

GADDING ABOUT NO. 3007

A SERMON
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*“Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way?”
Jeremiah 2:36*

GOD’s ancient people were very prone to forget Him, and to worship the false deities of the neighboring heathen. Other nations were faithful to their blocks of wood and of stone, and adhered as closely to their graven images as though they really had helped them, or could in future deliver them. Only the nation which avowed its belief in the true God forsook its God, and left the fountain of living waters to hew out for itself broken cisterns which could hold no water.

There seems to have been, speaking after the manner of men, astonishment in the divine mind concerning this, for the Lord says, in verses ten and eleven of this chapter, “Pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate.”

In the thirty-second verse of this same chapter, the Lord addresses His people thus, “Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.” And here, in our text, the same astonishment appears, “Why gaddest thou about so much to change, thy way?” It certainly was a most unreasonable thing that a people with such a God, who had dealt out to them so graciously the riches of His love, and had wrought such wonders on their behalf, should turn from Him to the worship of Baal or Ashtaroath, mimic gods which had ears but heard not, eyes but saw not, and did but mock the worshippers who were deluded by them.

As in a glass, I see myself in these people. The spiritual people of God are well imaged in the typical nation, for alas! waywardness and wandering of heart, are the diseases, not only of the Israelites of old, but also of the true Israel now. The same expostulations may be addressed to us as to that erring nation of old, for we as perpetually backslide, and as constantly forget the almighty One, and put our trust in an arm of flesh. He says to us also, “Why gaddest thou about, so much? “For we are, alas! too often false to Him, forgetting Him, and wandering hither and thither, rather than abiding in close and constant fellowship with God our exceeding joy.

I desire to put this question first to believers, and then to the unconverted. May the Holy Spirit bless it to each class!

I. If you read this question, taking it, in its connection, you will see, in the first place, that there is A RELATIONSHIP MENTIONED. The question is asked, “Why gaddest thou about so much?”

The inquiry is not made of a traveler, nor of one whose business it is to journey from pole to pole, and to investigate distant lands. It is not asked of a wayfarer lodging for a night, nor of a homeless vagrant who finds a poor shelter beneath every bush, but it is asked by God of His people Israel, describing them under the character of a married wife.

He represents the nation of Israel as being married unto Him, Himself the Husband of Israel, and Israel His bride. To persons bearing that character, the question comes with great force, “Why gaddest *thou* about so much?” Let others wander who have no central object of attraction, who have no house and no “house-band” to bind them to the spot, but thou, a married wife, how can you wander? What

have you to do in traversing strange ways? How can you excuse yourself? If you were not false to your relationship, you could not do so!

No, beloved, we strain no metaphor when we say that there exists, between the soul of every believer and Jesus Christ, a relationship admirably imaged in the conjugal tie. We are married unto Christ. He has betrothed our souls unto Himself. He paid our dowry on the cross. He espoused Himself unto us in righteousness, in the covenant of grace. We have accepted Him as our Lord and Husband. We have given ourselves up to Him, and under the sweet law of His love we ought to dwell evermore in His house. He is the Bridegroom of our souls, and He has arrayed us in the wedding dress of His own righteousness. Now it is to us who own this marriage union, and who are allied to the Lord Jesus by ties so tender, that the Well-beloved says, “Why gaddest thou about so much?”

Observe, that the wife’s place may be described as a threefold one. In the first place, *she should abide in dependence upon her husband’s care*. It would be looked upon as a very strange thing if a wife should be overheard to speak to another man and say, “Come and assist in providing for me.” If she should cross the street to another’s house, and say to a stranger, “I have a difficulty and a trouble, will you relieve me from it? I feel myself in great need, but I shall not ask my husband to help me, though he is rich enough to give me anything I require, and wise enough to direct me, but I come to you, a stranger, in whom I have no right to confide, and from whom I have no right to look for love, and I trust myself with you, and confide in you rather than in my husband.” This would be a very wicked violation of the chastity of the wife’s heart, her dependence, as a married woman with a worthy husband, must be solely fixed on him to whom she is bound in wedlock.

