

THE LOWER COURTS

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*“For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.
 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.”*
1 John 3:20-21

[Another sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, on verse 21, is #1855, What Is The Verdict?]

THE fault of a very large number of persons is that they will not lay spiritual things to heart at all, but treat them in a very superficial manner—or if they exercise any judgment concerning them, it is of the most superficial kind. Now this is very foolish because to say the least, the soul is of some value. And if men lay to heart the loss of their bodily health or of their estate, much more ought they to lay to heart anything which concerns their soul.

It is very wicked as well as very foolish, because in refusing to lay spiritual matters to heart, we virtually tell the God who made us that He is of no account to us, that we are quite indifferent to His being, to His character, or to His commands, that we do not desire to be obedient to Him, and that if we have been disobedient to Him, we do not trouble ourselves about that.

It is also as dangerous as it is foolish and wicked to be unconcerned about spiritual matters, for God will not be trifled with, and one of these days, those who would not lay eternal things to heart will find their souls full of anguish and with remorse they will be visited for this lightness of theirs. Whereas, today, like those of old who were invited to the wedding of the king's son, they make light of it and go their way to their farm or to their merchandise, there will come a day when they would give all their farms and their merchandise if they might have but another hour's respite, another invitation of mercy, and another opportunity to seek and find the Savior.

I do pray that, if any here have been amongst those who do not lay to heart the things that concern their immortal souls, they may not any longer be allowed to remain in the company of such vain and sinful persons, but may come out from that congregation of the foolish and begin to lay to heart the things which make for their eternal peace.

Then, beloved friends, there is another class of persons, very much superior to those of whom I have spoken, who nevertheless make a mistake of another kind. They do lay the things of God to heart and they are constantly weighing themselves in the balances of conscience. They look within again and again—they are not afraid of heart-searching—indeed they spend the most of their time in that stern occupation.

Am I about to blame these friends? I must answer, “No and yes.” I will not blame them for what they do, for they do the right thing—but I shall blame them for what they leave undone, namely this—they forget that the tribunal of conscience, though a very important one, is not the supreme court, and that, although it is well to try matters before the heart to see whether it condemns or acquits, yet there is another court, far higher than the court of the human heart, for “God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.”

There are some good Christian people who are always distressed because they never take their cases into the supreme court, and on the other hand, I fear that there are some ungodly professors who are always presumptuously at ease because they have been satisfied with the verdict of the lower court,

which is very liable to err in its judgment, and have never presented their case before the great Judge who cannot by any means make a mistake.

I am going to speak of these two courts. First, of the lower court of the heart or conscience, and then of the higher court where He presides who is “greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.” In speaking upon this subject, I shall mention four forms of verdict which may be given in the court of the heart. The first is *a correct verdict against ourselves*. The second is *an incorrect verdict against ourselves* (the first verse of our text applies to both of these). The third is *a correct verdict of acquittal* (that is in the second verse of our text). And then, lastly, I will say something about *an incorrect verdict of acquittal*, which, peradventure, our heart may sometimes give.

I. First, then, the apostle speaks of A CORRECT VERDICT AGAINST OURSELVES, “If our heart condemn us.”

There are some persons whose hearts justly condemn them and the voice of conscience is in them the voice of God. The echo of the divine sentence, “Depart, ye cursed,” is heard by them in the halls of conscience before the voice of God has spoken it—strangely contrary to echoes among men, which always follow the voice.

Conscience is saying, “You will be driven, O man, from the presence of God!” Now, in this case, the court of conscience sits under the King’s arms, with the marks of divine authority displayed above its head. And conscience sitting thus as a judge, judges rightly when it judges by the Word of God. Righteous judgment must not be according to man’s whim or fancy, but according to the supreme law of God—and the verdict of conscience is worth nothing unless it is so formed. The charge against the culprits is that they have broken God’s law, and in the case of many of them, that they have also rejected God’s mercy. They have offended against the law and the Gospel too.

There stands a prisoner at the bar and there sits conscience as the judge. And over its head I see tokens of God’s authority permitting conscience to judge him. The first witness that is called against the prisoner is memory. I put to it certain questions. “Memory, what have you to say concerning the life of this man? Has he kept God’s law?” And memory answers truthfully, “No.” “Has he then violated it?” “Yes, thousands of times.” “How long is it since he began to violate it?” “From a child.” “Has he continued to do so?” “Yes, to this very hour.” “Has he not repented of his sin and craved forgiveness from God?” “No, he has pretended to repent. He has had twitches of conscience—he has been alarmed at times, but he has hardened his heart and gone back to his sin and done despite to the Spirit of God.” “Memory, can you tell me how often the prisoner has broken God’s law?” “I cannot. Count the stars of the sky or the sand by the seashore—then only can you know how often he has sinned.” “Against which of the commands has he offended?” “Against them all.” “Can you give us some instances?”

