

A PSALMIST'S QUESTION AND ANSWER

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A SERMON
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*“If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?
 But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.”*
Psalm 130:3-4

NOTE, dear friends, that the psalm begins with this remarkable expression, “Out of the depths I have cried unto thee, O LORD,” and I call your special attention to that utterance of the psalmist because there are many who are afraid to pray when they are in the depths of soul-despair. It is comparatively easy to think you are praying when you have a fine notion of your own excellence. At such a time, you can stand up in the temple, with the boasting Pharisee, and pour out, as glibly as possible, expressions which you call prayer, but which God will never accept.

But the very best prayer in all the world is that which comes from a broken heart and a contrite spirit—when, away in the corner there, beside the conscience stricken publican, we smite upon our breast and cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Do not, I beg you, think that your prayer will not succeed because you are in the depths. There is no place for praying like that, if ever a man is more sure to succeed with God at one time than at another, it is when he is in his greatest straits.

You know that men, who are wisely generous, when they are about to distribute their alms, like to give to the most necessitous cases. The plea with them is the greatness of need, the urgency of distress, and it is just so with God and yourselves. It is not your goodness that will ensure an answer to your prayer, it is the greatness of your need. Even if you have sunk very low in your own esteem, till not a ray of hope seems left to you, and you are shut up in the blackest darkness of despair, now is the very time for you to pray, even as the psalmist said, “Out of the depths I have cried unto thee, O LORD.”

No prayers are more true, more real, and consequently, more acceptable, and no prayers are so likely to be quickly answered, as those that come up from the very depths of soul-distress. I begin my discourse with this observation, because I want to cheer some of you who at present hardly dare to pray. Yet you are the very people who may pray, you who think that the Lord will never hear you are the people whom He is certain to hear and answer.

When you are cleaned right out, when even the last rusty counterfeit farthing has been emptied out of your pocket, and you stand before your God as a wretched, starving, and bankrupt beggar, your abject poverty and dire need will commend you to His mercy and love. Now—if never before—now that you have come to your worst, dart up to heaven your prayer, and the Lord, who heard Jonah when he was in the whale's belly, and Manasseh when he was in captivity in Babylon, will hear you, and send you a speedy answer of peace to your supplication.

Note also, how intensely the psalmist pleads. In the second verse of the psalm, he says, “Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.” So, when you pray out of the depths, mind that you plead with all your might. Cold prayers ask God to refuse our requests, but the red hot petition of a soul on fire with agony after grace is certain to be heard.

If you have hitherto knocked in vain at mercy's door, knock again, only knock more loudly than before, and if one blow of the hammer of prayer has not sufficed to make that portal open, knock, and knock, and knock again, determined that if you do perish, you will perish praying and pleading, but you shall not perish if you will but ask, and seek, and knock with that importunity which will take no denial.

He who has this holy resolve strongly wrought within him by the blessed Spirit of God shall soon come into the morning light of gracious acceptance, and his heart shall be glad because the Lord has granted his petition.

This brings us to the threefold position which the psalmist occupied when he prayed this prayer. It was, first, one of *confession*, "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" It was also one of humble *confidence*, "But there is forgiveness with thee," and it was one in which he saw *the consequences* of God's mighty pardon, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."

I. First then, in our text, we have A CONFESSION—a confession which it will be well for every one of us to make, "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"

The psalmist may have felt that *if a human witness had been appointed to mark his sin, he might have been able to stand*, but he says, "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, who shall stand?" "If my fellow man should watch me honestly, and speak of me candidly, it may be that he would not be able to see a flaw in my life." There are some men who could say as much as that, they have been enabled, by the grace of God, so to behave themselves in all integrity and uprightness that no one could justly bring any accusation against them.

If the policeman were set to watch, or a spy were put into their house, or if even wife or child were the watcher, there are some who might be able to say, "I have borne myself uprightly both in the house and abroad among my fellow men, and I could pass such a test as that." But the psalmist said, "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand?" He knew that the Lord sees what no one else can see, and He sees behind the action into the motive of it, the secret design hidden in the heart.