Transfer the figure, for it is even so with us and the Lord Jesus. It is a tender topic, let it tenderly touch your heart and mine. What right have I, when I am in trouble, to seek an arm of flesh to lean upon, or to pour my grief into an earthborn ear in preference to casting my care on God, and telling Jesus all my sorrows? If a human friend has the best intentions, yet he is not like my Lord, he never died for me, he never shed his blood for me, and even if he loves me, he cannot love me as the Husband of my soul loves me.

My Lord’s love is ancient as eternity, deeper than the sea, firmer than the hills, changeless as His own Deity, how can I seek another friend in preference to him? What a slight I put upon the affection of my Savior! What a slur upon His condescending sympathy towards me! How I impugn His generosity and mistrust His power if, in my hour of need, I cry out, “Alas! I have no friend.” No friend while Jesus lives! Dare I say I have no helper? No helper while the almighty One, upon whom God has laid help, still exists with arm un-paralyzed and heart unchanged? Can I murmur and lament that there is no escape for me from my tribulations? No escape while my almighty Savior lives, and feels my every grief?

Do you see my point? Put it in that shape, and the question, “Why gaddest thou about so much to look after creatures as grounds of dependence?” becomes a very deep and searching one. Why, O believer, do you look after things which are seen, and heard, and handled, and recognized by the senses, instead of trusting in thine unseen but not unknown Redeemer? Oh! why, why, thou spouse of the Lord Jesus, why gaddest thou about so much?

Have we not even fallen into this evil with regard to our own salvation? After a time of spiritual enjoyment it sometimes happens that our graces decline, and we lose our joy, and as we are very apt to depend upon our own experience, our faith also droops. Is not this unfaithfulness to the finished work and perfect merit of our great Substitute? We knew, at the first, when we were under conviction of sin, that we could not rest on anything within ourselves, yet that truth is always slipping away from our memories, and we try to build upon past experiences, or to rely upon present enjoyments, or some form or other of personal attainment.

Do we really wish to exchange the sure rock of our salvation for the unstable sand of our own feelings? Can it be that, having once walked by faith, we now choose to walk by sight? Are graces, and frames, and feelings, and enjoyments, to be preferred to the tried foundation of the Redeemer’s atonement? Be it remembered that even the work of the Holy Spirit, if it be depended upon as a ground

of acceptance with God, becomes as much an antichrist as though it were not the work of the Holy Spirit at all. Dare we so blaspheme the Holy Ghost as to make His work in us a rival to the Savior's work for us? Shame on us that we should thus doubly sin! The best things are mischievous when put in the wrong place. Good works have "necessary uses," but they must not be joined to the work of Christ as the groundwork of our hope.

Even precious gold may be made into an idol-calf, and that which the Lord Himself bestows may be made to be a polluted thing, like that brazen serpent which once availed to heal, but when it was idolized, came to be styled by no better name than "a piece of brass," and was broken and put away. Do not continually help upon what you are, and what you are not, thy salvation does not rest in these things, but in your Lord. Go you, and stand at the foot of the cross, still an empty-handed sinner to be filled with the riches of Christ—a sinner black as the tents of Kedar in yourself, and comely only through thy Lord.

Again, the wife's position is not only one of sole dependence upon her husband's care, but it should be, and is, *a position of sole delight in her husband's love*. To be suspected of desiring aught of man's affection beyond that, would be the most serious imputation that could be cast upon a wife's character. We are again upon very tender ground, and I beseech each of you, who are now thinking of your Lord, to consider yourselves to be on very tender ground too, for you know what our God has said, "I the LORD thy God am a jealous God." That is a very wonderful and suggestive expression—"a jealous God." See that it be engraven on your hearts.

Jesus will not endure it that those of us who love Him should divide our hearts between Him and something else. The love which is strong as death is linked with a jealousy which is cruel as the grave, "the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." The royal word to the spouse is, "Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him."