I will not ask memory to expose any of you before this congregation, but I will ask your own memories to charge each one of you with your own sins whatever they may have been—that sin of licentiousness, that piece of trickery in trade, that angry thought, that hard word, that oppression of the innocent, that tempting of another to sin, that ruin of another in body and soul, that putting down of conscience on such and such a night when he struggled with you, and would have had you cease from sin—that wicked resolve not to be melted down under a certain specially earnest sermon, that desperate determination not to feel the force of divine love even when it came so near to you as to graze you.

Who of all the unpardoned sinners in the world has not some special sins to remember, to blush over, and to weep over, ay, with tears of blood if that were possible? Ah, memory, if you should tell all that you have recorded, your story would be too terrible for us to hear, and we would have to close the court, or bid some withdraw out of hearing, for you would have much to tell which would not be fit for their ears to hear!

Another witness is called, for it would not be right to condemn a man upon the evidence of only one witness, however excellent that witness might be. So I call the man’s own knowledge into the witness box and examine it. “What do you know, man, concerning yourself? Are you at this moment a lover of God?” “No,” says he. “Are you at this moment one who loves Christ? Are you at this hour one who

desires to be reconciled to your Maker? Do you desire to glorify God? Do you desire to overcome all sin and to live in perfect holiness?" The answer is a negative in every case and the Judge hears this. It is not merely what the man has done, but what the man is—not merely what he was yesterday, or in his youth, but what he is today. He is still an enemy to his God and he has no love to his Maker. He is still content to lead an unholy life. So in the mouth of these two witnesses his guilt is established.

But there are witnesses for the defense, so let them be heard. These are usually two—self-love and self-esteem. The man pleads that he is no worse than others. Yet a thief would not be allowed to escape punishment if he pleaded, "I am no worse a thief than my brother thieves." The man next says that he has done many good things, as if the keeping of one law of God would be any excuse for having broken another. This is as if the thief should plead before the judge that he was not a drunkard, or if he had committed burglary, that he had not been a murderer. Would this be accepted as an excuse?

Then the man pleads that he has attended a number of outward religious ceremonies—which is just as if a thief should say that he washed his hands every morning and took care to shave himself at certain intervals. What would all that have to do with the offense laid to his charge? If those things were right things for him to do, he did well in doing them, but they could make no atonement for his offenses.

Men will sometimes plead that, after all, it was more their misfortune than their fault that they fell into any sin at all. Yet man never considers such an excuse as that in reference to wrongs done to his fellow creatures—but the law deals with the offenses as having been willfully committed—and even so does God.

The court, after having heard these two lying witnesses, whose testimony is worth nothing, considers its verdict and the heart condemns the prisoner at the bar. Now what says the text? "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." So, if any man or woman here feels self-condemned, how much more must such a one be condemned by God!

If you feel uneasy even now, what cause for disquietude must there be in prospect of the just judgment of God! If your bleary-eyed conscience, which never yet half-opened its eyes, has condemned you, what guilt must God see in you. If conscience has decided against you, knowing only half—nay, perhaps not a millionth part—of your criminality, how certainly will the unerring Judge of all the earth, who knoweth all things, decide against you!

I would like to make those four words ring again and again in your ears, "God knoweth all things." Then He knows the sins that you have forgotten, or that you wish you could forget. Well, even if you have done so, they are fresh in His unfailing memory. Perhaps you cry, in the bitterness of your agony, "Cursed be the day wherein I committed them! Oh, for fountains of water to wash out the damning spots of sin, they would still remain. And even though I could not see them, yet still that eye, which through the murky night looks down on all, and sees as through the brightest day, that eye still sees my sins."

"God knoweth all things." That is, He knows all about your sins of omission, the good things that you have not done, the righteous acts which you have failed to perform. He knows what your motives have been. He knows how that apparently good action of yours was based upon sheer selfishness—how your pretended religiousness was, after all, only varnished hypocrisy.

O sirs, unless this blessed Book is all fiction, there are some of you who are great fools, for while you are condemning yourselves, you are calmly sitting down in prospect of the eternal judgment as if you thought that God would acquit you! You have lost the case in the lower court, where the judge is partial and would give a verdict in your favor if possible. How then will you dare to stand in the higher court, where the verdict *must* go against you if your case remains as it now is?