If any one of us will just think how we have been watched everywhere—at our board and in our bed, in our home and in the public street—if we will remember how the omniscient eye of God has seen everything, and how He has recorded everything that we have thought and said, as well as what we have done—such a person must feel the force of the psalmist's question, "O Lord, who shall stand?"

When I have occasionally met with brethren who have talked about their own perfection, I must confess that I have felt a sort of shudder go through me. The very last thing in this world, that I would dare to claim would be my own perfection, and I believe that all of you will say that when you have lived nearest to God, it is then that you have mourned most your distance from Him. When your prayer has been most prevalent, it is then that you have seen most of its imperfection, and when your faith has been most vigorous, it is just then that you have had to lament your unbelief.

I firmly believe that it is only the gross spiritual darkness of ignorance that makes any man think himself perfect. If he had more light, he would see how abundant are the spots upon him. You have sometimes had a white pocket handkerchief, and you have admired its whiteness, but when the snow has fallen, and you have laid your handkerchief upon the newly fallen snow, it has looked quite yellow instead of white, and so is it with the holiest life when it is placed by the side of the life of Christ, or looked at in the light of the perfect law of God, then we see how stained and defiled it really is.

So, Lord, we might stand up before our fellow men, and plead "Not guilty," when they belie and slander us, as they do, but before Your holy presence, "if thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"

The psalmist not only mentions the Divine Witness of his sin, but he also speaks of *a special form of guilt*. He does not say, "If thou shouldest mark open and overt transgression—the breaking out of bounds, and going astray into the paths of evil," but he says, "If thou shouldest mark iniquities." Pull that word to pieces and it becomes "in-equities"—whatever is not right in the sight of God. If He were to mark those in-equities, who could stand before Him? Not one of us could do so.

God observes how, after obeying the first commandment, we forget the second, or if we are mindful of the first table of the law, which concerns our relationship to God, we neglect to observe the second table, which relates to our duty to our neighbor. Sometimes perhaps, we spend much time in private devotion, yet do not attend to our family duties. At another time, family duties are attended to, but private devotions are forgotten. Sometimes there is a well-balanced relationship towards wife and

children, but not towards our parents, or towards our own household, but not towards the world. It may be that we are kind to our friends, and act according to the rule of equity with regard to them, yet we may be ungenerous towards those who are not our friends, and so be guilty of inequity there.

Our character ought to be harmonious throughout, and no life can be right in the sight of God unless it is holy. Let me alter that word a little, and spell it in a different way, yet retain the same meaning—that is, whole—not part of it devoted to righteousness, and part to unrighteousness, but all of it of one character, so that it is whole and holy. If that is what God requires, who among us can stand before Him? If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark in-equities, who among us could stand in Thy sight? Not one, we must all fall down before Thee, and confess our guiltiness.

Notice next, how the psalmist inquires, "*Who shall stand?*" If there were any way of getting into heaven by a back door, or of hiding our sins from God's eye, we might have some ground of hope, but brethren, there will come a day when we shall stand before God like prisoners at the bar. In that grand assembly, which shall be summoned by the sound of a trumpet around the judgment seat of God, at the last assize, there is no one who will then be able to find a place of shelter, for the rocks will not yield to our entreaties, and fall on us, nor will the mountains fulfill our wish, and hide us from Him who will then be seated upon the throne.

No, we must then be before Him, and when He begins to judge, then shall the wicked flee from before His face like chaff before the wind. And unless you and I have some better righteousness than our own, when God begins to mark iniquities, and to punish them, we shall no more be able to stand than will the rest of mankind, but we too, shall be driven before the blast of justice into the fire which never can be quenched.

Think of this, my brethren, could any one of you now, apart from Christ, stand up before the living God? If you had at this moment, to enter the dock and plead for your life before the Most High, without any Mediator to intercede for you, could you do it? No, you know that you could not. There is nobody here who would dare to appear before God except through Jesus Christ, we should all shudder at the very thought of such fatal presumption. Even those who are clothed in the righteousness of Christ are not always quite clear about appearing before God, how much less, then, must they be who have no robe of righteousness at all, but are only clad in the rags of their own iniquities? How shall they stand in that last dread day?

