

“STRAIGHTWAY”
NO. 2618

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“They straightway left their nets, and followed him.”
Matthew 4:20

“THEY straightway left their nets.” Immediately, without hesitation, without question, at once, on the spot, there and then, instantaneously—at the Master’s call they “left their nets, and followed him.” It was one mark of our Savior’s authority and power that, when He commanded, men obeyed. Your memories will help you to recall many instances in which persons and even inanimate things instantly obeyed when Christ gave them the word of command. Satan and legions of demons, diseases of every kind, and even winds and waves—those things which usually seem to be lawless and wild—always gave heed to the law which issued from His lips. When He spake, it was done, for His Word was with power.

This is a mark of the effectual calling by divine grace—whenever it comes, men are led “straightway” to obey it. I may call you as long as I please, yet you will not come to Christ for all my calling. But if Christ shall call you by His Spirit, you will come. Ay, and come “straightway.” When the command of Christ is applied to the soul with divine energy, there is an immediate yielding of the heart to Him and His law is obeyed in the life.

Judge yourselves, therefore, dear friends, whether the Word of God has come with power to you or not, for if it has not come with almighty power, but you merely hear it as I speak it, you will say to me, as Felix said to Paul, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”

But if the truth proclaimed shall be accompanied with the energy of the Holy Spirit, then, as soon as the Lord says, “Seek ye my face,” your heart will respond to Him, “Thy face, LORD, will I seek.” Pray to the Lord, you who have heard and answered the call of His Spirit, that the same call may be given to others, and be effectually applied to them, to the praise of the glory of God’s grace.

I am going to use, in two ways, one word in my text—“straightway.” First, I suggest that this word “straightway” should be *a motto for all Christians*. All disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ should take that word as their guiding star. Secondly, *let all seekers take it as their motto, too*, “straightway.” If you would find Christ, seek Him at once—“straightway.”

I. First, then, let this word “straightway” be THE MOTTO OF EVERY DISCIPLE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

When I preached, many years ago, in the cathedral at Geneva, after the service was ended, the brothers presented me with a large bronze medal commemorative of John Calvin, on which is this passage, “He endured, as seeing him who is invisible,” which was a most suitable motto-text for him. Upon the covers of his works are these words, which are also truly descriptive of the man, “*Prompte et sincere in opere Domini*”—“Prompt and sincere in the work of the Lord.”

I was pleased with both those mottos and my prayer then was, and still is, that they may both be mine as well as Calvin’s. I pray that I may endure, as seeing Him who is invisible, and that I may also live to earn that other commendation, “prompt and sincere in the work of the Lord.” Sincere, I trust we all are, who love the Savior, but we are not all as prompt as we are sincere. You know, in business, people like a man of prompt payments, upon whom they can always depend. We also like persons to be prompt in carrying out their promises.

But oh! to be prompt in the work of the Lord, so as, not only to do the right thing, but to do it at the right time—and that right time almost always is the time suggested by my text, “straightway.” “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might,” and do it at once. Leave it not to lie by among the lumber of good intentions, but if you are prompted to do it, set to work and do it off-hand.

“Straightway,” then, is to be the motto of the Christian, first, *in obeying Christ’s laws*. The moment, my dear friend, that you find yourself in the kingdom of heaven by faith in Christ, endeavor to be a loyal, law-keeping subject. Mary said to the servants at the marriage feast of Cana, concerning her Son, “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.”

And I say the same. “Whatsoever he saith unto you”—He whom you have now taken to be your Lord and King—do not merely talk about it, or think of it, but do it and do it at once. “I counsel thee,” said Solomon, “to keep the King’s commandment.” Take Solomon’s advice and let me add as a rider to it, “Keep the King’s commandments straightway.”

As soon as ever a man becomes a believer in Christ, the next step for him to take is to be baptized. The two things are constantly joined together in the New Testament. Our Lord said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” When the eunuch came to a certain water, he asked Philip, “What doth hinder me to be baptized?” Philip answered, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.”

I add to that, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou not only mayest, but thou art bound to do it according to the law of the kingdom of Christ.” Do you tell me that you cannot see it to be your duty? I would advise you candidly to search the Scriptures, and find out the teaching and practice of our Lord and His apostles concerning believers’ baptism. If, after that, you still say the same, I must leave you to your Master—I am not your judge.

