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Hosea 7:11 A Silly Dove

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“Ephraim was like a silly dove without heart.” — Hosea 7:11

THE race of Ephraim is not extinct. Men are to this very day very much like what they were in the days of the prophets. The same rebukes are still suitable, as well as the same comforts. As man has altered very little, if at all, in his outward bodily conformation, so has he not varied in the inner constitution; he is much the same today as he was in the time of Hosea. In this congregation, in the midst of the city of London, we have too large a company of those who are “like a silly dove without heart.”

To proceed at once with the text, I want you to notice four things: first; a saintly similitude; secondly, a secret distinction; thirdly, a severe description; and, lastly, a serious consideration.

I. Here we have A Saintly Similitude: Ephraim is like a dove!”

The people are not compared here to the eagle that soareth aloft, and acendeth its prey from afar, nor to the vulture which delights to gorge itself with carrion; they are not likened to any foul and unclean bird which was put aside under the law; but the very figure which is constantly chosen to set forth the beauty of holiness, to describe the believer, and to picture the whole Church, — nay, that very emblem by which we set forth him who is holiness itself, God the Holy Spirit, — that same comparison to a dove is here used to describe those who were without heart. “Ephraim is like a dove,” — it is a saintly similitude.

Let me remind you that, in all congregations, there are those who are like doves, but not Christ’s doves, who never build their nests in the clefts of the rock, in the bosom of the Savior. They are like doves; you can never tell them from genuine believers; and, like doves, they are perfectly harmless; they do no mischief to others in their lives. Track them, if you will, you will never find them in the alehouse; they sing not the song of the drunkard; no man ever lost anything in business by them. Men may have their pockets picked in the streets, but never by them. Persons may go staggering home under a wound, but that wound never comes from their hand, there is no uncleanness in their heart, and no slander on their tongue; they are amiable, admirable; we might almost hold them up for examples of propriety. Alas! alas! that we have only to look within to find that they are not what they seem.

Moreover, being like doves for harmlessness, they are also like them for loving good company. We find not the dove flying with a host of eagles, but it consorts with its own kind. Some of you are never happier than when you are either in the Tabernacle or else in some of the classes formed by various members of the congregation. You also find such a pleasant excitement in the prayer meeting that you are not absent from it except when you are prevented by business. You love being where God's people go; their hymns are sweet to your ears, in their prayers you find some sort of comfort, and in the ministry of the Word you take delight. You fly like a cloud, and like doves to their windows, and it is a joy to us to see you do it; and yet it may be that, although you know how to congregate like doves, you are simply "like a silly dove without heart."

Moreover, these persons are still more like the dove, in that they have the same meekness apparently, as distinguishes the dove. They hear as God's people hear, and sit as his people sit. They are not sceptics; they never object to the exposition of the doctrines to which they listen; they pick no holes in the preacher's coat, — they have no particular fault to find either with the style or the matter of his discourse; they decorously frequent the house of God, and behave themselves in a seemly manner when there; nay, more than that, they do seem with meekness to receive the Word, though they do not receive it, as engrafted into their own hearts; they even receive it with joy when the seed is scattered on them, but having no root in themselves, the good seed comes to nothing. O my dear hearers, it is a great subject for thanksgiving that, so many of you are ready and willing to listen to the Word with deep and profound respect; but I do beseech you to remember that you may, in this, be like unto the dove, and yet, after all, you may be taken in the same net and destroyed with the same destruction as that which fell upon the Ephraimites, who were "like a silly love without heart."

The dove, you know, is a cleanly feeder, and so we have many who get as far as that. They know the distinction between the precious and the vile; they will not feed on law, they can only live on grace; they have come to know the doctrines of the gospel, and they feed on them, — upon pure corn well winnowed. You have only to bring in a little free will, and straightway they know the chaff from the wheat, and refuse to receive it. They cast it away as refuse metal, which is of no value to them. But, while they have an orthodox head, they have a heterodox heart; while they know the truth, and feel it, yet still it is not the right kind of feeling; they have never so received it as to incorporate it into their very being; they have accepted it with the same sort of belief, and in somewhat the same manner, as Simon did in Samaria; but, after a while, when trouble and persecution shall come, and was too hot, they will turn aside.

But I have to add yet further here, that there are some of these persons who are like doves in another respect still more singular as a dove is molested by all sorts of birds of prey, so these persons do, for a time, share the lot which befalls the people of God. Why, there are some who, for the mere coming to the house of God, get nicknamed "saints." They are not saints, but, they have to bear the scoffing which is given to saints; and I know some, who have turned out great sinners, who have, for a time, put, up with much scoffing and rebuke for the sake of Christ. When pointed at in the street, it has been part of the manliness of their character to acknowledge that they did frequent such a place of worship. Though their soul has never been stricken by the Divine Word, yet it has become so sweet in their ear, that they are willing to bear some degree of reproach for the sake of it. I should not like to be compelled to say precisely wherein the saint is to be distinguished by outward signs, for really the counterfeits nowadays are so much like the genuine, that it needs the wisdom of the infallible God himself to discern between the one and the other. We can have false faith, false repentance, false hope, and false good works. We have all sorts of things, — paint, varnish, tinsel, — and we may so grain that a skillful eye will scarcely know whether it is the genuine wood or the artist's skill. There are many ways of preparing metals, and, sometimes, the alloy seems to have in it, for some purpose, qualities which the unalloyed metal lacks. O Lord, the great Searcher of hearts, do thou search us, lest we should have applied to us saintly names, and pass the saintly reputation and character, and hold saintly offices, and after all be cast away with the rubbish over the wall, and left to be consumed for ever and ever! But, enough on that point.

II. I have now to call your attention to A Secret Distinction: "Ephraim is like a dove without heart."

This implies a lack of understanding. The dove knows but little, and experience scarcely teaches it anything. We may almost spread the snare in the flight of that bird, and yet it will fly to it, it is so silly. It does not seem to possess, at least to the outward eye, the wits and sense of some others of the feathered tribe. It has little or no understanding. And oh, how many there are who are, spiritually, like the dove; they have no real knowledge of the truth! They rest in the letter, and think that is enough. I solemnly believe that there are those who have not the shadow of an idea of the meaning of the words while they hear every Sabbath-day in a form of prayer. They repeat those prayers without any appreciation of the sense of them; they would probably not notice if the words were put in any other way. Doubtless they would get as much good out of them if they were thrown together in wild disorder, as they do out of the beautiful and magnificent array in which they are marshalled. Many, who come and hear the most simple truths, go away and say, "It is a riddle to us; we cannot understand how people can sit and listen to that." Either they condemn the preacher's words as trite or else as fanatical; they cannot understand them. You may fetch a clodhopper, and set before him the masterpiece of an eminent old painter, and tell him, "That picture is worth sixty thousand pounds." He looks, opens his mouth, starts again, and says he can't make anything of it; he can't see where the money could go. He'd sooner have carts, and horses, and

pigs, and cows, and sheep. Well, now, to some extent, we might almost sympathize with him; but the high-art critics despise the man at once for having no soul above his clod. And it is just the same in spiritual things. Exhibit the glories of the person of Christ, and the matchless wisdom of the plan of salvation, that man can see nothing in it. "it is, no doubt, a very good and very proper thing," he will attend to it, and so on; and then he goes to church, and thinks he is pious, sits in his seat, and goes through the routine, and then supposes he is reconciled to God. Oh, how many such silly doves we have fluttering in and out of our places of worship! As a quaint old preacher said, there were scarcely seats enough for the saints on account of the number of simpletons that came to listen.

But, again, they were silly doves without heart, because, lacking an understanding heart, they also lacked a decided heart. Sometimes, however, the dove would be slandered if we should use her as a metaphor in this respect. Have you not seen the dove, when, from afar, with her quick eye, she has seen her cot, fly straight away, over miles of sea and land, straight to her beloved home? There, she could not be used as a metaphor of the ungodly; but of a child of Jesus, who thus flies to him over the wild waves of sin. But, perhaps, you have seen the dove as first she rises in the air, and then flies round and round. She deliberates in order to find out which is the right direction, and, when she has made up her mind, away she flies straight as an arrow to the goal. But, while she is fluttering about, she is an apt emblem of some men. They are undecided whether for God or Baal. They halt, to user Elijah's figure, between two opinions. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." On Sundays, they go to church; but, on Mondays, they put on their religious habits; the weather is too rough, or something else prevents them from going to the prayer-meeting. On Sunday, they say, —

"My willing soul would stay In such a frame as this, And sit and sing herself away To everlasting bliss;" — but, on Monday or Tuesday, the sound of the wheels in the street, and the noise of them that buy and sell, put the music of Jerusalem out of their cars, and they would fain go back to the world again. Ah, they are silly doves, without understanding and without decision!

Nay, there are some who may be said to have a sort of decision for a time; but they are like the dove, in that they are without resolution. The doves seeks to fly in one direction; somebody claps his hands, and she changes in a moment; or else he sprinkles a handful of barley on the ground, and, though she was flying yonder, she is over here again. How many persons there are of that kind, setting their faces to Zion, intending to join the church; perhaps they have seen the elders and the pastor, and been accepted; but, after a little time, they say, "Well, they did not know all about it; there are more frightful things than they dreamt of in it! "Like Pliable, they would go to heaven, but they get into the Slough of Despond, and there is queer stuff there that gets into the ears and mouth, and so they get out on the side nearest home, and tell Christian he may have the brave country all to himself, for they don't like the miry places on the way. Or, it may be, that some odd companion comes up from the country, and he will treat them to some place of amusement: or, perhaps, it may be that there is a prospect of gain to be got in some branch of business that is not quite so honest as it might be. But does not the money count as well? Isn't it as good to spend? Will not other men think it worth twenty shillings to the pound, however it may have been gained? These people, who seemed so true and warm-hearted, are like the silly dove without resolution, and fly away again to their old haunts, and become just what they used to be.

So likewise there are many, like a dove, without bold hearts. They never turn upon a persecutor. They never stood in the gap with Mr. Valiant-for-Truth, holding the sword in their hand; They cannot open their mouth to speak for Jesus, but they run away when they ought to stand out like a lion against their foes; they never give a reason for the hope that is in them. We have plenty of Baptist churches educating cowards by the score. They never come out before the whole church, — that would be too trying for their nerves. They are never expected to come out boldly on the Lord's side. Too often, baptism is administered somewhere in a corner, when as few as possible are present; and, in that way, where we ought to have lion-like men, we breed those who hide their principles, and are ready to amalgamate with any sect of people so long as they can but bear the name of Christians. I would to God, dear friends, we had bolder men for our Lord and Master. Be as full of love as you can, but take care that you mix iron with your constitution. Silly are the doves that have no bold heart for God. The day will come when only the bold heart shall win, for the fearful and unbelieving are to have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

Too many, also, there are like a silly dove, in that they have a powerless heart. If you visit a great manufactory where there is a large engine, you will notice that the amount of power used in the factory is proportionate to the capacity of the steam-engine. If that should work but feebly, then the wheels cannot revolve beyond a proportionate rate, and every part soon discovers that there is some lack of motive force. Now, man's heart is the great steam-engine of his whole being; and if he has a heart that palpitates with swift strokes, it will put his whole nature in motion, and that man will be mighty for his Lord and Master; but if he has a little, insignificant heart that never did glow, and never did burn, and never did know anything about the warmth, and life, and heat, and power, and benediction of God's love, then his will fritter away his time, knowing the right and doing the wrong, loving in some sort the thing that is beautiful, but still following that which is deformed, giving his name to God, and giving what little strength he has to the other side. Brethren, I would to God there were not so many in all our communities that have but a pigeon's heart, or a dove's heart, or no heart at all.

