

THE CRIPPLE AT LYSTRA

NO. 559

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“The same heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him,
and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice,
Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.”*
Acts 14:9-10

I HAVE read in your hearing the story of the preaching of Paul and Barnabas in the town of Lystra. The name of Christ was there totally unknown. They were a sort of country people, partly pastoral and partly agricultural, who seem to have been deeply sunken in superstition. At the gates of their city, there stood a great temple dedicated to Jupiter, and they appear to have been his zealous votaries.

Coming down from the mountainside Paul and Barnabas enter the town, and when a fitting time has come, they stand up in the marketplace, or the street, and begin to talk concerning Jesus, the Son of God, who had come down from heaven, had suffered and died, and had again ascended up on high.

The people gather round them. Among the rest a cripple listens with very marked attention. They preach again. The crowds are still greater, and on one occasion, while Paul is in the middle of a sermon, using his eyes to watch the audience as all preachers should do, and not looking up at the ceiling, or at the gallery front as some preachers are accustomed to do, he marks this cripple, fixes his eyes upon him, and looks earnestly into his face.

Either by the exercise of his judgment, or by the promptings of revelation, the apostle gathers that this man has faith—faith to be healed. In order to attract the attention of the people, to glorify the name of Christ, to publish more widely His glorious fame, and to make the miracle well known, Paul stops the sermon, and with a loud voice cries, “Stand upright on thy feet.” The cripple leaps and praises God.

The population are all amazed, and knowing that there was a tradition that Jupiter and Mercury had once appeared in that very town, a tradition preserved in the Metamorphoses of Ovid to the present day, they at once conclude that surely Jupiter and Mercury must be come again. They fix upon Barnabas, who was probably the elder and the nobler looking man, for Jupiter. And as Jupiter was always attended by Mercurius as a messenger, and Mercury was the god of eloquence, they conclude that Paul must be Mercury.

They rush to the temple, they tell the priests that the gods have come down. The priests, only too ready to foster popular credulity and pander to it, bring forth the sacred bullocks and the garlands, and are about to offer sacrifice before Paul and Barnabas. Such homage these men of God indignantly refuse. They rend their clothes, they beseech them to do no such thing, for they are nothing but men. Yet hardly with earnest words can they stay the people.

But the next day certain Jews came thither and produced a counter irritation in the simple minds of the people. No very difficult task where a rude fanaticism rouses the wild passions of the mob. Such an assembly must rage, whether it be with redundant applause or with derisive jeers. Accordingly, Paul finds himself exposed to peril.

He is stoned through the streets, dragged forth as dead, and left by the very men who worshipped him but yesterday as a god, left to die as a villain outside the city gates. But Paul’s preaching had not been in vain. There were some few disciples who remained faithful. His ministry was rewarded and owned of God.

There are two or three points in this narrative to which I shall call your attention tonight, making, however, the lame man the center of the picture. We shall notice, first of all, *what preceded this lame*

man's faith. Secondly, wherein lay his faith to be healed, and thirdly, what is the teaching of the miracle itself, and the blessing which the lame man obtained through faith.

I. WHAT WAS IT WHICH PRECEDED HIS FAITH?

That "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," is a great and universal rule, but the hearing of what? Doubtless the hearing of the Gospel is intended. On turning to your Bibles you will find it is written—"And there they preached the gospel." What, Paul, do you not change your voice? You have preached the Gospel in the cities of Iconium and Antioch, where there were enlightened and intelligent hearers, if the Gospel suited them, surely it will not do for these wolfish boors!

Why go and preach to these poor, ignorant, superstitious fanatics the very same truths which you spoke to your enlightened Jewish brethren? But he does so, my friends. The very Gospel which he preached at Damascus in the synagogue he preaches here at Lystra in the marketplace. He makes no difference between the education of his hearers in different places. He has the same Gospel to preach to them both.

You recollect that Paul went to Ephesus, and Ephesus, as a city, was besotted with a belief in sorcery. The people had given themselves up to practice magical arts. What is the right way to begin to preach at Ephesus? Deliver a course of lectures upon the impossibility and absurdity of such superstition? No sir, nothing of the kind. Preach Christ, preach the Gospel, and as Jesus Christ is lifted up they bring their magical books and make a bonfire of them in the open forum.

