

A POOR MAN'S CRY, AND WHAT CAME OF IT NO. 2193

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MARCH 8, 1891,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."
Psalm 34:6*

ON the morning of last Lord's Day [Sermon #2192, *The Joyous Return*] we labored to bring sinners to their God, and the Lord graciously made the Word effectual. We gave voice to the invitation to return, and we entreated men to take with them words, and turn unto the Lord. God's people found it a happy time. It is a very singular fact, but an undoubted one, that the simple gospel which saves sinners also feeds saints. Saints are never better pleased than when they hear those first truths which instruct sinners in the way to God. The Lord be thanked that it is so!

On this occasion I want to speak of what happens to those who do return to God, because many have newly been brought, through mighty grace. Some of them I have seen, and I have rejoiced over them with exceedingly great joy. They tell me that they did distinctly lay hold on eternal life last Sabbath day, and they are clear about what it means. They came out of darkness into His marvelous light; they knew it, and could not resist the impulse to tell at once those with whom they sat in the pews, that God had brought them up out of the horrible pit, and had set their feet upon the rock of salvation. For this joyful reason, I think we will go a step further, and talk of the happiness of those who have come back to their Father, have confessed sin, have accepted the great sacrifice, and have found peace with God. It is my heart's desire that those sheep that have come into the fold may be the means of inducing others to enter. You know how one sheep leads another, and perhaps when some come to Christ, many others will follow. When one of our professional beggars knocks at a door, and gets well received, he is very apt to send another. I have heard that vagrants make certain marks near the door by way of telling others of the confraternity which are good houses to call at. If you want many beggars at your house, feed one and another of them well, and birds of the same feather will flock to you. Perhaps while I am telling how Christ has received poor needy ones, others may pluck up courage and say, "We will go also." If they try it, they may be sure of receiving the same generous welcome as others have done, for our Lord keeps open house for coming sinners! He has distinctly said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." That does not refer merely to those who have come, but to those who are coming, and to you, dear hearers, who will come at this hour. Jesus bids every hungry and thirsty soul come to Him at once, and be satisfied from His fullness. Our text tells how they have sped who have cried to God. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

I. The first lesson we shall learn, this morning, is upon THE NATURE AND THE EXCELLENCE OF PRAYER, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him."—

*"Prayer is appointed to convey
The blessings God ordains to give."*

He gives us prayer as a basket, and then He pours the blessings of His grace into it. We shall learn from the text much about prayer.

Evidently *it is a dealing with the Lord*. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." He cried to the Lord that the Lord might hear him. His prayer was not intended for men, nor was it mainly meant to be a relief to his own mind; it was intended for the ear of God, and it went where it was intended to go. The arrow of desire was shot towards heaven. It reached the mark it was designed to reach. This poor man cried to the Lord, and the Lord is the right person to whom to appeal in prayer. I am afraid that

many public prayers are a performance to please the congregation, and when they are mixed with music, it is hoped that they will influence men of taste. Even private prayer is not always directed to God as it should be. I have heard ignorant people sometimes use the expression, "The minister came and prayed to me." That is a great mistake. We do not pray *to you*; we pray *to God*. We pray *for you*, but not *to you*. Yet I am afraid that the blunder reveals a mournfully dark state of mind as to what prayer is and does. I fear that many prayers are meant for the ears of men, or have no meaning at all beyond being regarded as a sort of incantation which may mysteriously benefit the utterer of them. Believe me, to repeat good words is a small matter; to go over the best composed forms of devotion will be useless, except the heart rises into real dealings with God. You must speak with God, and plead with Him. I often question those who come to join the church in this fashion, "You say there is a great difference in you: is there a difference in your prayers?" I very frequently get such an answer as this, "Yes, sir, I now pray *to God*. I hope that He hears me. I know that He is near, and I speak *to Him*, whereas before I did not seem to care whether God was there or not. I said my prayers by rote, and it did not seem like speaking to anybody."

Prayer is dealing with God. The best prayer is that which comes to closest grips with the God of mercy. Prayer is to ask of God, as a child asks of its father, or as a friend makes request to his friend. O my hearer, you have forgotten God; you have lived without speaking to Him; this has been the case for years. Is not this a wrong state of things? You are now in need; come and spread your case before your God; ask Him to help you. You need to be saved; beg of Him to save you. Let your prayer reach from your heart to the throne of God, otherwise, however long it may be, it will not reach far enough to bless you.