The root of the master lies here: those Ephraimites have not renewed hearts, and so they fail. Verily, verily, is it true to this hour, as

in Jesu's day, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Many strive to see it in their own way; but, until the effectual grace of God comes down to turn their hearts from the great and extraordinary confidence which their proud flesh has in their own works, they never will see, they never can see, the kingdom of God. How many like Ephraim, then, have the heart altogether wrong because it is not renewed; therefore it has none of these qualifications which tend to be more the man what he should be.

III. With great brevity, we notice, in the third place, A Severe Description: "Ephraim is like a silly dove".

It is a fine word, that word "silly." Hardly do I know another that is so eminently descriptive. There may be some sort of dignity in being a fool; but to be silly, — to attract no attention except ridicule, — is so utterly contemptible that I do not know how a more sarcastic epithet could be applied.

"Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart." And why silly? Why, it is silly, of course, to profess to be a dove at all, unless a dove at heart, silly of you to enslave yourselves with the customs of a country of which you are not a citizen, — to bind yourselves with the rules of a family of which you are not a member. We find men, when they go to another country, if there is a description there, only too willing to plead their own nationality, in order to escape it; and yet we have persons who will serve in the Christian conscription, who give as God's people give, and outwardly do what God's people do, and yet they are not of the godly nation, but are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. Do not this silly, — to take the irksome toil, and not to get the joy and the benefit of it? You are silly to go and work in the vineyard, though you have never eaten of the clusters, and never can unless your heart be right in the sight of God. Isn't it silly, then, to profess to be a dove at all, and yet not to be a dove?

Isn't it silly, again, to think you can pass muster when your heart is wrong, — to fancy that, if you go with the crowd, you shall enter heaven without being seen? Dost thou think to deceive Omniscience? Dost thou think infallible wisdom will not discern thee? Dost thou think to enter heaven while thy soul is estranged from God? Then, indeed, thou art worse than a fool; thou art "silly" to think such a thing. How canst thou thus hope to deceive thy God? What is more silly than to play fast and loose, in this way, — first, to sing the song of Zion, and then the song of lasciviousness! There is something dignified even in the devil himself; there is something awful about the grandeur of his wickedness, because he is consistent in it; but there is nothing of that consistency in you, because you are here and there, everywhere and nowhere; everything by turns, and nothing long.

Some of you are so silly as to hasten your own condemnation. You know that, to be without God, and without Christ, will ruin you, and yet you do that which keeps you from going to Christ; you hug the sins that prevent your laying hold on him, and still candle upon your knee the lusts which you know will shut the gates of heaven against you. Like Ephraim, you are silly enough to trust in that which will be your ruin. Some of you rest upon good works, or hope to be saved by good feelings. The two powers which had oppressed Ephraim, Egypt and Assyria, were still the powers in which he trusted. Do not you imitate his folly by trusting to that which will ruin you.

You are silly, again, because, when there is so much danger, you do not fly to the place of shelter. O silly dove, when the hawk is abroad, not to seek the cleft of the rock to hide itself! And how silly are some of you! Day after day, year after year, Satan is hawking after you; the great fowler is seeking your destruction; but the wounds of Christ are open to you, and the invitation of the gospel is freely given to you, and yet, so silly are you, that though you know better, you prefer the pleasures of the day to the joys of eternity. Yet I know not that you do prefer them, only somehow or other you are too silly to prove your preference, and go on, like a child that is playing on the hole of the cockatrice, making mirth over your damnation, too silly to make up your minds to choose either heaven or hell. I know there are some such, people in the house; would God that the arrow might find out the right persons; but, too often, these doves are so silly, in another respect, that they will not let the appeal of the gospel come home to thee. They say, "it cannot be for me, for I go to Mr. A's or Mr. B's class; it cannot be for me, for I go to the prayer-meeting, I contribute to the College, and every good work;" yet, all the while, it means just you who act upon your own whims, but not for God, who give God anything but your heart, who are ready to make a sacrifice of all, except that you refuse that which he asks of you, "My son, give me thine heart." It was considered to be a sign of great calamity when the Roman augur slew a bullock, and found no heart, and it is the worst of all calamities when a man has no heart to give to God. "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me," is one of the complaints against Israel of old, and one of the sins which made the prophets weep, and caused Jerusalem to be ploughed like a field.

IV. I close with just a few words upon the fourth point, and that is, A Serious Consideration.

There are one or two things I would say solemnly, softly, and hopefully. Oh, that they may stick in the memory and the conscience of many of you!

Those of you, my hearers, who have been long sitting in this Tabernacle, some of you ever since it was built, and before then in other places under our ministry, yet are just the same as you used to be, ought to recollect how sadly we look on those who are not saved. It is no rare thing to find the attendant of the sanctuary an unbeliever. It is a common thing to find the child of converted

parents, the lad educated at the Sabbath-school, the man who has always had a seat in God's house, still having no hope and without God in the world. Think of that! Be not deceived; the gospel will harden such people as you are. Speaking after the manner of men, (for, with God, all things are possible, and a sovereign God doeth as he wills,) it does seem less and less probable that you over should be called by grace after you have sat and listened to the Word so long. The voice that once startled you now soothes you; the manner that once attracted the eye, and sometimes seemed to touch the heart, fails to do either; and the very truth that once went over your heads like a crash of thunder has so little force in it now that you even sleep under the sound thereof. Think of that, you who are like a silly dove without heart.

Remember, too, that some of the vilest sinners that have ever lived have been manufactured out of this raw material. Some of the worst men were once, apparently, meek-hearted hearers of the Word, but they sat under the preaching of the gospel till they grew ripe enough to deny God and curse him. The unsanctified hearing of the gospel has sometimes produced more gigantic specimens of sin than the deaf ear of the adder. Beware, my hearer! I know that you will say with Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Yes, there is dog and devil enough in you, unless you have been changed by grace, to do that thing and twenty other things that you have never dreamt of yet. Think what multitudes of souls in hell there are like you, — silly doves without heart. Many of the population of that place of wailing once heard the gospel, heard it with gladness, and appeared to receive it for a time; but they had no root, and so the impression withered away. They never had been called effectually by grace, and never had been renewed in heart, although they had all the outward semblance of holiness. They have gone! Even now, your soul may listen to their groans and moans, the least of all which would be, "Make your calling and election sure, and be not satisfied with the name to live while you are dead."

May the Spirit of the living God stir you up to this; for, if not, I have one more consideration to urge upon you. Remember how soon you may be in hell yourself. And they who go there, if they have been such as you are, go there with a vengeance. To go from under the shadow of the pulpit to the pit, is terrible. To go from the communion cup, to drink the cup of devils; from the song at saints to the weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth of lost souls; from all the hallowed joys of God's Sabbath, of God's house, and of his Word, down to the unutterable infamy of spirits that have no love of God, but curse him day and night, — my hearers, that may to your lot within an hour, a week, a year. It matters not what the period may be, for, if it ever be your lot, the time past shall seem to have been but the twinkling of an eye for its joy, though it may appear to you to have been ages for the awful responsibility which the day of mercy will have entailed upon you. Repent and be baptized every one of you," as Peter said, so say I. If ye have not as yet received Christ, lay hold on eternal life, and oh, that the Spirit of the living God, while I preach the Word generally, may apply it particularly, finding out his own chosen, and gathering them out of the ruins of the Fall, that, they may be jewels in the crown of the Redeemer! The Lord make us doves, but God forbid that we should be "silly doves without heart."
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Hosea 8:1-2 The Minister's Trumpet-Blast and Church-Member's Warning

NO. 2772

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 30TH, 1902,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1869-1870.

"Set the trumpet to thy mouth. He shall come as an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law. Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee."-Hosea 8:1, 2.

WE do not use instrumental music in the worship of God, because we consider that it would be a violation of the Simplicity of our worship. We think it far better to hear the voices of Christian men and women than all the sounds, which can be made by instruments. Yet I am sure there is no Christian here who would object to a minister who can play well upon an instrument; and, indeed, a minister is good for nothing if he does not know how, spiritually, to give forth instrumental music. A true minister of Christ should know how to blow the ram's horn, so that the walls of Jericho may be made to tremble and fall; he should understand how to play the harp, so that, when any of you are disquieted, he may be to you as David was to Saul, and may drive away the evil spirit that troubles you. He should be able, too, to play upon the timbrel, and to lead you forth, sometimes, in the sacred song of joy and thanksgiving; he should be able to go forth like Miriam, and cry aloud to you, and ask you to follow him, while he says, "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously." His sermons should often seem to you to fulfill that exhortation of David, "Praise ye the Lord. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals." The minister of the gospel should understand, also how to blow the silver trumpet, to proclaim that the year of jubilee is come, and that the ransomed debtors may once more receive their lost inheritance. And there is one instrument upon which he should be well skilled, and, which he should

often use, namely, the trumpet. I do not mean the silver trumpet, but the war trumpet,-that clear, shrill-sounding instrument that gives the certain sound whereby men prepare themselves for the battle.

I have to use that trumpet to night; and, in explaining my text, I will speak of several, things that are here hinted at. First, there is a command to the gospel minister: "Set the trumpet to thy mouth;" there is, secondly, the particular reason for this command, in order that he may warn God's people: "Because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law;" then, thirdly, there is another special reason appended, because God was about to execute judgment upon these sinners: "He shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord." In the second verse we find our fourth point,-the blessed result of the blowing of this trumpet: "Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee."

I. First, then, here is A Command To The Gospel Minister:

"Set the trumpet to thy mouth." The Hebrew hath it, "Set the trumpet to the roof of thy mouth." Set it to thy mouth; keep it there; do not put it up sometimes, and then take it down again; but have it always in readiness, so as to sound the note of alarm. Set it to, the roof of thy mouth; blow with all thy might, and let men hear that the alarm comes not merely from thy lips, but from within thy mouth,-from thy v'ry heart. With such earnestness shalt thou sound the trumpet of warning.

What is meant by the minister setting the trumpet to his mouth? I think just this. In the first place, that when the minister is dealing with the souls of men, the tone which he uses should be very decisive. He should not set some little Jew's harp to his mouth, so that people hardly know whether he is making a noise or not; he should blow a trumpet, and produce a decisive sound, so that men may know what sin is reprov'd,-what virtue is commended. They should never have to ask themselves, "What does the minister mean? Does he really intend to condemn sin, or does he palliate it?" The declaration should be decisive, as the sound of the war trumpet is. When men hear that trumpet sounded in the East, they do not ask themselves, "Does that mean dancing? Is that the sound of them that make merry?" but they say at once, "That means war; we are sure it does. Let us prepare ourselves for the battle." So should it be with the message of God's servant. He has not to say, "If this," or "if that;" but to set the trumpet of gospel warning to the roof of his month, and give out a note that none can mistake. For the text means not only a decisive sound, but a clear sound. Of all sounds, perhaps that of the trumpet is the clearest; so should it be with the message of Christ's servant. It should not be indistinct, and full of hard words that cannot be understood; it should not be a piece of music, the tune of which is so difficult that no man can possibly follow it or even know what is meant by it; but it should be the one, two, three notes of "Awake! awake, ye sleepers! what mean ye?" or this yet more solemn note, "Awake, ye dead, and come to judgment." "Prepare to meet thy God." There should be something so Clear that, the moment the minister's statement is heard, those who are willing to understand it should have no difficulty in knowing its meaning.

