

MARVELOUS INCREASE OF THE CHURCH NO. 63

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 27, 1856
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AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK

*“Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?”
Isaiah 60:8*

THE ancient church, in the foresight of her mighty increase in these latter days, lifts up her hands in astonishment, and having been so used to see the Lord’s grace confined to a small nation, she exclaims in amazement, “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?”

We, beloved, are in a somewhat similar position. It has pleased our Father to add to our numbers so greatly beyond all precedent in modern times, that I doubt not that many of our aged members, who remember days of yore, when God was pleased to bless them very greatly, and then think of days of sadness and weariness, when they were diminished and brought low, are this morning lifting up their hands and saying, as they think of the present prosperity of our church, “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?”

I am sure whenever I appoint an evening for seeing the converts I am amazed. I can only stand up afterwards, clap my hands, and go home and weep for very joy to think that the Word of our God is so running and multiplying and abundantly increasing. And as post after post I receive letters from different parts of this country, from one person here, and another there, not in England only, but in Scotland, and even across the sea—in Ireland, and you know, in the Crimea also—I have been overwhelmed with amazement and have been obliged to cry out, “Who hath begotten me these?” “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?”

The church, when she uttered these words, appears to have been the subject of three kinds of feeling. First, *wonder*. Secondly, *pleasure*. Thirdly, *anxiety*. These three feelings *you* have felt, you are not strangers to them, and you will understand while I speak to you as the children of God, how it is that we can feel at the same time, wonder, pleasure, and yet anxiety.

I. First, the church of old and our church now, appears to have been the subject of WONDER when she saw so many come to know the Lord.

“Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?” Take the first sentence of the text first, “Who are these that fly as a cloud?”

The church wondered, first of all, *at the number of her converts*. They did “fly as a cloud.” Not here and there a convert—not now and then one—not converts like solitary bitterns of the desert, but they “did fly as a cloud.” Not a convert now and then, like a meteor, a thing we see but seldom, which flashes across the sky, rejoices the darkness and then is gone. Not now and then a convert, as a *rara avis*—a spiritual prodigy.

“But who are these?” says she, “that fly as a cloud?” She wonders at their number. But my brethren, why should we be astonished? Did not the apostle Peter become the instrument of converting three thousand under one sermon? And have we not heard of Whitefield, that while ten thousand listened to him, it has been known that two thousand at a time have felt the power of God manifested in their hearts?

And why should we wonder if hundreds are brought to God now? “Is his arm shortened, that he cannot save? Is his ear heavy, that he cannot hear?” Have we not cried unto the God of Jacob, and is anything impossible to Him? Remember how He “cut Rahab and wounded the dragon”? Think of His

prodigies by the Red Sea, and the miracles He worked in the field of Zoan. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

Oh! you distrustful church, do you marvel because your Lord gives you many children? Is it not written, “More are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife,” says the Lord. I tell you, the Lord will show you greater things than these. The increase we have had shall yet be exceeded, if God wills it.

Nothing is impossible with Him. He who converts one, could as easily convert a hundred, and He who redeems a hundred, could save a thousand by the selfsame power. Is not the blood of Jesus sufficient? Is not the Holy Ghost powerful enough? and is not the mighty Three-one God “able to do for us exceeding abundantly above what we can ask or think?”

Yet, so it is, so little are our expectations, and so unprepared are we for God’s mercies, that when He pours out a blessing upon us, so that we have not room enough to receive it, we begin shutting up the windows altogether and think, “Surely it cannot come from God, because there is so much of it.” Why, that is the very reason why we should believe it to be.

If there were few conversions, then we might tremble and fear lest they might be man’s, but when there are so many, none but a God can accomplish it. When one or two are brought to join a church, we may shake for fear and examine them with caution, but when they fly like a cloud, we can only say, “Great art thou, O God, marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.” Doubtless, brethren, until larger views of God’s power and increased faith shall diminish the wonder, we shall always stand in amazement and say, “Who are these that fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?”