From this psalm we learn that *prayer takes various shapes*. Notice, in the fourth verse, David writes, "I *sought* the Lord, and He heard me." Seeking is prayer. When you cannot get to God, when you feel as if you had lost sight of Him, and could not find Him, your seeking is prayer. "I sought the Lord and He heard me"; He heard me seeking Him, heard me feeling after Him in the dark; He heard me running up and down if haply I might find Him. To search after the Lord is prayer such as God hears. If your prayer is no better than a seeking after one you cannot as yet find, the Lord will hear it. In the next verse David puts it, "They *looked* unto Him." Then a looking unto God is a prayer. Often the very best prayer is a look towards God—a look which says, "Lord, I believe You; I trust You; be pleased to show Yourself to me." If there is "life in a look," then there is the breath of life in a look, and prayer is that breath. If you cannot find words, it is often a very blessed thing to sit still, and look towards the hills from where our help comes. I sometimes feel that I cannot express my desires, and at other seasons I do not know my desires, except that I long for God; in such a case I sit still and look up. "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You, and will look up." A look is a choice prayer, if it is the look of tearful eyes towards a bleeding Savior.

We might describe prayer in many other ways, as for instance, in this one—"O *taste* and see that the Lord is good," which you meet with in verse eight. Tasting is a high kind of prayer, for it ventures to take what it asks for. When we come boldly to the throne of grace, we have a taste of grace in the act of coming. That is a very acceptable prayer which boldly ventures to believe that it has the petition which it has asked of God. Believe that God has heard you, and you are heard. Take the good your God provides you; take it to yourself boldly, and fear not. Come boldly to the throne of the heavenly grace that you may find and receive. Lay hold upon the blessing which you need so much and it will be neither robbery nor presumption.

But *frequently, according to our text, prayer is best described as a cry*. What does this mean? "This poor man cried." This poor man did not make a grand oration; he took to crying. He was *short*; it was only a cry. In great pain a man will cry out; he cannot help it, even if he would. A cry is short, but it is not sweet. It is intense, and painful, and it cannot be silenced. We cry because we must cry. This poor man cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." That is not a long prayer, but it prays a great deal of meaning into a few words. That was a short cry, "Lord, save, or I perish," and that other, "Lord, help me." "Save, Lord," is a notable cry, and so is "Lord remember me." Many prevailing prayers are like cries because they are brief, sharp, and uncontrollable. A cry is not only brief, but *bitter*. A cry is a sorrowful thing; it is the language of pain. It would be hard for me to stand here and imitate a cry. No, a cry is not artificial, but a *natural* production; it is not from the lips, but from the soul, that a man cries. A cry, at-

tended with a flood of tears, a bitter wail, a deep-fetched sigh—these are prayers that enter into the ears of the Most High. O penitent, the more you sorrow in your prayer, the more wings your prayer has towards God! A cry is a brief thing, and a bitter thing. A cry has in it *much meaning, and no music*. You cannot set a cry to music. The sound grates on the ear, it rasps the heart, it startles, and it grieves the minds of those who hear it. Cries are not for musicians, but for mourners.

Can you expound a child's cry? It is pain felt, a desire for relief naturally expressed, a longing forcing itself into sound; it is a plea, a prayer, a complaint, a demand. It cannot wait, it brooks no delay; it never puts off its request till to-morrow. A cry seems to say, "Help me now! I cannot bear it any longer. Come, O come, to my relief!" When a man cries, he never thinks of the pitch of his voice, but he cries out as he can, out of the depths of his soul. Oh, for more of such praying!

A cry is a *simple* thing. The first thing a new-born child does is to cry, and he usually does plenty of it for years after. You do not need to teach children to cry; it is the cry of nature in distress. I never heard of a class at a Board School to teach babes to cry. All children can cry, even those who are without their reasoning faculties can cry. Yes, even the beast and the bird can cry. If prayer is a cry, it is clear that it is one of the simplest acts of the mind. O my hearer, whatever you need, pray for it in the way which your awakened heart suggests to you. God loves natural expressions when we come before Him. Not that which is fine, but that which is on fire, he loves. Not that which is dressed up, but that which leaps out of the soul just as it is born in the heart, He delights to receive. This poor man did not do anything grand, but from his soul he cried.

