bad teaching*. The teaching that is too common nowadays is very dangerous. The service makes no distinction between saint and sinner. Certain prayers are used every day which are meant for saints and sinners too—ready-made clothes, made to fit everybody, and fitting nobody at all. These prayers suit neither saint nor sinner, thoroughly beautiful as they are and grand as they are, but they bring up people under the notion and delusion that they are somewhere in a condition between being saved and being lost—not actually lost, certainly, but yet not quite saints—they are betweenites, mongrels—a sort of Samaritans that fear the Lord and serve other gods, and who hopes to be saved by an amalgam of grace and works.

It is hard to bring men to grace alone and faith alone, they will stand with one foot on the sea, and the other foot on the land. Much of teaching goes to buoy them up in the notion that there is something in man and something to be done by him, and hence they do not learn in their own souls that they must be saved by Christ, and not by themselves.

Besides that, there is *the natural pride of the human heart*. We do not like to be saved by charity, we must have a finger in it. We get pushed into a corner, farther and farther are we driven away from self-confidence, but we hang on by our teeth, if we cannot find a hold by any other means. With awful desperation we trust in ourselves. We will cling by our eyelashes to the semblance of self-confidence, we will not give up carnal confidence if it is possible to hold it. Then comes in, with our pride, *opposition to God*, for the human heart does not love God, and it frequently shows its opposition by opposing Him about the plan of salvation.

The enmity of the unrenewed heart is not displayed by actual open sin in all cases, for many by their very bringings-up have been made to be moral, but they hate God's plan of grace, and grace alone, and here their gall and bitterness begin to work. How they will writhe in their seats if the minister preaches divine sovereignty, they hate the text, "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom He will have compassion."

They talk of the rights of fallen men, and of all being treated alike, and when it comes to sovereignty, and God's manifesting His grace according to His own absolute will, they cannot endure it. If they tolerate God at all it shall not be on the throne, if they acknowledge His existence, yet not as King of kings and Lord of lords who does as He wills, and has a right to pardon whom He reserves, and to leave the guilty, if it so pleases Him, to perish in their guiltiness, rejecting the Savior. Ah, the heart loves not God as God, as revealed in Scripture, but makes a god unto itself, and cries, "These be your gods, O Israel."

In some instances the struggle of the heart in getting to Christ, I have no doubt, arises from *a singularity of mental conformation*, and such cases ought to be looked upon as exceptions, and by no means regarded as rules. Now take, for instance, the case of John Bunyan, to which we have referred. If you read "Grace Abounding," you will find that, for five years or more, he was the subject of the most fearful despair—tempted by Satan, tempted by his own self, always raising difficulties against himself, and it was long, long, long before he could come to the cross and find peace.

But then, dear friend, it is to the last degree improbable that either you or I will ever turn out to be John Bunyans. We may become tinkers, but we shall never write a Pilgrim's Progress. We might imitate him in his poverty, but we are not likely to emulate him in his genius, a man with such an imagination, full of wondrous dreams, is not born every day, and when he does come, his inheritance of brain is not all a gain in the direction of a restful life.

When Bunyan's imagination had been purified and sanctified, its masterly productions were seen in his marvelous allegories, but while, as yet, he had not been renewed and reconciled to God, with such a mind, so strangely formed, so devoid of all education, and brought up as he had been in the roughest

society, he was dowered with a fearful heritage. That marvelous fancy would have wrought him wondrous woe if it had not been controlled by the divine Spirit. Do you wonder that, in coming to the day, those eyes which had been veiled in such dense darkness could scarcely bear the light, and that the man should think the darkness all the darker when the light began to shine upon him? Bunyan was one by himself, not the rule, but the exception.

Now, you, dear friend, may be an odd person. Very likely you are, and I can sympathize with you, for I am odd enough myself, but do not lay down a law that everybody else must be odd too. If you and I did happen to go round by the back ways, do not let us think that everybody ought to follow our bad example. Let us be very thankful that some people's minds are less twisted and gnarled than ours, and do not let us set up our experience as a standard for other people. No doubt difficulties may arise from an extraordinary quality of mind with which God may have gifted some, or a depression of spirit natural to others, and these may make them peculiar as long as they live.