Of course, beloved, the Master never condemns that proper natural affection which we are bound to give, and which it is a part of our sanctification to give, in its due and proper proportion, to those who are related to us. Besides, we are bound to love all the saints, and all mankind in their proper place and measure. But there is a love which is for the Master alone.

Inside the heart there must be a *sanctum sanctorum*, within the veil, where He Himself alone must shine like the Shekinah, and reign on the mercy seat. There must be a glorious high throne within our spirits, where the true Solomon alone must sit, the lions of watchful zeal must guard each step of it. There must He, the King in His beauty, sit enthroned, sole Monarch of the heart's affections. But, alas! alas! how often have we gone far to provoke His anger? We have set up the altars of strange gods hard by the holy place.

Sometimes, a favorite child has been idolized, another time, perhaps our own persons have been admired and pampered. We have been unwilling to suffer though we know it to be the Lord's will, we were determined to make provision for the flesh. We have not been willing to hazard our substance for Christ, thus making our worldly comfort our chief delight, instead of feeling that wealth to be well lost which is lost as the result of JEHOVAH'S will. Oh, how soon we make idols! Idol-making was not only the trade of Ephesus, but it is a trade all the world over. Making shrines for Diana, nay, shrines for self, we are all master-craftsmen at this work in some form or another. Images of jealousy, which become abominations of desolation, we have set up.

We may even exalt some good pursuit into an idol, even work for the Master may sometimes take *His* place, as was the case with Martha. We are cumbered with much serving, and often think more about the serving than of *Him* who is to be served, the secret being that we are too mindful of how *we* may look in the serving, and not enough considerate of *Him*, and of how *He* may be honored by our service. It is so very easy for our busy spirits to gad about, and so very difficult to sit at the Master's feet. Now, Christian, if you have been looking after this and after that secondary matter, if your mind has been set too much upon worldly business, or upon any form of earthly love, the Master says to you,

“My spouse, my beloved, why gaddest thou about so much?” Let us confess our fault and return unto our rest. Let each one sing plaintively, in the chamber of his heart, some such song as this—

*“Why should my foolish passions rove?
Where can such sweetness be
As I have tasted in Thy love,
As I have found in Thee?”*

*“Wretch that I am, to wander thus
In chase of false delight;
Let me be fasten’d to Thy cross,
Rather than lose Thy sight.”*

But a third position, which I think will be recognized by every wife as being correct, is not simply dependence upon her husband’s care and delight in her husband’s love, but also *diligence in her husband’s house*. The good housewife, as Solomon tells us, “looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.” She is not a servant, her position is very different from that, but for that very reason, she uses the more diligence.

A servant’s work may sometimes be finished, but a wife’s never is. “She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.” She rejoices willingly to labor as no servant could be expected to do. “She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.” “She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.” All through the live-long night, she watches her sick child, and then through the workday as well the child is still tended, and the household cares are still heavy upon her.

She never relaxes, she counts that her house is her kingdom, and she cares for it with incessant care. The making of her husband happy, and the training up of her children in the fear of God, that is her business. The good housewife is like Sarah, of whom it is written that, when the angels asked Abraham, “Where is Sarah thy wife?” he answered, “Behold, in the tent.” It would have been well for some of her descendants had they been “in the tent,” too, for Dinah’s going forth “to see the daughters of the land” cost her dear.

Now, this is the position, the exact position of the chaste lover of Jesus, he dwells at home with Jesus, among his own people. The Christian’s place with regard to Christ is to be diligently engaged in Christ’s house. Some of us can say, I trust, that we do naturally care for the souls of men. We were born, by God’s grace, to care for them, and could not be happy, any more than some nurses can be happy without the care of children, unless we have converts to look after, and weaklings to cherish. It is well for the church when there are many of her members, beside her pastors and deacons, who care for the souls of those who are born in the church.

The church is Christ’s family mansion. It should be the home of newborn souls, where they are fed with food convenient for them, nourished, comforted, and educated for the better land. You have all something to do, you who are married to Christ have all a part assigned you in the household of God. He has given you each a happy task. It may be that you have to suffer in secret for Him, or you have to talk to two or three, or perhaps in a little village station, or at the corner of a street you have to preach, or possibly it is the distribution of a handful of tracts, or it is looking after the souls of a few women in your district, or teaching a class of children.

