

KNOWING AND BELIEVING

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*"I know whom I have believed."
2 Timothy 1:12*

THE text is wholly taken up with three things, namely, with knowing, with believing, and with the person who is known and believed, and upon both the knowing and the believing Paul is very decided. He puts in no "if," no word of change, he does not say, "I hope so," or "I trust so," but "I know I have believed, and I know whom I have believed." It is all assurance, and not a shadow of doubt. Let us imitate the apostle, or ask for grace to be able to imitate him, that we may shake off the dubious phraseology which is so common among Christians nowadays, and may be able to speak with apostolic confidence upon a matter upon which we ought to be confident if anywhere at all, namely, our own salvation.

As the text is thus taken up with knowing and believing, these two matters will be the subject of our meditation at this time.

My first remark drawn from the text shall be—

I. THE ONLY RELIGIOUS KNOWING AND BELIEVING WHICH ARE OF A SAVING CHARACTER CONCERN THE PERSON OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

"I know," says the apostle—not "what"—but "whom I have believed." He does not say, "I know the catechism which I have believed," nor "I know the institutes of Calvin," nor "I know the body and system of theology," but "I know *whom* I have believed." Both the knowing and the believing center around the wondrous person who for our sakes left His starry throne and became a man, knowing whom, is a saving knowledge, and trusting whom, is a saving trust, but of which, all other knowing and believing falls short.

Observe then, that all other knowledge may be useful enough in itself, but if it does not concern Christ, it cannot be called saving knowledge. Some persons *know a great deal about doctrine*. Perhaps they have taken up with the Calvinistic theology, or even with the hyper-Calvinistic, and they really understand the system thoroughly well, and they certainly hold it with quite enough tenacity, if not too much. We know some, who we believe, would very cheerfully go to the stake in defense of some points of doctrine so convinced are they of the orthodoxy of what they have received. Others take up another theory, and go upon the Arminian principle, and they too, know their set of doctrines, and know them well.

But dear friends, I may know all the doctrines in the Bible, but unless I know Christ, there is not one of them that can save me. I may know election, but if I cannot see myself as chosen in Christ Jesus, election will do me no good. I may know the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, but if I am not in Christ, I would only persevere in my sins, and such a final perseverance will be dreadful indeed.

It is one thing to know the doctrine of justification by faith, but it is quite another thing to be justified by faith, and to have peace with God. You may stand up for imputed righteousness, and fight for it, and yet the righteousness of Christ may never be imputed unto you. It is not knowing the creed, though that is well, that can save the soul, the knowledge that is wanted is to know Him whom Paul believed.

And again, a man may know something more than doctrine. He *may know a great deal about experience*. There is a class of persons who sneer at doctrine. They call the doctrinal preacher a mere “letter man,” as for themselves, they talk about deep experience. They have a consciousness of having a corrupt heart. They have discovered that they have evil tempers (by the way, other people too, have discovered it)! They have discovered that they have defiled natures, and everybody can see that they are not sinlessly perfect.

But strange delusion, because they know the disease, they fancy they have been healed. Because they have perception enough to see they are spiritually bankrupt, they therefore imagine that their debts are paid. Because they feel themselves to be in the Slough of Despond, they dream they are on the rock.

But there is a vast difference between the two things. A man may think he has an experience of his own emptiness, nay, he may truly possess it, but if it does not drive him to Christ, if he does not come and rest on the Lord Jesus, all his experiences are of no saving value. The foundation of the soul’s salvation is not experience of any or every kind, but the finished work, the meritorious blood and righteousness of our Lord and Savior.

There are some too, who not only know experience and doctrine, but who also *know how to talk of them*. They have mingled with Christian people until they can get up their phraseology, and as some Christians have cant expressions, these people can “cant” in any quantity and to any extent. They can talk about their “poor souls,” and about “the dear Lord,” and use all those other precious phrases of hypocrisy which lard some religious publications, and which are to be found in the conversation of some people who ought to know better. They use these expressions, and then when they get in among the people of God they are received with open arms, and they fancy that because they can talk as Christians talk it is all well with them.