But, secondly, the Chaldee has the idea in it, not of numbers, but of *swiftness*. “Who are these that fly as a cloud,” for swiftness? You have seen clouds dashing along, like chariots drawn by mighty horses, or flying like a fugitive army, when the swift winds have pursued them and you have said, “See how swiftly the clouds career along the sky.”

And it is notable that in great revivals of religion, persons are generally more swift in their religious growth and experience than they are in dull and degenerate times. “Why,” says one, “how soon persons join the church here! how very soon they attain to assurance of faith! how very speedily they come to understand Gospel doctrines. It was not so in my days, for I know I was months and months, and tried a long while before I dared think of obeying my Master—before I could say, ‘I know whom I have believed.’”

Just so, but these are brighter days than your days, and you are wondering now because the converts fly so swiftly. But that is just the idea of the text, “Who are these that fly *as swiftly* as a cloud?”

I know, brethren, it used to be the custom with our churches, when a convert came to keep him a summer and a winter—to summer him and to winter him. Now, that is very prudent and very wise, but it is not at all Scriptural—there is nothing in the Word of God to support it. The example of Jesus and His apostles is altogether against it, and I take it that Scripture is to go before prudence, and that His example is always to be above man’s wisdom.

Why should the people of God tarry in these days? Let them haste, and delay not to keep His commandments, and what if young people do grow in grace faster now than they did in your time? Perhaps God has now poured out a larger measure of His Spirit. He has placed us in brighter days, and plants in the warm sunshine must expect to grow faster than those that dwell in the frost. We know that in the short summers of Sweden, a harvest will ripen in two or three months, or less than that. Why should we complain of the corn of Sweden, because it ripens so swiftly, when it is just as good as ours that takes several months to ripen?

The Lord does as He wills and as He pleases, and if some fly swiftly, whilst others travel slowly, let those who go slowly bless God that they go at all, but let them not murmur that others go a little faster. Nevertheless, it will always be to God’s church a source of wonder, “Who are these that fly so swiftly like a cloud?”

The Targum has another idea—that of *publicity*. “Who are these that fly as a cloud?” The cloud, you know, flies so that everybody can see it. So do these converts fly openly before the world. It is a matter of admiration with this church and with God’s church whenever it is increased, that the converts become so bold and fly so publicly.

In the first days of the church, Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night. He was somewhat ashamed lest he should be put out of the synagogue. Joseph of Arimathea, the rich man, was afraid to proclaim his Lord, and therefore loved Jesus “secretly, for fear of the Jews.” But you do not read that any of them were afraid, when God poured out the Holy Ghost on the day that Peter preached, but “They broke their bread from house to house, and did eat it in singleness of heart, praising God.”

They went up to the beautiful gate of the temple, and in the very teeth of all the people, Peter and John healed the lame man. They worked their miracles openly before all men. They were not ashamed. So, when there is a glorious ingathering of souls, you will always notice how bold the people become. Why, there never were such a brazen-faced set of people as those who assemble here. They are not ashamed of their religion. Why, I have seen persons come to the pool of baptism, fearing, shaking, and trembling, but I have not found it so with the majority of those who have been baptized in this place. They seem proud to own their Master. They can sing—

*“Ashamed of Jesus? Sooner far
Let evening blush to own a star!
Ashamed of Jesus? Just as soon
Let midnight be ashamed of noon!”*

You “are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ,” for it has been here the power of God unto salvation to many who have believed. I have rejoiced to see the boldness of the young converts, I have heard of them fighting with the antagonists of the truth. I have seen them boldly standing up for their Master in the face of scorns and jeers, and slanders, and the church says, with regard to them, “Who are these that fly publicly as a cloud?”

But I think there is another idea here, which Dr. Gill gives us in his very valuable commentary. “Who are these that fly as a cloud,” for *unanimity*? You will mark, not as clouds, but “as a cloud,” not as two or three bodies, but as one united and compact mass! Here is the secret of strength. Split us into fractions and we are conquered. Unite us into a steady phalanx, and we become invincible. Knit us together as one man and Satan himself can never rend us asunder. Divide us into threads, let our warp and woof be disunited, and we become like rotten tow, that burns before a single spark of the fire of the enemy. But thanks be to God, we are “as the heart of one man.”