I hope there will be no question with any of you who love the Lord about the next point. It is the duty of every believer in Christ to come to His table. He said, “This do in remembrance of me.” He bids us gather in His name, and commemorate His death in the breaking of bread and the pouring out of wine. So how can you say that you are His obedient disciple if you have lived hitherto in total negligence of that great commemorative ordinance? “Straightway,” friend—“straightway” obey both the ordinances of the kingdom and delay no longer.

“Straightway,” also, unite yourself with the people of God. Christ’s servants—Christ’s blood-bought ones—are called “sheep.” Sheep are gregarious creatures—they always go in flocks. Join yourself to your brethren somewhere. If they are evilly spoken of, go and be evil spoken of with them. Do not attempt to fare better than the rest of your Master’s servants, but take up Christ’s cross and follow Him.

Give yourselves first to Christ and afterwards to us, or to some other Christian church, according to the will of God. And do this “straightway.” And whatever else appears to be the law of the house—and the law of Christ’s house is very plainly written in the Gospels and the epistles—obey the law of the house, and obey it “straightway.”

Next, dear friends, make this word, “straightway,” your motto *in entrance upon Christian service*. Do you ask, “When should a believer begin to work for Christ?” I answer, “Straightway.” There are no laborers for the Master who are so useful as those who begin to be useful while they are young. Sometimes, God converts men in mid life, or even in old age, and uses them in His service. But still, I venture to assert that church history will show that the most useful servants of Christ were those who were caught early, and who from their youth up bore testimony to the Gospel of Christ. At any rate, as soon as ever *you* are converted, I pray you to begin to do something for Jesus so as to get your hand in for future labor.

In the case of some old people, who have been professors of religion for years, but who have done next to nothing for Christ, I find it very difficult to ever stir them up at all. When I do get a saddle on them, they are very restless creatures, like a horse that has never been broken in—but if I break them in while they are colts, they get used to their work, it becomes a delight to them, and they would not be happy unless they had something to do for the Lord Jesus. If Christ has redeemed, you, beloved, and you

know it, get to His service “straightway.” Let there be no delay whatever, but at once commence to labor for your Lord.

I remember having a considerable share of sneers and rebukes not a few, from some who thought themselves very wise men, because I began preaching at the age of sixteen. I was recommended to tarry at Jericho till my beard had grown, and a great many other pieces of advice were given to me, but I confess that I have never regretted that I was a “boy-preacher” of the Word of God—and if I could have my time over again, I would like to do just the same as I did then.

O you young men who are just converted, try to serve God at once, for, if you idle away your years until the boy has ripened into a full-grown man and his beard adorns his chin, I question whether he will not be “a lazy-beard” all the rest of his life. No, no—get to work at once—“straightway.” Find out your niche and stand in it. Ask the Master to allot you your portion of the great harvest field, and go to work in it with all your might, and keep on at it, God helping you, till your dying day. “Straightway,” then, is to be your motto concerning the service of the Master.

And while I give this motto for the commencement of our whole lifework, I beg to propose it to all Christian friends as a suitable motto *for each work as it arises*. If there is anything good to be done, when shall I do it? “Straightway.” There is no time like the present for the fulfillment of a good design. How many excellent projects have been postponed for a time and therefore never carried out for the benefit of men!

Now, dear friends, especially you who have your children around you, if you ask me, “When shall I commence to train them for God?” I answer, “Straightway.” “But they are so young.” Well, never mind how young they are, you will find bad tempers and many other evils springing up from the hearts of even the smallest children. And the time to repress them is as soon as they appear.

You will find that Satan will take the earliest hour that he can find for doing his deadly work. He is always up in the morning early and he will try, if he can, to sow the tares in that little plot of ground. Take you as early an hour as Satan takes, and ask God, by His grace, that you may teach your child the things of eternal life “straightway.”

I would say to you, dear Mother, if you have never talked with your daughter about her soul, do it this very night. “But” you reply, “when I get home, she will be in bed.” If so, then wake her up, but do talk and pray with her tonight. And then let her fall asleep again. Begin this holy service at once if you have neglected it until now.