Besides, there are some who are kept from coming to Christ through remarkable *assaults of Satan*. You remember the story of the child whom his father would bring to Jesus, but "as he was a coming the devil threw him down and tare him." The evil spirit knew that his time was short, and he must soon be expelled from his victim, and therefore he cast him on the ground, and made him wallow in epilepsy, and left him half dead. So does Satan with many men. He sets upon them with all the brutality of his fiendish nature, and expends his malice upon them because he fears that they are about to escape from his service, and he will no longer be able to tyrannize over them. As Watts says—

*"He worries whom he can't devour,
With a malicious joy."*

Now, if some come to Christ, and the devil is not permitted to assail them, if some come to Christ, and there is nothing strange about their experience, if some come to Christ, and pride and opposition have been conquered in their nature, if some come to Christ, and they are not ignorant, but well instructed, and readily see the light, let us rejoice that it is so. It is of such that I am now about to speak somewhat more at length.

II. It is admitted as an undoubted fact that many are much troubled in coming to Christ, but now, secondly, **THIS IS NOT AT ALL ESSENTIAL TO A REAL, SAVING COMING TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.**

I mention this because I have known Christian men distressed in heart because they fear that they came to Christ too easily. They have half imagined, as they looked back, that they could not have been converted at all because their conversion was not attended with such agony and torment of mind as others speak of.

I would first remark, that *it is very difficult to see how despairing feelings can be essential to salvation*. Look for a minute. Can it be possible that unbelief can help a soul to faith? Is it not certain that the anguish which many experience before they come to Christ arises from the fact of their unbelief? They do not trust—they say they cannot trust, and so they are like the troubled sea which cannot rest. Their mind is tossed to and fro, and vexed sorely through unbelief, is this a foundation for holy trust? It would seem to me the oddest thing in all the world that unbelief should be a preparation for faith.

How can it be that to sow the ground with thistle seed should make it more ready for the good corn? Are fire and sword helpers to national prosperity? Is deadly poison an assistance to health? I do not understand it. It seems to me to be far better for the soul to believe the Word of God at once, and far more likely to be a genuine work when the soul convinced of sin accepts the Savior. Here is God's way of salvation, and He demands that I do trust His dear Son, who died for sinners. I perceive that Christ is worthy to be trusted, for He is the Son of God, so that His sacrifice must be able to put away my sin, I perceive also that He laid down His life in the room, place, and stead of His people, and therefore I

heartily trust Him. God bids me trust Him, and I trust Him without any further question. If Jesus Christ satisfies God, He certainly satisfies me, and asking no further question, I come and trust myself with Him.

Does not this kind of action appear to have about it all that can be needful? Can it possibly be that a raging, raving despair can ever be helpful towards saving faith? I do not see it. I cannot think it. Some have been beaten about with most awful thoughts. They have supposed that God could not possibly forgive them, they have imagined that, even if He could pardon them He would not, since they were not His elect, nor His redeemed. Though they have seen the Gospel invitation written in letters of love, "Come unto me all you that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," they dare to question whether they should find rest if they did come, and they invent suspicions and surmises, some of them amounting even to blasphemy against the character of God and the person of His Christ.

That such people have been forgiven according to the riches of divine grace I do verily believe, but that their sinful thoughts ever helped them to obtain pardon I cannot imagine. That my own dark thoughts of God, which left many a scar upon my spirit, were washed away with all my other sins, I know, that there was ever any good in those things, or that I can look back upon them without shame and regret, is a thing I do not know. I cannot see of what particular service they could have been to anybody. Shall one bath of ink take out the stain of another? Can our sin be removed by our sinning more? It is impossible that sin could aid grace, and that the greatest of all sins, the sin of unbelief, should help towards faith.

