

WHY MEN REJECT CHRIST

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“And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.”
Luke 9:52-53

YOU hardly need that I should explain this action of the Samaritans. Probably our Savior's nearest road to Jerusalem lay through Samaria, and He did not avoid that district, as many Jews did who went a long way around rather than pass through that unfriendly country. The Lord Jesus was so gentle, so meek and lowly, so much more a man than a Jew, that it is somewhat strange that the Samaritans did not make an exception in His favor, and treat Him courteously when He passed through their land. He Himself was quite free from all bigotry, and was glad to mingle with all sorts of men, whatever their nationality.

He sent His messengers to the Samaritan village, to say that Jesus of Nazareth was passing through, and wished to lodge there for a night, but they refused Him because it appeared to be His intention to go up to Jerusalem to keep the feast, and it was their opinion that the feast ought to be kept in their own temple on their own mountain, Gerizim. Therefore, because the Christ was going up to the Jewish feast at Jerusalem, they would not receive Him. They were guilty of gross inhospitality in thus refusing to entertain a servant of God, for He was that in the esteem of many of them, and they were also guilty of still greater inhospitality which they did not understand, for they refused to receive the Son of God who in human flesh had come down to bless the sons of men.

I do not mean to say much about Samaritans in my discourse, for we have little or nothing to do with them, but I am going to use the text with reference to ourselves. I am sure that there is here a picture of many to whom I am now speaking.

I. First, I would remind you that the LORD JESUS CHRIST STILL SENDS MESSENGERS BEFORE HE COMES TO THE SONS OF MEN.

Before He comes Himself, He sends His heralds. His own personal coming to the earth was heralded by a long line of prophets, and especially by John the Baptist, and when He had come into the world, He did not usually enter a place without giving some kind of notice to the inhabitants. He frequently sent before Him either evangelists, by two and two, to go into every place whither He Himself would come, or else He commissioned certain messengers to give notice that the Christ of God was on His way to pay a visit of mercy.

I believe that, nowadays, the Lord Jesus Christ comes to many men in a very surprising manner. Before they are aware of it, His grace steals into their hearts, He says to many what He said to Zacchaeus, “Make haste, and come down, for today I must abide at thy house.” He speaks out of heaven to some as He did to Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus. He has differing ways with different men, but often, and with the most of us, He sends His messenger before Him ere He comes Himself.

The message that we who are Christ's messengers have to bring is this, *we have to tell who He is* that has come among the sons of men, asking for entertainment in their hearts. Brethren, it is God Himself, the Lord of glory, who has appeared in human flesh, and has become bone of our bone and

flesh of our flesh. He has come in the fashion of a man. He has lived and loved and labored here below, He has died, He has been buried, He has risen again, He has gone back into the glory, and now, spiritually, He is present among us. Here is His own declaration, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

We preach not to you, a merely human teacher, we preach one who is certainly human, but who is also divine. We preach not alone a Teacher, but a Savior who offered Himself without spot unto God, that He might put away the sin of all who believe in Him. And now, in the message of the Gospel, He comes again into our midst, even He whom angels worship, who is His Father’s joy, the delight of His people, the hope of all who have a living hope, the pattern and the mirror of what His saints are yet to be. It is He of whom we speak, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, who is also very God of very God.

As His messengers, we have further to say that *He is willing to come and dwell in men’s hearts*. The messengers who came to that Samaritan village proclaimed the good tidings, “The Christ is coming! The Christ is coming! He is willing to come and lodge with you.” I think the loungers at the gate were at first astonished that the great Miracle-Worker should come to their lone village, to the Samaritans with whom the Jews had no dealings, and they went in, and said to the people, “Jesus, who healed the sick, and raised the dead, is willing to come and stay a night with us.”

We tell you, dear friends, that the Lord Jesus is willing to come to you, that He will be glad to find admission at the door of your hearts. It were good news if we could tell you that He would let you come to Him, but we tell you something better, that is, that He is willing to come to you. It were good news if we said, “If you entreat Him, if you beseech Him, if you constrain Him, He may perhaps come and stay an hour with you.” But instead, thereof, we can come and say, “Our Master bids us tell you that He is willing to be received by you, and that to as many as receive Him to them will He give power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.”

Oh, what glad tidings for your sinful hearts that the pure Christ is willing to come and live in you! Oh, what good news for you guilty men that the pardoning Christ is willing to come and take a lodging within your spirits! Tell it to one another wherever you dwell. Tell the good news that Jesus comes, not to pass by, nor even to sojourn merely for a night, but to come and take possession of the heart forever.