And you, dear Father, if you have never yet personally spoken to your children about the Savior, you cannot tell the power you might have over them if you would do so. I shall never forget when my father spoke to me, as a boy, about my soul, and asked me to pray. I remember with what shamefacedness I declined the attempt—and how wounded I felt, in my heart, to think that I was not able to pray.

I had my groans and cryings unto God in secret, but they were deepened and intensified by the question that he had put to me. O dear parents, do begin at once, that they may become God’s children while yet they are your children!

A little boy once said, “Father, please take me to chapel with you tonight.” “My dear,” the father replied, “you are too young. I will take you when you grow older.” “Father,” answered the child, “if I don’t go now, very likely when I get older, I shall not want to go at all.” And alas! that is often the case. Take them, therefore, while they are yet little, where they may get a benefit to their souls and “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

Then, with regard to any individuals with whom you may meet, take care to speak to them about the Savior. If you ask me when you shall speak to them, I answer, “Straightway”—tomorrow morning, across the counter, or in the workshop, or whenever there is a quiet minute or two that you can use. Perhaps the friend to whom you think of speaking may be dead if you delay until the end of the week, so go to him “straightway.”

There is a minister now preaching the Gospel, and God is greatly blessing him, who says he owes his earnestness to a remark I made in a certain College that I visited. I was asked, as we say, “on the spur of

the moment,” to speak a word to the students, and I said, “Well, brethren, I have nothing to say to you except this—whenever you see the devil, have a shot at him.”

The young man told me that he recollected that sentence and it had often been of service to him. So I say it again to every Christian here—Whenever you see the devil, have a shot at him. If you see sin, rebuke it. If you see doubt, try to remove it. If you see darkness, bring the light to bear upon it—and do it “straightway,” for opportunities are flying and will soon be gone unless we seize them as they come near us.

There is a lamentable story told of a man in a boat being carried down a waterfall and drowned. And an hour after, one who had been standing with others on the shore said, “I could have saved him if I had thought of it before.” They asked him, “How would you have done it?” And he laid before them a perfectly feasible common-sense plan that might have been easily carried out, and I should think, he went home very miserable, for all the spectators of the disaster seemed to say, “Why did you not think of it before? You are wise too late.”

So, when certain men have died, I think some of you must have known what it was to say, “Oh, I wish I had spoken to him! That Gospel, which saved me, might have been a blessing to him, and now he is gone and I have thought of the remedy too late!” Do not let it be possible to have such regrets, but whenever you find an opportunity of speaking about salvation to others, do it “straightway.”

And once again, let this word, “straightway,” be your motto *with regard to your own soul*. Whenever you find your spiritual life declining, your faith growing weak, and your love getting cold, go back to Jesus and ask for quickening—and do it “straightway.” Always nip these things in the bud. Most diseases must have the remedies applied at once if they are to be cured. If they are allowed to remain unchecked for a time, they gather strength, to the great injury of the patient.

The moment you feel that you have not the power in prayer that you once had, go “straightway” to Jesus. The instant you realize that you have not the love for souls that you once had, hie away to Jesus and tell Him all about your sad condition. Oh, if we always took heed to our backsliding as soon as it began, how much of sorrow and how much of sin might be spared! So, dear friends, if I am describing your case, I implore you to renew your communion with your Lord—get back to Christ, ask for pardon at His hands—and do all this “straightway.”

Dear Christian brothers and sisters, this is the motto for you, “straightway.” Let it flame like a lightning flash through the place. Whatever ought to be done, let it be done at once, without even a second thought. O beloved, will you still delay in such a matter of urgency as this? Then let me further plead with you for a minute or two before I turn to the other part of my subject.

Imagine the day of battle and a colonel issuing the order to his regiment to march into the midst of the fray. Do the men hesitate? Do they stand still? Then, there is mutiny in the ranks. “Forward!” he said, but the troops stay where they are. They are disloyal. How can the battle be won by men who act like that?