Again, in setting the trumpet to his mouth, the minister should not only give a decisive and clear testimony in all his ministrations, but it should also be a loud and startling testimony. You know some preachers who send their congregations to sleep; not only because of their monotonous style of address, but because their matter itself is sleepy. The people seem to say, "Well, if that is all the man has to talk about, we may as well be a sleep as awake." Sometimes, they preach the doctrines, which teach men to sit still, and do nothing; and then they say, "Well, let us sit still, and do nothing; only, let us sleep by the way, and enjoy ourselves." There are too many droning preachers that Satan employs to rock the cradle of immortal souls, while he is standing by waiting till the time shall come for him to carry them off. "You play," says Satan to the minister, "and I will dance to them; and between the two of us, we will lead them to hell." There will be a fearful amount of blood upon the skirts of a man whose ministry has startled nobody. When a trumpet is blown in a besieged city, there are many persons with weak nerves who are quite frightened and many children too, and many timid souls that are greatly alarmed; and someone might come to the trumpeter, and say, "Why sound thy clarion? Weak women are made to tremble." "Yes," says he, "but better that weak minds should be made to tremble than that stout-hearted ones should perish better these should be alarmed now than go quietly on until the enemy invests the city, and puts them all to the sword." A startling time is often to come to the minister; he is not to be content to keep to ordinary subjects, and deal with them in an ordinary manner. He must go out with a "Thus saith the Lord," and, like a new Elias, he must speak with fire from heaven hanging on his lips, and the thunders of God rolling around his brow. He will never fully discharge his office if he is always playing on the harp, with its soft dulcet notes; he must take down the war trumpet, and sound an alarm, that all men may be warned thereby.

I think I may add that, when the minister of Christ blows this trumpet aright, it is one that is pretty sure to be heard further than he himself is seen. Men do not always see a trumpeter when they hear the sound of his trumpet; and let the minister of Christ fearlessly proclaim his Master's Word, and his line shall go out through all the earth. Let him be honest and faithful, and he need not fear that he shall lack hearers. That trumpet sound, it may be, shall be heard all over England,-across the Channel shall it be heard upon the Continent,-it shall go beyond the Alleghenies, and make the Rocky Mountains echo with the sound. Let him but preach the whole gospel, and set the trumpet to the roof of his mouth, and all the world shall hear; or, at least, if they hear it not, he shall have performed his duty; but many will hear it, for God will always find ears willing to listen to the sound that comes from an honest mouth.

II. "Set the trumpet to thy mouth."

That is the command to the gospel minister, and I mean to obey it while I deal with the second head, The Particular Reason Assigned For It. The reason why Hosea was to become a trumpeter at this particular time was this: the children of Israel had broken God's covenant; they had gone astray, and transgressed his law; therefore God was angry with them, and was about to smite them with sore judgments. Before, however, he smote them, he warned them. God does not usually give a word and a blow, but he gives a word, and another word, and another word, and then yet another word, and, after all that, there comes the blow; he warns before he strikes. The axe of God, like the axe of the Roman dictator, is bound up in a bundle of rods; he smites with the rod first, and if that suffices not, then he draws out the axe, and smites with it, and its strokes are enough to destroy the soul.

Now, with regard to this church,-God, I think, has put it into my heart to speak to you about your transgressions and your sins. And, in this matter, the trumpeter includes himself; and while he addresses the church and congregation, he intends, thereby, not to exempt a single person, unless there be one, indeed, who can claim exemption. Well, my brethren, to begin with ourselves,-the members of this church,-is there not good reason that the minister should always have the trumpet to his mouth to warn us of our particular sins? God has blessed us very greatly as a people; we have lived in the sunshine of his countenance; he has been pleased to give us success in our labors beyond our most sanguine anticipations. Whatever way our brethren turn their hands, God seems to prosper them; -if not in their worldly business, yet certainly in their business for him. There is nothing, that I am aware of, which this church has undertaken but God has been pleased to give us success in it. But have we not, with all this blessing, very great sins to confess before God?

When I sit down and think of myself, I am, to my own self, a wonder and a marvel that God hath not cast me off; that he hath not said to me, "I will no more speak my Word through thee. T will leave thee to thyself; thou shalt be like Samson when his hair was gone." And, oh! if he should say that to any of us, where should we be then? Brothers and sisters in the church, may not you, personally and collectively, cover your faces, and mourn, and weep, by reason of your own private and individual sins? Are you perfect? Are you quite clear of guilt? Are your garments; unspotted and unsullied? God forbid that you should say they are, for this were indeed to vaunt yourselves in pride. No, every man may weep apart, and his wife apart, and his children apart; for, with us, even with us, there are sins against the Lord our God. I sometimes fear lest, as a people, we should be tempted to pride; lest we should conceive that the success with which God favors us is owing to something in ourselves,-lest we should begin to say, "We are the men, and wisdom shall die with us." We stand in a position in which God has made us eminent by his blessing; but let us take heed lest, by exalting ourselves, we become like Capernaum, once lifted to heaven, but afterwards brought down to hell. There have been many churches, which God has left because of their sin. Riding through the country, we can see every now and then a chapel, and when we enquire how the cause prospers, we are told that it is in the worst position possible. "But was it always so?" "No," it is said; "there was once a servant of God there, and the people gathered round him, and they walked well for a time, and there were many conversions." But, alas! They fell into sin, and God left them, and there is "Ichabod" written on every piece of mortar in the walls; if you could see it, there is the great "Tekel" of Belshazzar put upon the pulpit and upon the pew; pastor and people alike have been weighed in the balances, and they have been found wanting. Shall it be so with us as a church? Shall we be found wanting in the time of testing?

Shall I tell you-and here I speak without the slightest tone of severity,-one thing in which some of our friends are wanting? A conscientious regard to social prayer. There are some who are constant at the meetings for prayer, but I cannot conceal from myself the fact that there are many whose faces I never see there; or, if I see them once a year, it is indeed a treat. I doubt not but that their business is so urgent that they could not constantly attend; but then I know there are others, who do regularly attend, who have business that seems to me to be equally as urgent; and I think these absentees might come sometimes, at any rate. Now, if we begin by some of us neglecting the meetings for prayer, and if our neglect should increase, we shall then be on the high road to the loss of God's favor, and to the prevention of all future prosperity.

Besides, may I not also say that there are some, I fear, in the church, who have lost their first love? It is remarkable to me that there are so few in this church who have turned out to be deceivers. Sorrowful are the meetings when we have to excommunicate here and there one; but out of so vast a number we have great reason to thank God that they are comparatively so few. But, oh! may there not be many among us who, if they cannot be made amenable to church discipline, are nevertheless rotten at the core? Have we not some that are like trees, fair on the outside, but inwardly their hearts are but fit to be tinder for the devil's tinderbox? Have we not too many among us who are secretly living in sin, whose practice in trade would not bear strict investigation, but who, nevertheless, cannot be laid hold of, because there is no gross vice no open public, and flagrant sin? And, oh! brethren, if these things increase, if this leprosy breaks out in the garments, it will spread, and God will come to abhor his own inheritance, and will say of this church, "I will get me gone; I will abide here no longer; but I will find a people who shall be more faithful to my Word, who, shall live' more true to the promises and vows which they have made."

I will set the trumpet to my mouth to night, in behalf of every member of the church, and in behalf of myself also. O brothers and sisters, the time past should suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles! Let us seek grace, that we may be purged from all

our former conversation in the days of our flesh, that we may come out from the world, that we may be more and more separate from it, that there may be a greater distinction between us and the ungodly sons of men, that we may prove to be what we profess to be,-Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile. O Christian Church, if thou shalt fall from thine integrity, thou wilt soon fall from thy prosperity! Suspend prayer, and thou wilt suspend success. Break down our hedges, let in the hypocrites,-or let them even come in by stealth,-and the wild boar out of the wood will soon waste this church. And where are the goodly clusters now? Where are now the grapes of Eshcol, and where are the winepresses gushing with new wine? Famine hath devastated the land; black death hath covered all the vineyards; and the vines lament, and they are burned up with fire. If God forsakes us,-and he will do so if we turn aside from him as a Church,-then this must be the result. The lamentation that I have taken up must be the lamentation of this church, unless God shall keep us true to him in prayer, and diligence, and holiness. God doth not cast away his people for ever, but he often casts away a separate church from its degree of usefulness; he doth not put out his lamps, but he does let them burn very low indeed, so that there is scarcely anything but a smoking wick left. May it never be so with us!

Having set the trumpet to my mouth for the members of the church, I blow another blast of it to every one of you. Brothers and sisters in Christ, in the days of Jesus, there was found a Judas in the midst of his twelve apostles. "I have chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil." Is there not reason to fear that, among the many hundreds in this church, there are to be found some who are like Judas? O traitor, if thou art still in the ranks, tremble to hear thy doom! O thou deceiver, the day is coming when judgment must begin at the house of God! Though chaff is mingled with the wheat, the rushing, mighty wind is rising now; I hear it,-I hear it in the distance, and soon it will come, and winnow this church, and then, where wilt thou be? Where wilt thou be when Christ shall take his fan in his hand, and thoroughly purge his floor? Do not think, my dear friends, members of the church that you will be saved, if you are out of Christ, because you are members of the church. Remember what happened to Joab; he ran right into the tabernacle, and caught hold of the horns of the altar. Solomon said to Benaiah, "Fetch him forth." And Benaiah said, "Come forth from thence;" and he said, "Nay, but I will die here." And Benaiah told Solomon what he said, but did the king spare Joab because he had his hands on the horns of the altar? No; he said, "Go and slay him there," and Benaiah thrust his sword through him even while he had his hand upon God's own altar. So will it be with you. You may put your lip to the communion cup, you may come and sit round this table; you may be a deacon, you may even enter this pulpit as a preacher; but, unless your heart is right with God, with your hand upon the horns of God's altar you must be damned. From the pulpit you must go to the pit; you must descend from the table to commune at the feast of fiends; go from the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, to the general assembly and congregation of the lost in hell. I can blow my trumpet no louder than this to each one of you. Oh, hear it, hear it, hear it, church-members! Listen to it, and regard it now, and search and try yourselves, and see whether ye be in Christ or not.

Yet one more blast from my trumpet, and this is for those who are not members of the church, but who constantly attend upon the ministry of the gospel. O ungodly hearers, the day is coming when you shall have no man to warn you, when you shall have no one to invite you to come to Christ! Sabbath-days will not last forever; eternity is drawing near, and bears in its hand the stamp that must seal your doom. I remember a sermon of William Dawson's on Death, the three heads of which were, "First, Death is following after us; secondly, he will certainly catch us; thirdly, we don't know when." That third head is a very solemn one,-we don't know when; and what if it should be to-night? Hear the blast of my trumpet,-"Consider your ways;" "Prepare to meet thy God." "Stand in awe; and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still." "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." Sinner, while the lamp holds out to burn, turn thou to Christ, and live; else' know thou that, when that lamp is quenched, God's mercy will be quenched too for thee', and thou wilt be cast away into the outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Remember that ancient message, "He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon his own head." If all that is said be of no avail to you, then shall he that blew the trumpet be clear, but on your own head shall be your doom for ever and ever.

I have to mourn because I cannot sound this trumpet, as I should. Oh, that I had a voice powerful enough to find its way into the poor, dead, stony hearts of sinners dead in trespasses and sins! It were easy work to preach if we preached to none' but the living in Zion; but to have to talk to hard stones that will not break, and to speak to icebergs that will not melt, that is a work that requires large faith, and often depresses our spirit. Yet must we come back to it again, for the thought of eternity rises upon us; we see sinners plunging down to hell in one awful stream; we see the grave glutted with their corpses, and hell swollen with their blood; we mark how every night sucks in its prey, and how every day shuts its' devouring jaws upon the helpless thousands of our race, and we cannot be still; especially when we have before us some who will go from these galleries and from these pews to help to feed the everlasting burnings. Did I say there would be some such? I mean, "Except they repent, they shall all likewise perish." If we could but look any one man in the face, and know that he would be in torment within a year, oh, what pity we should feel for him! We could scarcely rest under such a burden. I am quite sure I should not sleep to-night,-I should lie tossing on my bed, crying to God for mercy on that poor man, and I would not stop a moment before I would go to' him, and tell him the' way of salvation. Ah! but there is not only one, but scores, perhaps hundreds, in this place of worship, who have no hope. They are prayerless men, those whose knees never bend in prayer before their Maker,-hard-hearted men, who have never trembled yet under conviction of sin, and who have never sought and never found Christ as their Savior. Ah! poor friends, poor friends, we may we'll weep for you, and sigh for you, and all the more because you will not weep and will not sigh for yourselves. To be on the high road to he'll, and

yet to be trifling with eternal things;-to be on the brink of perdition, and yet to be jesting at religion; -to be nearing the everlasting burnings, and yet to be breaking the Sabbath-day, and treading the blood of Christ beneath your feet;-oh, this is mad work! Bedlam has not within its walls a man more insane-a more mad, manacled wretch-than the' man who knows that the wrath of God abideth on him, and yet makes merry, and dances to the sound of his own funeral knell, who goes leaping to the gallows tree, and, chanting a song, bows his neck to the death-block and the gleaming axe. O Spirit of God, it is thine to wake the dead, and thine to change the heart! Do thou it, we pray thee; for all the blasts of our trumpet cannot do it unless thou dost take' the work in hand.