But oh, remember that if a parrot could call you “father” it would not, for all that, have become a child of yours, and that a foreigner may learn the language of an Englishman but never be an Englishman, but remain a foreigner still. So too, you may take up the language of a Christian, but may never have within you the Spirit of God, and therefore be none of His.

You must know *Him*. “Know thyself,” said the heathen philosopher, that is well, but that knowledge may only lead a man to hell. “Know Christ,” says the Christian philosopher, “know Him, and then you shall know yourself,” and this shall certainly lead you to heaven, for the knowledge of Christ Jesus is saving knowledge—“whom to know is life eternal.”

In addition to these valuable pieces of information, there are some who *know a great deal ABOUT Christ*, but here I must remind you that the text does not say, “I know *about* Christ,” but “I know him.” Ah, dear hearer, you may have heard the Gospel from your youth up, so that the whole history of Christ is at your fingers ends, but you may not know Him, for there is a deal of difference between knowing about Him, and knowing Him.

You may know about a medicine, but still die of the disease which the medicine might have cured. The prisoner may know about liberty, and yet lie and pine in his dungeon until, as John Bunyan put it, “the moss grows on his eyelids.” The traveler may know about the home which he hopes to reach, and yet may be left out at nightfall in the midst of the forest. Many a man of business knows about wealth, or even concerning the millions of the Bank of England, and yet is a bankrupt or on the verge of poverty. Many a sailor knows about the port, but his ship drifts upon the rock, and all hands go down. It is not enough to know about Christ, it is knowing Christ Himself that alone saves the soul.

And over and above, and in addition to all this, you *may know the Scriptures from youth up*. I suppose I have some—perhaps many—before me, who are well acquainted with almost every chapter in the Bible. You could not be questioned upon any part of it so as to be really nonplussed. You have read the Book, and you continue to read it still, and I approve of your wise choice in so doing, and beg you ever to continue in so excellent a practice. But remember, if you have not the Word of God in your heart it is of small use to have it merely in your head.

Oh, to know Christ is our supreme and tragic want! Not to know texts and Scripture merely, for “the letter killeth, it is only the Spirit that quickeneth,” and unless you know Christ you do not know the vital spirit of the Word of God. The only saving knowledge then, is knowing Christ.

Well now, so is it with the exercise of faith. You may *know a great deal about faith*, but the only saving faith is belief concerning Christ. “I know *whom* I have believed.” To believe doctrine will not save a man. You may hold all the creed, and be orthodox, and then be no better than the devil, for I suppose that the devil is a very sound theologian. He surely knows the truth. He believes and trembles, but you may know it and not tremble, and so you may fall short of one virtue which even the devil possesses.

A firm belief in what is preached to you is well enough in its way, but to believe a doctrine as such cannot save you. Some have a belief in their minister, and I suppose that is so flattering to us, that you will hardly expect us to speak against it, but of all vices it is one most surely to be dreaded because it is so very dangerous. We charge you in the sight of God, always weigh what we have to say to you, and if it be not according to Scripture, cast it away as you cast away refuse.

Take nothing merely because we say it, let nothing that we preach be received upon our *ipse dixit*, but let it be tried and tested by the Word of God, for otherwise you may be led by the blind, and “if the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch.”

Ah, what multitudes of persons there are in England who are beginning to get their fellow man to perform their religion for them! They are too lazy to think, they are too idle to use whatever brains they have, and therefore they get some mere simpleton who thinks that God is pleased with his putting on a white gown or a blue dress, or a black gown or green dress, a scarlet gown or mauve dress, is pleased with burning candles in the daylight, and pleased with making a pungent odor in the church—they get such a creature as this to do their religion for them, and then they lie down at night to rest, feeling perfectly satisfied that God is satisfied and they are all right.