But here is a polished governor, Sergius Paulus, sitting upon the judgment seat. What shall be preached to him? Would it not be well to begin with a dissertation on politics, and to show that the Christian religion does not interfere with proper government, that it does not stir up the people to anarchy? No sir, nothing of the kind. There is nothing for Sergius Paulus any more than there is for Elymas the sorcerer, but the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul goes to Athens. Now the Athenians are the most learned and philosophical of the whole race of men. What will Paul preach there? The Gospel, the whole Gospel, and nothing but the Gospel. He may change his *tones*, but never his *matter*. It is the same remedy for the same disease, be the men what they may.

He comes to Corinth, and here you have not only polished manners, but the very refinement of vice. It is a city, an emporium of trade, and a sort of central depot of sin. What then? Will he now, to please the trader, assume a different dialect? Not he! The Christ for Athens is the Christ for Corinth too.

And now see him. He has come to Lyconia, and is preaching at Lystra. Here is an ignorant set of people who worship an image. Why does he not begin by preaching of the deity? Why does he not talk to them of the Trinity in unity? Why does he not try and confute their notions about their gods? No my dear sir, he will do nothing of the kind. That may be done incidentally, but the first and the last thing that Paul will do at Lystra is, there he will preach the Gospel.

O glorious Gospel of the blessed God! Wherever we take you, you are suited to the wants of men. Take you to Persia with all its gems and jewels, and you do suit the monarch on his throne. Or take you to the naked savage with all his poverty and squalid filth, and you do suit him too. You may be preached, thrice glorious wisdom of God, to the wisest of men, but you are not too great a mystery to be understood and believed even by the fools and the babes. The things which are not can receive you as well as the things which are.

Never, I pray you brethren, lose heart in the power of the Gospel. Do not believe that there exists any man, much less any race of men, for whom the Gospel is not fitted. Wherever you go, do not cut, and trim, and shape, and alter. But just bring out the whole truth as God has taught it to you, and rest assured that you will be unto God a sweet savor of Christ in every place, both in them who are saved and in them who perish.

What then, was this Gospel which the apostle Paul preached everywhere? Well, it was a Gospel which had in it three things, *certain facts, certain doctrines, and certain commands.*

It was a *Gospel of facts*. Every time Paul stood up to preach he told the following unvarnished tale. God, looking upon the race of men, beheld them lost and ruined. Out of love to them He sent His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was born of the virgin Mary, lived some thirty-two or thirty-three years a life of spotless innocence and perfect obedience to God. He was God, He was man. In due time He was delivered up by the traitor Judas. He was crucified, and actually put to death. Though He was the Lord of life and glory, who only has immortality, yet He bowed His head and gave up the ghost.

After three days He rose again, and showed Himself to many of His disciples, so that they were well assured He was the same person who had been put into the grave. And when the forty days were finished He ascended up to heaven in the sight of them all, where He sitteth at the right hand of God, and shall also come ere long a second time to judge both the quick and the dead.

These were the facts which Paul would state. God was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Briefly, these were the facts which Paul would preach, and if any one of these facts be preached doubtfully, or be left out of any ministry, then the Gospel is not preached, for the foundations upon which the Gospel rests have been removed, and then what can the righteous do?

Following upon these facts, Paul preached *certain doctrines*, the doctrines flowing out of the facts. To wit, he preached that Jesus Christ had offered a full atonement to divine wrath for the sin of His people, so that whosoever would believe on Him, and trust Him, should be saved. The doctrine of the atonement would form the most prominent feature in the Gospel of the apostle Paul. Christ also has suffered for us, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly."

Then would come the doctrine of pardon. Paul with glowing tongue would tell how God could be just, and yet the justifier of him who believes; how all manner of sin and iniquity shall be forgiven unto men, the simple condition being that the man believes in Christ, and this not so much the man's own work, as a gift of the Holy Ghost.