Whatever it is, if we have been growing at all negligent, if we have not thrown our full strength into His work, and have been expending our vigor somewhere else, may not the question come very pertinently home to us, “Why gaddest thou about so much?” Why that party of pleasure, that political meeting, that late rising, that waste of time? Have you nothing better to do? You have enough to do for your Husband and His church, if you do it well. You have not a minute to spare, the King’s business

requires haste. Our charge is too weighty and too dear to our hearts to admit of sloth. The Lord has given us as much to do as we shall have strength and time to accomplish by His grace, and we have no energies to spare, no talents to wrap up in napkins, no hours to idle away in the market-place. One thing we have to do, and that one thing should absorb all our powers. To neglect our holy life-work is to wrong our heavenly Bridegroom.

Put this matter in a clear light, my brethren, and do not shut your eyes to it. Have you any right to mind earthly things? Can you serve two masters? What, think you, would any kind husband here think if, when he came home, the children had been neglected all day, if there was no meal for him after his day's work, and no care taken of his house whatever? Might he not well give a gentle rebuke, or turn away with a tear in his eye? And if it were long continued, might he not almost be justified if he should say, "My house yields me no comfort, this woman acts not as a wife to me?"

And yet, bethink thee, soul, is not this what you have done with your Lord? When He has come into His house, has He not found it in sad disorder, the morning prayer neglected, the evening supplication but poorly offered, those little children but badly taught, and many other works of love forgotten? It is your business as well as His, for you are one with Him, and yet you have failed in it. Might He not justly say to you, "I have little comfort in your fellowship, I will get Me gone until you treat Me better, and when you long for Me, and are willing to treat Me as I should be treated, then I will return to you, but you shall see My face no more till you have a truer heart towards Me"?

Thus, in personal sadness, have I put this question, the Lord give us tender hearts while answering it!

II. Painful as the inquiry is, let us turn to it again. A REASON IS REQUESTED, what shall we give? "Why gaddest thou about so much?"

I am at a loss to give any answer. I can suppose that, without beating about the bush, an honest heart, convinced of its ingratitude to Christ, would say, "My Lord, all I can say for myself is to *make a confession of the wrong*, and if I might make any excuse, which after all is no excuse, it is this, I find myself so fickle at heart, so frail, so changeable, I am like Reuben, unstable as water, and therefore I do not excel." But I can well conceive that the Master, without being severe, would not allow even of such an extenuation as that, because there are many of us who could not fairly urge it.

We are not fickle in other things. We are not unstable in minor matters. Where we love, we love most firmly, and a resolve once taken by us is determinedly carried out. Some of us know what it is to put our foot down, and declare that, having taken a right step, we will not retrace it, and then, no mortal power can move us.

Now, if we possess this resolute character in other things, it can never be allowable for us to use the excuse of instability. Resolved elsewhere, how can you be fickle here? Firm everywhere else, and yet frail here! O soul, what are you at? This is gratuitous sin, wanton fickleness. Surely you have wrought folly in Israel if you give the world your best, and Christ your worst! The world your decision, and Christ your wavering! This is but to make your sin the worse. The excuse becomes an aggravation. It is not true that you are thus unavoidably fickle. You are not a feather blown with every wind, but a man of purpose and will, oh, why then are you so soon removed from your best-beloved One?

I will ask you a few questions, not so much by way of answering the inquiry, as to show how difficult it is to answer it. "Why gaddest thou about so much?" *Has thy Lord given you any cause of offense?* Has He been unkind to you? Has the Lord Jesus spoken to you like a tyrant, and played the despot over you? Must you not confess that, in all His dealings with you in the past, love, unmingled love has been His rule? He has borne patiently with your ill-manners, when you have been foolish, He has given you wisdom, and He has not upbraided you, though He might have availed Himself of the opportunity of that gift, as men so often do, to give a word of upbraiding at the same time. He has not turned against you, or been your enemy, why then, are you so cold to Him?