Yet, once again, dear friends, *much of all this struggling and tumult within, which some have experienced, is the work of the devil*, as I have already said. Can it be essential to salvation for a man to be under the influence of Satan? Is it needful that the devil should come in to help Christ? Is it absolutely essential for the black fingers of the devil to be seen at work with the lily hands of the Redeemer? Impossible. That is not my judgment of the work of Satan, nor will it, I think, be yours if you will look at it. If you never were driven either to blasphemy or despair by Satan, thank God you never were. You would have gained nothing by it, you would have been a serious loser.

Let no man imagine that if he had been the prey of tormenting suggestions his conversion would have more marks of truth about it, no mistake can be more groundless. It cannot be that the devil can be of any service to anyone among you. He must do you damage and nothing but damage. Every blow he strikes hurts but does not heal. Mr. Bunyan himself says, when he speaks of Christian fighting with Apollyon, that, though he won the victory, he was no gainer by it. A man had better go many miles round about, over hedge and ditch, sooner than once come into conflict with Apollyon.

All that is essential to conversion is found in the simpler way of coming at once to Jesus and as to all else we must face it if it comes, but certainly not look for it. It is easy to see how Satanic temptation hampers, and how it keeps men in bondage when otherwise they might be at liberty, but what good it can do in itself it would be hard to tell.

Once again, *many instances prove that all this law work, and doubting and fearing, and despairing, and being tormented of Satan, are not essential, because there are scores and hundreds of Christians who came at once to Christ, as these two blind men did, and to this very day know very little about those things.*

I could, if it were proper, call upon brethren who are around me at this moment who would tell you that when I have been preaching the experience of those who come to Christ with difficulty, they have been glad that it should be preached, but they have felt, "We know nothing of all this in our own experience." Taught from their very youth the way of God, trained by godly parents, they came under the influences of the Holy Spirit very early in life. They heard that Jesus Christ could save them, they knew that they wanted saving, and they just went to Him. I was about to say, almost as naturally as they went to their mother or their father when they were in need, they trusted the Savior, and they found peace at once.

Several of the honored leaders of this church came to the Lord in this simple manner. Only yesterday I was greatly pleased with several that I saw who confessed faith in Jesus in a way which charmed me, and yet about their Christian experience there was little trace of terrible burns and scars. They heard the Gospel, they saw the suitability of it to their case, and they accepted it there and then, and entered immediately into peace and joy.

Now, we do not tell you that there are a few such plain cases, but we assert boldly that we know hosts of like instances, and that there are thousands of God's most honored servants who are walking before Him in holiness, and are eminently useful, whose experience is as simple as A B C. Their whole story might be summed up in the verse—

*“I came to Jesus, as I was,
Weary and worn and sad;
I found in Him a resting place,
And He has made me glad.”*

I will go yet further and assure you that many of those who give the best evidence that they are renewed by grace cannot tell you the day in which they were saved, and cannot attribute their conversion to any one sermon or to any one text of Scripture, or to any one event in life. We dare not doubt their conversion for their lives prove its truth. You may have many trees in your garden of which you must admit that you don't know when they were planted, but if you get plenty of fruit from them, you are not very particular about the date of their striking root.

I am acquainted with several persons who do not know their own age. I was talking to one the other day who thought herself ten years older than I found her out to be. I did not tell her that she was not alive because she did not know her birthday. If I had told her so, she would have laughed at me, and yet there are some who fancy that they cannot be converted because they do not know the date of their conversion. Oh, if you are trusting the Savior—if He is all your salvation and all your desire, and if your life is affected by your faith, so that you bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, you need not worry about times and seasons.

Thousands in the fold of Jesus can declare that they are in it, but the day that they passed through the gate is totally unknown to them. Thousands there are who came to Christ, not in the darkness of the night, but in the brightness of the day, and these cannot talk of weary waitings and watchings, though they can sing of free grace and dying love. They came joyously home to their Father's house, the sadness of repentance was sweetened with the delight of faith, which came simultaneously with repentance to their hearts. I know it is so. We tell you but the simple truth. Many young people are brought to the Savior to the sound of sweet music. Many also of another class, namely, the simple-minded, come in like manner. We might all wish to belong to that class.