Everywhere Paul would be unmistakable in this—"Ye chief of sinners, look to the wounds of Jesus, and your sins shall be forgiven you." Equally clear would he be upon the doctrine of justification. "Christ," he would say, "will wash you; nay, more, he will clothe you; the perfect holiness of his character shall be imputed unto you and being justified, you shall have peace with God, and there shall be no condemnation, because you are in Christ Jesus."

I think I see the flashing eye of the apostle, I think I listen to his earnest voice, while he pleads with men to lay hold upon eternal life, to look to Jesus Christ, to forsake the deeds of the law, to put their trust in nothing which comes from man, but to look to Jesus, and to Jesus only. These great truths, atonement, pardon, and justification, with all the other truths connected with them, of which we cannot now speak particularly, were just the Gospel which the apostle Paul preached.

And out of these we said there sprung *certain commands*. The commands were these—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Nor do I suppose that the apostle for a moment stammered to preach that other command—"Arise, and be baptized." He would not preach half the Gospel, but the whole of it—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," and often after his hearers had cried, "What must we do to be saved," and they had believed in Christ, they would say to him—"See, here is water, what doth hinder me to being baptized?"

The apostle then preached a Gospel which was made up of certain authenticated facts, out of which there flowed certain most gracious evangelical doctrines which were enforced and driven home with divine authority by Christ's own commands. "Well," says one, "do you think the world will be turned upside down by this?" Sirs, it has been, and it will be again. In vain do those who seek after human learning, and who aim at dreamy sentiment or spurious science in preference to the standard teaching which is from above, attempt to find a nobler instrument.

This is the great battering ram which shall yet shake the bastions of error. This is the sword, the true Excalibur, which, if any man knows how to wield it, shall cut through joints and marrow, and make him more than a conqueror. He who gets a hold of the Gospel of Christ, and knows how to use it, has that before which the devils tremble, and in the presence of which angels adore, which cherubs long to look into, and which God Himself smiles upon as His noblest work.

The truth we proclaim is not that which is discovered by us, but that which has been delivered to us. Do you ask, then, where this man's faith came from? It came from Paul's preaching of the Gospel.

II. Now WHEREIN LAY THIS MAN'S FAITH?

Paul looked at the man we are told and perceived, "*that he had faith to be healed.*" What means this "faith to be healed"? In this man's case I think it was something like this. Poor fellow! As he listened to Paul's preaching, he thought perhaps—"Well, that looks true, that seems to be the truth, it is the truth. I am sure it is true, and if it is true that Jesus Christ is so great a Savior, perhaps I may be healed. These lame legs of mine, which never would carry me anywhere, may yet come straight. I—I—I think they may, I hope they may, I believe they may. I know it can be done if Christ wills it. I believe that, and from what Paul says of Christ's character, I think He must be willing to do it. I will ask the apostle, the first convenient season that I have I will lift up my cry, for I believe it can be done, and I think there is a perfect willingness, both in the mind of the apostle and of the Master that it should be done. I believe it will be done, and that I shall yet stand upright." Then Paul said to him, "Stand upright on thy feet," and he did so in a moment, for "he had faith to be healed."

Do you think I am overstraining the probabilities of the case? You will perhaps say, "It does not appear that Paul had any communication with the poor cripple before the miracle was performed." Now I venture to draw quite an opposite inference. I know from my own experience that it is no uncommon thing for some one individual to arrest the preacher's attention. The group of countenances which lay before him in a large assembly like the present, might to the first glance of a stranger look confused and inexplicable, as a Chinese grammar does to those who know not the language. But you need not doubt that a practiced eye can learn to read the one as well as the other.

The languor and indifference of some, the curious inquiring look of others, the cold, critical attention of a considerable number, and the countenances of those who are rather absorbed in a train of thought just awakened in their own minds—these have all a peculiar impressiveness, and form a picture which often reacts upon us and kindles a vehement desire in our breasts to reach the souls of those who, for a brief hour, hang upon our lips.

But there will sometimes be one who has faith dazzling in his very eyes, as they are fixed with an intentness, of which it were vain for me to attempt a description, seeming to drink in every word and every syllable of a word, till the preacher becomes as absorbed in that man as the man had been in the preacher.