III. Having gone through two parts of the text,-the command to the minister, and the reason found among his people,-I shall next ask your attention to the third point, The Reason Why Hosea Should, At That Time, Specially Set The Trumpet To His Mouth, Namely, That Judgment Was Impending Upon The People Of Israel: "He shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord."

Different expositors have given various interpretations of this verse, and applied it to the peculiar plague which was, at that time, about to fall upon the Israelitish people; some say it was one thing, and some another. I do not care to enter into these diverse interpretations; it is enough for me to believe that there is a visitation here threatened against the Church of God. What does it say? Look at the text again: "He shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord." But will the Lord let anything come against his own house? It cannot be so, surely. Ah! but it is so; and the emphatic name of God, Jehovah, is used, for you see the word Lord is in capitals: "He shall come as an eagle against the house of Jehovah." If sin gets into God's house, he will no more spare sin in his house than he will spare it in the devil's house. God hates sin everywhere; and if sin gets into his own Church, he will flog it out. It is of no use at all for this traitor to go and hide himself in the house of God's children; the Lord will drag him out to execution, even though he creep into our bedchambers. There shall be no sparing him; he may hide under the camels furniture, but every Rachel shall be made to stand up, and God will turn out our brazen images, and cast them away from us.

It seems, then, that a visitation is threatened against the Church of God,-against God's own house. Notice the form of this visitation: "He shall come as an eagle." Now, an eagle comes in two ways. First, it comes on a sudden. Poised high in the air, so far aloft that you cannot see it, it keeps its wings fluttering as birds of prey are wont to do, and with its sharp eyes, so powerful that, at that tremendous height, it can see the smallest fish in the water, it marks its prey, and on a sudden down it dashes, as if it had fallen from heaven like a meteor-stone, or like the lightning-flash. It is up there where we cannot see it, and suddenly it swoops down, and bears away its prey. Now, such is often God's visitation upon his Church; he comes suddenly, like an eagle, and chastens his children.

Besides, here is an allusion to the strong flight of the eagle. When the eagle once stretches his wings to fly, who can stay his wings? He bears up against the wind; he buffets the storm; he cuts through it as a ship sails through the billows or a fish swims through the sea; on, on, like an arrow from the bow, he shoots to his desired stopping-place. So shall God's judgments be to' his Church; they shall come on his Church irresistibly, and there shall be no escape, there shall be no deliverance. The eagle shall come with such force that none shall stay his might.

How true this has been of the Church of Christ in many ages! As I have said before, God has never left his chosen people'; but he has often left separate churches, when those churches have become mixed with the world. Look at the Seven Churches of Asia. It would be an interesting and an instructive journey for any of us to make, to go to Sardis, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to the other spots where there once were the church's to which John the' Divine wrote a part of the Book of Revelation. We should see that some of them have no inhabitants whatever,-only the bittern and the owl, and the ruins of a long-past grandeur; in others, a few huts, and Bedonin Arabs pasturing their flocks, with, perhaps, not a dozen Christians to be found within a circuit of a dozen miles. God has taken the candlestick out of its place, and quenched the light in darkness. Just so is it with the Church of Rome. What prosperity there was there once! Paul had, doubtless, a large number who used to gather together in his hired room to listen to him; and if Peter ever went to Rome, and he may have done so, he would, doubtless, have gathered a goodly band around him. We have good evidence that there was a very large number of Christians there, for, in the catacombs under Rome, all along the corridors, many miles in length, there are inscriptions to the memory of Christians. You look on one and another, and there you see the name,-one man with an anchor to show his hope, or another with a dove; and on most of them are these words, "He rests in peace," or "She rests in peace." And there are thousands of these; the church in the catacombs must have numbered a great many members, and there they flourished, down there in the darkness of the earth, worshipping God by candlelight when the sun was shining above them, and his brightest rays could never reach them in those gloomy caverns. That church seems to have been a very eminent one; the inscriptions bear the proofs of the very highest and most spiritual forms of piety; and now, the mother of harlots sits upon her seven hills, and the ancient candlestick is taken out of its place.

Again, to give you another picture, which will, perhaps, strike you still more forcibly, look at Germany. In the days of Luther, it was the stronghold of the gospel. You know how Luther used to preach the Word, and What crowds gathered to hear that mighty thunderer, while in simple language he proclaimed the truth, and defied the Pope and the devil too! Things are improving now, I hope; but it might have been said, some years ago, "How are the mighty fallen!" The Lutheran churches had become nearly all

Unitarian or Rationalist; they had forsaken the' fountain of living waters; they forgot the Lord that bought them, and turned aside to damnable heresy. And why should it not be so here! Unless the Lord should continually preserve unto us a remnant, we should become like unto Sodom, and be made like unto Gomorrah. That descent may come in an instant; the eagle may even now be watching in the air, and his swoop may be without any warning. There may come sudden destruction, as pain upon a woman in travail, and we may not escape.

As long as we walk with God, as long as we are true to the faith, as long as we labor for the salvation of souls, so long we are secure. But as surely as sin is permitted to spread among us,-if the spirit of lukewarmness, of laxity of doctrine, of prayerlessness, should creep in here, it will be all over with us'. The Lord will say, "Let me go hence;" there will be heard, in this place, what was heard in the temple just before the time of its destruction by Titus. It is said that there was heard within the veil a rushing of wind, and the high priest who was officiating declared that he heard a voice say, "Arise, let us go hence." That voice has been heard in many places. I could point to chapels where that voice must have been heard, houses of prayer where once there were crowds of hearers, but which are now covered with dust and cobwebs, where scarcely anybody cares to enter, and where those that enter are cold, and dead, and dull, and careless. Shall it ever be so with this church? God forbid! Thou God of Benjamin Reach, thy suffering servant; thou God of Gill, thy servant who declared the truth in all its fullness; thou God of the sainted Rippon, whom thou hast taken to thyself; thou who hast been the God of this church for, lo! these many years; thou who hast kept us beneath the shadow of thy wings, and brought us into a position of high privileges and responsibilities, be thou our God even until the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and then for ever and ever!

IV. I think I need not say any more with regard to this great and solemn reason why the trumpet is to be blown. Let me, in closing, just dwell for a minute or 'two upon The Very Beautiful And Blessed Effect Of This Blast Of The Trumpet: "Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee."

In the Hebrew, this expression is very remarkable indeed it runs thus, "They shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee,-Israel." I do not know whether you perceive the meaning of this expression; it is, perhaps, difficult for me to say it so as for you to perceive the pith of it. They say, "My God, we. know thee;" then, as if God did not know who they were, they say, "Israel." "My God, we know thee,-Israel." They mention their name, and plead it before him. Or else it may be, as another excellent translator says, that they thought perhaps the' Lord would not remember them, but he would remember the man with whom he had made a covenant, namely, Jacob, Israel; for they say in the Hebrew, "My God, we know thee,-Israel." Remember Israel; think thou of him who wrestled with thee, and became a prevailing prince.

We will be content, however, to take the passage as it stands. "Israel shall cry unto thee, My God, we know thee." Can you sincerely utter that cry, brothers and sisters? If so, a blast of the trumpet will have had a blessed effect if you can say, "Lord, we know thee." What do you know about him? There is one point, in his character I want you specially to remember. If you know God aright, you will know that he is a jealous God. That is one of the first things which he said when he spoke to his people in the wilderness, "I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God." I do not know that we fully understand the meaning of that word "jealous." You know what it means in common life,-how, if there be one who has a right to another's love, if that person suspects that the other's heart is given away, there is jealousy. Well, now, there is jealousy in God's heart if his people give to others love that is due to him. And do you know when we are most jealous! It is an object of utter indifference to me who certain people may love, because I have no affection for them; but if there be one on whom my whole heart is set, if that person's heart were given to someone else, I should feel jealousy. Now, God is not jealous of sinners; he is jealous of saints, of his own people, especially the people he loves best. I remember that an old divine says, "It is an awful thing to be one of God's favorites;"-I have turned that over in my mind many times, and shuddered at the thought,-"for," says he, "God does not deal with all his children on precisely the same' rule. There are some of his people whom he makes more his favorite's than others; he takes them out, and makes them his eminent servants, puts them in the first rank of the battle, and makes them very useful and very serviceable; he is more jealous of them than he is of any others. He is jealous of all his children, but especially of those children upon whom he has bestowed most of his favors." You remember the story of the poor king of England. When there had been a rebellion against him, and he had put it down, he promised that he would give pardon to all who were concerned in it. He had brought to him the list, which contained the names of those whom he was to pardon. He read the name of his son Richard, and he wept;- "Is Richard a rebel?" He read the name of his son Henry, and he wept again;- "Is he a rebel?" But he had one favourite son, his son John and he saw in the midst of the paper the name of his son John as one whom he had to forgive; he forgave him, but it broke his heart, and he died. The more favor there is, the more jealousy there will be.

Now, as a church, we may truly say, not in pride, but in thankfulness, that God has been very gracious to us. He has distinguished us by his grace; he has caused our candle to shine brightly; he has heard our prayer; but he will be very jealous of us if we begin to ascribe the good work to ourselves. If we take any honor to ourselves, and leave off praying to him, if our zeal diminishes, if we become lax in our lives, if immoral characters are tolerated among us, God will be very angry with us, and we must expect that, though he will not cast away his own people, yet, as a church, he will take away our beauty, and cause it to fade away like the moth; and the fine gold shall become dim, and the' glory shall depart from this portion of his Israel.

Now what is the lesson of all this? It is just this, brethren, that I would stir you up to continue in prayer. To some of you, perhaps, the exhortation is not needed, but to others I am sure it is. Thank God we have many in the church who know how to wrestle with God; but, oh! we want more of these. We want not merely to have the few like Gideon's men that lapped; but we want to have you all among the lappers,-to have you all wrestlers with God, all diligent in his service, and seeking to extend his kingdom. Let us be, from this day forward, more prayerful than we have ever been before. (Copyright [AGES Software](#). Used by permission. All rights reserved. See [AGES Software](#) for their full selection of highly recommended resources)

Hosea 8:7 What Shall the Harvest Be?

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 14TH, 1882.

For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up.” —Hosea 8:7.

Prudent men look before them to see the result of their actions. Their eyes look right on, beyond the present, to the future. They look before they leap. It is only the foolish man who goes blindly on, till at last he stumbles and has a desperate and probably fatal fall. Brethren, I hope that I am addressing those who have enough wit and wisdom to look at the consequences of, what they are doing. This is how I wish to live,— not merely doing what may give me to-days temporary pleasure, but asking myself what will be the result of those actions by-and-by. How will they appear to me when I come to be old? What aspect will they wear when my eyes are failing me in death? What will be the result in that life after death,— that endless future which is so sure to come to me, let me live as I may? I say that I hope I am speaking to those who do look a little ahead, and are not, “like dumb driven cattle,” satisfied if there be grass enough within the reach of their mouths, but who look before them to see the consequences on the morrow, and especially on that last great day for which all other days were made,” the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” We are all sowing, brethren; we cannot help it. You, sisters, too, are sowing; perhaps but a little garden plot, or possibly a broader acreage in public life; but you are all sowing. And every day there is a sowing; no man goes forth in the morning without a seed-basket. What may be in it, is not so easily told. There may be nought in it but the wind; there may be darnel in it; there may be in it curses which shall grow up to plague himself and others; but it is certain that we do not move an inch along the furrows of life without scattering some kind of seed. He that does least is seeding his idleness; and, like the thistle that stands still, and offers its downy seed to be carried by every wandering wind, so does the sluggard; he does mischief by doing nothing.