I could not but wonder at our church meeting on Wednesday, how all seemed to fly as a cloud. No sooner was a thing proposed, than the whole church seemed without a dissenting opinion to be carried along irresistibly by one thought that possessed its bosom. It is very seldom you see a church really united, but God has united *us*.

We have “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” But yet the church wonders at it, she can scarcely understand it. “Who are these,” she says, “who fly as one compact and solid cloud?” God grant that we may always continue so! Whatever is said of one of us, let it be said of all of us. Do not let us be stragglers. Those who fall into the rear of an army are always in danger, and those who hang about its flanks are equally subject to insult and injury.

Let us march breast to breast, shoulder to shoulder, each of us drawing the sword at one word, everyone doing as the captain tells us, and as surely as truth prevails, unity shall conquer, and our king shall honor us and bless us still, treading our foes beneath our feet, and making us more than conquerors through Him that has loved us.

Again, there is the idea of *power*. Who is he that shall bridle a cloud or stop it in its march? What man is he who by a word can stay the careering clouds and make them still? Who is he that can bid

them, when they are driving northward, turn their course to the south? Who is he that can rein the coursers of the wind and forbid them to drag the chariots of darkness along to the west?

The clouds yield to none, no majesty can control them. They laugh to scorn the sceptre of the prince and they move on despite the rattling of the sabers of armies. None can stop the clouds—they are invincible, uncontrollable, and in their majesty they move themselves right royally, like the kings of heaven.

And who is he that can stop the converts of Zion? Who is he that can keep back the children of Jerusalem, when the Lord shall “bring again the captivity of his people,” who is he that shall stop them? When His people of old were in Babylon, could “the two-leaved gates” bar them in? Could Cyrus, with all his armies, have kept them prisoners?

Nay, the two-leaved gates open, the bars of brass give way, and Cyrus himself sends them back to their country, with gold and silver to build their temple. And when in latter days the Jews shall return to their own land again, to worship God, who shall stop them? Shall the might of Russia? Shall the power of Egypt? Shall the tyranny of Turkey? Shall aught keep them back? No, the city shall be builded again upon her own heap, and the tribes of the Lord shall yet go up again, to worship God where their forefathers bowed before them.

O, people of God! it is so with you. “Who are these that fly as a cloud!” Try, try, O enemy, to stop one of the Lord’s doves, when he is coming to the windows! You cannot do it. Did not the devil try to stop you, O brother, when you were coming to God? Ah! he did, but it was all in vain. And when you went to join the church, how many difficulties there were in the way! But when you are called to God you will not be afraid, you will fly like a cloud.

Ah! the world says we shall stop by and by, that all our success is as nothing, that it will soon die away, that it is a mere excitement, and will soon end. Ah! let them talk so, if they please. We are flying like a cloud. We have God within us, we have good within us, we have the might of the Deity within our church, and who is he that shall stop us?

We bid the mighty men of this earth come, we bid carnal reason array itself against us, we bid the wisdom of the critic try to stop us. But they cannot do it. The weakness of God is mightier than man, and He who took us from the sheepfolds to lead His people Israel will not desert His David. He who has put us before His people will not cast us away, nor will He leave His church, nor forsake His chosen ones. “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?”

Thus have I tried to picture to you the amazement of Christ’s church. “Who are these that fly as a cloud?” And now, church of God, one word with you ere I leave you. Your success is amazing one way, but it is not amazing if you look at it in another direction. It is amazing that any man should be saved, if you look at man—it is not amazing if you consider God. It is amazing that the wilderness should blossom as the rose, if you look at the wilderness, but it is not amazing, if you consider JEHOVAH. It is wonderful that a desert should have the excellence of Carmel and Sharon, but wonder all dies away, when you recollect that God who does as He wills in the armies of heaven does as He pleases in this lower world.

O, church of God! give the honor and the glory to your God, and to your God only. Write His name upon your banners. Let your sacrifice smoke before Him and before none else. Let no man receive your honor. Give it unto God. Unto God belong the shields of the mighty. “I am and there is none else besides me.”