And while he pursues the discourse, gaining liberty at every step, till he forgets the formality of the pulpit in the freedom of conversation with the people, he perceives that at last this man has heard the very truth which meets his case! There is no concealing it.

His features have suddenly relaxed. He listens still, but it is no longer with painful anxiety. A calm satisfaction is palpable on his face now. That soul of communion which is in the eye has unraveled the secret. Preacher and hearer, unknown to all the rest of the audience, have secretly saluted each other, and met on the common ground of a vital faith. The anxious one feels that it can be done. And I can readily conclude that the apostle perceived that feeling with greater certainty than he would have done had the man whispered it in his ears.

So have I sometimes known that the exhortation to believe has become from these lips a positive command to the struggling conscience of some one, who has been brought to a point where the remedy is instantly applied, and the cure instantly effected.

Most unquestionably there is such a thing as faith to be saved. I do not know how many here may possess it, but thank God, there are hundreds of you here who have faith that *you are* saved. That is

better. That is the ripest faith, the faith which knows you are saved and rejoices in hope of the glory of God. Alas! there are others who have no faith at all. But it is with those who have faith, and that only faith *to be saved*, not faith that *you are* saved, I am more particularly concerned at this moment.

Shall I describe this “faith to be saved”? for I believe that there may be some here who may just now stand upright on their feet. Some who may at this time leap for joy of heart because they are saved and did not know it. You have “faith,” but you have not fully exercised it.

Now, you believe that Jesus Christ is God’s Son? “Yes.” That He has made a full atonement for His people? “Yes.” You believe that they are His people who trust Him? “Yes.” You believe He is worthy to be trusted? “Yes.” You have nothing else to trust to? “No, sir.” You depend on nothing which you have ever felt, or thought, or done? “No sir, I depend on nothing but Christ.” And you do, after a sort of fashion, trust Christ. You hope that one of these days He will save you, and you think, and sometimes you almost know, He will. You are ready to trust Him. You do believe He is able, you do not think He is unwilling. You have got faith in His ability, and you have almost got faith in His willingness. Sometimes you half think to yourself, “I am a child of God.”

But then, there is some ugly “but” comes in. Those lame legs again, those lame legs again. You are still afraid. You have “faith to be saved,” but you have not the full assurance of faith which can utter forth this joyous psalm, “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.”

Well now, I do not know whether I have picked you out, whether I have given a right description of you or not. I recollect the time when I was in that state. I can honestly say I did not doubt Christ. I three parts believed that He would save me. I knew He was worthy of my trust, and I did trust Him as far as this, that I resolved, if I did perish, I would perish crying to Him, and that if I was cast away, it should be clinging to the cross. I believe I had “faith to be saved,” and was for months in bondage, when there was no necessity that I should have been in bondage at all, for, when there is “faith to be saved,” then the man only needs that gracious command—“Stand upright on thy feet,” and forthwith he leaps out of his infirmity and walks freely in the integrity of his heart.

III. I shall not enlarge further upon this, because I want to go to THE SPIRITUAL TEACHING OF THE MIRACLE, AND OF THE BLESSING CONFERRED.

Are there not many, who though they have “faith to be saved,” are still entirely lame or painfully limping? The reasons may be different in different cases. Some have been so stunned by the grief which they have suffered on account of sin, and the frightful convictions through which they have passed, that while they do believe that Christ is able and willing to save, they cannot get a hold of the fact that they are saved. Such is the faintness of spirit and the languishing of soul brought on by long despair.

“Stand upright on thy feet,” thou trembling sinner. If you believe in Jesus, whatever your fears may be, there is no cause for them. As for your sins, they were laid on Him, every one of them, and though you have been sore broken in the land of dragons, thus saith the Lord unto you, “I have put away thy sin; thou shalt not die; I have blotted out like a cloud thy transgressions, and like a thick cloud thy sins.”

Rejoice, then, and be glad. If you do trust Christ, you *are* saved. Though as yet it only looks like faith which heralds the tidings of a salvation which has not yet arrived. Still, it is the grace of God which brings salvation which has enabled you to believe, and he who believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. O receive the welcome message, spring up at the sound of the words, stand upright on thy feet and rejoice.