Oh, I charge you believe not this delusion! It is not believing in a priest that will save you. Believing in the priest may be your ruin, but believing in Christ is the really vital point, the one thing that truly matters. He that believeth on Christ is saved, but he that believeth even the Pope of Rome shall find that he believeth to his own eternal ruin.

Then again, it is not *believing in ourselves*. Many persons believe thoroughly in themselves. The doctrine of self-reliance is preached in many quarters nowadays. I suppose that what is meant by the term is a good mercantile possession, a business virtue, but it is a Christian vice as towards spiritual things, and emphatically towards the soul’s salvation. Self-reliance in this matter always ruins those who practice it.

Rely on self! Let night rely on her darkness to find a light, let emptiness rely on its insufficiency to find its fullness, let death rely on the worms to give it immortality, let hell rely upon its fire to make it into heaven—such trusts as these would be equally strong with those of the sinner who relies upon himself for salvation. Your belief must not be that *you* can force your way to heaven, but you must believe *Him*, for aught else is an unsaving faith.

You see then, that the knowledge which saves, and the belief which saves, both hang upon the cross, they both look to the wounds of that dear man, that blessed God, who was there the propitiation for our sins, and who suffered in our room and stead.

My hearer, are you trusting Christ? Are you hanging upon Him as the vessel hangs upon the nail? Do you know Him as a man knows his friend? Do you seek to know more of Him? Is He all your salvation and all your desire? If not, take home this solemn warning, whatever else you know, you are ignorant still, and whatever else you believe, you are an unbeliever still, except you know and believe in Him, who is the Savior of men.

I pass on now to a second point, which is this—

II. THAT KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT FAITH IS VAIN.

This is to try to balance with but one scale, to run a chariot on one wheel. You have the double matter here. “I *know* whom I have *believed*.” It is good to know, but knowledge must be crowned with faith. It has been remarked that Paul does not say, “I know of whom I have heard.” He does not say, “I know of whom I have read,” he does not say, “I know of whom I have preached,” but “I know whom I have believed.” Here he hits the nail on the head. Knowledge is useful in the bud, mere reading, preaching too, are well as an exercise, but believing is the fruit which must grow upon the tree of knowledge or else the knowledge will be of little use to us.

Now, my dear friends, I know that I am addressing many of your class, many who know Christ in a certain sense, know much about Him. You know of His nature, you believe Him to be true deity, you know Him to be human like yourselves, and for man’s sake made man. You know His life. You have often read it. You often like to dwell upon the incidents of it. It is a genuine and great pleasure to sing of Bethlehem and its manger, of Cana and its marriage. You have turned over the pages of that life of lives, and felt enraptured with this matchless masterpiece of biography.

You are well acquainted too, with His death, it has often drawn tears to your eyes when you have thought of the shame and the spitting and the crown of thorns. You know something concerning His expiring cries. Your imagination has often pictured to you the wounded body of that dread Sufferer. You have thought that if you had been there, you would have wet His feet with your tears, so did you sympathize with Him. You know of His burial and of His resurrection too, and you have sweetly joined with us when we have been singing—

*“Angels, roll the rock away,
Jesus Christ is risen today,”*

and you have not been behind hand when we have been singing of His ascension. Your eyes have flushed with fire when you have heard the words—

*“They brought His chariot from on high,
To bear Him to His throne;
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
‘The glorious work is done.’”*

You know that He reigns in heaven. You know that He has prepared mansions for His people. You know that He intercedes for sinners. You expect that He will come. You are a believer in His second advent, and when the *Te Deum* has been sung in your hearing—“We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge,” you have said, “Ay! I do—I do—believe it.”

Now, if you know all this, you know that which it is very important to be known, but if you stop short there, where are you? Why, I have no doubt there have been hundreds who knew this, but who have given their bodies and souls to the devil, and have lived in open sin, day by day.