Some professors would be ashamed to be thought simple-minded, but I would glory in it. Too many of the doubting, critical order are great puzzle-makers, and great fools for their pains. The childlike ones drink the milk while these folks are analyzing it. They seem every night to take themselves to pieces before they go to bed, and it is very hard for them in the morning to put themselves together again.

To some minds the hardest thing in the world is to believe a self-evident truth. They must always, if they can, make a dust and a mist, and puzzle themselves, or else they are not happy. In fact, they are never sure till they are uncertain, and never at ease till they are disturbed. Blessed are those who believe that God cannot lie, and are quite sure it must be so if God has said it, these cast themselves upon Christ whether they sink or swim, because if Christ's salvation is God's way of saving man, it must be the right way, and they accept it. Many, I say, have thus come to Christ.

Now, proceeding a step farther, *there are all the essentials of salvation in the simple, pleasant, happy way of coming to Jesus just as you are*, for what are the essentials? The first is *repentance*, and these dear souls, though they feel no remorse, yet hate the sin they once loved. Though they know no

dread of hell, yet they feel a dread of sin, which is a great deal better. Though they have never stood shivering under the gallows, yet the crime is more dreadful to them than the doom. They have been taught by God's Spirit to love righteousness and seek after holiness, and this is the very essence of repentance. Those who thus come to Christ have certainly obtained true *faith*. They have no experience which they could trust in, but they are all the more fully driven to rest in what Christ has felt and done. They rest not in their own tears, but in Christ's blood; not in their own emotions, but in Christ's pangs; not in their consciousness of ruin, but in the certainty that Christ has come to save all those that trust Him. They have faith of the purest kind.

And see, too, how certainly they have love. "Faith works by love," and they show it. They often seem to have more love at the first than those who come so dreadfully burdened and tempest-tossed, for in the calm quiet of their minds, they get a fairer view of the beauties of the Savior, and they burn with love to Him, and they commence to serve Him, while others, as yet, are having their wounds healed, and are trying to make their broken bones rejoice.

I am not wishing to depreciate a painful experience, but I am only trying to show, as to this second class, that their simple coming to Christ, as the blind men came, their simply believing that He could give them sight, is not one whit inferior to the other, and has in it all the essentials of salvation.

For, next, notice that *the Gospel command implies in itself nothing of the kind which some have experienced*. What are we bidden to preach to men—"Be dragged about by the devil, and you shall be saved"? No, but "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." What is my commission at this time? To say to you, "Despair, and you shall be saved"? No, verily, but "Believe, and you shall be saved." Are we to come here and say, "Torture yourself, mangle your heart, scourge your spirit, grind your very soul to powder in desperation"? No, but "Believe in the infinite goodness and mercy of God in the person of His dear Son, and come and trust Him." That is the Gospel command. It is put in various forms. This is one—"Look unto me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth."

Now, if I were to come and say, "Tear your eyes out," that would not be the Gospel, would it? No, but "Look." The Gospel does not say, "Cry your eyes out," but "Look." And it does not say, "Blind your eyes with a hot iron." No, but "Look, look, look." It is just the very opposite of anything like remorse, despair, and blasphemous thought. It is just "Look."

Then it is put in another shape. We are told to take of the water of life freely, we are bidden to drink of the eternal spring of love and life. What are we told to do? To make this water of life scalding hot? No. We are to drink it as it freely flows out of the fountain. Are we to make it drip after the manner of the Inquisition, a drop at a time, and to lie under it, and feel the perpetual drip of a scanty trickling? Nothing of the sort. We are just to step down to the fountain, and drink, and be contented therewith, for it will quench our thirst.