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." God grant that these words may not be forgotten, but may they be words that shall awaken some here whom God intends to bless!

II. Now I must pass on to the second point—AN INCORRECT VERDICT AGAINST OURSELVES.

Sometimes our heart condemns us, but in doing so, it gives a wrong verdict, and then we have the satisfaction of being able to take the case into a higher court, for “God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.” This is giving another sense to the passage and almost all the great expositors say that there are two senses here—the legal sense and the evangelical sense.

This evangelical sense was that which Luther was so bold in proclaiming. I will give you the meaning of the text in this way. The question before our heart is—are we Christians or not? Have we believed in Christ or not? Conscience takes knowledge of all our imperfections, failings, shortcomings, and conscience says, “No, the man is not a Christian, he is guilty of such and such sins.”

And many a dear child of God, ay, and some of the best of God’s children, have often had a verdict in the court of their own conscience which has been adverse to their hopes—the reason being that their conscience has been cognizant of only one side of the case, or they have forgotten some great and important truth, which ought to have been mentioned before the court—and then its verdict would have been different.

I may have here many children of God who are condemned by their own conscience. And if I only looked within my own heart, it would condemn me. If I had to bring the evidences of my salvation from my prayers, my preaching, or my daily actions, my heart would condemn me. New evidence is sometimes brought into court which completely changes the aspect of the case.

I daresay you have sometimes been a juryman and you would not like to tell your brother juryman how many times you have changed your mind while you have heard the evidence. But if you have listened to it attentively, I expect you have had half a dozen different opinions during the trial. You have heard the whole case against the prisoner and you have said to yourself “He’s certainly guilty.” And you have thought, “Ah, Mr. Foreman, you shall have my verdict against him!”

Then some evidence is brought which throws more light upon the case, and then something else is said in favor of the prisoner and you have said, “Ah, I was too much in a hurry,” and before the whole case was finished, you have been quite satisfied that the man was innocent. It is just so with our heart—it condemns a man when it has only heard half the evidence. But happily, “God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.”

Here is the case. This man, a believer in Jesus Christ, has been guilty of all these sins. He admits that he has. They are very many, and very black, so it is a clear case that he should be condemned. No, it is not, for there is a circumstance that has not been mentioned yet. It is true that the man was deeply in debt to the law of God, but his debt has been paid for him by his glorious Surety—and there is a receipt for it signed by God Himself. Does not that alter the case? The debt is proved, it is true—but as soon as the debt is proved, the receipt is produced to show that the debt has been discharged.

The Christian comes into court and says, “I admit my guilt, but I plead that Christ suffered in my stead. I confess my sin, but I also claim that it was laid upon Christ, and though my heart condemns me, God is greater than my heart, and He does not condemn me, for He looks upon His dear Son and sees me in Him, “accepted in the beloved.”

A man is tried for a certain crime, but his counsel assures the court the man who committed that crime is dead and that the prisoner at the bar is not that man at all. A reliable witness is produced who testifies that he knew the other man well, and that he saw him dead and buried. And another trustworthy person declares that the prisoner at the bar is a different man altogether.

So it is with us today—every true believer in Christ can say, “I was verily guilty, but I died with Christ and was buried with Him, and now I am a new creature in Christ Jesus. Old things have passed away and all things have become new. I am no longer what I once was, for I have been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

The case against the prisoner stands as it did before, and the heart was right in condemning him—but now there is more light thrown on the subject and he can confidently ask, “Who shall lay anything to the

charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Through the death and resurrection of Christ, and our union to Him, so that they are counted as our death and resurrection, we have passed into a state of justification. And through the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, the sin which was laid at our door has ceased to be and we are accounted righteous through the righteousness of Christ. So that, "if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."

Have you ever had a battle (I know you have, if you are a true child of God), with your own evidences? It is usually very poor work to turn over your own evidences. I believe that lawyers enjoy poring over musty old deeds, because there are generally six-and-eight-pences or guineas to come to them as the result. But I cannot say that I am much interested in "rights, easements, hereditaments," and so on—and the experience of reading an old deed is very much like the experience of turning over your own evidences.