Some are still lame, though they have faith, *through ignorance*. They do not know what being saved is. They entertain wrong expectations. They are trusting in Christ, but they do not feel any surprising emotions. They have not had any remarkable dreams, or visions, or striking ebullitions of excited joy, and therefore, though they have “faith to be saved,” they have not the faith of a present salvation. They are waiting for something, they hardly know what, to embellish their faith, or to fortify it with signs and wonders.

Now, poor soul, wherefore do you wait? These things are not necessary for salvation. In fact, the fewer you have of them, I think, the better, especially of things which are visionary. I rather tremble for those who talk much about sensible evidences. They are too often the frivolities of unstable hearts.

Beloved, though you may have never had any ecstatic joys, or suffered any deep depression of your spirits, if you are resting on Christ, it does not matter one whit what your feelings have been or have not been. Do you expect to have an electric shock, or to go through some mysterious operation?

The operation is mysterious, too mysterious for you to discern it, but all that you have to do with is this—"Do I believe in Jesus? Am I simply depending upon Him for everything?" If you do you are saved, and I pray you to believe this. Stand upright on your feet, and leap for joy, for whether you believe it or not, if you are now depending upon Christ, your sins are forgiven you, you are a child of God, you are an heir of heaven.

How many, too, are kept lame because of *a fear of self-deception*. "I do trust Christ, but I am afraid lest I should deceive myself. Suppose I were to get confidence, and it should be presumption! Suppose I should think myself saved, and I am not!"

Now sir, if you were dealing with yourself there would be reason to be afraid of presumption, but your faith has to deal with God, who cannot deceive you, and with Christ who will never tempt you to be a deceiver. Does not the Lord Jesus Christ Himself tell you that if you believe in Him thou art saved? You believe that, do you not? Then, soul, if you believe on Him, it is not presumption to say, "I am saved." Away with all that affectation of modesty, which some good people think to be so pretty—saying, "I hope," "I trust," but "I feel such doubts, such fears, and such gloomy misgivings."

My dear sir, that is not humility. That is a vain unseemly questioning of God. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ tells you, and He gives His own unequivocal word for it, that if you rest upon Christ you rest upon a rock, that if you believe in Him you are not condemned. Is it an evidence of the lowliness of your heart that you suspect the veracity of God, or the faithfulness of His promise? Surely this were no fruit of the meekness of wisdom.

No, beloved, it may seem too good to be true, but it is not too good for my God to give, though it is too good for you to receive. You have His word for it, that if you trust His Son to save you, and simply trust Him, and Him alone, even if the pillars of the heavens should shake, yet you would be saved. If the foundations of the earth should reel, and the whole earth should like a vision pass away, yet this eternal promise and oath of God must stand fast.

Others again, cannot stand upright on their feet because they are afraid that *if they did begin they would go back again, and so bring dishonor to Christ*. This would be a very proper fear if you had anything to do with keeping yourselves. If you had to carry yourselves to heaven, it would be reasonable enough for you to despair of doing it. Of your own impotence it is impossible you can be too deeply convinced.

You cannot do anything whatever, but Christ gives you His promise to preserve you even to the end. If you believe on Him you shall be saved. He does not say you shall be saved for a year, or for twenty years, and then, perhaps, be lost at last. No, but "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." If one man who believes in Christ is cast away, that promise of Christ is not true.

Brethren, it is true, and it must be true, and let its glorious truth be sweetly familiar with you now—if you give your soul to Christ, putting simple faith in His person as the Son of God, and in His work as the Mediator between God and man, you shall as surely see His face within the pearly gates of heaven as your eyes see me tonight. There may be a question about your seeing me, but there can be no question about Christ fulfilling His promise and keeping His word.