What is the Gospel again? Is it not to eat the bread of heaven? "Eat you that which is good." There is the Gospel banquet, and we are to compel men to come in, and what are they to do when they come in? Silently to look on while others eat? Stand and wait till they feel more hungry? Try forty days' fasting, like Dr. Tanner? Nothing of the sort. You might think this to be the Gospel by the way some people preach and act, but it is not so. You are to feast on Christ at once, you need not fast till you turn yourself into a living skeleton, and then come to Christ.

I am sent with no such message as that, but this is my word of good cheer, "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Ho, every one that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money, let him come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Freely take what God freely gives, and simply trust the Savior. Is not that the Gospel? Well, then, why should any of you say, "I cannot trust Christ because I don't feel this, and don't feel that"? Do I not solemnly assure you that I have known of many who have come to Christ just as they were—who have never undergone those horrible feelings which are so much spoken of, and yet have been most truly saved?

Come as you are. Do not try to make a righteousness out of your unrighteousness, or a confidence out of your unbelief, or a Christ out of your blasphemies as some seem to do, nor dote so foolishly as to imagine that despair may be a ground of hope. It cannot be. You are to get out of self, and into Christ, and there you will be safe. As the blind man said, when Christ asked him, "Believe you that I am able to do this?" so are you to say unto Him, "Yea, Lord." Trust yourself with your Savior, and He is your Savior.

III. I conclude with one more observation, that **THOSE PERSONS WHO ARE PRIVILEGED TO COME TO JESUS CHRIST SOFTLY, PLEASANTLY, AND HAPPILY, ARE NOT LOSERS.**

They do lose something, certainly, but there is not much in it. They lose somewhat of the picturesque, and they have less to tell. When a man has had a long series of trials to drive him out of himself, and at last he comes to Christ, like a wrecked vessel tugged into port, he has a deal to talk of and write about, and perhaps he thinks it interesting to be able to tell it, and if he can tell it to God's glory, it is quite proper that he should.

Many of these stories are found in biographies, because they are the incidents which excite interest and make a life worth writing, but you must not conclude that all godly lives are of the same sort. Happy are those whose lives could not be written because they were so happy as to be uneventful. Some of the most favored lives do not get written because there is nothing very picturesque about them.

But I ask you this, when those blind men came to Christ just as they were, and said that they believed that He could open their eyes, and He did open their eyes, is there not as much *of Christ* in their story as there well could be? The men themselves are nowhere, but the healing Master is in the foreground. More detail might almost take away the peculiar prominence that He has in it all. There He stands, the blessed, glorious opener of the eyes of the two blind men, there He stands alone, and His name is glorious!

There was a woman who had spent all her substance upon physicians, and was nothing better, but rather grew worse. She had a long tale to tell of the various doctors she had been to, but I do not know that the narrative of her many disappointments would glorify the Lord Jesus one bit more than when these two blind men could say, "We heard of Him, and we went to Him, and He opened our eyes. We never spent a halfpenny upon doctors. We went straight away to Jesus, just as we were, and all He said to us was, 'Do you think that I can do it?' and we said, 'Yes, we believe You can,' and He opened our eyes directly, and it was all done." Oh, if my experience should ever stand in my Master's light, perish my best experience! Let Christ be first, last, midst, do you not say so, my brethren?

If you, poor sinner, come to Christ at once, with nothing about you whatever that you ever can talk of—if you are just a nobody coming to the ever-blessed Everybody—if you are a mere nothing coming to Him who is the All-in-all, if you are a lump of sin and misery, a great vacuum, nothing but an emptiness that never need be thought of any more, if you will come and lose yourselves in His infinitely glorious grace—this will be all that is wanted. It seems to me that you will lose nothing by the fact that there is not so much of the picturesque and the sensational in your experience. There will be, at least, this grand sensation—lost in self but saved in Jesus, glory be to His name.

Perhaps you may suppose that persons who come thus gently lose something by way of evidence afterwards. "Ah," said one to me, "I could almost wish sometimes that I had been an open offender, that I might see the change in my character, but having been always moral from my youth up, I am not always able to see any distinct sign of a change."