Bow before Him, lest, if you give praise to the creature, and if you think we have done anything and say, “Behold this great Babylon that I have builded,” God would say, “Because you have exalted yourself like the cedars of Lebanon, therefore will I bring you down to the earth, and your glory shall be taken from you.” May the Lord in His mercy keep us from pride, and also keep us living on Him, believing in His might, and trusting in His power!

II. This brings us to the second portion of our discourse, which is the PLEASURE OF THE CHURCH.

“Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?”

First, the church is exceedingly pleased at the *character* of those who come to her, “doves.” We should always thank God, when those who join the church are of the right sort, for alas! there is such a thing as having a large addition to the church of men that are of no use whatever. Many an army has swelled its ranks with recruits, who have in no way whatever contributed to its might. And it has been known in many great revivals, that large hosts have been gathered in, who have forsaken the truth in six months.

I know a church which excommunicated eighty members in twelve months for disorderly conduct and forsaking the truth. And they had taken in a hundred or so the year before, from some great spasm, which had been occasioned by one of those spurious revivalists, who came about making a great noise, and doing no good whatever, but scorching and burning up the ground, where other men might have sown the good seed of the kingdom. I wonder that any man should be so self-conceited as to call himself a revivalist or profess to be a revival-maker.

Let this be known, as my opinion, he is a nuisance and nothing better. But where a church is cautious, where the minister exercises scrutiny, and all possible means are taken to see into character, it gives us great pleasure that they are of the right sort. Ah! beloved, you should be at our church meetings sometimes and hear the sweet words of experience which are uttered there. I am sure you would say that they, “fly as the doves to their windows.”

Now and then there comes before me an old croaking raven, that wants to come in, but we are soon able to tell the raven from the dove. It may be that now and then a raven gets into our church, but I do hope that the majority are doves. We have seen them so humble, so meek, trusting alone in Jesus, like timid doves, half afraid to speak and tell you, and yet so loving, that they seemed as if they had sat on the finger of Jesus, and picked their food from between His lips. We have marked their conduct afterwards, and seen it to be holy and consistent.

We will glory before the world, that notwithstanding the numbers that have been added to us, we have had to cut off as few as any church in the world—but *one* in a year, out of our vast body! and that one was received from another church, and therefore had never been examined thoroughly. O my brethren, always try to give the church pleasure by your dove-like conversation. “Be wise as serpents, but harmless as doves.” Such was your Master’s teaching.

Let your character be—

***“Humble, teachable, and mild,
Changed into a little child;
Pleased with all the Lord provides,
Weaned from all the world besides.”***

“Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth.” Be not like the unclean bird, that will devour all kinds of filth, but be like the dove, that lives on the “good corn of the kingdom.” And be you sure that you are like them, loving and kind to one another, and like them, always mourn when you lose your mate—weep when your Jesus is gone from you and you lose His delightful presence. Be you like the dove in all these things.

Again, the church feels pleasure, not only in their character, but in their *condition*. Like doves “that fly.” Lowth translates this portion of the verse “like doves on the wing.” The church feels pleasure in thinking that her converts are “like doves on the wing.” Do you never, beloved, get into such a condition that you are not like a dove on the wing, but like a dove in a secret place, in the cleft of the rock, hiding yourself in darkness because you are afraid to be seen?

For my own part, I am often not like a dove on the wing, but like a dove hiding its head under its wing, afraid to fly. But “He reneweth our strength like the eagle’s.” There is a molting time for the

Lord's doves, but their feathers grow again, and then they have the wings of the dove, covered with silver, and their feathers with yellow gold, and then they can fly upwards towards Jesus.

And will not our church rejoice, when her converts appear to be all on the wing, not doubting, fearful converts, not converts that stand timidly, afraid to come. But converts on the wing, flying upwards towards Jesus, prayerful, laborious, active, not sitting still, doing nothing, but laboring and flying upwards towards Jesus. These are the converts we want. And the church is pleased when she can say, "Who are these that are like doves on the wing?"