Now sit down in the dust no longer, you doubting, mourning, trembling sinner. With a loud voice I say unto you, as Paul did, "*Stand upright on thy feet.*" Wherefore do you mourn? There is nothing to mourn about. Your sin is forgiven. Your eternal salvation is secure. A crown in heaven is provided for you, and a harp of gold awaits you. If you believe in Jesus none can lay anything to your charge. Not even the principalities of darkness shall be able to prevail against you. Eternal love secures you against

the malice of hell. Stand upright then, on your feet, for if you believe you are saved, completely saved, saved in time, and for eternal days, saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

Then possibly there is one here who cannot stand upright *because of his many sins*. Ah! while I have been talking about Christ it may be something has been saying in your heart, “Ah! ah! what is it? Christ taking men’s sins, suffering in their stead? That suits me. Is God doing this? Ah! then He must be able to save, and I am told that whosoever trusteth in Him shall never perish, is it so? Why, here I am. I who have not been in a place of worship for months, for years, I have strayed in here tonight, and if what this man says be true, well then, I will even venture my soul upon it. I have got nothing, I know, but he says there is nothing wanted. I am not prepared to trust Christ, but he says there is no preparation required, and if I trust Jesus Christ just as I am, Christ will save me. Why, I will do it, by the grace of God, I will do it. Can He save me?”

Then comes in the bitter reflection—“Look what a sinner I have been! why, I should be ashamed to say how foully I have sinned. He must shut me out. I have been too great a villain, too gross an offender. I have cursed and sworn at such a rate. He cannot mean that if I trust Christ I shall be saved. I believe He can save me. I see the fitness of the plan, and the excellency of it. I believe it, but see what a sinner I am!”

Sinner, stand upright on thy feet, for “all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” Return, thou wanderer, return to thy Father’s house! He comes to meet you. On your neck He will fall, and you shall be His child forever. Only believe you in His Son Jesus Christ, and though this be the first time you have ever heard His Word, I would settle my eyes upon you earnestly, and say, “Stand upright on thy feet.”

Oh! how often I wish that somebody had come to me when I was under depression of mind, and had told me about the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ. I think I should have stood upright on my feet long before I did, but alas! I kept hearing about what people felt before they believed in Christ—very proper preaching—and I was afraid I did not feel it, though now I know I did.

I heard a great deal about what Christians ought to be, and a great deal more about God’s elect, what they are in His esteem, but I did not know whether I was one of God’s elect, and I knew I was not what I ought to be. O for the trumpet of the archangel to sound the words, “*Believe and live*,” as loud as the voice which shall wake the dead in their graves! and O for the quickening Spirit to go with voice, as it shall go with the ringing of the archangel’s trumpet when the graves shall open, and the dead shall arise!

Go, you who know it, and tell it everywhere, for there are multitudes, I doubt not, who are really seeking Christ, and who have His Spirit in them, but it is like as the prophet hath it, “The children have come to the birth and there is no strength to bring forth.” They have come to the very edge of light, and they only want one helping hand to bring them into noonday.

They are slipping about in the Slough of Despond, and they are almost out of it, but they want just a helping hand to pull them out. This hand of help is stretched out by thus telling them, telling them plainly, it is in JESUS their help is found, and that trusting Him, relying upon Him, they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand.

I would to God that some of you, who have been long hearing me, might be found in this class. I have been bowed down in spirit at some sad things which have been brought to my hearing of late. I know that there are some here, and there always have been some few attending my ministry, who have a personal affection for me, and who listen to the Word with very great attention, and who, moreover, are very greatly moved by it, but some of these have some besetting sin which they either cannot or will not give up. They do renounce it for a time, but either bad associates, or else the strength of their passions, take them away again.

O sirs! I would ye would take warning. There was one of whom we had some sort of hope, who listened to our ministry. There came a turning point with him. It was this, either that he must give up sin, or else give up coming to the Tabernacle, and what—oh! what became of him? I could indicate the place where he sat. *He died of delirium tremens!* And I do not wonder.

When you have heard the Gospel preached Sabbath after Sabbath, when your response to the solemn appeals you have earnestly listened to has only been that you reject Christ and refuse eternal life—is it any marvel that in making the choice of your own damnation, reason should resign its seat as director of your actions, and cease to curb your headstrong will, leaving the maddened passions to dash on with reckless fury, and precipitate your destruction.