A cry is as *sincere* as it is simple. Prayer is not the mimicry of a cry, but the real thing. You need not ask a man or woman, when crying, "Do you mean it?" Could they cry otherwise? A true cry is the product of a real pain, and the expression of a real want, and therefore it is a real thing. Dear souls, if you do not know how to pray, *cry*. Cry because you cannot pray. Cry because you are lost by nature and by practice, and will soon be lost forever unless grace prevents. Cry with a strong desire to be saved from sin, and to be washed in the precious blood of Jesus. Pour out your hearts like water before the Lord. Just as a man takes a pitcher, and turns it upside down, and pours all the water out, so turn your hearts upside down, and let them flow out until the last dreg has run away. "You people, pour out your heart before Him." Such an outpouring of heart will be a cry and a prayer.

But now note, further, concerning the nature and excellence of prayer, *that prayer is heard in heaven*. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." He was all alone, so that nobody else heard him, but the Lord heard him; yes, the Lord, even Jehovah of hosts, the All-glorious, bowed His ear to him. In God's ear the songs of angels are continually resounding; yes, He hears all the voices of all the creatures He has made, yet He stooped from His eternal glory, and gave attention to the poor man's cry. Never imagining that a praying heart ever pleads to a deaf God or that God is so far removed from men, that He takes no note of their desires. God does hear prayer; He does grant the desires and requests of lowly men. I do not think that we shall ever pray in downright earnest unless we believe that God hears. I have been told that prayer is an excellent devotional exercise, highly satisfying and useful, but that there its result ends, for we cannot imagine that the Infinite Mind can be moved by the cries of men. Do not believe so gross a falsehood, or you will soon cease to pray. No man will pray for the mere love of the act, when he has arrived at the opinion that there is no good in it so far as God is concerned. Brethren, amidst all the innumerable goings forth of divine power the Lord never ceases to listen to the cries of those who seek His face. It is always true, "The righteous cry and the Lord hears." Wonderful fact this! Truly marvelous! It might surpass our faith if it were not written in His Word, and experienced in our lives. Many of us know that the Lord has heard us. Doubt about this matter has long been buried under a pyramid of evidence. We have often come from the throne of grace as sure that God had heard us as we were sure that we had prayed, in fact, our doubts all lie around our own praying, and do not touch our assurance that God hears true prayer. The abounding answers to our supplications have been proofs positive that prayer climbs above the region of earth and time, and touches God and His infinity. Yes, it is still the case that the Lord listens to the voice of a man. It is still Jehovah's special title—the God that hears prayer. The Lord will hear your prayer, my hearer, even if you cannot put it into words; He has an ear for thoughts, and sighs, and longings. A wordless prayer is not silent to Him. God reads the intents

of the heart, and cares more for these than for the syllables of the lips. This poor man could not speak, his heart was so full that he could only cry, but Jehovah heard him.

Once more, prayer has this excellence, that *it wins answers from God*. "The Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." God does put forth power in answer to prayer. I know the difficulties which are started concerning this. There is a fixed purpose, from which God does not depart, but this is by no means inconsistent with the prevalence of prayer, for the God who decrees to give us blessings has also decreed that we shall ask for them. The prayer and the providence are alike appointed by the predestination of God. Our praying is the shadow of God's giving. When He is about to bestow a blessing He first of all works in us earnest prayer for it. God moves us to pray; we pray; God hears, and answers; this is the process of grace. The Lord does in very deed answer prayer. I read yesterday certain notes taken by an interviewer, who called on me some years ago. He reports that he said to me, "Then you have not modified your views in any way as to the efficacy of prayer?" In his description he says—"Mr. Spurgeon laughed, and replied, 'Only in my faith growing far stronger and firmer than ever. It is not a matter of faith with me, but of knowledge and everyday experience. I am constantly witnessing the most unmistakable instances of answers to prayer. My whole life is made up of them. To me they are so familiar as to cease to excite my surprise, but to many they would seem marvelous no doubt. Why, I could no more doubt the efficacy of prayer than I could disbelieve in the law of gravitation. The one is as much a fact as the other, constantly verified every day of my life.'" The interviewer reported me correctly, and I would repeat the testimony. I could speak with even deeper confidence today. More than forty years I have tried my Master's promises at the mercy seat, and I have never yet met with a repulse from Him. In the name of Jesus I have asked and received, save only when I have asked amiss. It is true I have had to wait, because my time was ill-judged, and God's time was far better, but delays are not denials. Never has the Lord said to me, or to any of the seed of Jacob, "Seek you My face" in vain. If I were put into the witness box, and knew that I should be cross-examined by the keenest of lawyers, I should not hesitate to bear my testimony that by many infallible proofs the Lord has proved to me that He hears prayer. But, my hearers, if you need evidence on this point, try it yourselves. Remember, the Lord has said, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." Here is a fair test. Make an honest experiment concerning it. I have no doubt that at this moment I could call upon hundreds in this congregation who would not refuse to stand up and say that the Lord hears prayer. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." I might call on many a man and woman here who could solemnly declare that they cried, and the Lord heard them. Are you at this service, Hannah? You were here the other morning with a sorrowful spirit, and now I see by your countenance that the Lord has smiled upon you, and your soul is magnifying His name. Prayer has done this for you. Is it not so? God answers the supplications of His believing people, and of this we are witnesses. Thus have I set the matter before you, and I would remind you of the words of the Lord Jesus, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for everyone that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened." Thus have we been instructed by our text as to the nature and excellence of prayer.