Furthermore, the translation of the Septuagint gives us another idea. "Who are these that fly like doves *with their young*?" The church rejoices at the company that the converts bring with them. How charming is the sight when a father unites himself with the people of God, and then his children after him!

We had an instance a little while ago here, of two sons followed by their mother, and we have had many instances of a mother following her daughters, and of daughters following their mothers, and sons following their fathers. Oh! how blessed it is to see the doves come with their young! If there is anything more beautiful than a dove, it is the little dove that flies by its side.

Beloved, do you not rejoice, some of you, that you have your children in the church? that you can run your eye along the pew where your offspring are sitting with you, and can say, "Ah! glory be to God, it is not only I that have received His mercy, but here are my sons, too. And there sits my daughter drinking from the same well as I draw from, living on the same spiritual manna, looking to the same cross for salvation, and hoping for the same heaven!" But I notice some families here—I could point them out if I would. I notice them with sadness, where there is a father and a mother, both of them heirs of heaven, but of whose sons we have no evidence and no hope that they are the children of God.

And there are some of you, my friends, whose young ones have come before you. We have daughters here that have prayerless mothers. We have sons that have ungodly fathers. Oh! does it not seem hard that the children should be in the kingdom before the parents? For if it be hard that a parent should see his children perishing, surely there is tenfold horror in the thought of children saved, and parents going to hell—your offspring entering into the joy of their Lord, and you yourselves cast "into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Daughter of Zion! plead for your children. Men of Jerusalem! plead for your children.

The church, again, feels pleasure *at the direction in which these doves move*. "Who are these that fly as the doves to *their windows*?" Where should the dove fly to else but to its dovecot? The word means the dovecot, where the doves live, the little pigeon holes into which the doves enter and dwell. The joy of the church is that the poor sinner does not fly to man, nor to the law, but flies to Christ, the dovecot!

I can recollect when, like a poor dove, sent out by Noah from his hand, I flew over the wide expanse of waters, and hoped to find some place where I might rest my wearied wing. Up towards the north I flew, and my eye looked keenly through the mist and darkness, if perhaps it might find some floating substance on which my soul might rest its foot, but it found nothing.

Again it turned its wing and flapped it, but not so rapidly as before, across that deep water that knew no shore, but still there was no rest. The raven had found his resting place upon a floating body, and was feeding itself upon the carrion of some drowned man's carcass. But my poor soul found none.

I went on—thought I saw a ship floating out at sea. It was the ship of the law, and I thought I would put my feet on its canvas, or rest myself on its cordage for a time, and find some refuge. But ah! it was an airy phantom, on which I could not rest, for my foot had no right to rest on the law—I had not kept it and the soul that keeps it not must die.

At last I saw the barque Christ Jesus—that happy ark, and I thought I would fly thither, but my poor wing was weary and I could fly no further, and down I sank into the water. But as providence would have it, when my wings were flagging, and I dropped into the stream to be drowned, just below me was the roof of the ark, and I saw a hand put out from it, that took me, and said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore I have not delivered the soul of My turtle dove into the company of the

wicked—come in, come in!” and then I found I had an olive branch in my mouth of peace with God and peace with man, plucked off with Jesus’ power.

Poor soul! have you found a resting-place in the ark? have you fled to your window? or are you, O Ephraim, like the silly dove that has no heart, that goes down to Egypt, and rests itself in Assyria? Oh, say you, why is it that you are looking for rest, where none can be found? There be many that say, “Who will show us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me!” That is the dove’s resting-place, that is his house.

Have you found your home in Christ? If you have not, when the storm comes, O dove, with ruffled plumage you shall be driven before the swift tempest, you shall be blown along like a small feather before the stream, onward, onward, through the dark unknown, until you find yourself with burned and singed wings, falling into flames that have no bottom. The Lord give you deliverance and help you to fly to Jesus.