But see how the faithful soldiers in the army behave. The command is given, “Charge!” It matters not how many are their foes—away they go like a whirlwind—who can hinder them? Let it be so with you, dear friends. Good soldiers of Jesus Christ must not hesitate, but must obey the Captain of their salvation “straightway.”

Have you a vivid imagination? Can you, in your mind’s eye, picture an angel up yonder before the burning throne of God? The voice of JEHOVAH has said to him, “Descend to earth.” Can you imagine Gabriel staying there, with his finger on his lips, deliberating whether he shall fly or not? Do you not often ask that you may do God’s will on earth as angels do it in heaven?

Then, how can you hesitate, even for an instant, to do what you are clearly commanded by Christ to do? Let me ask you another question—Did Christ delay His great mission of mercy? Nay, for it was with Him as good Dr. Watts sings,—

*“Plunged in a gulf of dark despair
We wretched sinners lay
Without one cheerful beam of hope,
Or spark of glimmering day.*

*“With pitying eyes, the Prince of Grace
Beheld our helpless grief;
He saw, and (oh, amazing love!)
He ran to our relief.*

*“Down from the shining seats above
With joyful haste He fled,
Enter’d the grave in mortal flesh,
And dwelt among the dead.”*

There was no hesitating in Christ. Then, shall there be any in you who are called by His name?

Further, did God lose any time before He saved you when you cried to Him? Does He delay to bless you now? If there is a seeming delay, it is infinite wisdom that makes you wait, only that the blessing may be all the more valued by you when it comes.

But He is always ready to bless you. He stands prepared to give you all that you need. I charge you, therefore, by all these reasons, take this word “straightway” as your motto. You are yourself a dying man, and if you do not accomplish your life-work “straightway,” when can you perform it? Others are dying all around you. If you are not made a blessing to them “straightway,” when may you hope to do them good?

If anything be right, let it be done at once—there cannot be a good reason for any delay. Why should you ask for second thoughts about a plain duty? In such a case, first thoughts are best, and those first thoughts should be followed by immediate and energetic action. “Straightway!” Write it on your banners. Let it wave in the breeze, for victory will be given to the church of Christ when she advances to the fight with all her hosts “straightway.”

II. Now I ask the prayers of all believers while, during the rest of my discourse, I try to speak to those who are “out of the way.” In this large congregation there must be many who are not saved. It is idle to suppose that we are all of us the children of God and the servants of Christ, for we are not. There are some here who are not saved—but among them there are, I hope, some who wish to be saved.

Well, if you really desire to be Christians, if the Holy Spirit has made you start seeking the Savior, I ask you to put this word into your bosom and bear it home with you, “straightway,” for IT IS A MOST SUITABLE MOTTO FOR ALL SEEKERS.

Are you seeking the Lord? Then, I pray you, *hear the Gospel* “straightway.” The Gospel is not preached everywhere. Some go to certain places of worship because the music is admirable, others because the preacher is clever, some because it is considered “respectable” to go to such a place. I charge you, if you have not found Christ, care for nothing but finding Him. And where will you find Him except where He is fully and faithfully preached?

If He is the head and front of the minister’s discourses, then go there—not where they preach the modern gospel, which would not save a mouse—but where Christ on the cross is lifted high as the one hope for the salvation of sinners. Go there, go at once, and make a habit of going where Christ crucified is constantly proclaimed.

Remember how the Lord gave the invitation to the heavenly feast even by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and you labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me:

hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”

But when you are hearing the Gospel, be not content with merely hearing, but *repent* “straightway.” You cannot have Christ and keep your sins, therefore, give up all evil at once. May God’s blessed Spirit now separate you from your sins! Have you been inclined to drunkenness? Turn the intoxicating cup bottom upwards once for all, and have done with it.

What has been your particular besetting sin? Though it were dear as your right eye, pluck it out. Though it were precious as your right arm, cut it off and cast it from you. And do it “straightway.” “Oh!” you say, “I will see about it tomorrow.” Then, I know that God’s Spirit is not effectually calling you, or you would be ready at once to turn from every false way, to Him, and then the time of your deliverance would have come. Therefore, I repeat—Repent “straightway.”