Is this the way to deal with One so tender and so good? Let me ask you, has your Savior changed? Will you dare to think He is untrue to you? Is He not "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever"? That cannot, then, be an apology for your unfaithfulness. Has He been unmindful of His promise? He

has told you to call upon Him in the day of trouble, and He will deliver you, has He failed to do so? It is written, “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” Has He withheld a really good thing from you when you have walked uprightly? If, indeed, He had played you false, your excuse for deserting Him might claim a hearing, but you dare not say this, you know that He is faithful and true.

“Why gaddest thou about so much?” *Have you found any happiness in gadding about?* I confess, sorrowfully, to wandering often, and wandering much, but I am ready enough to acknowledge that I get no peace, no comfort by my wanderings, but like a forlorn spirit, I traverse dry places, seeking rest and finding none. If, for a day, or a part of a day, my thoughts are not upon my Lord, the hour is dreary, and my time hangs heavily, and if my thought is spent upon other topics even connected with my work in the church of God, if I do not soon come back to Him, if I have no dealings with Him in prayer and praise, I find the wheels of my chariot taken off, and it drags along heavily, while I cry to my Lord—

*“The day is dark, the night is long,
Unblest with thoughts of Thee,
And dull to me the sweetest song,
Unless its theme Thou be.”*

The soul, that has once learned to swim in the river of Christ, will, when His presence is withdrawn, be like a fish laid by the fisherman on the sandy shore, it begins to palpitate in dire distress, and ere long it will die, if not again restored to its vital element. You cannot get the flavor of the bread of heaven in your mouth, and afterwards contentedly feed on ashes.

He, who has never tasted anything but the brown, gritty cakes of this world, may be very well satisfied with them, but he who has once tasted the pure white bread of heaven can never be content with the old diet. It spoils a man for satisfaction with this world to have had heart-ravishing dealings with the world to come. I mean not that it spoils him for practical activity in it, for the heavenly life is the truest life even for earth, but it spoils him for the sinful pleasures of this world, it prevents his feeding his soul upon anything save the Lord Jesus Christ’s sweet love. Jesus is the chief ingredient of all his joy, and he finds that no other enjoyment beneath the sky is worth a moment’s comparison with the King’s wines on the lees, well refined.

“Why then gaddest thou about so much?” For what, oh! for what reason do you wander? When a child runs away from its home, because it has a brutal parent, it is excused, but when the child leaves a tender mother and an affectionate father, what shall we say? If the sheep quits a barren field to seek after needed pasturage, who shall blame it? But if it leaves the green pastures and forsakes the still waters to roam over the arid sand, or to go bleating in the forest among the wolves, in the midst of danger, how foolish a creature it proves itself!

Such has been our folly. We have left gold for dross! We have forsaken a throne for a dunghill! We have quitted scarlet and fine linen for rags and beggary! We have left a palace for a hovel! We have turned from sunlight into darkness! We have forsaken the shining of the Sun of righteousness, the sweet summer weather of communion, the singing of the birds of promise, and the turtle voice of the Divine Spirit, and the blossoming of the roses and the fair lilies of divine love, to shiver in frozen regions among the ice caves and snow of absence from the Lord’s presence. God forgive us, for we have no excuse for this folly.

“Why gaddest thou about so much?” *Have you not always had to pay for your gaddings aforesaid?* O pilgrim, it is hard getting back again to the right road. Every believer knows how wise John Bunyan was when he depicted Christian as bemoaning himself bitterly when he had to go back to the arbor where he had slept and lost his roll. He had to do a triple journey, first to go on, and then to go back, and then to go on again. The back step is weary marching. Remember, also, Bypath Meadow, and Doubting Castle, and Giant Despair. ’Twas an ill day when the pilgrims left the narrow way. No gain, but untold loss, comes of forsaking the way of holiness and fellowship.