The psalmist asks, "*Who shall stand?*" as if he felt that he could not himself do so, and moreover, that he did not know anybody, in the whole range of his acquaintance, who could thus stand. David, who probably wrote this psalm, had known many good men in his time, and he was accustomed to associate with the excellent of the earth, yet he says, "O Lord, who shall stand?"

And I may repeat his question now, since God has marked our iniquities, "Who among us can stand in His sight upon the footing of our own good works?" Echo answers, "Who?" Did you think that you could, my friend, before you came in here? You say, "I am a regular church goer, I have been baptized, and confirmed, and have taken the sacrament, I can stand." Oh, do not attempt to stand on such a rotten plank as that, you need something far more substantial than that to support you! Or did you say, good friend, "Well, I have always been a Dissenter, I have taken my seat, almost from a child, in the meeting house, and I have lived so that others esteem me, and reckon me to be a man of God, and I think I can stand in my own consistency of character"?

Ah, my brother! you know not what the requirements of God really are if you can talk like that, for there are none of us who shall be able to stand, when He comes to judge and try us, unless we stand upon Christ's merits. When God puts us into His scales, one by one, we shall all be found wanting. When He puts us into the furnace, one by one, He will find us nothing but a mass of dross. I mean, of course, unless we are saved by grace, and are trusting in the perfect obedience and atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son.

Let us, therefore, all repeat this confession of the psalmist, and own that we are all guilty before God, for it is clear that no mercy can come to us until we are willing to put ourselves in the position

where mercy can rightly deal with us. Mercy is for the guilty, forgiveness is for the unrighteous, so if we will not class ourselves among the guilty and the unrighteous, mercy and forgiveness can never come to us.

II. Now, secondly, we come to THE PSALMIST'S CONFIDENCE.

Although he felt that none could stand before God by themselves, yet he said, "But there is forgiveness with thee." How did he know that, and how do we know it?

Well, we know that there is forgiveness with God, *because we have been informed by revelation concerning the character of God*, and we find one prominent feature in the character of God is that "He delighteth in mercy." It gives Him the greatest possible pleasure when He can righteously forgive sin. He needs not to be entreated, as though He were slow to pardon, for it is one of His special joys to cast iniquity into the depths of the sea. God's character, as it is revealed to us in the Scriptures, convinces us that there is forgiveness with Him.

Moreover, this impression, conveyed to us by the general tenor of the Scriptures, *is deepened by the direct teaching of the Gospel*. Why did Jesus come into the world to be a Savior if God does not delight to save the lost? Why did He offer an atonement if it were not that sin might be put away by that atonement? Why was the fountain filled with blood if it were not God's intent to wash away the stains of His people's guilt? Oh, yes! that accursed and yet blessed cross—or rather, that bleeding Savior dying upon it, ought to give us such an assurance of God's forgiveness that we might never doubt it. There is forgiveness with God, each wound of Christ proclaims it with an emphasis which makes it an absolute certainty.

Further, beloved, we are assured that God will forgive sin *because we have so many definite promises to that effect*. I shall not stop to quote many of them, for I hope you know them for yourselves, here are three, "Come, now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found." "He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

This blessed Book is as full of promises and proclamations of mercy as an egg is full of meat. It abounds in messages of love and grace, it tells us that God wills not the death of the sinner, that He delights not in judgment, for that is His left-handed work, but that His compassion freely moves towards the blackest and vilest of sinners when they repent, and return to Him.

He is never so much at home, so completely fulfilling the purposes of His being as when He presses the wanderer to His bosom, and cries, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make you as Admah? how shall I set you as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, My repentings are kindled together." This is the doctrine that is clearly taught in the Word of God, and therefore we share the psalmist's confidence that there is forgiveness with Him.