II. Let us move on, and note, secondly, that our text leads us to think upon THE RICHNESS AND FREENESS OF DIVINE GRACE. Great grace is revealed in this statement—"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

You will see the richness and the freeness of grace when you consider *the character of the man who prayed*, "This poor man cried." Who was he? He was *a poor man*; how terribly poor I cannot tell you. There are plenty of poor men about. If you advertised for a poor man in London, you might soon find more than you could count in twelve months; the supply is unlimited, although the distinction is by no means highly coveted. No man chooses to be poor.

David, on the occasion which suggested this psalm, was so poor that he had to beg bread of the Lord's priests, and though he was a soldier he had to borrow a sword from their treasury. He had no house, no home, no calling, no income, no country, no safety for his life. He was poor indeed who wrote these words—"This poor man cried." Why should men imagine that poverty is an injury to prayer? Will the Lord care about the age of your coat? What is it to Him that you have a shallow pocket, and a scanty cupboard? "This poor man cried." Does God hear poor men? Yes, that He does, the poorest of the poor,

the poor in spirit! He hears those who are so poor that even hope has dropped out of their box, and that is the last thing to go.

This poor man was also *a troubled man*, for the text speaks of “all his troubles”—a great “all,” I guarantee you. He did not know what to do. He could not see his way in his blizzard of trials, he was surrounded with difficulties, as with an iron net, and he could not hope for a deliverer. He was a troubled man, and because he was a troubled man, he cried. People wondered what he cried about, but they would not have done so had they known his inward griefs. His old companions thought he had gone out of his mind; they said religion had turned his brain, and they stayed out of his way. This poor man cried, and no man noticed him because he was so poor and so wretched, but “the Lord heard him.” He does not turn away from the doleful and the desolate; He takes delight in coming to them, and binding up their wounds.

This poor man was *a mournful man*; a man altogether broken down, a man who could not hold his head up, he blushed and was ashamed, both before God and man. All he did, when alone, was to cry, and if one watched him closely in company, the tears might be seen forcing their way from his heart through the eye, and down the cheek. This poor man cried, for he was so feeble, so faint, so forlorn, that he could not do otherwise, but “the Lord heard him.” The Lord so heard him as to make that poor man rich in grace.

I feel sure, also, that “this poor man” was *a strange fellow*. What did he want with crying when others were laughing? It is not a pleasant or a usual sight to see strong men weep. Some men weep because they are very tender-hearted, but many others do so, I am persuaded, because they have been given to drink. This man was given to inward crying, he cried day and night unto the Lord because of a secret wound which never ceased to bleed. People could not make him out, and they came to despise him, or at least to be shy of him, but “the Lord heard him.”

He was also *a changed man*. Why, he used to come in of an evening, and to be a thoroughly jolly companion, but now he looks as miserable as an owl, and nobody desires his company, he is such a kill-joy. “Poor miserable creature!” people say. Even his wife sighs and says, “What has become of my poor dear husband?” He was a poor man, and as sad and singular as he was poor. He sought out secret places, and there he sighed and cried before the Lord.