But then you must also *pray* “straightway.” Plead with the Lord just where you are now in your seat, or if you desire quiet and retirement, pray as soon as you reach your house—yea, pray in the street, on the road home. Lift up your heart to God and cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” But do it at once, or as the text says, “straightway.”

Above all, *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ* “straightway.” That word “straightway” is implied in every Gospel exhortation. We are not sent to preach to our Hearers, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ tomorrow.” No minister of Christ is authorized to say, “Put off faith in Christ for a week.” No, but our message is, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

Believe in Jesus and believe in Him now. And if the Spirit of God is really working in your spirit, you will be moved to believe now. If it be only my talk and my persuasion, you will still say, “Tomorrow.” But if it be God’s Word, it will go with power to your heart and you will say, “Now, Lord, even now, bring my soul out of prison, that I may trust Your Son and praise Your holy name.” For a man to delay, who has nothing to depend upon but the breath in his nostrils, is the height of folly. For a man to delay, who stands on the brink of the grave, when that grave will conduct him to hell, is terrible indeed.

Delay is dangerous, but I confess that I do not understand men and their criminal carelessness. I daresay you read in the papers, a short time ago, about the destruction of the Swiss village of Elm. What an extraordinary affair it was, that the people should have had it reported to them, for months, that the forest which overhung the village was often seen to tremble when the rocks were blasted at the quarry.

They knew that, sooner or later, the mountain above them would inevitably come down and crush them! Yet they went to church on the Sunday morning, and were gathered together as comfortably and quietly as if nothing alarming could ever happen to them. Many of you, no doubt, remember the story and therefore, I need not tell you how, on a sudden, the great forest above the village seemed to come down upon them—and when stalwart men from the upper end of the village hurried to help their fellow countrymen, they had scarcely arrived before the mountain itself descended in one tremendous mass and buried the whole village in a moment. The people knew that such a calamity as that would certainly happen—they had been warned of it again and again—yet they persisted in living there.

I do not know how men could get so accustomed to impending danger as they did, and I must blame the foolhardiness of those who willfully ran such a risk of destruction. But it is nothing compared with the madness of man and women who see the great mountain of divine wrath trembling and about to fall upon them, to crush them to all eternity, and yet they go on with their games and occupy themselves with their sports, just as if there were no God to judge them, no heaven to be sought, no hell to be shunned.

They sin as if iniquity were mere child’s play and there were no punishment for it in the world to come. Delay is dangerous at all times, but I feel moved to say that it is specially dangerous for some of you just now. For, as the Lord lives, unless you find salvation within another week, you will be in the world where it shall be impossible for you either to seek or to find it. If not saved soon, you will be lost forever. Delay is dangerous—therefore escape for your lives and escape at once.

Besides, delay will be a great loss to you. If I were unsaved at this moment and in my right senses, I would wish to be saved here and now. I do not know what has been done with the two men who have been lying in prison for the last two years under what is believed to be a false accusation. We heard that the Home Secretary had fetched them up from Chatham to Pentonville to Millbank, and that they were brought up in their own clothes, with a view to setting them free to-morrow.

But I guarantee you, if I had been in their position and had been asked, “Would you prefer to be set at liberty on Saturday, or to wait till Monday?” I would have said, “Oh, set me free at once, straightway.” Any delay would be to my loss. Who wants to stop in prison on a Sunday when he can walk at large? Who wishes to be there five minutes longer than he is compelled to be?

And in like manner, who would be unconverted five minutes longer than he needs to be? It is a loss to a man to be unsaved—even if he is ultimately saved, all the time that went before his conversion is just so long spent in prison—it is dead time, lost time. Therefore, let there be no delay in trusting Christ, for all delay is a loss.

And besides, delay makes it more difficult to get into the way of life. A person, on a certain line of railway, wants to go North, but he gets into the wrong train and therefore, travels South. After he has gone a little way, he puts his head out and says, “This is not the station that I ought to pass.” And as the porters cry out a name altogether different from what he expected to hear, he exclaims, “Why, I am on the wrong train!”

What does he do then? Go on and say, “Well, I will get out by and by”? Not he. If he is a man of business and needs to keep an appointment, he jumps out at the first station after he discovers his mistake, and he says, “Tell me, please, when is there a train back? I have evidently come South instead of going North, and I need to return as quickly as possible.”