These messengers of Christ were also *to tell the people to make ready for His coming*. According to our text, Jesus “sent messengers before his face; and they went, they entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.” Make ready, then, for the coming of Christ into your hearts. “But,” say you, “we cannot entertain Him as such a King should be entertained.” It is true, beloved, you cannot, but remember that this royal Guest asks nothing of you but that you give Him room to abide in your heart. The Master still says, as He did of old, “Where is the guest chamber?”

He does not ask you to provide the fare for the feast, but only to prepare the guest chamber. He still says, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” Our great Melchizedek, when He comes to meet us, brings with Him the bread and the wine—the bread, His body, and the wine, His blood. He gives us meat to eat that the world knows not of.

Whatever preparation you have to make is not a matter that is beyond your power. I will tell you what to do to make ready for Christ, give Him a room that is empty. Drive out the sin that rules there, or rather, ask Him, by His grace to come and drive out His enemy and yours. If you are willing to have him driven out, Christ is both willing and able to drive him out. Say to the Lord, “There is my heart, such as it is, it is all Thine own.” If you really say that from your heart, you are ready for Him. Tell Him that you grieve over your sin, for repentance will make you ready for Christ. Tell Him that you are a lost sinner, and that your sense of need has made you ready to be saved by Him. Tell Him that you are willing to be renewed by His grace, tell Him that you desire to be holy, that you wish to be cleansed in His precious blood, this is the kind of readiness which Christ wants.

The best preparation for a feast is hunger, there is no sauce like it. Readiness for being clothed is to take off your rags, readiness to be washed is to see, and lament, and abhor your filthiness, readiness to receive alms is to take the place of a beggar, and to confess how poor you are. So, you see, I have asked no hard thing of you when, as the messenger of my Lord, I tell you that the King Himself draws near, even the incarnate God, and that He is willing to enter into your hearts, and that all the readiness that He asks of you is that you open the door to let Him in.

But, my brothers, *the messengers of God have come to some of you a great many times*. I wonder whether some of you can recollect the first sermon that ever made you weep. Do you remember the first holy book that awakened your sleeping conscience? Can some of you unconverted people call to mind your mother's tears and your father's prayers for you? You will have, as it were, to swim through the river of your mother's tears if you are resolved to go to hell. Some of you will have to ride roughshod over your father's entreaties ere you will be able to reach perdition.

You have been called many times, you have been invited again and again, take heed lest, one day, even the Christ should say, "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh."

The messengers of God and the messages of God are not to be trifled with. Sickness, losses, convictions of conscience, and a thousand other things are messengers from the Most High. Let us not trifle with them any longer, but even now, as the Christ sends out His messengers, let us receive them gladly, and say to them, "Tell your Master that we shall be glad if He will come to us."

II. Now, secondly, it appears from the text that although Christ sends out messengers to announce His approach, **THERE ARE SOME WHO WILL NOT RECEIVE HIM.**

These Samaritans would not receive Him, and alas! the people who will not receive Christ are still very many. One would be glad to preach until midnight to sinners who would receive the Savior, no exhaustion would we mind if we could but preach to people willing to welcome our Master. We cannot make it out why some of you do not receive Christ as your Savior, there is so much about you that is hopeful and good that we cannot understand why you refuse Him. There are such blessings attached to the reception of Christ—even eternal life hangs on it—that it puzzles us how you can bar your door against this blessed Friend of ours, yet so it is.

Let me put it to you, dear friends—I would like to "buttonhole" you, to take you by the hand, and to say to you, "*God has sent His Son to be the Messiah*, the Mediator between Himself and you, do you deliberately turn away from Him? He sent that dear Son of His into the world to save sinners, and in order that He might save them, He died in unutterable pangs upon the cross. Do you really refuse to be saved by the merits of that matchless death? Is it so that you will both tempt the justice of God and reject the mercy of God?"

The plan of salvation cost God His darling Son, do you mean, in cold blood, to say that you care not what it cost? Will you fling the atonement to the winds, and have nothing to do with it? Well, then, what I ask of you is just this—to really make this decision with deliberation if you are resolved to be lost. I am not half so much afraid of you who would thus reject Christ as I am of the many who will not even think of Him, who take up neither one position nor another, but who let the whole subject slip by with a neglect that is a thousand times more contemptuous towards Christ than even if they had thought it out, and had decided not to believe it. O sirs, do not, I pray you, neglect the Christ of God, and refuse Him whom God has sent to save you!