You say, "I am a man of prayer." But what kind of prayer was it? Why, your thoughts were wandering all the time you were praying. "But" you say, "I do love God." "Ah!" cries the devil, "and a precious kind of love it is! It needs a microscope to see it if there is any love there at all." "Ah! but I do long after holiness." "You have nobody to bear witness to that but yourself" says the devil, "for as soon as a sin looks attractive to you, though you do not actually go to it, you know that your heart goes after it." "But my faith is fixed on Christ." "Ah! but where does your unbelief go? You would like to trust to yourself after all, if you dared to do so."

Satan can generally beat us in an argument and when our own conscience also condemns us, the best thing is to go straight away to the Court of King's Bench and say, "The devil is too strong for us, so we will go where we can leave our case in the hands of our great Advocate, who is more than a match for Satan."

Then, beloved, God can often see in His people the good which they cannot see in themselves, and I believe He likes best those people who think least of themselves. When you look into the glass, do you see a very lovely face? Ah, then you have never really seen yourself. But if you look into the glass, and see yourself defiled and filthy—and then see the change that Christ works in you—you are one of those whom God loves, because He loves those who are contrite in spirit and broken in heart—and who think meanly of themselves.

"Well," says one, "I never had a doubt about my state. I have always felt sure that I was all right." Then, my friend, if you never had a doubt about yourself allow me to doubt for you. Ah, beloved! it is not high thoughts that prove us to be Christians—it is lying humbly in the dust before the mercy seat that is one of the sure signs that we are the children of God. So although your heart condemn you, as my own heart and conscience have condemned me a thousand times, I trust that you can yet say with me,

*"I do believe, I will believe
That Jesus died for me;
That on the cross He shed His blood
From sin to set me free."*

Savior, I will trust You and I do trust You. Lost, and ruined, and guilty, and all but damned, I will still trust You—and so You cannot cast me away, for You have promised, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

So, you see, there is a blessedly comforting meaning in these words of the apostle John as well as a meaning that should arouse us all to earnest concern about our real standing in the sight of God.

III. Now, thirdly, we have A CORRECT VERDICT OF ACQUITTAL, "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God."

When is it that our heart does not condemn us? Of course it always condemns *us* in *some* things. There may be people in the world who are perfect. I should like to have the pleasure of their acquaintance, yet I do not know whether they would like to have the pleasure of mine, for I am afraid that my imperfections and their perfections would make a quarrel before long, and I do not know whether they would not be the people to quarrel first.

Superior articles generally crack the soonest, and whenever a brother has had a very high polish on him, and much varnish of the very first quality, I have generally proved him to be a hypocrite before long. Still, it is not my business to judge him—to his own Master let him stand or fall. If he is perfect, I say again that I should like to know him, for I know that I am not perfect.

But our heart does not condemn us about some things. For instance, we ask, “*Are we really sincere in our profession of religion?*” and our conscience answers, “Yes, we do not make a profession of religion in order to gain by it, nor because it makes us respectable, nor because it brings us comfort and ease. God knows that we do it because we cannot help doing it.

We love Christ and we must take sides with Him, and unless we are utterly deceived, we are sincere in saying that we are followers of Christ.” I am putting these words into the mouths of those of you who really feel that you ought to utter them, and I trust that each one of you will join me in saying, “I am a poor lost sinner, but I do trust in Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and I do hang upon Him as the only Savior. And if that be the faith that saves the soul, I certainly have exercised it. I have no reliance on any ceremony, or any doctrine, or anything that I can do, or feel, or say, or be—nothing but the crucified, risen, and glorified Christ is my confidence.” Beloved, that is one thing in which our heart does not condemn us.

And then, it is the same when we can add, “With all our imperfections, we feel that *we do love God’s people and we do love our fellow men*. We desire to relieve their distresses as far as we can, and as much as lies in us, we desire to promote the happiness and comfort of others.” If a man cannot say this, he cannot claim to be a Christian, because any man who lives for himself is no more a Christian than the devil is.

The first object of the Christian is to glorify God, and the next object is to make other people happy. Those who never study other people in the household, but are selfish, and let their narrow soul be confined within their own ribs, have nothing about them in common with a real Christian. If a man truthfully says, “I love others and I especially love the saints of God,” then he may say that his conscience does not condemn him.

I am not saying this on my own authority. Let me turn your attention to a few of the verses preceding our text, reading from the fourteenth verse, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death...Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed, and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.” You see, this is the very evidence that God gives—that by our love to others, our hearts will be assured before Him, and we shall have confidence concerning our own relationship towards God.