III. Now we come to our third point—the CHURCH’S ANXIETY.

“Ah!” says the church, “it is all very well their flying like a cloud. It is all right their going as doves to their windows, but who are they?” The church is anxious, and she anxiously desires to be sure that it is all gold that is put into her treasury, for she suspects that some of those lumps of bullion cannot be gold. She thinks, “Surely that is not all genuine metal or there would not be so much of it,” and she says, “Who are they?” That is the question! Now I address myself to an anxious church to answer it.

First, they are *those that fly*. Our text says, “Who are these that fly?” They are those who fly because they cannot stop where they were, and they are flying somewhere else for refuge. We trust that those who have joined our church are those who are persuaded that the land wherein they dwelt is to be consumed with fire, who feel a necessity to come out of the place where they once lived, and have a strong desire to seek “a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

We hope, beloved, that those who have joined with us here are those who are escaping from hell and flying to heaven, such as once had no sins that they cared for, but now come out because they needs must come, for their house has got too hot for them, and they cannot abide any longer in their sins.

Here we have the idea of conviction. They are those that fly. They are not content now to make their nest of their own good works, with here and there a little bit of down picked off Morality-common, and here a piece of yarn that they have picked up in Legality palace, and here a piece of good work that they have found in the barnyard of Ceremonialism. No, they are poor souls who have no rest anywhere, but are flying, and flying with rapid wing, until they can get to their windows.

Are you such, my beloved, that have joined the church? or are you not? If you are not, you have deceived me, and you have deceived the church, for we thought you were. We want to have none united with us but those who are flying to us. We want no self-righteous ones, no self-sufficient ones, no good moral people.

We want those who feel that they are nothing at all, and want Jesus Christ to be all in all. We want a church of poor ragged sinners, clothed by Jesus—poor dead sinners, made alive by Jesus. I ask God, when I ask Him to give me any, to give me those who are flying with haste for a Savior, and if any of you that have come to us making a profession of flying are not such, I beseech you by everything that is solemn, by that hell of hypocrites, which is the hell of hells, and by the heaven you would lose, to bethink yourselves how sinfully you are acting, in continuing members of a Christian church when you are hypocrites and have never fled.

But again, they are those who fly *not on the ground, but like a cloud, up high*. We know many a church, to which the people come, because there is so much charity connected with it. I know some country churches in the Establishment which are attended by some people, because there are regularly given away so many sixpences after the service. That is flying like a will-o’-the-wisp, dancing about in dark marshy places.

If I could buy all London for my congregation by the turn of a three-penny piece, I would not give it. If people do not come from some better motives, we do not wish to have any. But we have none of that

sort, we trust. They fly higher than these groundlings. Zion rejoiced that they did not fly on the ground, but flew like a cloud. They were persons that did not care about the world, but wanted heaven.

They were *souls filled with rain*, like the clouds, or if they were not big and black with rain, as the clouds sometimes are when they are about to burst, yet they had a little grace in them, a little moisture, a little dew.

And they were *persons driven by the wind*, just as the clouds are—who do not move of themselves, but go because they must go—who have no power of themselves to move, but have something driving them behind. Brethren, we hope that the converts of this church have been driven to us by the power of the Holy Ghost, and could not help coming, and they have been men filled with rain, which they will drop out upon us in copious showers, if God pleases.

They have been like the clouds, which tarry not for man, neither wait for the sons of men. They are come with us now, and we hope to see the clouds go up higher and higher into the air, until those clouds shall one by one, be swallowed up in Jesus, shall be lost in the one assembly of the First-born church of the Holy Ghost. These are the persons who “fly as a cloud.”

We give you yet another answer, O you timid church. Those who come to join themselves with you are *persons who have been regenerated*, for they are *doves*. They were not doves by nature—they were ravens—but they are doves now. They are changed from ravens into doves, from lions into lambs. Beloved, it is very easy for you to pretend to be the children of God, but it is not easy for you to be so.

The old fable of the jackdaw dressed up in peacock’s feathers often takes place now. Many a time have we seen coming to our church, a fine strutting fellow, with long feathers of prayer behind him. He could pray gloriously, and he has come strutting in, with all his majesty and pride and said, “Surely I must come, I have everything about me, am I not rich and polite? have I not learning and talent?”