In the Scriptures, we are told that God's forgiveness is full, He does not half forgive, as men often do. "I can forgive," says somebody, "but I cannot forget." But God—wonderful as it seems to us—forgets as well as forgives. This is His own declaration, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Man's forgiveness is often only verbal, the venom of anger lingers in his heart while the profession of forgiveness is upon his lip, but God's forgiveness is full and ample, when He says that He forgives He means it in the fullest sense of the word. He will treat you, repenting sinner, as though you had never transgressed against Him. He will make you a new creature in Christ Jesus, and you shall stand before Him, throughout eternity, as if even a thought of sin had never defiled your mind.

It is full forgiveness that God bestows, and it is as free as it is full. You are not to buy it with your tears or your good deeds, for it is freely given to you by God. He is more willing to forgive you than you are to be forgiven, and it is more easy for Him to blot out your sin than it was for you to commit that sin. If there were no provision for the removal of your sin, what would you do? But there is abundant

provision, made by God, for your forgiveness, His great mercy has been at work from before the foundation of the world, so as to have everything in readiness for the complete forgiveness of all who repent of sin, and trust in Jesus.

That forgiveness is also immediate, it is yours as soon as you repent and believe. Oh, how my soul leaped with joy when I first understood that God had forgiven me all my sin! That great act was instantaneous, and it may be so with you also. Your coming to God may take time, but God's forgiveness of your sin is bestowed in a moment. The instant that a sinner believes in Christ, his sin is all gone, just as much gone as it will be if he lives fifty years, and is a diligent servant of God all the time. Yes, I venture to say that the dying thief, when he had given one penitent glance at Christ, was as truly delivered from sin as those blessed spirits which had been for centuries before the throne of God on high.

Only think, my friend, what it would be for you to receive forgiveness in a moment. You may have come in here as black as hell itself through sin, yet go out without a stain upon you. "It cannot be done," says someone. Yes it can, but only by God, for with Him all things are possible, and He has already done it for many whom I know, and He will do it for all those who come to Him in penitence, and put their trust in His dear Son.

And this forgiveness, once received, is irreversible. It is not God's way to pardon a man, and then afterwards to condemn him. That is the fashion of a certain set of theologians who believe in people being once forgiven and yet ultimately lost. I find no such teaching as that in the Scriptures. If the Lord says to anyone, "I absolve you," it is done, and in that moment, every sin is forever put away. I even go the length of Kent's hymn—

*"Here's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast;
And O my soul, with wonder view
For sins to come, here's pardon, too!"*

There is no playing fast and loose with you, beloved. If you believe in Christ, you are justified with a justification that will stand the test of time, the strain of death, and the trial of eternity. "He that believeth on him is not condemned," and he shall not be ashamed or confounded, world without end. What do you say to this full, free, immediate, and irreversible pardon?

And this pardon is for every sinner, of every kind, who repents and believes in Jesus. Many people seem to think that when we preach about the pardon of sin, we mean the pardon of not having "taken the sacrament," as they express it, or not attending regularly a place of worship, or some such matters, but we mean the pardon of the greatest sins that anyone can commit—the pardon of thieving, the pardon of lying, the pardon of swearing, the pardon of infidelity, the pardon of fornication, the pardon of adultery, the pardon of murder.

We do not preach a sham forgiveness for sham sinners. Christ Jesus is not a physician who came into the world merely to cure the finger ache. No, but it is the deadly disease of sin that Christ has come to cure. He has not come all the way from heaven to earth, and died, in order that He might simply wash a tiny spot of blackness from a fair lady's hand, but He has come to make a Blackamoor white, to make the foulest and most abominable wretch that curses the earth, whiter than the snow.

I will go as far as ever I can, and say, that if there be anybody who has committed every mentionable and every unmentionable sin—if he has even lived in secret vice and transgression till he would not dare to sit in the seat he occupies if others did but know one-tenth of what he has done—I am sent to tell even him that Jesus receives just such sinners as he is as soon as they repent and believe in Him. Well may we sing—

*"Who is a pardoning God like Thee,
Or who has grace so rich and free?"*

So we have come thus far with our subject. First, there is the confession that none of us can stand before God without a Mediator, and next, there is the confidence that, with God, there is forgiveness.