There is one other thing about which our hearts do not condemn us—we do feel that *we love holiness and love righteousness*. And though we do not always act as we should, and have to mourn over our sins, yet we hate them and loathe ourselves for going into sin. We would, if we could, have perfect tempers. We would, if we could, act in perfect righteousness towards man, and in perfect holiness towards God.

It is the duty of a Christian to be strictly just in all his business transactions and not to ask, “What is the custom of the trade?” The customs of many trades are dishonest—and the usual modes of carrying them on are little better than systematic roguery. I have heard of men who mark a hundred as a hundred

and twenty, and who mark goods as of certain lengths when they know they are not of such lengths. And they say, "It is the custom of the trade."

Well, if it be the custom of your trade to lie, remember that it is God's custom to send all liars to hell. A Christian has no right to lie even if all the world should concur in the lie. He should say, "No, I serve the God of truth, and come what may, no falsehood shall defile my tongue, for Christ has cleansed it and made it His own."

Our text says, "If our heart condemn us not," and we thus know that we are God's children, "then have we confidence toward God." I wish I had an hour in which to preach upon this part of the text, though I daresay you do not. But these words are full of comfort, "then have we confidence toward God."

The man who has a clear conscience, like a little bird, to sing in his heart, has confidence toward God in this way. He knows that he is the Lord's and that God loves him. He knows that God will not do him any hurt, and will not suffer the devil or anyone else really to harm him. He knows that God is blessing him and will continue to bless him. He knows that God is his Father and his Friend, and he therefore goes to God in great confidence about his troubles and tells them all to Him.

He has much confidence in prayer and he may talk to God in prayer in a way which other people may think too familiar, yet it will not be so. His heart is right with God and therefore he has confidence toward God. He does not doubt God's faithfulness, or God's truth, or God's power, or God's veracity. He simply confides in God and lets things go as they will, for he knows that God is ruling and overruling all—and he walks through the world with a childlike, restful confidence—knowing that God will keep him and preserve him even to the end.

And when he has to die, he will die in confidence, and when he rises from the grave, he will rise in confidence. And when the world is all ablaze, he will behold the last great conflagration without alarm. And when he stands before the judgment seat of Christ, he will stand there without a tremor. He has confidence toward God, for he has peace within him.

IV. Now I have very briefly to speak concerning AN INCORRECT VERDICT OF ACQUITTAL.

There are some persons whose hearts do not condemn them for this reason—*their hearts are hopelessly stolid*. God save you, my dear hearers, from a heart which is so full of pride that it is, as David says, "as fat as grease," from a heart that is harder than adamant, and from a heart that knows it is guilty, but will not condemn itself, but whispers, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace. There are tens of thousands of men walking the streets of London who are living habitually in the worst of sin, yet their hearts are so petrified, and rendered so perverse from everything like right judgment, that they rarely if ever appear to condemn them.

But I take leave to tell them that *what little heart they have left does condemn the*, for this reason, that, when a man's heart is right and does not condemn him, he has confidence toward God. Ask these men whether they have any confidence toward God. "God!" say they, "do not let us even hear His name. How do you know that there is a God?" Such men never feel so easy in mind and never are in such an argumentative mood as when some precious philosopher attempts to prove that there is no God—that is the very thing for them.

Would not the devil's children ring all the bells for many a day if they could but prove that there was no God? What a jubilation there would be among the rogues, thieves, vagabonds, and skeptics if they could once feel sure that there was no God! It would be the worst thing that could possibly happen to us who love Him, but to them it would be the best thing that could happen according to their notions. And why? Because there is something within their heart that tells them, after all, that they are not right—and as they do not want to get right, they try to persuade themselves that there is no God. That is their way of getting a little sleep for their conscience.

But they are not really as quiet as they think they are. Supposing I were to ask such a man, who was so quiet and at ease, whether he would mind sitting down for half-an-hour when he got home, and look into futurity, and seeing whether there is a judgment, a heaven, and a hell—what would be the result?

“Not I,” says he, “I am not going to bother myself about such things as those.” It is said that you ought not to talk about the gallows if you know that there is anybody present who had a relative who was hung.

And these men, in like manner, do not like us to talk about judgment, heaven, and hell. O sirs, you are like the silly ostrich that buries its head in the sand and hopes that nobody will see it. Why, if there be no such things, it will have done you good to have thought about them, and to have confirmed yourself in the notions of which you boast so much.

I also ask you to do another thing. You say that your heart does not condemn you, but will you for a little while contemplate death? We will let judgment alone for a minute. I suppose you believe that you will die—you have not yet discovered a patent for the preservation of highly-cultured intellects from the vulgar hands of the sexton? You do not expect that education will keep you out of the tomb. So will you think about death?