As we are all sowing, the great question we have to consider is,” what will the harvest be?” Every wise man will ask himself that question. I may have sown very little in my small plot, or, I may have walked far, and scattered the seed broadcast over the wider field committed to my charge; but what have I sown, and what shall I reap? What sheaves shall I gather into the garner? Sheaves of fire that shall burn into my soul for ever, or sheaves of glory that I shall bring with rejoicing in the last great day? Brethren, if it be rightly examined, this matter of the harvest from our sowing will be found to be full of very rich encouragement to those who are seeking to serve God. If thou hast believed in Christ, and received eternal life by faith in him, and if now thou art trying to labor for him, thou art sowing blessed seed; and if it come not up to-day, or to-morrow, yet grace ensures a crop, and thou shalt have precious sheaves which thou shalt gather in one of these days. Therefore, be thou encouraged to labor on. The husbandman waits for the precious fruits of the earth through the long and dreary winter; through the chequered days of spring, through March winds and April showers, he waits, until at last the golden harvest rewards him for all his toil. Labour on, then, beloved, “steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” That which you sow, you shall also reap; your Lord has told you so. Therefore, be not dismayed by the long waiting; but—

Sow and faint not, Till the seed a harvest bear.

But, while this truth is full of encouragement to God's people, it ought to be a very strong and powerful check to those who are living in sin. As you sow, you will have to reap. Those “wild oats” about which you laugh now, are easily sown, but they will make hard and sorrowful reaping. That act of iniquity, that indulgence in lust, that lie, that blasphemy, that revolt against God in string conscience and refusing to yield to Christ,— all these will produce a harvest in due season. It is easy to toss these pigeons up into the air, but they will all come home to roost. At night-fall, you shall see every one of them; and they will have grown greater than when you set them flying, and they will be bearers of messages of misery to the rash hand that sent them flying abroad. It is a dreadful thing to be so living that you would not wish the result of your actions to come home to you; and if any of you are so living, I pray God, the Holy Spirit, now to give me something to say which shall, like a strong hand, lay hold of your bridle, and compel you

to stand. still, and race no longer in the downward course to hell.

My text naturally divides itself into two parts; and, at first sight, they do not seem to be very closely connected; but I think that I shall be able to show that they are. From the first part of the text, we may learn that some sowings will have a horrible harvest: "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." Then the rest of the text will teach us that some sowings must end in failure. They are such poor windy things, that they shall never come to anything that is good. If a blade shall come up, yet "it hath no stalk." And, if it should seem to come to a stalk, "the bud shall yield no meal." It shall be like the devil's meal,— all bran; there shall be no good flour in it. Or, if it should yield meal, "if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up." The old proverb says, "There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip," and these sowers find it to be so with their sowing. Strangers come in, and steal away the fruit out of the very mouth that hoped to be fed by it, so that no good result comes of the sowing as far as he is concerned.

I. The first part of our text teaches us that some sowings will, Produce A Horrible Harvest.

Some have a horrible harvest even in this world; as, for example, the sowing of oppression, which leads to revolt and revenge. I do not know a better instance of this than France affords. Some two hundred years ago, or even less than that, the owners of the land in that country treated the peasantry worse than they treated their cattle. Poor and almost naked men might have been seen dragging the plough over the soil themselves, because they were reduced to such poverty, by excessive rents, that they could not afford to keep animals to do the hard work. Kings, and princes, and the great ones of the land cared for nothing but their own pleasures, and those pleasures were often of the most vicious kind. Read the firsts chapters of Carlyle's French Revolution, and see in what a state France was; yet, for a time, everything seemed to go on favourably for the oppressors. If the peasantry revolted, they were put down with an iron hand. The mighty rulers thought that their empire would never come to an end; and as for the Grand Monarch himself,— was there ever such another mortal as he thought himself to be, and as his courtiers spoke of him? Might not his kingdom last for ever,— at least, in the hands of his successors? Yet, one after another, those kings and nobles sowed the wind, and, at the end of the last century, they reaped. the whirlwind. Having themselves defied all law and justice, they had taught the people to do the same; and when the masses once rose in rebellion, and got the upper hand, you know how they worked the terrible guillotine, and how the streets, not only of Paris, but of many another city and town, were deluged with blood, and the oppressors were made to realize that their cruelty and oppression had come home to them at last. It is always so, sooner or later, according to the rule of God's righteous government. Men may stretch the cord for a long while, but at length it snaps, and woe be to those that are holding it when it gives way! The people may be, for a time, trodden down beneath the tyrant's hoof; but, in the long run, the tyrant gets the worst of it. France has more than once furnished an awful instance of the retribution that comes upon those who do not regard the dignity of man, and who treat him as if he were merely a beast, or something worse; they have sown the wind, and they have reaped the whirlwind.

Now take another view of the picture presented by our text. We have lately had, over in Ireland, a terrible proof that the justification of outrage leads on to murder. Certain persons say, "We never meant to urge our countrymen to commit the crime of murder, and we are shocked at the Phoenix Park tragedy. We wash our hands in innocence, for we are clear of guilt in this matter. We denounce it, we have no part in it; we abhor it." So they say; but what led up to that awful deed of blood? When men have used expressions in which they have not condemned, but have almost justified outrage and murder in other cases, what could come of it but that their disciples should go a little beyond what their masters may have intended? You cannot scatter fire, and then when, at last, the city burns, say, "Oh, we never meant it to spread like that! We only intended to burn down that cottage, or that wretched shanty; but we never thought of burning down the city. We are as innocent of the crime as newborn babes; we never meant to do anything of the kind." Yes; but you cannot say to fire, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no further;" and in like manner, if you sow the wind, you will reap the whirlwind. There is a whole province of Holland protected from the sea by a dyke, and there is a man who wants to let in a little water to the other side for a certain purpose; he says he is only going to let a little stream run through, so he takes his pickaxe, and he works away till he has made a passage through the dyke, and then, of course, the whole dyke is swept away, and the province gets drowned. The foolish fellow says, "God forbid that I should have the blame of this catastrophe! I never meant to do anything of the sort." Of course, he did not; he intended something far less than that, but his action naturally produced the result that followed, and therefore, he is rightly regarded as responsible for it. Beware, I pray you, of trifling with the eternal principles of justice, and of right and wrong. Beware of ever sanctioning what you consider to be only a little evil; for, if you do, the greater evil is sure to follow at its heels. It is like the boy that the burglar takes and pushes through a little window, that he may open the door, and let in those who commit robbery and murder. So, if any of us begin to advocate principles which sap and undermine the foundations of law and order, we cannot tell to what mischief our talk will lead; it is well for us always to be careful not to sow the wind, lest we should, by-and-by, reap the whirlwind.

Passing from those great instances which prove the rule, I want you next to notice that there are many persons who fall into this same fault. Take, for instance, the teacher of error. He is, perhaps, in other respects, an excellent minister, but he is unsound on one important point. Just so; and, before long, his unsoundness on one point will lead to unsoundness all round. It is like a single

speck of decay in fruit; it is very apt to cause the whole to go rotten. Have you never heard the story, which was told by Augustine, concerning a young man who had been, at one time, a professed believer in God, but who had given up all trust in him? It occurred to him, when he was very much tried by the buzzing and biting of flies, that God could not have created such troublesome little creatures. They were such a nuisance to him that he concluded that the devil had made them; and, having once gone the length of believing that the devil made flies, he thought it highly probable that Satan created some other nuisances, and he went on till at last he came actually to believe that the devil made everything, and he did not believe in God at all. "Ah!" remarks Augustine, as he relates the story, "he that erreth about a fly soon erreth about all things." Look at the progress of Romanism in our own country. When the most of us were boys, we used to hear our fathers talking of a Mr. Pusey and of baptismal regeneration; and it was thought then to be a wonderful thing if a man wore a cross down his back; all England was stirred about the matter, and everybody was horrified; but look at the so-called "priests" now; they have gone all the length of Rome. "Where?" you ask. Well, where are they not? They seem to be everywhere now, swarming over the land; and they have brought back rank Popery into what used to be called "the Protestant Church of England." How has that come to pass? Well, first of all, there was a little of it tolerated, and then a little more of it was wanted, and gradually more was sucked down until now I believe that many of the Ritualists would be prepared to receive the Pope and all his cardinals, red hats and all. I really cannot see why they should not; for, if they did, they could scarcely be more Popish than they are already. Only go a little way in the course of error, and it is like sliding down an inclined plane; there is no knowing where you will stop. Go to the top of St. Paul's Cathedral, and throw a stone down from that height. You say that you only mean to throw it a yard. Ah! but it will never rest until it gets to the ground, and perhaps it will kill someone before it reaches the earth. So, when once you start in the way of error, there is no possibility of stopping unless divine grace shall interpose to save you from the consequences of the first false step. You sow the wind, and you reap the whirlwind. A little error leads to more, and that to still more, until the very idea of God is given up. I therefore love to meet a man who is stiffbacked in his orthodoxy; and, in this age of laxness and looseness, I am prepared to clap my hands even when I see a little bigotry. I like a man to believe something, to stick to it, to know that it is true, and not to be ashamed to avow it in the teeth of his fellow-men, let them oppose as they will; for there must be something true, and, oh! that God's gracious Spirit may teach us what it is; and when we once know it, may we hold it fast, come life or come death; for if we do not, we shall sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind.

Here is another instance of the same truth,— an ill example at home. I will confine it to that one point, though it is of general application. You probably know a man who is very lax in the management of his family. He professes to be a Christian himself, perhaps; but his sons and daughters are allowed to plunge into every frivolity and every vanity; ay, and they may even go into open sin, and all that they will hear will be some gentle word like that which fell from the lips of soft-hearted Eli when he de but hint that his sons were not doing well when they were doing much that was terribly ill. The man even hears that such-and-such a vice has been committed by his son, yet he scarcely upbraids him; he is so easy-tempered. that he says nothing, though he sorrows within his own heart. Peradventure, his own example and the example of his wife are not such as could be desired. Family prayer is neglected, and holy living is not known in the house. He gets prematurely old, his son has died very soon,— he has drunk himself to death, or destroyed himself by vice. His daughters, too, are unhappy in their marriages. The whole family has virtually gone to ruin as to any connection with the Christian Church. What shall I say of the old gentleman? He will not say it himself, but I must say it for him; he sowed the wind, and he has reaped the whirlwind. The father's character is usually seen in his sons. It has been said that ministers' sons often turn out badly; if it is so, and I am not sure that it is,— it must be because the ministers have not kept their own vineyards, for the rule still holds good, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Generally, though not always, if he does depart from it, it is because there has been some fatal neglect in his training; and there are some Christian parents who are acting thus. They are so indulgent, not only to their children, but to themselves also, that they do not like to give themselves the trouble that ought to be taken in all such cases. They are sowing the wind, and they will reap the whirlwind.

Let me give another illustration of the truth of the text, with reference to persons who fall into evil habits. At first, those evil habits are under restraint. They admit that they drink, but they say that they cannot be called "drunkards." They may, now and then, take more than is good for them; but, still, it is not very often. That is the beginning of the evil; but, by-and-by, where are they? They have sown the wind, and they reap the whirlwind. Did you never hear the story of the Persian prince, who dreamed that he was drinking from a cup, and a fly came and tried to sip from it? He drove it away; but, as he kept on drinking from his cup, it came back again, and it had grown as large as a bird. He drove the creature away, but it returned as large as an eagle,— the largest kind of bird. He tried to chase that away, but it soon came back in the form of a man, who grinned at him most horribly. He strove to get that man away, but soon he was back in the form of a giant, who trod on him, and crushed him to death. That is just the picture of the growth of an evil habit; at first, you say, "Is it not a little one?" But it grows, and increases, till it becomes unconquerable. That parable illustrates our text; if you sow the wind, you will reap the whirlwind. You cannot live in sin, you cannot do wrong of any kind, or in any form, but it will come back to you, not merely as wind, as you sowed it, but as a whirlwind, as a horrible tempest, as a rushing tornado, carrying everything before it.