III. Every thoughtful person will be glad to follow on to the third point, which is, THE CONSEQUENCE OF FORGIVENESS.

I do not know whether you have noticed, but I have, that together with the return of Popery to this country—and it is coming back fast, there is scarcely a street in London in which you may not smell it at one end or the other—there has come back with it a kind of Roman fog which has obscured the vision of the general public. The editor of one precious newspaper—the newspaper editors, as you know, are all very profound theologians, and you may always accept any theology that you find in the newspaper when it agrees with the teaching of the Bible—one of these clever men is alarmed because people are taught to sing—

*“Till to Jesu’s work you cling
By a simple faith,
‘Doing’ is a deadly thing,
‘Doing’ ends in death.”*

“This is dreadful,” says the critic. All those gentlemen, who bring out newspapers, are so moral that they are afraid for the morality of Christian people, so they give us a great deal of warning and exhortation against such teaching as that hymn contains.

The time was when almost every pulpit in England rang with the grand doctrine of justification by faith, and then the whole current of religious thought was strongly set against anything like salvation by the works of men, but alas! it is not so now, for with this Popery which has returned to our land, there has come back the common notion that, after all, salvation must be by works, and there must be some merit in what man is doing, and that, if we go in for preaching the free pardon of sin, we shall demoralize this wonderfully pious country, and if we preach Lutheranism and Calvinism, we shall run the risk of making London a most wicked city!

It would be a dreadful thing, certainly, to make London worse than it is, to my mind, that is a thing almost impossible of achievement, but still, that is the fear which is held before us, that we might pollute the precious intelligence and purity of this wonderful nineteenth century by preaching the full justification of all who believe in Jesus. It will stand a good deal of polluting, and then not be much worse than it is at present, but that is the fear with which our newspaper editors are trying to alarm us.

Now it so happens that this was the constant talk of the Papists against Protestantism, their cry was, “If you preach justification by faith, men will never do good works. If you preach that pardon of sin is freely given, you will never get the people to be even decently honest.” But this theory has been exploded by fact.

Remember what Dr. Chalmers said—that, in his first pastorate, he preached morality till he had scarcely a moral person in his parish, he preached righteousness and goodness till he could hardly find a single decent honest man anywhere about him, but as soon as he began to preach salvation by the grace of God, there came a total change over the characters of those who were round about him, and therefore, that man of profound erudition, and of a masterly mind, sat like a child at the feet of Jesus to bear His testimony that it is the Gospel of the grace of God, and not the preaching of the works of the law, that creates holiness, and produces good works.

You may go to the work-mongers to *hear* about good works, but you must come back to the believers in Christ to *find* them. Their changed lives prove that the Gospel does produce the best possible results. The more we trample down human merit, the more do we exalt the merit of Christ. The more we show the absolute uselessness of good works to merit salvation, the more do we promote the highest type of morality, and the more do we lead men to live unto God from motives of gratitude for what He has done for them. This is a matter of fact.

What did the Romanism and the work-mongering of Laud produce? The Cavaliers, with their dainty perfumed curls, but what did the justification by faith, preached by Owen, and Howe, and Charnock, produce? Our Puritan forefathers, who, with all the sternness against which some speak, were the godliest race of Englishmen who have ever lived in this land, God send us back the like of them!

You usually find that side, which boasts its practicalness, to be impractical, and on the other hand, the side which cries out against human works as a ground of trust, to be the very side which abounds in holiness unto the glory of God.

Well now, the text says, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." Thus, you see, the doctrine of free forgiveness actually produces in man's mind a fear of God. You might have thought the psalmist would have said, "There is no forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared;" but it is not so.