If you could go to the condemned cell tonight, I should not wonder if the wretch confined there knows all this. If you were to go into the flaunting gin palaces, which are scattered to our shame and curse all over London, where men and women are drinking liquid fire at this very moment, you would find that half of them know all this, but they do not drink any the less for it. If you were to go into the lairs of vice, you would find that the most abandoned know all this, but it does them no service.

And I will add also this, that the lost spirits in hell went there knowing all this, and the devil himself knows it all, but he remains a devil still. Ah, my hearer, I charge you before God, do not sit down and say, “I know, I know, I know.” Do you believe? Do you believe?

The common answer given very frequently to the city missionary is just this, men say to them, “There is no need for you to come here and tell me anything, I know all about it.” Ah, but do you believe in Jesus? What is the good of your knowing unless you believe? I do not think that the most of you who go to places of worship want so much instruction in divine truth as you want an earnest appeal

to your hearts not to stop short at instruction. You do know, and that, indeed, shall be, indeed, part of your damnation, that you had the light but you would not see, that Jesus came into your streets, and came nigh unto you, but you would not have Him. The medicine was there, but you died because you would not take it. The food was on the table, but you would sooner perish with hunger than receive it as the free gift of heaven.

Ah, my hearer, your knowing should not benefit you, but will be a plague to you. The poor savage in his kraal in Central Africa who never heard the name of Jesus, shall die with at least this mitigating circumstance, that he never rejected the Savior's love. The million a month who die in China—for a million do every month die in China—the million who die every month in China die with this one solace, at any rate, that they never sinned against the light of Christianity, nor rejected the truth as it is in Jesus.

This is more than you could say. This is a clout which will never be held to your armhole. This will never help to make a dainty couch for you, when you make your bed in hell. The responsibility of having known shall add remorse to the whips of accusing conscience, and make perdition more terrible still. Oh, may God grant that we may not stop short with knowledge alone, but may know Christ as Him whom we have believed! But still we have in the next place—

III. FAITH WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE IS BUT A BIRD WITH ONE WING.

The old faith of the fuller is coming back in some places today. You remember what the fuller said, "Yes, he believed, he believed, what did he believe?" He believed, "What the church believed." And what did the church believe? "Well, the church believed—well, what he believed." And pray what did he and the church together believe? "Why, they both believed the same thing." Ah, how many there are of that sort today! They say, "We think he ought to be sincere, you know, and if he is sincere, it does not matter much whether it is absolutely true. He need not trouble greatly to inquire whether what he believes is Scriptural or not, or whether it is according to God's revelation, that will take up too much of his time and thought, and look too much like being obedient to God's will. Just be sincere, you know, and then, hit or miss, whatever your mother or father happened to be in religious character, go at it with all your might and it will be all right."

Now unfortunately, that does not happen to be the truth, because we do not find people in this world getting on in proportion to their sincerity. I suppose our friends who bought Overend and Gurney's shares were sincere enough in their belief that they were buying a good thing, but I should fancy that their opinions have undergone a change of late. No doubt there have been persons who have taken prussic acid, sincerely believing that it would benefit them, but I suppose it has killed them, notwithstanding their sincerity.

If a man should travel due south in order to get to the Orkney Islands, however sincere he might be, he would probably discover himself in the Bay of Biscay before long. The fact is, it is not sincerity alone, it is the studious endeavor to find out what the right is, and what the truth is, that is the only safe way for us. We do not, therefore, ask you to believe without knowing what you are to believe. It is impossible. Do not think a man can hold in his hands four or five doctrines and say to you, "Do you believe them?" "Well, but what are they?" "Never mind, you are a true believer, and you must believe them without knowing them."

A man who has no power of belief at all says, "Oh, yes, I believe, I will kiss your feet if necessary, or do anything you like to tell me." But the thoughtful man, the man who is likely to be saved, says at once, "I find it impossible to believe until I first know what I am to believe."

I have sometimes thought when I have heard addresses from some revival brethren who had kept on saying time after time, "Believe, believe, believe," that I would like to have known for myself what it was we were to believe in order to our salvation. There is, I fear, a great deal of vagueness and crudeness about this matter.