I will not tarry to give more illustrations of this solemn truth, because I want to leave a few minutes for the consideration of the

second part of the subject. Only I pray that God may write on the memory and heart of any of you who are living as you should not live, the great fact that, as surely as you so live, "That which a man soweth, that shall he also reap;" and he will reap even worse than he sows, for if he sows the wind, he will reap the whirlwind.

II. Now let us turn to the second part of the subject, which is, that some Sowings Must End In Failure.

There are some people who do not think that they are doing any hurt, yet they are living an aimless life. Go to them, and ask what they are sowing? "Nothing," they answer. They say that they are doing no hurt to anybody, for they are not doing anything at all; but is not that kind of life an injury to themselves, and to others also? If you have no aim in life, no high ambition, no object, no noble purpose, does anything ever come of it? People talk of what they call chance, but I never found any chance of a man's getting to be holy without intending to be so. I never yet heard of a man doing any great good in the world if he did not mean to do it. I never heard of a man glorifying God by accident, nor of anyone getting to heaven as it were by the throw of the dice, somehow finding himself there, but not knowing how it all happened. No; if you lead an aimless life, what will come of it will be just what the text says: "It hath no stalk" There will be no up-growing from it; and even if there should be some kind of stalk to the seed that you have sown, yet, when it springs up, "the be shall yield no meal." It cannot be any comfort to you, even if things should go pretty well without your intending that they should, for the comfort, after all, lies in the motive and in the intention; and even if your life should somehow turn out to be better than that of other aimless persons, though you never intended it to be so, "if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up." If you meant it to be nothing, it will be nothing.

I daresay that I am speaking to a large number of people who do not know what they are living for. You have come into the world, and here you are; and, in due time, you will go out of it; but that is all that can be said of you. You are doing nothing; you have no noble end in view, no glorious purpose to accomplish, no sublime aspiration to realize. Then take it for granted that, if all you sow is the wind; you will reap nothing but wind; only it will come to you in a fiercer form,— as a whirlwind, for God will say to you, "I made thee for my glory; I sent thee into the world with a purpose; I entrusted thee with talents; I made thee a steward of my goods, and now thou art accused, unto me of having wasted my goods. Give an account of thy stewardship." What will you say then? Alas! in that day, the trifler, the idler, the mere butterfly in the garden of the world, will find things going hard. indeed. with him. God save you all from lealing an aimless life!

But there are some who are sowing the wind in another form; they are leading a selfish life. Selfis the beginning and the end of their life. They open a shop simply to make money. They live at home to be comfortable. Perhaps they enlarge themselves a little by talking the wife and the children into the circle of self; still, that is all; they have no care for God, no love for Christ, no wish to help the poor, no thought about eternity. That is a life of sowing the wind, and it will end, sooner or later, in reaping the whirlwind, for no man lives unto himself without earning for himself a fearful reward. Selfishness is often like the serpent that stings itself to death. It is not possible, within the compass of a man's own soul, that he should satisfy the cravings and desires of that soul. When he loves God, and loves his neighbor,— he is really most of all blessing himself, for then is he living to true purpose. But when self is everything to a man, he confines his soul within the charnel-house of his own ribs, and his spirit dies within him, and becomes like a stone. In the case of the man who lives only for self, it may be said of his life, in the words of the text, "It hath no stalk; the bud shall yield no meal." He gathers riches, but has no happiness or contentment in them; he is like Solomon, who, with all his possessions, had to cry, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Or if he gets to be rich, and seems to enjoy himself a little, he suddenly dies, and strangers swallow up his estate. All that is left of him is a massive tomb, and the notice in the newspapers that he died worth so many thousands of pounds,— which is not true, for he never was really worth a farthing all his life; he was a worthless man, whose only value consisted in the money he possessed. O my dear hearers, I do implore you, with all my soul, not to live unto yourselves! If you desire the highest, grandest selfishness that can ever be attained, I charge you, throw selfishness away, remembering our Savior's words, "He that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it." He who casts his life away for the sake of Christ, and for love of the truth, shall be the man who shall really save his life, and find true joy and blessedness; but for anyone to live for self, is to sow the wind, and to reap the whirlwind.

So, once again, will it be if a man lives a self-righteous life. A self-righteous man is generally very great at sowing; — so many prayers,—so many almsgivings,— so many sermons,— so many ceremonies. Yes, wind, wind, wind: he is sowing wind; but what will come of it all? This very good religious man — I forget whether his name is Goodenough, or Too-good, but I believe the families are cousins; — is, in his own opinion, so very excellent that he does all he ought to do, and perhaps a little more. Yet he is only sowing the wind; and what will he reap from it? Well, if God is very gracious to him, he will soon reap the whirlwind, for he will find, to his confusion, that all his righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and they shall be like the sere leaves of the forest borne away by the wind. I pray that he may, in this sense, reap the whirlwind very soon; for, if not, he will do so in the next world, when all his pretended good works and all his formal observances of external religion will be nothing but so much whirlwind. to blow in his face, and to fan the flames of hell for ever. O dear friends, shun self-righteousness, and trust alone to the righteousness of Christ! May the Spirit of God lead you to wash in the atoning blood, and then cover you with the spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ! Thus, it will be well with your soul; but all self-righteousness shall end in delusion and confusion for ever and ever. May God grant that none of us may, in this sense, sow the wind!

The text is pre-eminently true of every man who leads a deceitful life. Oh, have I the misery of speaking to one who makes a profession of religion, and who wishes to be thought to be a Christian, and yet who is not really so? It is hard for a true believer to maintain a Christian character, but it is very much harder to keep up that character when there is nothing at the back of it. Oh, how desperately does the man who is a hypocrite have to labor! He has to patch up here, and patch up there,— daub with untempered mortar here, and whitewash there, and he never has any peace. But, all the while, he is only sowing the wind. There is nothing real in his religion; and what will come of it when that hypocrisy is discovered, when he stands revealed before the bar of God? Will his hypocritical religion do him any good? No; “it hath no stalk” even now; it cannot yield him even present comfort. If there be a “bud” that looks a little like self-respect, it “shall yield no meal.” I have already quoted the old proverb, “The devil’s meal is all bran,” and I may add that the hypocrite’s meal is all bran. There is nothing substantial in it. And even if he should seem to die in the odour of sanctity, yet the stranger shall come in, and devour his supposed religiousness, for somebody shall tell the truth about him, and so his fine reputation shall be utterly blasted.

Now, brothers and sisters, I have come to the end of this discourse; and what should be the practical result of it but that, if we have been sowing anything that we ought not to sow, we should pray God to come and plough it all up. Lord, drive the plough straight through every life that is not according to thy Word! Oh, to have all the evil obliterated,— every seed of sin crushed. and destroyed! Would God that it might be so with all of us!

What next? Well, let us then go — oh, may the Divine Spirit lead us! — to Jesus Christ, and ask him to give us the good seed. Let us have our hands washed from the evil in which we formerly delighted; and he alone can cleanse us. Then let us take the clean good wheat which he will give us out of his own granary, and let us go and sow it. God help us to sow it right and left, from morn to eve, without weariness, that, at the last, we may gather in a glorious harvest, not to our own glory, but to the praise of him by whose rich, free, and sovereign grace we were enabled to sow to the Spirit, and of the Spirit to reap life everlasting! Amen.

Before we go, we will sing that very solemn hymn in Mr. Sankey’s book, “What Shall the Harvest Be?” It will help to impress the subject upon our memories and hearts.

Sowing the seed by the dawn-light fair,

Sowing the seed by the noon-day glare;

Sowing the seed by the fading light,

Sowing the seed in the solemn night:

Oh! what shall the harvest be?

Sowing the seed with an aching heart,

Sowing the seed while the tear-drops start,

Sowing in hope till the reapers come,

Gladly to gather the harvest home:

Oh! what shall the harvest be?

Sown in the darkness, or sown in the light,

Sown in our weakness, or sown in our might,

Gathered in time, or eternity,

Sure, ah, sure, will the harvest be!

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Hosea 10:2. The Divided Heart

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty.” — Hosea 10:2.

THIS was originally spoken of the kingdom of Israel. For many years they had been under a king who commanded the worship of Baal, and persecuted the worshippers of Jehovah. God chastened the people very sorely for this, but he did not utterly destroy them. At last Hoshea, the king, came to the throne. He was the last king of Israel, and it is very remarkable that it is said of him that he was much better than those that went before him. He did not evil in the sight of the Lord after the manner of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. He was not what could be wished, but still he was not like the rest; and it seems very odd to a person who reads it casually that God should spare the nation under worse kings, and then should carry it away into captivity, when they had for once in a while a far better king. But the matter is explained thus. Hoshea withdrew the curse of persecution from the people, and they were left free to follow Jehovah. While they were persecuted — compelled to worship Baal, God, as it were, had compassion upon them. He abhorred their idolatry, but still his anger did not burn against them to the same degree as it did afterwards when they were left to do as they pleased, and religious persecution was withdrawn and the pressure was taken off. Then, when there began to be an internal discussion and strife, and some went after the two God, and others still followed the old idol, then it was that God saw that the nation was incurable. They were altogether set upon evil, and he said, “Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty,” or it might be read, “Now shall they be condemned.” From which I gather that a sin in a certain case may be overlooked for a while, and that the same sin under another circumstance may be speedily punished. God knows the circumstances of temptation in which a man may be placed, and though the forge of temptation is not an excuse for sin, it may serve as a mitigation of it. A person under a tyrannizing power who is driven to sin by fear may be far less guilty than another who is under no such constraint, but who wilfully of his own heart chooses the evil, and God may bear a long time with the same sin in one man under certain circumstances, which in another under different circumstances shall provoke him at once to anger, and he shall sweep off the man from the face of the earth. Beware, dear hearers, of deliberate sin. Beware of the sin which is of your own choosing. I may say, beware of all sin, for in a measure it is deliberate, and of your own choosing, but especially that sin which is not brought upon you by any pressure, but simply by your own wilful disobedience to God. This is a crying sin, and one which God will not long put up with.

And now I shall take the language of the text, and apply it in other ways. Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty.