Ah, let me tell you, friends, that this form of evidence is of small use in times of darkness, for if the devil cannot say to a man, "You have not changed your life"—for there are some that he would not have the impudence to say that to, since the change is too manifest for him to deny it—he says, "You changed your actions, but your heart is still the same. You turned from a bold, honest sinner to be a hypocritical, canting professor. That is all you have done, you have given up open sin because your strong passions declined, or you thought you would like another way of sinning, and now you are only making a false profession, and living far from what you should do." Very little consolation is to be got even out of the

change that conversion works when once the arch-enemy becomes our accuser. In fact, it comes to this, however you come to Christ you can never place any confidence in how you came. Your confidence must always rest in Him you came to—that is, in Christ—whether you come to Him flying, or running, or walking. If you get to Jesus you are all right, anyhow, but it is not how you come, it is whether you come *to Him*.

Have you come to Jesus? Do you come to Jesus? If you have come, and you doubt whether you have come, come over again. Never quarrel with Satan about whether you are a Christian. If he says you are a sinner reply to him, “So I am, but Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and I will begin again.” He is an old lawyer, you know, and very cunning, and he knows how to baffle us, for we do not understand things so well as he does. He has been these thousands of years at the trade of trying to make Christians doubt their interest in Christ, and he understands it well.

Never answer him. Refer him to your solicitor, tell him you have an Advocate on high who will answer him. Tell him you will fly away to Christ again, if you never went to Jesus before you will go now, and if you have been before you will go again. That is the way to end the quarrel. As to evidences, they are fine things in fine weather, but when the tempest is out wise men let evidences go. The best evidence a man can have that he is saved is that he is still clinging to Christ.

Lastly, some may suppose that those who come gently to Christ may lose a good deal of adaptation for after usefulness, because they will not be able to sympathize with those who are in deep perplexity and in awful straits when they are coming to Christ. Ah, well, there are enough of us who *can* sympathize with such, and I do not know that everybody is bound to sympathize with everybody in every respect.

I remember mentioning one day to a man who had considerable property that his poor minister had a large family and could scarcely keep a coat on his back. I said I wondered how some Christian men who profited under the ministry of such a man did not supply his wants, he answered that he thought it was a good thing for ministers to be poor because they could sympathize with the poor. I said, “Yes, yes, but then, don't you see, there ought to be one or two that are not poor to sympathize with those who are rich.” I would give them turnabout, certainly, and let the poor pastor now and then have the power to sympathize with both classes. He did not seem to understand my argument, but I think there is a good deal in it.

It is a great mercy to have some brethren around us who, by their painful experience, can sympathize with those who have been through that pain, but do you not think it is a great mercy to have others who, through not having undergone that experience, can sympathize with others who have not undergone it? Is it not useful to have some who can say, “Well, dear heart, don't be troubled because the great dog of hell did not howl at you. If you have entered the gate calmly and quietly, and Christ has received you, do not be troubled because you are not barked at by the devil, for I, too, came to Jesus just as gently and safely and sweetly as you have done”? Such a testimony will comfort the poor soul, and so, if you lose the power to sympathize one way, you will gain the power to sympathize in another, and there will be no great loss after all.

To sum up all in one, I would that every man and woman and child here would come and trust the Lord Jesus Christ. It seems to me to be such a matchless plan of salvation, for Christ to take human sin and to suffer in the sinner's stead, and for us to have nothing to do but just to accept what Christ has done, and to trust ourselves wholly with Him. He that would not be saved by such a plan as this deserves to perish, and so he must. Was there ever so sweet, so sure, and so plain a Gospel? It is a joy to preach it. Will you have it? Dear souls, will you not yield to be nothing and have Jesus to be all in all?

God grant that none of us may reject this way of grace, this open way, this safe way. Come, linger no longer. The Spirit and the bride say “Come.” Lord, draw them by the love of Jesus. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 3:14-36

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—232, 556, 549

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