The opposite of our text is very manifest. When there is no forgiveness, or when a man thinks there is none, what is the consequence? He is driven to despair, and despair often leads to desperate living. Our old proverb says, "You may as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb," and that is the spirit that actuates the despairing sinner. He says, "I cannot be forgiven, I must be damned, so I may as well enjoy life while I have it. There is no hope of heaven for me, so why should I not make the most I can of earth? If I cannot obtain salvation from God, I will see what I can get out of the devil." Is not that kind of talk quite natural? If there is no hope of forgiveness, then there is no proper fear of God.

Many are abiding in a state of carelessness, *because they really do not know whether there is any pardon to be had.* When a man is in doubt as to whether he can be forgiven, he says, "I am afraid it would be a very long process, and I do not know whether I should get it even then. Perhaps, however, there is no pardon to be had, so I might become a religious man, and yet miss the forgiveness of sins." That is the thought of many, and therefore they become torpid and lethargic, careless and indifferent, but when the Holy Spirit teaches a man that there is forgiveness to be had, he would leap out of his very body rather than miss it.

Now, you will see him gird up his loins, and run with endurance till he reaches the goal, now the man will play the man. He says, "What! Is there forgiveness for such a sinner as I am? Is a new start in life possible for one who has been so sad a failure? Is the picking up of the harlot off the street, and the thief from the prison, and the debauchee out of the gutter possible?" This hope gives the man something that is like a new mainspring to a watch. You have put within him that which will help him to subdue his sin, and become a better man throughout the rest of his career. Is it not so? Only assure the man of the pardon of his sin, and that assurance supplies new vigor to his soul.

How encouraging too, is the belief that there is pardon to be had! But more, how sanctifying is the actual reception of it! Imagine the experience of some dear friend, who has just believed in Jesus, and to whom the Spirit of God bears witness that he is forgiven. What sort of a man will he be? I will try and picture him to you.

Already I see his eyes glistening with a light I never saw there before. The man looks positively handsome, you would hardly recognize him if you knew him before this great change happened to him. He had a burden on his mind that made him always look careworn. That has gone, and now he looks supremely blest.

But I also see tears in his eyes, how came they there? He was not much given to weeping in his old days. He is grieving to think that he should ever have offended so kind a God, for nothing makes us as sorry for sin as the sense of being completely forgiven. He knows he is pardoned, he is sure of it, he knows that God loves him, and now he loathes himself that he should ever have sunk so low. Yet, if you will take one of his tears, and put it under a microscope, or analyze its component parts, you will find that there is no bitterness in it. Joy is mingled with his sorrow as he stands at the foot of the cross and bathes his Lord's feet with his penitential yet rainbow tears.

Now see him go home. He has some Christian friends there, I hope, and if so, he will not be long with them before they begin to notice the change in him, and it is not long before he wants to tell them

the blessed secret. Mother wants to know what has happened to her boy, and his arms are thrown around her neck as he says, "Mother, I have found the Lord." She is very delighted, and perhaps very surprised, for it was not his usual way to talk about religion, he used sometimes to sneer and jeer at it.

Will he go to bed without prayer? No, he needs nobody to tell him to pray, he has been praying all the way home and while he has been sitting there. These are the first real prayers he has ever presented, but it has now become as natural for him to pray as it is for a living man to breathe.

Watch that man tomorrow when he goes to his work. Perhaps he does not introduce the subject of religion among his workmates, but he keeps himself to himself as much as he can. By and by, they begin using filthy language around his bench, and at last, he cannot endure it, so he lets fall just a little word or two of protest, and then they have found him out.

For the next few days, they will cluster round him, jesting and jeering. "He is a hypocrite, of course." That is their notion of fair play—everybody who does not think as they think must be a hypocrite! "He has some selfish motive for turning Methodist." They know very well that they would not do anything good unless there was something to be got by it, so they measure the other man's corn by their own bushel, and they impute to him some unworthy motive, and now he, who was always, "Hail fellow well met," gets abundance of banter and abuse, if not worse.

He gets away sometimes, where he can pray by himself, and he likes to find a quiet corner where he can read his Bible. He used to read nothing but the low trashy novels of the day, if he read anything at all, but the Word of the Lord has now become sweet and precious to him. He has a little two-penny Testament in his pocket, and he gets a few minutes, whenever he can, that he may become better acquainted with his Master's Word.