What is there in such a prospect to attract you from the happy way of communion with Christ? Perhaps, the last time you wandered, you fell into sin, or you met with a grief which overwhelmed you, ought not these mishaps to teach you? Having been already burned, will you not dread the fire? Having aforesaid been assaulted when in forbidden paths, will you not now keep to the King's highway, wherein no lion or any other ravenous beast shall be found?

“Why gaddest thou about so much?” *Do you not even now feel the drawings of His love attracting you to Himself?* This heavenly impulse should make the question altogether unanswerable. You feel sometimes a holy impulse to pray, and yet do not pray, you feel, even now, as if you wished to behold the face of your Beloved, and yet you will go forth into the world without Him, is this as it should be? The Holy Ghost is saying in your soul, “Arise from the bed of thy sloth, and seek him whom thy soul loveth.” If your sloth prevents your rising, how will you excuse yourself?

Even now, I hear the Beloved knocking at your door. Will you not hasten to admit Him? Are you too idle? Dare you say to Him, “I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?” If you keep Him without, in the cold and darkness, while His head is wet with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night, what cruelty is this? Is this your kindness to your Friend? Can you hear Him say, “Open to me, my love, my dove, my undefiled,” and yet be deaf to His appeals?

Oh, that He may gently make for Himself an entrance. May He put in His hand by the hole of the door, and may your bowels be moved towards Him! May you rise up and open to Him, and then your hands will drop with myrrh, and your fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock. But remember, if you neglect Him now, it will cost you much to find Him when you do arise, for He will make you traverse the streets after Him, and the watchmen will smite you, and take away your veil, so rise, and admit Him now.

***“Behold! your Bridegroom’s at the door!
He gently knocks, has kneeled before:
Has waited long; is waiting still:
You treat no other friend so ill.***

***“Oh lovely attitude! He stands
With melting heart and laden hands;
Delay no more, lest He depart,
Admit Him to your inmost heart.”***

He calls you yet again, even now. Run after Him, for He draws you. Approach Him, for He invites you. God grant that it may be so!

I wish I had the power to handle a topic like this as Rutherford, or Herbert, or Hawker would have done, so as to touch all your hearts, if you are at this hour without enjoyment of fellowship with Jesus. But indeed, I am so much one of yourselves, so much one who has to seek the Master's face myself, that I can scarcely press the question upon you, but must rather press it upon myself, “Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way?” Blessed shall be the time when our wanderings shall cease, when we shall see Him face to face, and rest in His bosom!

Till then, if we are to know anything of heaven here below, it must be by living close to Jesus, abiding at the foot of the cross, depending on His atonement, looking for His coming—that glorious hope, preparing to meet Him with lamps well trimmed, watching for the midnight cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh,” standing ever in His presence, looking up to Him as we see Him pleading before the throne, and believing that He is ever with us, even unto the end of the world. May we be, in future, so fixed in heart that the question need not again be asked of us, “Why gaddest thou about so much?”

And now I have to use the text, for a few minutes, in addressing those who are not converted.

I trust that some of you, who are not yet saved, nevertheless have a degree of desire towards Christ. It is well when, like the climbing plant, the heart throws out tendrils, trying to grasp something by the

help of which it may mount higher. I hope that desire of yours after better things, and after Jesus, is something more than nature could have imparted. Grace is the source of gracious desires. But that is not the point. Your desires may be right and yet your method of action mistaken.

You have been trying after peace, but you have been gadding about to find it. The context says that the Israelites would soon be as weary of Egypt as they had been of Assyria. Read the whole passage, “Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria. Yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thine hands upon thine head: for the Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.” (Jer 2:36-37). Their gadding about would end in their being confounded at last as they were at first. Once they trusted in Assyria, and the Assyrians carried them away captive, that was the end of their former false confidence. Then they trusted in Egypt and met with equal disappointment.

When a man is first alarmed about his soul, he will do anything rather than come to Christ. Christ is a harbor that no ship ever enters except under stress of weather. Mariners on the sea of life steer for any port except the fair haven of free, grace. When a man first finds comfort in his own good works, he thinks he has done well. “Why,” says he, “this must be the way of salvation, I am not a drunkard now, I have taken the pledge, I am not a Sabbath-breaker now, I have taken a seat at a place of worship. Go in, and look at my house sir, you will see that it is as different as possible from what it was before, there is a moral change in me of a most wonderful kind, and surely this will suffice!”