In a very little while we have found him to be nothing but an old prattling jackdaw, having none of the true feathers belonging to him. By some accident one of his borrowed feathers has dropped out, and we have found him to be a hypocrite. I beseech you, do not be hypocrites. The glory of the Gospel is not that it paints ravens white, and whitewashes blackbirds, but that it turns them into doves. It is the glory of our religion not that it makes a man seem what he is not, but that it makes him something else.

It takes the raven and turns him into a dove, his ravenish heart becomes a dove’s heart. It is not the feathers that are changed, but the man himself. Glorious Gospel, which takes a lion, and does not cut the lion’s mane off, and then cover him with a sheep’s skin, but makes him into a lamb! O church of God! these that have come like doves to their windows are trophies of regenerating grace, which has transformed them, and made them as new creatures in Christ Jesus.

The last answer I shall give respecting those who have come to join themselves with us is, that they are those, we hope, who have *fled to their windows* and found a refuge in Christ my Lord. There is nothing we want to know of a person coming before the church, except this. Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you had pardon from His hands? Have you had union with His person? Do you hold communion with Him day by day? Is He your hope, your stay, your refuge, your trust? If so, then you may come in. If you are one living in the dovecot we will not drive you away, if you have fled like a dove to your window, we are glad to have you.

But there is the anxious question—Have you fled to Christ? Beloved, there are some who think they have fled to Christ that have not, and there are some who think they have not fled to Christ that have. There are some of you who think yourselves safe for heaven, that are nothing but whitewashed sepulchres, like the Pharisees of old.

It is a horrible thought that there are some, we fear, who lay their head upon their death pillow, as they think, in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection, but will in hell lift up their eyes, being in torment. A dove, you know, can find good shelter for itself in other places beside a dovecot. There may be some little hole in the barn, and in there the dove gets and builds its nest, and is very happy and comfortable.

Ah! dove, but there is no place that will protect you that is not a dovecot, and there is only one dovecot. You have built a nice snug nest perhaps in some of your trees. You are building your hope in some one of your merits. You are putting your trust in some of your own works. It is all in vain. There is only one dovecot. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ and him crucified."

There is only one hope for a poor sinner from the justice of JEHOVAH, and that is in the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," who "gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." Do you know how *that* dovecot was made for you? Do you know how it is lined for you and how large the door is?

It was made by Jesus, the carpenter's son. It is lined with the blood of His own heart, and the door is so wide that the biggest sinner can get in, but he who has any righteousness will find that the door is not large enough to let him carry his righteousness with him. Poor soul! have you a dovecot? and are you living in it? If so, we rejoice with you, and glad enough should we be to have you united with our church, for we love all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, lest you should not understand our holy religion, one moment shall suffice, and you may go.

Do you not know that the law which God made on Sinai has been broken by us all, and that God, the "jealous God," will "by no means spare the guilty"? And do you not know, O sinner, that you must offer something to God, to make up a recompense for what you have done? Do you not know, that God is so angry with the man who sins, that He will damn that man, unless there is someone who will be damned for him, and suffer the punishment in his stead?

And do you not know, that our religion is a religion of substitution—that Jesus Christ the Son of God became man, that He might take the punishment we ought to have had—that He bore the wrath we ought to have borne, that He took the guilt we committed, just as the scapegoat of old did, and carried it right away into the wilderness of forgetfulness. So that now a sinner who is putting his trust in that substitution can escape punishment. God's justice cannot demand payment twice—

*"First at my bleeding Surety's hands,
And then again at mine."*

Precious Jesus! what a substitute You were for guilt! Sweet Lord Jesus! I kiss Your wounds this day. Thou Man! Thou God! Thou who did wrestle with Jacob! Thou who did walk with Abraham, the man of God, of Mamre! Thou who stood in the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! Thou Son of God, Thou Son of Man, who did appear to Joshua with your sword drawn!

I worship You, my substitute, my hope! Oh! that others might do so too, and that the whole of this vast multitude might, with one heart, accept Him as their Savior!

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.