I. This May Be True Of Any Christian Church.

It has long been my joy, beloved in the Lord, that our heart has not been divided. We have walked together these many years in holy fellowship, and, imperfect as we are, yet there have not been divisions among us. There has been no division about doctrine. We have agreed upon the great truths of God. There has been, I believe, no division about who shall be greatest. We have been content each one to occupy his place in the church, and to work on. It is not our goodness that has made it so; it is only the power of God's Spirit which has kept us, who otherwise might readily have been sundered — kept us as the heart of one man in sacred unity. Oh! let it always be so — let it always be so! May these eyes be closed in the darkness of death long before I shall set you contending the one against the other. If it should ever happen that I should be unfit to go in and out among you to your edification, may I be laid aside, and some other found round whom you may rally as one man, that by any means and every means the church may be kept in its integrity one in heart — a threefold cord cannot be broken. Let each man endeavor to avoid giving offense to his brother. Let us all be members unto edification of the same one Lord, one faith, one baptism. May the same Spirit abide in us, and work with us to God's glory, for we well know that a divided church is found faulty. It is faulty so far as anything like usefulness is concerned. The strength that is spent in division is so much taken away from service. When the children of God use their swords against one another, they are not using them against the adversaries of the Lord. May our strength never be spent in division. A house divided against itself must come to naught, but strong in the unity which God shall give us may we not be found faulty. I will not dwell upon that, however, but remark that the text: —

II. May Be Used Again Of Each Individual Christian

One-heartedness in a Christian is a great point. “Unite my heart to fear thy name” is a prayer which every Christian should pray always. “A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.” A double-hearted Christian — what shall I say of him? He is like the eye which when it is single fills the body with light, but if it hath lost its singleness it causes the body to be darkness; and if the light that is in us is darkness, how great is that darkness! Though a Christian deep down in his soul cannot be divided in heart, but must love his God, yet there may be very much of division of pursuit, division of aim and object in Christian men. And, brethren and sisters, may I not suggest that it may be so with some of you, that your hearts may be divided, and therefore you are found faulty? Take the Christian man who desires to serve God, but still is equally desirous to amass wealth. Such a man — may God not put him into the scales and judge him, for I fear he will be found wanting; but if his desire for wealth be even subordinate to that of the glory of God only in a slight degree he will never attain to any great eminence in the divine life. He cannot. In proportion as his vital force is divided and drawn away from the main business of life, he will become spiritually lean, even if he become pecuniarily rich. He may

be a millionaire in the world, but he will be a pauper in the church. He may be a “strong” man on the market, but he shall be a very dwarf in the house of God. There will sure to be a faultiness where the heart is so divided. The most charitable construction we can put upon it is that there are darker evils.

We have known Christians, too, whose object in life has been the large acquiring of knowledge, the pursuit of science, the gathering up of information. This, like the pursuit of wealth, is lawful enough in its subordinate place, but when it comes into rivalry with the seeking of the glory of God, the man may become a scholar, but he will never become a beloved disciple that leans his head upon Jesu’s bosom. He may be great in the classics, and he may be a master in the sciences, but he will never be a master in Israel. The division of his vital powers, the want of concentration, will be sure to keep him in the rear ranks of the Church of God — if he be kept there. Oh! what a blessed thing it is to see a whole-hearted Christian man, who, while he pursues his present business, still pursues it for God’s glory; while he studies and stores his mind, is doing it for one object, namely, that he may be thereby more useful to the Church of God, and more helpful in the winning of souls. Give the man but one heart, one object, and he is a man. Someone has said that he dreaded the man of one book, and so the wicked world may dread the man of one object if that one object be the glory of God. They that have two targets to shoot at shall not strike either; they miss their aim; but he who lives only for God with all his might, is like a thunderbolt launched from Jehovah’s hand and goes crash through every difficulty, and reaches the point God aims at, and that the man himself seeks. He shall live for something; he shall tell upon his age; he shall leave his mark. The man with undivided heart — he shall not be found faulty, but he that is this and that — a follower or Christ, but yet something over and above that, almost equally as much the other as he is a Christian — he shall be a poor, poor thing; he shall not enjoy the light of fellowship with God; he shall not walk in nearness to Christ. He shall be saved, but “so as by fire.” No “abundant entrance” shall be administered to him into the kingdom of God our Father.

I believe, dear friends, and I will go a step further using the same words, that this case, if it should happen to be that of a minister with a divided heart, is more sad than it is in the case of the common Christian. Dear brethren, those of us who believe that we are called to be ministers for Christ are, above all the rest of the Church, bound to devote ourselves to one thing. “This one thing I do.” If other men have two things to do, we by our call and office, if we be not liars in professing to be of God, and traitors to our office, are bound to do but one thing, and that is to free ourselves from the blood of all men, that we may stand before God as his honest servants. You may depend upon it that a minister with his heart at all divided will make a failure of his ministry. It must be so. I have watched the career of a good many young men, though not old myself, and I remember one with remarkable abilities, and in his preaching there was a good clear sound of the gospel. But I, who was as a father to him, noted that he had an ambitious desire to be distinguished as a speaker. I saw that, even when he sought to win souls, it was with a view that persons might say how earnest he was. I could not help detecting in his conversation that there was an evident object to make himself somewhat, that he might be great in Israel. And I remember well how I walked with him and warned him that if God’s servant did anything whatever for himself, God would not use him for his divine purposes, that if we sacrificed to our pride, God would not let us stand as priests at his altar; that if we would be honored, we must keep down, keep humble; that God would not long bless a man who was self-seeking, even in the ministry of Christ. The warnings he received very kindly, but they never sank into his heart; and I can see him now! He is not here, but were he here I think he would confess the truth of what I say. He lies a miserable wreck upon the shore, and he has fallen by his ambition! Else had it not been for that, I would have conceived for him a high and excellent career. And I would say to every minister, “I charge you fling away your ambition. Your only ambition must be to be nothing, to be hated, scouted, called a fool, a driveller, if by any means you may win souls for Christ; but to cultivate rhetoric, to be an orator, to study that you may be thought to be a profound thinker, to labor earnestly with this idea that you may be esteemed to be a first-class soul-winner — even that is bad. The only thing is to seek to do what God would have you do, and to glorify him, to lay every honor at his feet, and live for him, for any sort of division in the Christian minister’s pursuit may make him faulty.” I believe that the man who gives himself to be a preacher should divest himself of the cares of this life, as the soldier does in the army, that he may be able to give his whole soul and life to the one matter for which his Lord has called him. It will be good for him to do this, and then he had better leave politics alone. He had better leave everything alone but his one work. We have not mind enough for two things, and our work is such that if we had mind enough for twenty things it would be best to consecrate it all to that one thing. If I may snatch firebrands from the flame, who will may fill your Senate and may guide the policies of Cabinets; if I may load sinners to the cross of Christ, and tell them of life in his dear wounds, I should be content, though I should never influence anything besides except the hearts of men to the Savior. One thing, young man, if you are about to be a minister — one thing, my brother, however old thou mayest be, permit me to say to thee and myself to-night — one thing we must do if we would not be found faulty. But the stress of my text I intend to lay to-night upon one particular case, and that is: —

III. The Seeking Sinner.

There are some persons who are awakened and are seeking salvation, but they are not likely to find it because their heart is divided, and they will be found faulty. Very briefly, and very briefly indeed, I mean to speak upon this disease, upon the evil of it, and suggest a few thoughts by way of a cure for it.

Of this disease, let me say that it is a disease in the heart. Now a very small prick in the heart will kill. A great gash in the head may

be healed, but a slight wound in the heart is deadly. A division of understanding or of judgment may be remedied, but a division of heart is a very terrible and often a very fatal disease. Let me show you how, and in what respects, some seeking souls are divided in heart.

And they are, first, divided as to a sense of their condition. At one time they think they are in great danger; to-morrow they don't know that there is anything very particular. When they have read a passage of Scripture, they believe their heart to be evil, but they forget the text, and they think their heart is, after all, not so bad as Scripture says it is. They hear that there is a wrath to come, and they are alarmed, but they get away to their friends and neighbors, and say, "Why was I so foolish as to be frightened by the preacher?" "They are in danger; they dare not say they are not, but yet they almost hope it is not true. They know it is not all right with them, yet they try to cheat themselves with the idea that it is pretty nearly all right. They fare never likely to seek a Savior while they are in this condition, for until a man's mind is thoroughly made up that he must be saved by Christ or perish he will never go to Christ. A divided heart about our personal condition before God is a deadly sign.

These same seekers are often divided as to the objects of their choice. They want salvation to-night; they would give their eyes to have it. They will get to their chamber and pray, "O God, save me!" They will endorse the language of that hymn: —

"Wealth and honor I disdain;

Earthly comforts, Lord, are vain;

These can never satisfy:

Give me Christ, or else I die."

To-morrow they will forget all about Christ, and they will be seeking after something else. To-night they would have heaven, but to-morrow they would find a heaven on earth. To-night they would give up sin, but to-morrow they wish to have much of it. To-night they see the emptiness of earthly pleasure, but to-morrow they will suck it down as the ox drinks down water. Their heart is divided between this and that. They are not for the world quite nor for Christ quite; they halt between two opinions. Oh! that God would decide them that their heart, their divided heart, may not prove their ruin.

Some seekers are divided as to the object of their trust. They trust in Jesus Christ, but they also trust a little in themselves. They believe his blood has a great deal to do with it, but they think their prayers have something too, and so they stand with one foot on the land and the other on the sea, and therefore they fall. They are relying upon self in part and upon Christ in part, and so they will assuredly come to destruction, for Christ will never be part Savior. It must be all or nothing. He never entered into partnership with sinful worms to help save them; he is the sole foundation, and other foundation can no man lay. Alas! upon this matter, how many have their hearts divided! They are trusting to their baptism, or to their confirmation, or to their sacraments — all false foundations — and yet they are trying to trust in Christ at the same time. Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty.

And this division is found in their love. They think they love divine things now, but by and by some earthly thing comes in and gets uppermost in their souls. Oh! I do remember myself when, if I woke in the morning, I took care always to have a godly kook under my pillow, and an arousing book too — Doddridge's "Rise and Progress," Alleine's "Alarm," Bunyan's books, and the like — and yet at another time I forgot all about that. I was hot to-day and cold to-morrow. I would have been ready to die in order to be saved at some times, would fain have escaped from the mercy of God, and permitted to "enjoy myself," as I said in the things of the world. Oh! it is a sad state to be in. A seeker will never get Christ until he must have Christ, and he will never get salvation until salvation is the first thing, the last thing the middle thing with him — until it comes to this, "By God's Spirit I must be saved. Nothing will content me. I must be saved, and until I am saved, I cannot give sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyes lids." The Lord of his mercy give us an united heart about this, for a divided heart here is a faulty heart in the seeker. Now let me speak upon

IV. The Danger Of This Disease — the evil of it.

The evil of it is, first, that seekers with divided hearts miss the blessing. Ye shall find him when ye seek him with your whole heart — not till then. Mercy's door opens to the knock of a whole-hearted knocker. A half-hearted seeker will have to wait many a day before that gate will ever give him entrance. No, soul, if thou dost not think enough of mercy to ask for it with all thy heart, thou wilt have to wait awhile. No, man, the choice mercies of God are too precious to be thrown away upon one who asks with a divided heart. Now look at heaven's gate, instead of here and there, instead of looking right and left. For thee one thing is needful, sinner — that one thing. Fifty things thou mayest leave to be sought by and by, but now for thee it is one thing, and if thou wilt not make it one thing, thou wilt miss it — miss it to thine eternal loss.

Again, remember that you who seek the Lord with a divided heart condemn yourselves. When you stand before the judgment seat you won't be able to say, as some will, "Lord, we did not know of this salvation. Lord, we never were impressed with its value," for the Lord would tell you, "Why, you trembled under a sermon; you knelt and prayed, and you cried to me, though you lied with yours

lips because your heart was not perfect before me. Yet you did know the value of these things, and you did feel them, too, in a measure, so that you are without excuse.” He that follows the world with all his heart, and thinks that the best, is a reasonable man in following it; but he who thinks the world to come the best, and yet follows this present evil world — why, what a fool is he, and who shall plead for him? When he stands before God, his prayers will damn him, if nothing else will, for his prayers will be swift witnesses against him that he did know, did feel, and yet he would not act upon his knowledge, and he blotted out that which he perceived in his feeling. God save us from missing heaven and from condemning ourselves by seeking it with a divided heart.