But yet he was *a hopeful man*. There must have been some hope in him, though he could not perceive it, for people do not cry for help unless they have some hope that they will be heard. Despair is dumb, where there is a cry of prayer there is a crumb of hope. A cry is a signal of distress, and people will not hoist a rag on a pole unless they have a little hope that a passing vessel may spy it out, and come to their rescue. There is not only hope *for* a man, but hope *in* a man as long as he can pray; yes, as long as he can cry. If you do but long, and look, and seek, and sigh after God, you are one of those poor men whom I have tried to describe, and good will come to you. I can see that poor man now. I used to know him, for he was born in my native town, and he went to the school where I was a scholar. He was hardly a man, but only a youth, and then I used to sleep with him, or rather to lie awake at nights with him, and hear him groan. He prayed in my hearing many a time, and very poor praying it was, but he meant what he said. I have been with him in the fields, and he used to tell me that he was such a vile creature that he feared that he must be cast into hell forever; he was afraid that he was not one of the chosen and redeemed people of God, and that he should never be able to believe in Jesus. I knew him when he gave himself up for lost. I know him now. I see him whenever I use the mirror, and I must say on his behalf this morning—“This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.” Oh, the freeness and the richness of grace, that God should hear nobodies, that God should look upon those who are less than the least of all saints, and the very chief of sinners!

If you desire to further see the richness and freeness of grace, by the help of the Holy Spirit, I beg you to remember *the character of the God to whom this poor man cried*. He who prayed was poor, and his prayer was poor, but he did not pray to a poor God. This poor man was powerless, but he did not cry to a feeble God. This poor man was empty, but he went to God's fullness. He was unworthy, but he appealed to God's mercy. Our God delights in mercy; He waits to be gracious; He takes pleasure in blessing the weary sons of men. This poor man cried to that Savior who is able to save to the uttermost. O my friend, never mind how poor you are; you are not crying to your own poor self. Remember, you have not

to draw water out of your own emptiness; you come to God, who is the fountain of grace. Your merit is poverty itself, but the mercies of God are unsearchable riches. The power by which you are to be saved lies not in your own spirit, but in the Holy Spirit. Therefore cry with great hope, and believe that God is as great in His grace as in His power and wisdom.

While we are thinking of the freeness and richness of this grace in the text, I would have you notice *the character of the blessing*. "The Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." He gave him salvation from the whole of his troubles. His sins were his great troubles; the Lord saved him out of them all through the atoning sacrifice. The effects of sin were another set of grievous troubles to him; the Lord saved him out of them all by the renewal of the Holy Spirit. He had fallen into a perilous position by his own fault, and troubles came upon him thick and heavy, but in answer to prayer the Lord made a way of escape for him, out of them all, and led him into peace. He had troubles without and within, troubles in the family and in the world, and he felt ready to perish because of them, but the Lord delivered him out of them all. Note that word "all"; it is large and comprehensive. If you will kindly look at the psalm, you will see the range of this delightful deliverance. We read in verse four, "He delivered me from *all my fears*." Sometimes our fears are more painful than our troubles. We suffer more in dreading troubles than in enduring them, but prayer banishes such fears. We see that *all shame* was removed in the same way, "They looked unto Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." Happy men; for the shame of their sin is gone! Their shame and their fears went when their prayers were heard. They were no longer distressed about the past, and no longer under apprehension of wrath in the future, "He saved them out of all their fears." If you will look further on you will find that the Lord saved them out of *all their wants* (verse 9)—"There is no want to them that fear Him." "They that wait upon the Lord shall not want any good thing." Oh, to be saved from the pinch of dire necessity within the soul—saved from all fear, all shame, all trouble, and then from all want! This is a grand salvation! But this is not all, for this poor man was saved from *all dangers* (verse 20), "He keeps all his bones: not one of them is broken." He saved him out of all real peril. And, lastly, He saved him from *all apprehension of desertion*—"None of them that trust in Him shall be desolate." The salvation that God gives in answer to prayer is a perfect one, and He gives it freely, gives it in answer to a poor man's cry, without money or merit. How complete is God's deliverance!