My dear friends, some of you are traveling on the wrong line and you have come to a station, tonight. It is not a station where you ought to be. Do not, I entreat you, go on to another in the same direction, but I pray God, by His grace, that you may get out of the train in which you have been traveling on the down line, and say, “Which is the train for heaven? I must get into it somewhere—first class, second class, third class, or in the goods wagon—I do not care where I go so long as I do but get in, for I have made a mistake hitherto, and I would not continue to make it—for the longer I remain as I am, the more difficult will it be for me to get right.”

Do you not also know, dear friends, that every moment in which a man delays he is committing more sin? When I am not doing that which is right, I sin by omission. When a man neglects a duty for a week, how many times does he sin? “Once,” you answer. Ah, no! It is his duty to do it now, but he has not done it, so that is sin. It will be equally his duty in five minutes’ time, and every moment he puts it off, he keeps on committing sin upon sin the longer he delays.

Have you never heard the legend of one who had often delayed his repentance till he was taken into a wood, where he saw an old man chopping sticks for his fire. He cut away till he had enough to make a large pile of firewood, and then he tied the firewood up, and stooped to put it on his shoulders, but it was too heavy for him to lift.

The old man sighed, took his axe, and cut down some more branches, and added them to his bundle. But when he tried to take it up, of course it was still heavier than before. So the foolish old man, with many a sigh, went on cutting more wood, and put that on the heap, and then tried to lift it, but of course it was heavier still. And the longer he delayed, the heavier the burden became.

That is just your case, dear friend, if you are delaying to repent.

*“Longer wisdom you despise,
Harder is she to be won.”*

There is all the more sin to be repented of, there is the more hardness of heart to be overcome, so you are adding to the difficulty every moment that you delay.

“Grandfather,” said a little child, “the preacher talked about loving Jesus. Do you love Him?” “No, child,” said the old man. “I have never thought of these things, but I hope that you will while your heart is tender.” “But Grandfather, you will die soon, won’t you love Jesus?” “No, child,” replied the old man, “my heart is too hard now. It is no use for me to think about it.”

Many a man has said that. It is a great mistake, for the Lord can soften the hardest heart and bring the oldest man or woman to Himself. Still, there is great force in the grandfather’s words and it is a blessed thing when we begin to serve the Lord early, for there is a hardening process that goes on every hour of delay, which I pray God, of His infinite mercy, to prevent by bringing every one of you to Jesus Christ “straightway.”

Shall I tell you one thing more before I finish? It is this—whenever a man will not have Christ “straightway,” whenever he will not give up his sin “straightway,” whenever he will not believe in Jesus “straightway,” that is a roundabout method of saying “No,” to Christ. The father in the parable said to the son, “Go, work to day in my vineyard,” and he replied, “I go, sir.” That is to say, “I am going, sir. I mean to go. Give me just a little time to think it over. It is all right, sir, I will go.”

But how does the parable put it? “He said, I go, sir, and went not.” It was an indirect way of saying that, after all, he did not mean to go. Alas! that is what I fear some of you will do tonight. You will say, “Yes, what the preacher says is quite correct. We should seek Christ and plead for mercy—and we will do so—by and by. Soon—not immediately. Of course, we cannot be in a hurry about these things, but we will attend to them some day.”

I tell you, sirs, plainly, that you will not. You are the sort of people who will not come to Christ. You have not the moral courage to say “No,” but you mean “No” all the while, and if you said, “No,” I would have more hope of you, for the rest of the parable runs thus—“He said to the other son, Go, work to day in my vineyard; and he said, I will not.” That was pretty plain. “But afterwards he repented, and went.”

Now, I would rather have you say, “I will not,” and then afterwards go home and repent, and come to Christ, than I would have you beat about the bush and say, “Oh, yes, yes, yes!” thinking that you are complimenting Christ with your lying—I dare not use a milder term. That “yes, yes, yes,” means that you will not.

Have you never noticed, when you have been collecting subscriptions, if you go to a person who does not say “No,” straight out, but says, “Well, let me look at your list—yes, what is the object of it?” that he usually adds, “I have many calls. I will think of it”? I have known such people, “think about it,” a very long while, but nothing ever came of all their thinking.