“No,” says the man, “I shall do nothing of the sort. It would give me the blues for a week.” Ah, I see, I see! Your conscience has not acquitted you, after all, for, if it had, you would not be so unwilling to think about death. *I* do not object to think of death and there is no believer in Christ here who objects to thoughts of death, but rather we pray, “So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

There must be something radically wrong about that supposed ease and peace of mind which will not bear contemplations of death and judgment. The fact is, you are condemned by your own heart, for if you were not, you would have confidence toward God. And let me assure you that those who have once experienced confidence toward God greatly rejoice in it. It is the joy of life and it will light up even the dark valley of death. Confidence in God is, in fact, the beginning of heaven, and I think it is a part of the very fruition of heaven itself.

God bless you, dear friends! May we all be led to faith in Jesus Christ! Remember that there is salvation in Him. Whoever trusts Jesus Christ is saved. Whoever relies upon His finished work shall never come into condemnation, and even though his heart may sometimes accuse him, Christ will clear him from all guilt through His own most precious blood. May this be the happy portion of each one of you here! May each one be able to say,

*“In Christ I have believed,
And through the spotless Lamb
Grace and salvation have received,
In Him complete I am.”*

In closing my sermon, I ask every individual here that old and personal question, “Do *you* believe on the Son of God?” Somebody says, “Yes, I do believe in Him, glory be to His holy name.” I hope there are many in this place who can truly say, “With all our hearts we do believe in Jesus Christ our Savior. We have a thousand infirmities, but we do trust in Him.”

Just a notch lower there is one who says. “I do believe in Jesus, but not as fully as I should like to.” Ah, well, dear brother, faith grows if it is true faith. That is a good prayer, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” I expect you will get higher by and by, and be able to say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

Another friend says, “I hope and trust that I do believe in Jesus.” Brother, get out of that stage, I implore you. I never like to “hope and trust” in that fashion. When I get to bed at night and say to myself “Did I lock the door?” I am not content to lie there and say, “I hope and trust that I did.” There may be a thief in the garden, so it will not be safe for me to “hope and trust” that all doors and windows are properly fastened. We like to be sure about these less important matters—how much more ought we to be sure about the salvation of our souls!

If a man owes you a hundred pounds and someone says to you, “Is he solvent?” it is not very satisfactory if you can only say, “I hope he is.” You will feel much easier in your mind when you know that he is solvent. And it is a great deal better to know that you are saved than to go on hoping and hoping, or saying, “I hope and trust it is all right.” You are either saved or you are not saved—do get to know which is true. Give no rest to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids till you really know that you are trusting in Jesus and therefore you are saved.

Somebody a little lower down says, “I do not know whether I believe in Jesus or not.” Well, if you do not yourself know, nobody else can tell you. And I should recommend you to begin trusting Christ now. I always find that the shortest way to deal with doubt and fear is to say, “Well, if I am not a believer in Jesus Christ, I will believe in Him now.” So I urge you, my friend, to go to Him and say,

*“Just as I am—without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd’st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.”*

Begin tonight, dear friend. If you fancied you did begin once before, begin again now. And if you never did begin before, begin now.

“Well,” says another, “I am trying to believe in Jesus.” That is another grade and it is all wrong, for a man cannot truly say that he is trying to believe in Jesus. What are you doing to help you to believe in Him? Are you hearing the Gospel earnestly? Are you searching the Scriptures for evidence concerning Christ? Or are you just doing nothing but saying “I am trying to believe?”

Suppose I read an article in the newspaper and then say, “I am trying to believe it.” Well, if I am searching for evidence and questioning others as to whether it is true or not, I speak correctly—but if I merely put the paper away and sit down and say, “I will try to believe it”—that is absurd. The fact is, you do not believe in Jesus or you would not say, “I am trying to believe in Him.”

“Well,” says one, “I do not yet believe in Jesus, but I wish I did.” I like to hear you say those last words, for when a man wishes to believe what is certainly true, I think he will soon believe it. There is many a man who has wished to believe a lie till he has believed it—and I think that a man who wishes to believe the truth has the easier task of the two. May the ever-blessed Spirit lead you into a solemn conviction of the truth as it is in Jesus!

If there is one here who says, “I do not believe in Jesus and I do not want to believe in Him,” may God have mercy upon that poor sinner and save him tonight—and God shall have the glory both now and forever. 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.