I have heard it often asserted that if you believe that Jesus Christ died for you, you will be saved. My dear hearer, do not be deluded by such an idea. You may believe that Jesus Christ died for you, and may

believe what is not true, you may believe that which will bring you no sort of good whatever. That is not saving faith.

The man who has saving faith afterwards attains to the conviction that Christ died for him, but it is not of the essence of saving faith. Do not get that into your head, or it will ruin you. Do not say, "I believe that Jesus Christ died for me," and because of that feel that you are saved. I pray you to remember that the genuine faith that saves the soul has for its main element—trust—absolute rest of the whole soul—on the Lord Jesus Christ to save me, whether He died in particular or in special to save me or not, and relying as I am, wholly and alone on Him, I am saved.

Afterwards I come to perceive that I have a special interest in the Savior's blood, but if I think I have perceived that before I have believed in Christ, then I have inverted the Scriptural order of things, and I have taken as a fruit of my faith that which is only to be obtained by rights, by the man who absolutely trusts in Christ, and Christ alone, to save.

The matter, then, which saves is this—a man trusts Christ, but he trusts Christ because he knows Him. See! He knows Christ, and therefore he trusts Him. How does he come to know Him? Well, he has heard of Him, he has read of Him, he seeks Him in prayer, and when he has learned His character, he trusts Him. Occasionally young converts will say to us, "Sir, I cannot trust Christ." I never try to argue with them about it, but say, "Then you do not know Him, because to know Christ truly is sure to bring trust."

I believe there are some men in the world whom you have only to know to trust because they are so transparently honest, so clearly truthful, that you must trust them. The Savior is such a character as that. Let me tell you, sinner, God was made flesh, and dwelt among us, do you believe that? "Yes." He lived a holy life, He died a painful death, the merit of His life and death is set to the account of every one who trusts in Him, and He declares that if you trust in Him He will save you. Now you can trust Him surely.

You say, "No, I cannot." Why not? Is He not able? He is divine, therefore you cannot raise the question. Is He not willing? He died, that argues willingness surely to do a less thing, since He has done the greater. You cannot doubt that surely! The life of the Lord Jesus Christ is an answer to every form of doubt. Do you know, I feel with regard to Christ myself, that instead of its being any difficulty to trust Him, I find it very difficult not to trust Him, if I cannot find any reason why I should distrust Him.

I was turning over the other day some odds and ends of my own brain to see if I could find any reason why Christ should not receive my soul. Well, I could not find half a one, but I could think of twenty thousand reasons why I should believe in Him to save me, even if I had a million souls. I feel as if His way of saving is so magnificent, and the working of it out so divinely generous, that His sufferings were so great, His person is so glorious, that I could not only cast my one soul on Him, but fifty thousand souls if I had them. Why, I cannot find any reasonable ground for doubting Him. Soul, I would to God that you would think of Him in the same light!

***"He is able, He is willing:
Doubt no more!"***

You know something of Him, oh, may God give thee grace to add to your knowledge, trust, and then shall you have true saving faith.

Let it be remarked here that in proportion as our genuine knowledge of Christ increases, so we shall find that our trust in Him will increase too. The more we know Christ, the more we shall trust Him, because every new piece of knowledge will give new arguments for immovable confidence in Him.

Oh, if you have not seen Christ, I can understand your doubting Him, but if you have leaned your head upon His bosom, if He has ever kissed you with the kisses of His lips, if He has ever taken you into His banqueting house, and waved His banner of love over you, I know you will feel, "Doubt Thee, Jesus, doubt Thee? Why, how can I? I know the power of Your arm, I know the love of Your heart, I know the efficacy of Your blood, I know the glory of Your person, I know the faithfulness of Your

Word, I know the immutability of Your oath, and I can trust You, and either sink or swim, my soul casts herself upon You, You blessed Savior.” And now there may be some present who are saying, “I cannot say I know whom I have believed.”