But there are some who *never think about Christ at all*. The year rolls on with scarcely a thought of Him. Look on the vast mass of London's population, never going to any house of prayer to hear about Jesus. There is but little reading of the blessed Book which tells us of Him, one might imagine that they regarded it as all old wives' fables, or a dream from the "Arabian Nights." Yet they do not go quite that length, for they have not thought enough about it even to say as much as that. What! shall Christ die, and yet you do not think His death worth a thought? Shall He, with His pierced hands, open the kingdom of

heaven to all believers, and will you not even look to see what He has done? Oh! how shall I plead with you? Would God that I had voice and heart commensurate to so stern a labor as that of pleading with consciences that go to sleep, and hearts that lie dead in the presence of a bleeding Christ!

There are also, alas! many who, though they do think of Christ, yet *reject the plan of salvation by the great Substitute*. They cannot see it, they say, they mean that they will not have it. They do not care to be saved by the atoning sacrifice, they would sooner trust in something else. Oh! dear friends, I am sure that, if you would work that problem out with a little care, you would soon come to a different resolve.

I remember, when under deep conviction of my guilt, with a strong desire to be better, and to have peace with God, I tried prayer, I tried Bible reading, I tried diligent attendance to the means of grace, I tried a change in my manner of life, I tried everything I could think of, but I never could find peace and rest until I cast myself on Christ's atoning work, and trusted Him to save me. Then did I enter into the peace of God, and found a joy and rest of spirit which I would not barter for all the crowns of all the kings who ever lived.

I do entreat you to think much of the sufferings of our Lord, and consider what they meant, and I should not wonder that you will at length fall in love with the great plan of redeeming mercy by which Christ was made to suffer in our stead, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. At any rate, do give a full and fair consideration to God's way of salvation. Make room for it in your heart. Be ready to entertain the Savior, at least go as far as this—weigh His claims, judge His doctrine, see whether there be not about His atoning sacrifice something of promise which is not offered anywhere else.

Yet it would not be sufficient, even if I could bring you to think of Christ, and to judge somewhat more favorably concerning Him. I long—oh! that I had power to work this miracle, but I have not—I do long to open some sinner's heart to let the Savior in. I know who will be the man who will be the first to welcome Christ. He who has no righteousness of his own, he who longs to escape from the wrath to come. I think I hear him say, "Sir, you put a question to me, and I will put one to you. You say, 'Will you open your heart for Christ to enter?' O sir, that is not the question, my heart is ready enough to receive Him, but can I hope that He will come in?"

Soul, there was never a heart yet that was willing to have Christ but Christ gave Himself to that heart. There is no question about His will, the question is about your will, He has said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Now, if I were struck dumb—if this throat were choked up, from which for so many years has pealed forth as with the sound of a trumpet the Gospel of Christ, I should like my last words to be, "Come to Christ, just as you are." Never was a soul repulsed that came to Him, though black as midnight, though guilty of crimes enough to condemn it to all eternity. Only do but come to Jesus. Be you willing and obedient, and you shall have Christ, for it is written, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The Lord make all of you willing this very hour!

III. But now, thirdly, CHRIST IS OFTEN REFUSED FOR THE MOST ABSURD REASONS.

The Samaritans did not receive Him because He was going up to Jerusalem, so that theirs was a *sectarian reason*. They were Samaritans, and He was siding with the Jews. I think that sectarianism anywhere is an evil thing, but let no man ruin his soul for the sake of being a sectarian. If I were the strictest Churchman, I would rather go to heaven through hearing the Gospel preached by a Dissenter than I would be lost in order to remain a staunch member of the Established Church, and if I were a Dissenter, I would sooner go hear the Gospel fully preached in the Church of England, and find Christ there, than I would go and sit down in my own conventicle, and listen to a sort of semi-Unitarianism of modern thought.

The first and chief thing for my soul's good is that I must have Christ, and for my part, I care not where I find Christ. Whether it be in a barn or in a cathedral, He is the same Christ to me. I would meet Him on the mountain's brow if He bade me go there, but I would also meet Him on the surface of the lake if He said to me as He said to Peter, "Come." Anywhere with Jesus, all is well, but away from Jesus, all is ill. Let nobody, then, refuse to accept Jesus Christ because of sectarian bigotry.