Am I clear of their blood? I have asked myself the question. I may not be in some things, but I know I am as far as my ministry is concerned. I have not shunned to declare unto any of you the whole counsel of God. When I have known any vice, or any folly—which of you have I been afraid of, or before whom of you all have I trembled? God is my witness, Him have I served in the spirit, and if these turn aside unto their crooked ways, they have not done it without well knowing the consequences. Nay, they have not done it without being warned and entreated, and persuaded to look unto Jesus Christ.

And I do conjure some of you—you know to whom I refer—I do conjure those of you who have a conscience which is not seared, but who, nevertheless, persevere in your sins—I conjure you by the love of God, do me this one favor at the last, if you choose your own ruin, bear witness for me that I have not hesitated to warn you of it.

I had infinitely rather, however, that you would do yourselves this great favor, to love your own souls. If you have anything to throw into the fire, throw it in, but let it not be your soul. If you have anything to lose, go and lose it, but do not lose your soul. Sirs, if you must play the fool, indulge your sport at a cheaper rate than this. If sin be worth having, then I pray you, pay a cheaper price than your own souls for it, for it does seem to me so pitiful, so sorrowful a thing, that you who have been so short a time among us and are passing away before my very eyes, should still prefer the fleeting joy of the moment to the eternal joy, and risk everlasting torment for temporary mirth.

By the tears of Jesus when He wept over Jerusalem, by the blood of Jesus which He shed for guilty men, by the heart of the eternal Father who wills not the death of a sinner but had rather that he should turn unto Him and live, I pray you be wise and consider your ways. Choose ye this day whom you will serve, and may the Lord guide your choice. May you fall into the arms of divine mercy and say, “If Thou wilt help me, Jesus, here I am. I give myself to You.”

May my Master teach me how to address you if I do not know how to gasp the words of simplicity, tenderness, of terrible apprehension, but of persuasive power. If there were any words in any language that would melt you, this tongue is at your service to utter them. If there is any form of speech, though it should make me to be called vulgar, and subject me to the shame and hissing which once I endured, if the furnace could be heated seven times hotter than that, I would but laugh at it if I might but win your souls.

Tell me, sirs, how shall I put the case? Would you have argument? I wish that I could reason with you. Would you have tears? There, let them flow! Ye dry eyes, why do you not weep more for these perishing souls? Would you have God’s Word without my word? Sirs, I would read it, and let my tongue be dumb if that would teach you. Would my death save you? That God who sees in secret knows that tonight it were a joy to me to enter into my rest, and so it were little for me to talk of being willing to give a life for you, and it were, indeed, but a trifle to me.

Oh! why will ye perish? Why should I plead with you, and you not care for yourselves? What is it that besets you? Poor moths! Are ye dazzled with the flames? Are ye not content to have singed your wings? Must they also consume body and soul? How can you make your bed in hell? How can you abide with eternal burnings? In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I command you—for I can do no less—I command you to turn unto Him and live.

Believe on Him and you shall be saved. But remember, at your hazard you reject the message tonight. It may be the last message that shall ever come to your soul with power, if you cast this away—

*“What chains of vengeance must they feel,
Who slight the bonds of love?”*

I would have you saved now. I cannot talk about tomorrow. I would have you decide at once. Oh! you have come as far as this twenty times, and have you gone back again? You have been aroused, you have made vows and you have broken them, resolutions and you have belied them. O sirs, for God's sake do not lie to the Almighty again. Now be true this time. May the Spirit of God make you speak the truth, even though you should be compelled to say, through your wickedness, "I will not submit myself unto the Son of God."

Do speak the truth. Procrastinate not. As Elijah said, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" so say I. If God be God serve Him, but if Baal be God serve him. But do not keep on coming here and then going to the pot house. Do not come and take your seat here and then go to the brothel.

Sirs, do not do this foul scandal for God's sake, and for your own sake. If you will serve the devil serve him, and be a true servant to him. If you mean to go to hell, go there. But if you seek eternal life and joys to come, give up these things. Renounce them. Why drink poison and drink medicine too? Have done with one or the other and be honest. Be honest to your own souls.

May the Lord grant that tonight some may have given to them, not only "faith to *be* saved," but the faith which saves, for His name's sake. Amen.

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