He is missed very much over at "The Black Bull" or "The White Horse," and he is likely to be missed there, for he has found a better tap to draw from and to drink at, and he no longer goes to the entertainments where his former companions revel in rioting and chambering and wantonness. They ask, "Where is old Jack gone? What has become of him?" It has happened to him, as to many more, "Old things are passed away; all things are become new."

There is another man in that workshop, which swears occasionally, and drinks a great deal, and he says that he does not believe in this doctrine of grace, he thinks its tendency is immoral. Ah! his own talk is not very sweet, but he is very strong upon that point of morality. Give him a pint of beer, and see how he will argue, give him another pint, and then see how he will denounce this Calvinistic doctrine of immediate pardon through faith in Jesus. He says that if everybody believed in that way, he does not know what would happen, but he appears very horrified at the prospect, especially after he has had a third pint of beer.

I notice that some of you laugh at my description. Well, the thing I am alluding to, the miserable hypocrisy of the world, ought to be laughed at, unless we cry over it, which would be better. They call us cants, but the biggest cants are on the other side. I tell you that there is no cant, in all the world, so despicable as the mean hypocritical man who picks out every honest Christian, and says that he is a hypocrite. Such people know better, yet they must bespatter us with mud in order that their own filthiness may not be observed.

I may well speak upon this matter, for I am one of the principal sufferers from this kind of treatment, and I contend that we do not deserve this at the hands of the world. We know too, that it is enmity against our Master, and against His truth, that provokes such attacks. Yet sometimes, a converted man has a different experience from that which I have been describing.

There is a dear brother—not present now, or else I might not tell the story—an earnest and useful member of this church. Many years ago I recollect his writing to tell me of his conversion. He was then a butler in a noble family, and I rejoiced with him over his conversion. Some months after, he came and brought me two guineas as an offering to God, and as he laid them on my vestry table, he said, "This is how I came by them. I am employed as butler to Lady So-and-so. When I became a Christian, I cleaned my plate so much better than I had ever done before, that her Ladyship took notice of what I did, and on

one occasion, when she had company, she brought a number of distinguished individuals into the butler's pantry to see how beautiful her plate looked. "One of them said to me, 'You do this work thoroughly well, young man, there are a couple of guineas for you.' So I said to him, 'It is very kind of your Lordship, but I shall take that money, next Sunday, to Mr. Spurgeon.' He made some jesting remark, and then asked, 'Why are you going to do that?' I replied, 'It is because I love the Lord Jesus Christ that I have become a better servant to her Ladyship than I used to be, I hope I am not careless now about any of my duties, and I want my Savior to have the credit of all I do.'"

So, dear friends, you see that you can glorify Jesus Christ in cleaning plate, or digging in a garden, or selling potatoes, or anything else that is right, so long as you do it unto Him, and to His praise, doing the best you can, because you feel that a Christian ought never to do anything badly. Even the commonest thing that he turns out should be done by him as a servant of Christ to the very best of his ability. If you act so, I shall not care what profession or occupation you choose, so long as it is a lawful one, nor in what line of life you may be called to move, so long as this is your firm and fixed resolve, "I will not seek the glory of self, I will not seek my own honor, but I will seek the glory of God alone."

Brethren, come and put your trust in Jesus, take His blood and righteousness to be your only hope, and then you may, by your blameless, honest, upright, sober, kindly, Christian lives, put to silence the accusations of foolish men, or at least take away from them any ground of accusation.

Walk carefully, prayerfully, humbly before God and men, putting your trust, not in yourselves, but in Christ alone, and you shall then find in your experience, the best exposition of the text, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared," for you will prove, by your own fear of God, which is continually before your own eyes, that His free, rich, sovereign grace, manifested in your pardon, did not produce in you indulgence in sin, but gave you the sweet liberty of walking in holiness, and in the fear of the Lord. God bless you all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.