Was it not also for a *proud reason* that the Samaritans rejected Jesus Christ? What right had these Samaritans to dictate to the Messiah where He should go? If He chose to go to Jerusalem, had He not a right to go where He pleased? How often we also try to dictate to Christ! We think that He ought to save us this way, or that way. O sirs, be willing to let the sinner's Savior save the sinner in His own way! Never dictate to Him who is Lord of all, nor reject Him through foolish or wicked pride.

It was a *selfish reason*, too, that made these Samaritans refuse to receive Christ. Dog-in-the-manger-like, they would not accept Christ, themselves, but they did not want Him to go to Jerusalem. I have sometimes heard it said, "If this Gospel is preached to the scum of society, to the outcast, and the low, I am not going to hear it." Ah! my fine gentleman, you will not have it yourself, and you do not want others to have it. I would be glad to come to Christ side by side with the foulest harlot who ever rotted into infamy, I would be glad to come to Christ with a criminal who was standing with the rope about his neck, about to be hurled into eternity by the common hangman, I would be glad enough to come to Christ with the poorest, lowest beggar who ever picked foul crusts from off a dunghill. So long as I can but get to Christ, who am I that I should find fault with my company?

Come, sirs, away with your pride! Yes, my lady, or my lord, you must come to Christ like anybody else. He cares nothing for earthly stars and garters, and honors and titles. He died to save *sinners*, even the very chief of them, and you are not in a fit state to be saved until you come down to the level which you think now so much beneath you, but which is indeed the true level upon which we must stand if we are to close in with Christ. O pitiful Samaritan pride and selfishness, unwilling that Christ should go to the despised Jews, for the proud Samaritan thinks, "If He comes to me, He ought to go to nobody else."

I do not think there ever was a *good reason for not believing in Christ*. I believe that the most unreasonable things in all the world are doubt and unbelief, in fact, atheists and infidels are the most gullible persons living. The modern scientist, who does not believe in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, and who pours scorn upon the New Testament, believes things infinitely more incredible than he can ever detect in Sacred Scripture.

I do not hesitate to say that the whole theory of evolution is more monstrously false and foolish than any other ever conceived beneath high heaven, and it is a marvelous thing that men should be able to squeeze their minds into the belief of an absurdity which, in time to come, will be ridiculed to children in the schoolroom as an instance of the credulity of their ancestors. As one science, falsely so-called, has passed away, devoured by the next notion that men have adopted, so shall it be to the end of the chapter. He who will not believe God shall be the dupe of lies, but there is no good and valid reason why men should not accept the Christ.

You dear people, who believe your Bibles, and listen to the Gospel from week to week, yet who do not accept Christ as your Savior, are the most unreasonable of all people. If this Gospel is true, why do you not receive it? If Christ be the Savior of sinners, why do you not believe in Him? I could understand your casting your Bibles behind your backs, and never coming to a house of prayer again, however greatly I might lament such conduct, but I cannot understand the diligent hearer of the Word, who commends and approves it all, yet never believes in Christ to the salvation of his soul.

These Samaritans would not receive Christ, and they gave as the silly reason for their rejection of Him that He was going to Jerusalem, and many who do not receive Christ must give equally unreasonable reasons for their unreasonable conduct.

IV. Now I must close by noticing that JESUS ACTS STILL VERY MUCH AS HE DID THEN.

First, *He does not send fire from heaven to consume those who reject Him*. James and John came to their Master, when the Samaritans would not receive Him, and said to Him, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" Oh, dear! well might the Master rebuke them, and say, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." But have not I seen men so eager to convert their fellow men that they would even bully them to Christ? There never yet was a man bullied to the Savior, men do not believe in Christ through being threatened and coerced.

Persecution is the devil's work from beginning to end, and it never does succeed, and never will. The Savior gives us no permission to put it in action, He abhors it, for it is not at all according to His mind.

What, then, did the Master do? As He would not bring fire from heaven upon the people who rejected Him, so also *He would not force Himself upon them*. Now, if you, my dear hearer, do not accept Christ, you may not at once drop down dead, you may not find your house on fire when you get home, you may not become a beggar, that is not God's way of dealing with those who reject Christ.

I have heard of an impious man who said, "If there be a God, let Him strike me dead." It was because He is God that He did not take the wicked man at his word, why should He? It is not according to the nature of God to act after that fashion. While you are in this world, listening to God's terms of mercy and grace, if you choose to receive Christ, it shall be a blessed thing for you, but if you refuse Him, there is not one of us who would lay a finger upon you to harm you, or who would desire that you should suffer in your mind, your person, or your estate. Our Lord and Master would not treat you so and He will not force Himself upon you.