You smile at what people do with regard to a subscription list—and it is, in some respects, a thing to smile over. But beware lest you do the same with your soul. Do not, I pray you, act like that towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not merely think about it, but do it. Go straight away to Him and think of it afterwards—and you will then have to think, with joy and delight, that the best day’s work His grace ever enabled you to do was this getting away to Christ and casting yourself on Him.

God bless you, dear friends! May we all meet in heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

MATTHEW 25:1-13

Verses 1-2. *Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.*

What a division this makes in the visible church of God! Let us hope that we are not to gather from this that as many as half the professors of Christianity at any time are like these foolish virgins. Yet our Lord would not have mentioned so high a proportion if there were not a very large admixture of foolish with the wise—“Five of them were wise, and five were foolish.”

3. *They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:*

They thought that, if they had the external, it would be quite enough. The secret store of oil, they judged to be unnecessary, because it would be unseen. They would employ one hand in carrying the lamp, but to occupy the other hand by holding the oil-flask seemed to them to be doing too much—giving themselves up too thoroughly to the work—so they “took their lamps, and took no oil with them.” They might just as well have had no lamps at all.

4. *But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*

Oil in their lamps and oil with their lamps. Lamps are of no use without oil, yet the oil needs the lamp, or else it cannot be rightly used. The light of profession cannot be truly sustained without the oil of grace. Grace, wherever it exists, ought to show itself, as the oil is made to burn by means of the lamp, but it is no use to attempt to make a show unless there is that secret store somewhere by which the external part of religion may be maintained.

5. *While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.*

Both the wise and the foolish fell into a state which seemed alike in them both. In the case of good men, Christ’s delaying His coming often causes disappointment, weariness, and then lethargy. And even the true church falls into a deep slumber. In the foolish—the mere professors—this condition goes much further. There being in them no true life, the very name to live becomes abandoned, and before long, they give up even the profession of religion when there is no secret oil of grace to sustain it.

6. *And at midnight—*

When things had come to the worst—“at midnight”—the coldest and darkest hour, when everybody was asleep.

6. *There was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.*

That was a cry which startled everybody. None of the virgins could sleep when once it was announced that the bridegroom was coming. I wish, dear friends, that we thought more of the great truth of the second advent. The more often it is preached, in due proportion with other truths, the better. We still need to hear that midnight cry, “Go ye out to meet him.”

7. *Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.*

They could not sleep any longer. They were fairly startled and awakened.

8. *And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil;*

Ah, me! Now they began to value what they had aforesaid despised. They were foolish enough to think that oil was unnecessary, but now they saw that it was the one essential thing, so they cried to the wise virgins, “Give us of your oil.” And hear the dreadful reason—

8. *For our lamps are gone out.*

I do not know any more terrible words than those, “Our lamps are gone out.” It is worse to have a lamp that has gone out than never to have had a lamp at all. “‘Our lamps are gone out.’ We once rejoiced in them. We promised ourselves a bright future. We said, ‘All is well for the marriage supper.’ But ‘our lamps are gone out,’ and we have no oil with which to replenish them.”

O sirs, may none of us ever have to lift up that mournful cry. On a dying bed, in the extremity of pain, in the depth of human weakness, it is an awful thing to find one’s profession burning low, one’s hope of heaven going out like the snuff of a candle.

9. *But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.*

It is no easy matter to go and rouse up the seller of oil when the midnight hour has struck. O you who are putting off repentance to a dying bed, you are foolish virgins indeed! Your folly has reached the utmost height. You will have more than enough to do when you lie there with the death-sweat cold upon your brow, without then having to seek the grace which you are neglecting to obtain today, but which you will value then.

10. *And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came;*

While they were going.

10-11. *And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.*

Too late, so that they could not enter.

12. *But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.*

“I never knew you,” says Christ in another place, and this knowledge of His is always bound up with affection. He loves no heart that He knows not in this sense. Those whom He knows, He loves. Will He ever say to me or to you, dear friend, “I know you not”? God grant that He never may have cause to do so.

13. *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.*

HYMN FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—416, 520, 492

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