IV. “HOW CAN I KNOW THAT I MAY BELIEVE IN HIM?”

The answer is, search the Word of God with a desire to find Him. Seek out the most Christ-exalting ministry in your neighborhood, in whatever denomination you can find it, and listen to it with all your ears and with all your heart. Get you to your chamber and there seek the Lord to illuminate you in the matter of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ask Him to reveal His Son in you.

I tell you this, faith comes by hearing and by hearing the Word of God, and when to these is added earnest seeking you shall not be long without finding Him. They who seek Christ are already being sought of Him. You who desire Him shall have Him, you who want Him shall not be long without Him. It is to have Christ to some degree, to hunger and to thirst after Him, and when you feel that you cannot be content without Him, He will not let you be, but will soon come to you.

I believe there are some who will get peace with Christ tonight! Do you understand it, dear friend? You have nothing to do, you have nothing to be, you have not even anything to learn, except that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and that He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. You know that. Now, trust Him, and if you do, it is all done, and you are saved. If you have trusted in Him whom God has revealed as your Savior, it is not a matter of twenty minutes nor a matter much less of months, but you are saved at once.

*“The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God;
His pardon at once he receives,
Salvation in full through Christ’s blood.”*

When a man once gets into the lifeboat, if it were certain that the lifeboat would never sink, he is saved as soon as he gets in. Now, the act of faith does, as it were, put us into the lifeboat of Christ Jesus, and we are saved directly. You may have many a tossing, but you will get safe to land at last.

If you want faith you must get it, as I have told you, by knowing Him, studying the Word of God, listening to it, and seeking His face, but make use of what you know, or else what you know will be like the stale manna, and will be of no use to you. Believe it as you know it, use it up as you get it, and if you already know Christ to be a sinner’s Savior, and know that you are a sinner, then come tonight and put your trust in Him, and be of good cheer, and He will never, never, never cast you away. And now, lastly, I should like to ask a question, and it is this—

V. HOW MANY ARE THERE WHO DO KNOW CHRIST?

We all know something of which we are a little proud, but “I know, I know, I know,” is a very poor thing to say when you do not know Christ. “I know,” says my young friend over there who has been to Oxford or Cambridge University, “I know So-and-so.” “I know,” says another, “such and such a special line of distinguished thinking.”

But do you know Christ, my dear friend? “Ah, thank God,” says one upstairs, and another good soul below, “we can hardly read, sir, but we do know Him.” I would change places with you, friends, much sooner than I would with the most learned of men who do not know Christ, because when they come to the gates of death, you know, he who keeps the gate will not say, “Do you know the classics? Have you read Horace? Have you studied Homer? Do you know mathematics? Do you understand logarithms or conic sections?” No, but he will say, “Do you know Christ?” and if you scarcely even know your own native tongue, yet if you know Christ the gates of heaven shall fly open to let you in.

Now, do you know Christ? Do let the question go round to each one, “Do I know Christ?” Well then, do you believe Christ? Do you trust Christ? “Yes, thank God!” says one, “with all my imperfections I can sing the hymn—

“On Christ the solid rock I stand,

All other ground is sinking sand.”

Oh then, brethren, let us be of good cheer, for trusting Him, He will never fail us, believing Him, He will never leave us, but we shall see His face in glory. Oh, that the day were come! But when it does, to His name shall be all the praise! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-11

Verses 1-2. *I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word;*

We are not to use such strong language as this, unless there is some sufficient reason for it. We must not be too hot upon cold matters, but even this is better than to be cold upon matters that require heat.

When John Calvin wished to leave Geneva to complete his studies elsewhere, that man of God, Farrell, knowing how necessary it was for the church that Calvin should remain at Geneva, charged him before God that he dared not go, and hoped that a curse might light upon all his studies, if for the sake of them he should forsake what he held to be his duty. So sometimes, like the apostle, we may before the Judge of the quick and dead, charge men not to forsake their work and calling.