When these Samaritans would not receive Him, He did not say, "Come, John, and James, and Peter, we will burst open the village gates, we will enter their homes, we will claim the lodging to which we have a right." Oh, no, that was not His way of working! The Lord Jesus Christ must be served willingly if He is served at all, and He must be received cheerfully if He is received at all. In many cases those who received Christ when He was upon the earth received Him gladly, and that is the only reception which He desires. Forced Christianity would be no Christianity. One volunteer here is worth ten thousand pressed men, indeed, Christ will have no pressed men, all His soldiers must be volunteers. There is a delightful pressure of His grace, but that never violates the will of man, though it sweetly inclines that will towards Christ.

What did the Master do when these Samaritans rejected Him? *He went elsewhere*. We read that "they went to another village." I fancy that I can see the Master and His little band of disciples waiting outside that village gate as the sun is going down. The Samaritans ask, "Is He going to Jerusalem?" Yes, He is, then they tell Him that He cannot enter, He may go away, and they will not entertain Him. He says not a word. He utters no complaint, but He just goes quietly down the hill, the little band following at His heels, and He walks away until He knocks at the gate of another village, where they lodge Him for the night.

That is all that will happen if you reject Him, He will go somewhere else, but when I say that is all that will happen, it is a very great "all." It is a very dreadful "all," for my Master never seems to me more terrible than in His gentleness. You have refused Him, so He is going away. No thunder peals to alarm you, no lightning dashes to destroy you, only He is going away. There is more terror in that going away than there would be in the tempest.

One day, my hearer, if you continue to reject Jesus Christ, when you shall be in another world, you will have to read, written in letters of fire above your head, these words, "He came to you, and you would not receive Him, so He went unto another." In the parable of the wedding feast, they that were bidden with one consent began to make excuse, and the Master of the house, being angry, said to His servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." Is it not a wonder that, even when the Master was angry, He only did a kind thing to show His anger? And, dear hearer, when Christ shall turn away from you because you refuse to receive Him, it will be only that He may turn somewhere else.

When Dr. Hawker was preaching once, a learned man from London, who had listened to him, said, "I could not make heads or tail of the man's talk." Someone told the doctor what had been said. "Ah!" he remarked, "I daresay the learned man could not understand the truth I was preaching, but there were scores of old women in the aisles who could." So, if there are some who will not have Christ, there are plenty of others who will. If you who are rich, or learned, or great, will not have Him, He will give Himself away to the poorest, the lowest, and the smallest, who will accept Him, and they shall be in the bosom of their God at last, while you who were too proud to come to Him, shall be cast away forever.

O my dear Hearers, He stands before the door of your heart just now, He is gently knocking, not with a sledge hammer, but with His own pierced hand! Admit Him, admit Him, I beseech you, admit Him at once, if not, it may be that He will never knock again. Probably He never again asked those Samaritans to welcome Him, but some other Samaritans did receive Him. He might reasonably have expected to be received by these villagers, but inasmuch as they said Him nay, He just turned His face from them, and went away.

Shall He turn away from you like that, my hearer? Shall He depart from you thus? What is your answer? “Yes,” or “No”? Ere you go out of this house, I beseech you to answer me, and I pray God to help you say, “Come in, my Lord, come in.” May He grant it, for His name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 3:1-24

This is a very wonderful chapter, because, while it teaches the doctrine of regeneration, and the necessity of a great moral and spiritual change, it yet also reveals the doctrine of salvation by faith alone—a very wonderful combination, which puzzles many who read what is recorded here. Many have been staggered by one or other of these great truths, yet they evidently agree together, for they are taught by the same unerring Teacher, and they are preserved to us by the Spirit of God in the same chapter.

Verses 1-2. *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said to him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*

Nicodemus was very candid, he went as far as he could go. If he had not yet learned to believe in Christ as his Savior, he did at least admit that Christ, upon the evidence of His miracles, was “a teacher come from God.” There is always hope of a man who is willing to see all that he can, and who acknowledges what he can see. He will see “greater things than these” if he is willing to use his eyes.

3. *Jesus answered and said to him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

Without a new birth, “he cannot see,” he cannot comprehend, he cannot understand, he cannot know anything about “the kingdom of God.”

4. *Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?*

Ah, me! our blessed Master taught much by parables, and parabolic teaching is the best of teaching, but you see how readily it can be misunderstood, how men can take the emblem in a carnal way, and not understand its spiritual meaning. This is how the false doctrine of transubstantiation is taught. When Christ says of the bread, “This is my body,” the Romanists take His words literally, and so miss their spiritual meaning. It was in the same way that Nicodemus fell into error concerning Christ’s teaching.