Did you ever notice how perfect was the answer which God gave to the prayer of Moses when he cried to God for Pharaoh in the day of the plagues? When the locusts covered the land, Moses prayed, and we read, "There remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt" (Exo 10:19). So was it with the frogs, and even with the flies, "He removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; there remained not one." Pharaoh could not have found a specimen of locust, or fly, in all Egypt. So you may be devoured with troubles as the land by locusts, and they may be croaking in your ears like the frogs in the bedchambers of Egypt, but when the Lord bids them "go," they will depart from you, and you will be in quiet. He who puts away as a cloud your iniquities, and as a thick cloud your sins, will soon drive away your troubles like a swarm of buzzing flies. "The Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." Is not this free grace? Is not this rich mercy?

And, once more, think that *this all came through a cry*. A cry is all that the poor man brought. He did not go through a long performance; he did not perform a laborious set of ceremonies—"This poor man *cried*, and the Lord heard him." What can be simpler? Oh, you think you need a priest, do you?—a priest on whom a bishop has laid his hands? Or do you dream that you must go to a holy place, a pile of stones put together in architectural form. Possibly you even dream that you must pine all through Lent, and not expect joy till you reach Easter. What folly is all this! You have but to cry, and the Lord will hear you. There is but one priest—even the Lord Jesus. There is but one holy place—His glorious person. There is but one holy time, and that is today. When the Spirit of God works a cry in the heart of the poor man, that cry climbs up to heaven by the way of Jacob's ladder, and at the same instant mercy comes down by the same ladder. Our Lord Jesus Christ is that ladder which joins earth and heaven together, so that our prayers go up to heaven, and God's mercy comes down to us on earth. Oh, that man would be content with the blessedly simple apparatus of grace, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles"!

III. I must be brief on my last head, but it is a very important one. Consider THE NEED AND THE USEFULNESS OF PERSONAL TESTIMONY. It is David who says, "This poor man cried." You see he tells the story; he writes it down in a book for us to read; he weaves it into a psalm for us to sing.

Testimony is a weighty thing for the persuasion and winning of men, but *it must be of the right kind*. It should be *personal*, concerning things which you yourself know, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." Never mind if you should be charged with being egotistical. That is a blessed egoism which dares to stand out and bear bold witness for God in its own person. "*This poor man cried,*" not somebody over the water—"and the Lord heard *him,*" not a man down the next street. The more *definite and specific* your testimony, the better and the more convincing. One of our evangelists writes me, that when he was praying with an inquirer, and trying to lead him to Jesus, he was much helped by a working man coming in, and kneeling down by their side, and saying, "Lord, save this poor soul, even as you saved me at two o'clock this morning!" Afterwards the evangelist asked him how he came to use such an expression. "Well," said the man, "I *was* saved then; just as the clock struck two, I found the Savior, and I always like to tell when a thing happens." Somehow or other, that "two o'clock in the morning" helped the inquirer mightily; it put such a reality into the transaction. He thought, "This man knows that he was saved at two o'clock in the morning, why should I not be saved now, at eight o'clock in the evening?" I do not say that we can all tell the date of our conversion; many of us cannot. But if we can throw in such details, let us do so, for they help to make our testimony striking.

Our witness should be an *assured* one. We must believe, and therefore, speak. Do not say, "I hope that I prayed, and I—I—trust that the Lord heard me." Say, "I prayed, and the Lord heard me." If you begin to stutter when you are giving your evidence for the Lord Jesus, worldlings will not believe you. Are you sure? If you are not sure yourself, you cannot assure others. The accent of conviction is indispensable if you would convince. Be sure that you have cried, and be sure that God has heard you, and then bear testimony to what you have tried and proved.

Give your testimony *cheerfully*. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." Do not say it as if it were a line from "the agony column," but write it as a verse of a psalm—of such a psalm as this, which begins with, "I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

Your testimony must have for its sole aim the glory of God. Do not wish to show yourself off as an interesting person, a man of vast experience. We cannot allow the grace of God to be buried in ungrateful silence. When He made the world the angels sang for joy, and when He saves a soul we will not be indifferent. Let us call together our friends and our neighbors, and charge them to rejoice with us, for our Lord has found us, though we were lost. Remember how the father, when the prodigal came back, said to his household, "Let us eat, and be merry." So, dear friends, be glad at heart that the Lord has saved you, and tell others of what He has done, saying, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him."