2. *Be instant in season, out of season;*

The Greek word means, “Stand up to it,” as when a man is determined to finish his work, he stands right up to it. Stand over your work, putting your whole strength into it, up-standing over it. “In season, out of season,” because the Gospel is a fruit which is in season all the year round. Sometimes these “out of season” sermons, preached at night or at some unusual time, have been of more service than the regular ordinances of God’s house.

Mr. Grimshaw used to ride on horseback from village to village throughout the more desolate parts of Yorkshire, and wherever he met with ten or a dozen people, he would preach on horseback to them, preaching sometimes as many as four and twenty sermons in a week. That was being instant “out of season” as well as “in season.” So should God’s Timothys be, and indeed, all of us.

2. *Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*

That is, do not exhort with mere declamation, but put some argument into your exhortation. Some men think it quite enough to appear to be in earnest, though they have nothing to say. Let such exhorters remember that they are to exhort with doctrine, with solid teaching.

3. *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;*

When men have not good preachers, they are sure to have a great many of them. Those nations which have the worst priests always have them in swarms. So let us be thankful if God sends us a glowing and zealous minister, for even those who count it an affliction to have a minister, would be more afflicted if they had not a good one.

But how evil it is when men get itching ears, when they want some one to be perpetually tickling them, giving them some pretty things, some fine pretentious intellectualism. In all congregations there is good to be done, except in a congregation having itching ears. From this may God deliver us.

4. *And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*

When a man will not believe the truth, he is sure ere long to be a greedy believer of lies. No persons are so credulous as skeptics. There is no absurdity so gross but what an unbeliever will very soon be brought to receive it, though he rejects the truth of God.

5-6. *But watch thou in all things, endure affliction, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.*

How complacently he talks about it! It is only a departure, though Caesar's sword might smite his head from his body. And truly death to the believer is no frightful thing. "Go up," said God to Moses, and the prophet went up, and God took away his soul to Him, and he was blessed. And so, "Come up," says God to the Christian, and the Christian goes up, first to his chamber, and then from his chamber to paradise.

7-8. *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

This seems then, to be a distinguishing mark of a true child of God, he loves the appearing of Christ. Now there are some professors who never think of the second advent at all. It never gives them the slightest joy to believe that

*“Jesus the King will come,
To take His people up
To their eternal home.”*

Truly they are mistaken and are surely wrong, for was not this the very comfort that Christ gave to His disciples, "If I go away, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." I trust, dear friends, we are among those "who love his appearing," and if we are, it is a sure prophecy that we shall have a crown of righteousness.

9-10. *Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica;*

Demas was once almost a martyr, he was upon the very edge of suffering, but now you see he goes back to the world again, he is not content to lie in the dungeon and rot with Paul, but will rather seek his own ease. Alas! Demas, how have you dishonored yourself forever, for every man who reads this passage as he passes by, flings another stone at the heap which is the memorial of one cowardly spirit who fled from Paul in danger.

10. *Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.*

It is likely that Paul had sent Crescens and Titus away upon a mission, but now, from certain intimations, the apostle is sure that his time of death is coming on, and so indeed it was, for his head was struck off by Nero's orders a few weeks after the writing of this epistle, and now he somewhat laments that he had sent them away. And would not you and I want the consolation of kind faces round about us, and the sweet music of loving voices in our ears, if we were about to be offered up?

11. *Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.*

That is one of the prettiest verses in the Bible, because you remember that the apostle Paul quarreled with Barnabas about this very Mark, because John Mark would not go into Bythinia to preach the Word, but left Paul and Barnabas, therefore Paul would not have Mark with him any more because he had turned in the day of trouble.

But now Paul is about to die, and he wishes to be perfectly at peace with everyone. He has quite forgiven poor John Mark himself for his former weakness, he sees grace in him, and so he is afraid lest John Mark should be under some apprehensions of the apostle's anger, and so he puts in this very kind passage, without seeming to have any reference at all to the past, but he gives him this great praise—"for he is profitable to me for the ministry."

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