5. *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

If the water here signifies baptism—mark you, if it does—then, observe, that there is no entering into the kingdom without it. I do not think that baptism is here intended at all, but the purifying influence of the Word of God symbolized by water. We might read the verse, “Except a man be born of water, even of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” There is a great change of character necessary for entrance into the kingdom, seeing it is one thing, entering into it is another matter, yet one cannot even see the kingdom of God without being born again, or born from above.

6-7. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

Nicodemus was well born, no doubt, probably, he was a pure Jew, yet he must be born again. And you may have descended from a long line of saints, your parents may be in the church of Christ, and

your parents' parents too, but still the truth remains, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," at its very best, it cannot rise above that which gave it birth, it is but flesh.

"You must be born again." There is no hope for you apart from the new birth from above. You cannot see, and you cannot enter, the kingdom of God merely by your first birth. Birthright-membership is a great delusion, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and only "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

8. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

It is a mystery. You can never fully understand it, but you can enjoy it. If you are born again, you will know what it is, but you can no more discover your second birth than your first birth, except by its results and effects. May God give you to know what it is to be born again! There are many doctors of divinity and men of great learning who know nothing about this new birth, and there are many who are mere babes in Christ who nevertheless enjoy the fruit of this blessed regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

9-10. *Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*

These A B C truths, which are taught in the very first school book used by Christ's scholars—"Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?"

11. *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.*

This is true of all faithful ministers of the Gospel, we do not preach theories, we preach facts. We do not talk about speculations, we speak of a new birth through which we have ourselves passed. If there be no such thing, we are liars unto you, but there is such a thing, and this is our witness, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." The fashion, nowadays, is to make statements upon religious matters with great caution, expecting to have them disputed, but we need exercise no caution when we state what we know to be true. We will be positive, we will utter our "verily, verily," when we speak what is a matter of fact to our own consciences, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness."

12. *If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?*

Regeneration is a work that is worked here on earth, and belongs to this present life. High as the mystery is, it lies but at the very threshold of the temple of divine truth, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" No doubt unbelief hides much of heavenly truth from us, but if we begin to doubt the very elementary doctrines of our holy faith, how shall the great Master take us on and up to the higher science that He is ready to teach us?

13. *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.*

This saying must have puzzled Nicodemus, he had, doubtless, read a great many riddles, but into the meaning of this riddle he could not enter, yet, beloved, any child of God, though he was converted only yesterday, may know what Jesus meant.

Now observe that, as the first part of this chapter sets forth the need of a great and supernatural change, the latter part of the chapter shows us the door of mercy wide open, and tells us that faith in Christ will save us.

14-15. *And, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

There is no contradiction here to what we have been reading. He that believes in Christ receives the new birth, receives eternal life, and thus, by faith, gets that which is essential to a sight and entrance into the kingdom of God.

16-18. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned:*

What a charming sentence! What comfort it ought to bring to the mind of every sinner who will now believe in Christ!

18. *But he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

“He that believeth not is condemned already.” If you have heard of Christ’s salvation, and you have not believed in Him, that is evidence enough of your condemnation. There is no need to prove your evil works. No need to fetch your diary, and turn over the record of your life. If you have not believed in Jesus Christ, it shows a natural lack of holiness, a lack of love to the loving God, and by that evidence you are condemned already, because you have not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

The dislike of Christ is caused by a love of sin. If men did not hug their sins, they would embrace the Savior.

20-21. *For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

If you do not like self-examination, you can be sure that you are wrong. If you do not like reading heart-searching books, or listening to a faithful Gospel ministry, you can be sure that you are wrong. If you do not like that part of the Word of God which judges you, and makes you tremble, you can be sure that you are wrong. The man in business, who cannot bear to look at his books, most probably has good reason to be afraid of his books. He shuts them up because they would shut him up if he were to pay attention to them.

O sirs, there is no more damning sign of man’s condition than his endeavor to avoid the light. Search and see, look and examine. Make sure work for eternity, whatever you trifle with, trifle not with your souls. Take other things on hearsay, if you please, but not your condition towards God. Let that be searched into with all earnestness and sincerity, and be not satisfied till the truth has satisfied you.

22-24. *After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison.*

We ought to be thankful that God’s ministers are not silenced in this age. May the Lord raise up, in these evil days, many a John the Baptist, who shall faithfully declare his testimony concerning the Lamb of God!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—552, 491, 549

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