Testimonies to facts have weight with men. Those who live to win souls have learned from experience that facts are grand things to use in their holy service. When you are teaching people doctrines they will often be inattentive and unmoved, but when you come to facts they listen and feel their force. I sat not long ago with one whom I would gladly win for my Lord, and I told him certain facts with regard to the Lord's hearing prayer for the College and the Orphanage, and other parts of my work for the Lord. I marked the deep interest which these facts produced. He believed me to be a man of integrity, and he could not resist the conclusion that the Lord is a prayer-hearing God. To yourself and to others one fact is better than a dozen inferences. Even the hardest of the Gradgrinds can only say, "What I want is facts." Test prayer for yourself, and then boldly state the results and you will have power with men. Personal experience is far more convincing than observation; tell facts which you have yourself experienced, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard *him,* and saved him out of all his troubles."

Such testimony will have most weight with the same sort of men as yourselves. When a poor man tells what the Lord did for him, he wins the attention, and gains the belief of other poor men. When any event happens to a person like myself, I become interested in it. The poor man says, "I see he is a poor man like myself, and if God hears him, why should he not hear me?" Does not your brother's salvation cheer you, and make you feel that you will cry to the Lord too? How wonderfully God has heard prayer from men in singular positions! He heard Jacob when his angry brother Esau was close upon him with armed men. At Jabbok the Lord heard him by night, and he met his brother the next morning with a

smiling face. Israel in Egypt was in sore bondage, but the Lord heard his people's cry, and sent Moses, and divided the Red Sea, and brought forth His chosen. The Lord heard Samson when he was ready to die of thirst. He heard the men of Reuben who cried to God in the battle against the Hagarites, "and He was entreated of them, because they put their trust in Him." He heard Hezekiah and Isaiah when Rabshakeh wrote his blasphemous and slanderous letter. We read that, "for this cause they prayed, and cried to heaven. And the Lord sent an angel, who cut off all the mighty men of Assyria." David prayed in the cave, and Elijah on Carmel, and Jeremiah in prison, and the Lord heard them. There was once a man in the belly of a fish miraculously kept alive. The great fish felt ill with such a thing as a living man within him, and therefore it dived deep down till the prisoner felt himself to be at the bottom of the mountains. Then, to get vegetable medicine, the fish rushed among the sea meadows, and Jonah cried, "The weeds were wrapped about my head." He was in a strange, dark, horrible place, and he says of it, "Out of the belly of hell cried I." Was his cry of any use? Yes; we read, "Out of the belly of hell cried I, and You heard my voice. My prayer came in unto You, into Your holy temple." Wherever you may be, and in whatsoever trial you may be involved, the Lord will hear your cry, and come to your help. If any soul here is, like Jonah, in the very belly of hell in feeling and apprehension, yet, his cry will prevail with heaven, and he shall know that "salvation is of the Lord." A poor man's cry will sound, through the telephone of Christ's mediation, in the ear of God, and He will respond to it.

Now, this witness, dear friends, while it is very strong to those who are like ourselves, *will be increased in force as one and another shall join us*. One person says, "I cried to the Lord, and he heard me." "But," says an objector, "that is a special case." Up rises a second witness, and says, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." "Well, that is only two, and two instances may not prove a rule." Then, up rises a third, a fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and in each case it is the same story—"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." Surely he must be hardened in unbelief that refuses to believe so many witnesses. I remember the story of a lawyer, a skeptic, who attended a meeting where the subject was similar to our theme of this morning. He heard about a dozen tell what the Lord had done for them, and he said, as he sat there, "If I had a case in court, I should like to have these good people for witnesses. I know them all, they are my neighbors, they are simple-minded people, straightforward and honest, and I know I could carry any case if I had them on my side." Then he very candidly argued that what they all agreed upon was true. He believed them in other matters, and he could not doubt them in this, which was to them the most important of all. He tried religion for himself, and the Lord heard him, and very soon he was at the meeting, adding his witness to theirs. If I were to put the question at this moment to my present audience, what would be the result? Our friend Mr. Stott said just now in prayer that we were a very promiscuous company this dark morning. I agree with him. Still I will try it. You that have had answers to prayer say, "Yes." (The response came like a thunderclap). I am sure there are none of us who have ever tried the power of prayer who would have to say, "No." If I were to put the contrary, there would be no answer. All who are accustomed to pray will vote with the ayes. Go home, then, with the words of our text in your hearts and on your tongues—"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." Glory be to God! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 34.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—67 (SONG 2), 116 (SONG 1), 34 (VER 2).

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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