Now, if God be dealing with that man in a way of grace, he will soon be ashamed of his false confidence. He will be thankful, of course, that he has been led to morality, but he will find that bed too short to stretch himself upon it. He will discover that the past still lives, that his old sins are buried only in imagination—the ghosts of them will haunt him, they will alarm his conscience. He will be compelled to feel that sin is a scarlet stain, not to be so readily washed out as he fondly dreamed. His self-righteous refuge will prove to be a bowing wall and a tottering fence.

Driven to extremities by the fall of his tower of Babel, the top of which was to reach to heaven, he grows weary of his former hopes. He finds that all the outward religion he can muster will not suffice, that even the purest morality is not enough, for over and above the thunderings of conscience, there comes clear and shrill as the voice of a trumpet, “Ye must be born again,” “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Well, then, what does he do? He resolves to find another shelter, to exchange Assyria for Egypt. That is to say, as works will not do, he will try feelings, and the poor soul will labor to pump up repentance out of a rocky heart, and failing to do so, will mistake despair for contrition. He will try as much as possible to feel legal convictions. He will sit down, and read the books of Job and Jeremiah, till he half hopes that, by becoming a companion of dragons, and an associate of owls, he may find rest. He seeks the living among the dead, comfort from the law, healing from a sword. He conceives that, if he can feel up to a certain point, he can be saved, if he can repent, to a certain degree, if he can be alarmed with fears of hell up to fever heat, then he may be saved.

But ere long, if God is dealing with him, he gets to be as much ashamed of his feelings as of his works. He is thankful for them as far as they are good, but he feels that he could not depend upon them, and he recollects that, if feeling were the way of salvation, he deserves to feel hell itself, and that to feel anything short of eternal wrath would not meet the law’s demands. The question may fitly be put to one who thus goes the round of works, and feelings, and perhaps of ceremonies, and mortifications, “Why gaddest thou about so much?” It will all end in nothing.

You may gad about as long as you will, but you will never gain peace, except by simple faith in Jesus. All the while you are roaming so far, the Gospel is nigh you, where you now are, in your present state, available to you in your present condition now, for “now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” O sinner, you art thinking to bring something to the Most High God, and yet he bids you come “without money and without price.”

Your Father saith to you, “Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” He declares to you the way of salvation, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” He calls to you in His gracious Word, and says, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” He bids you trust in His Son, who is the appointed Savior, for He hath laid help upon One that is mighty. He thus addresses you, “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.”

You want pardon, and Jesus cries from the cross, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” You want justification, and the Father points you to His Son, and says, “By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.” You want salvation, and He directs you to Him who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. The God of heaven bids you look to His dear Son and trust Him.

Though I preach this Gospel almost every day of the week—and scarcely a day passes without my telling the old, old story—yet it is ever new. If you, who hear me so often, grow weary of it, it is the fault of my style of putting it, for to myself, it seems fresher every day! To think that the tender Father should say to the prodigal son, “I ask nothing of you; I am willing to receive you, sinful, guilty, vile as you are; though you have injured Me, and spent My substance with harlots, though you have fed swine, and though you are fit to be nothing but a swine-feeder all your days, yet come, just as you are, to My loving bosom, I will rejoice over you, and kiss you, and say, ‘Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet!’”

Sinner, God grant thee grace to end all thy roamings in thy Father’s bosom! “Why gaddest thou about so much?” Renounce all other hopes and fly away to the wounds of Jesus. “Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way?” Listen and obey these closing lines—

*“Weary souls who wander wide
From the central point of bliss,
Turn to Jesus crucified,
Fly to those dear wounds of his:
Sink into the purple flood,
Rise into the life of God.*

*“Find in Christ the way of peace,
Peace, unspeakable unknown;
By His pain He gives you ease,
Life by His expiring groan:
Rise, exalted by His fall;
Find in Christ your all in all.”*

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