Moreover, O man, I would press one fact upon thee very solemnly, and that is that a divided search after salvation is an insult to the Savior. Who is it, and what is it, O man, that thou dost set up in competition with Christ? All heaven and earth cannot produce his equal, and hast thou found something that can rival him? What is it? Darest thou say what it is? There have been men who have had good thoughts, but even a harlot’s love has been chosen by them, instead of Christ. There are others that have loved the wages of unrighteousness, and Sabbath-breaking has made them forego Christ. We have known others who, for fear of a little scandal from their worldly companions, have been ashamed to follow Christ, and they have given up Jesus Christ sooner than bear a fool’s derision. O man, if thou hadst the choice made thee to-night of all the kingdoms of this world, and Christ, thou wouldst insult Christ if thou shouldst pause in the choice, for he is better than them all, and thy soul’s salvation is better than them all. “For what shall it profit a man, though he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” But I can weep for thee while I rebuke thee. What is it thou dost put in competition with Christ? What is it thou dost prefer to Christ? Man, art thou mad that thou shouldst insult thy Savior, who poured out his heart’s blood for the salvation of such as thou art, and dost thou think that anything can be worth the having at so dreadful a price as the loss of thy soul, and the loss of the Savior’s salvation? I beseech thee turn that over in thy mind. I cannot put it an forcibly as I would, but I pray thee let thy conscience help thee, and answer if it be right in thee to have a divided heart, and so to insult thy Savior.

Once more only on this point, and that is, dost thou not know that a divided heart is a continued disobedience to God? He saith, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength”; and now thou hast sinned thy soul out of his favor and in danger of eternal death, and yet with only half a heart dost thou turn to him. Thou puttest out one hand towards God, but with the other thou wouldst have thy sin. Thou wouldst fain go to heaven and take thy sins with thee. Thou wouldst be saved, but thou wantest to sit both at the table of the Lord and the table of Satan. Thou desirest to hold with the hare and run with the hounds — be the friend of the devil, and yet the friend of God. O man, the very thought is rebellion against thy Maker. Cast it away from thee, and ask the Lord this night to bind all thine affections into one bundle, and then draw them all to himself — that for thee the one thing may be to seek salvation through Christ, and reconciliation to the good Lord in heaven, through the precious blood of his dear Son. And now suffer the last few words which shall be meant to be: —

V. A Cure For This Disease of a dividend heart.

And the first word shall be this. Thou oughtest well to have done with a divided heart when the matter in hand is thy salvation or damnation. When a ship is floating gaily out at sea with favorable winds, men think but little of their safety. When she begins to rock and there is some danger, then their safety rises in importance, and they put it side by side with the safety of the gold they carry with them; but when the winds break loose and the storm is up, and the ship is about to go by the board, and the man must leap into the lifeboat, he flings his gold away; he leaves his treasures loose upon the floor. As they sink into the abyss, he gives up anything if he may but save his life. In that dread hour when the vessel is going down, and a handful of men alone are clinging to a mast, all is gone from them except the thought of saving life. And surely it should be so with you. When you are saved you may begin to think of some other thing, but not to-night. For as the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, there is but a step between some of you and death. Before another Sabbath day — I may speak positively, for out of so many as there are here some one of us will die this week, by all the probabilities of life and death — before another Sabbath day one of us will lie in the shell, prepared to be taken to the grave, and if that should happen to be an unconverted man, then before another Sabbath you will know of hell and of the lake of fire more than this book can tell or these lips can utter, except ye be converted and fly to Christ. Surely in such jeopardy your whole heart ought to be set upon the one matter — your own salvation — and I beseech you and I pray God the Spirit to make it so that you may now with your whole undivided faculties seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. By the awful peril of your soul, I do entreat you linger, and delay, and remain undecided no more, lest your heart, being divided, should prove faulty and be cast away for ever.

Remember, again, and the argument is equally forcible, though it is more pleasing, the mercy that you are seeking after is worth the concentration of all your thoughts to find it. To be delivered from all your past sin — is not this worth the seeking? To be made a child of God — is not this worth wrestling for? To be secure of heaven, to be delivered from hell — is not this worth an attempt to obtain? Oh! if it needed that you should go to your houses to-night, and neglect your to-morrow’s business — it does not need it, but if it did — if you wells not to the market or to the Exchange by the week together, ay, and if your tables were deserted, and you snatched but a morsel that might sustain life, and if you took no walk, had no recreation, if you denied yourself anything and everything until you found Christ, I could not blame you. I am sure it would be well worth the while. Anything, everything should be neglected that you might become one of the people of God, and saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. Did you know the

joy that belongs to Christians, you would never be satisfied until you had it. The man that saw the pearl of great price save it in another dealer's hands, and he thought, "I must have that; it is the finest pearl of all, so I must have that"; and he went his way, you know, and though he had many a dainty jewel, he sold all he had and turned it all to gold, and back he came to the trader, and he gave with joy all that he had that he might buy that one pearl, and he made a good bargain too. And you would make a blessed bargain if everything were given up that you might find a Savior, and be delivered from the wrath to come. Therefore, I do pray you to seek him with your whole heart.

Once more, do remember that the Savior gave his whole heart when he came to save men. There was no by-play about Christ. His zeal for souls did eat him up. He, loved, he lived, he died to save them. Will you have a divided heart about that which took the Savior's whole soul? Remember the devil is in earnest to destroy you. He will leave no stone unturned to keep you his victim that he may utterly destroy you. Shall hell be in earnest to ruin you, and will you not be in earnest to escape from it? Remember, good men are in earnest. I wish that I could speak to you with the tongue of an angel to-night. There is no faculty of my mind which I would not lay under a heavy mortgage if I might but bring your soul to Christ. I would willingly enough go to school again and sit at any master's feet if he could tell me how to deal with human hearts aright, and stir them and draw them to the Savior. Ah! 'tis poorly done, but it is with my whole soul I would plead with you to fly to Christ. And yet 'tis but little a concern of mine, compared with the way in which it is a concern of yours. If I have been faithful, I shall not be responsible for you; it is your soul that is at stake. Sirs, shall I be anxious about your souls, and will you not care about them? Do they seem precious to me, and trifles to you? Shall I urge you to escape, and will you feel, "It does not signify; it is but a trifle." Lord, deliver us from this insanity for insanity it is for a man to trifle with his soul, when others are in earnest for him. And God is in earnest. The great eternal God is in earnest. He says to-night to you, "Turn ye, turn ye! Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" If salvation be child's-play to you, it is not to him. He gave his Son from his bosom to redeem men, and he sent his Spirit unto men to sanctify them. He puts out his omnipotence, lays his wisdom under tax to find a plan, and devise a way by which he might save mankind. Oh! trifle not where God is so in earnest, lest you find him terribly in earnest in the day when his incensed love shall turn to wrath. Jealousy — what is it but love set on a blaze? And if you so hate God that you will prefer to live in hell sooner than be indebted to his mercy, then rest assured you shall feel how heavy his arm can be.

"What chains of vengeance shall they feel Who slight the cords of love? How they deserve the deepest hell That scorn the joys above!"

May God of his infinite mercy prevent anybody here from daring the wrath of God by following after Christ with a divided heart — trifling with his Maker, trifling with his soul, trifling with heaven, trifling with hell. May we be in earnest, each one of us, and may we all meet at the right hand of God through sovereign grace. The Lord bless you all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Hosea 10:12: An Urgent Necessity

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"It is time to seek the Lord till he come and rain righteousness upon you." - Hosea 10:12.

Hosea uses a great many figures taken from farming. He describe the seeking of the Lord in the former part of this verse as ploughing, and sowing, and breaking up fallow ground. I suppose he intends by this to describe conviction of sin, humiliation of soul as the work that ploughs, the reception of the truth of the gospel by faith in Jesus Christ as sowing, for this introduces the living seed into the soul. And he here gives two reasons why this matter of seeking the Lord should be attended to at once. His first reason is the season. "It is time to seek the Lord." The second is a very gracious expectation that God will rain righteousness upon us. First, then, prophet reasons that we should seek after the Lord because it is:-

I. The Time To Seek God.

"It is time to seek the Lord." I wish you to reflect, first, that we yet have time. It might have been otherwise. We might have been cut down in our sins. Many of our neighbors and acquaintances have died. Some of them we have reason to fear died in their iniquities, and were taken away with a stroke. We, too, have passed through dangers. Some have escaped in shipwreck. Some have been in imminent peril in accident; some of us have come into the very jaws of death in serious sickness. We might almost

sing, or quite sing:-

“Lord, and am I yet alive

Not in torment, not in hell;

Still doth thy good Spirit strive

With the chief of sinners dwell.”

We yet have time. Let no person living say he hath not time, for while life lasts, hope lasts. The sentence, “Depart, ye cursed,” is not yet pronounced by Christ’s lips on you. Pronounce it not on yourselves. Do not conclude your case to be hopeless, and make it hopeless, but rather believe that being in the assembly of God’s people, listening to the testimony of his grace, you are still on praying ground and pleading terms with God, and you yet have time given you to seek the Lord. The most aged need not despair; the most guilty need not conclude that their day of grace is over. Until that iron bar shall fasten the door, and you are shut in the pit for ever, let not Satan persuade you that you are beyond all hope. While the gospel note rings from the silver trumpet of gracious invitation, “He that hath ears to hear let him hear,” ye yet have time - time to seek the Lord.

This time is given you for this very purpose. You think, perhaps that your prolonged life is given you that you may mature your plans, that you may rectify mistakes of business, that you may accumulate more money, or perhaps you are grown enough to think that the best way of using time is to get earthly pleasure out of it, and indulge animal passions and appetites. Ah! sirs, it is not so. To whatever use you put this talent of time, God’s long-suffering has been your salvation. By it God teacheth you to repent while he permitteth you to live. His long-suffering is not that you may provoke him further, but that you may cease to provoke him. He cuts not down the tree not that it may spread its useless branches and cumber the ground yet worse, but if, perhaps, being digged about a little longer, it may bring forth fruit. It is the very motive why the Intercessor pleads, “Spare it yet another year.” He spares you that you may not depart hence till you are ready to depart. He gives you space, not for sin, for repenting opportunity, not for perpetrating worse offenses, but for turning from your evil ways. Your time has this mark on it, if you would but see it, “Repent! I give thee space. Repent. Take heed thou waste it not.” There is encouragement to every unconverted person in this thought. If this time is given you to repent in, then rest assured that, repenting and believing in Jesus’ you will be accepted. If the judge stands at the criminal’s door and waits, and says he waits there until he is willing to receive the pardon he grants, and if the criminal be anxious to receive the pardon, there can be no difficulty in the way. The very waiting of the judge at the door proves that he does not want to execute the sentence - only desires to see some symptom of contrition, some tokens of turning from the evil way, and gives space if, perhaps, these tokens may become apparent. Hear ye, then, oh! unconverted ones, hear ye then, and trifle not with the space allowed you. It is time to seek the Lord, says the text; surely it is high time. Not only the time, but high time. It is high time, ye young ones, that ye seek the Lord, for Satan is on the watch for you if, perhaps, your unwary footsteps may be decoyed into the paths of evil - evil which, if you be not delivered from, you will have to regret ever having trodden to life’s latest hour. Oh! if you would be kept from the snare of the fowler, ye young ones, it is time ye seek the Lord - high time. Now when you are leaving your mother’s roof - going away from a father’s gentle guidance, it is time to seek the Lord. I would press this on any young man here just launching into life, or throbbing marriage, ere that business be entered upon - it is time to seek the Lord. Set up God’s altar when you set up a house, and ere ye trade for yourself consecrate yourself and your substance to God, who can bless you and will. But, oh! ye that have passed now into middle life, have ye spent forty years in sin? It is high time ye sought the Lord. Your best days have been given to provoking him. Will ye not give the rest, such as they are, to his service? Oh! that his Spirit might constrain you so to do. And you that lean upon the staff, you who have come to the verge of human life, is it not high time to seek the Lord? I see your sun going down; the sky is scarcely bright, the red rays betoken that the sun is hiding himself. Oh! ere the dark, dark, endless night comes on, seek ye the Lord while yet he may be found. Be grateful for having been spared so long. Oh! be not so ungrateful as to use so long a life all for sin; for, remember, it will be then all used for your own destruction. You have long enough been a fool. Grey hairs and foolery are not well matched. You have long enough sported on the brink of hell; will you not start back from it? By God’s long-suffering and patience, I beseech you remember it is high time for you to seek the Lord. And you in whom I mark that treacherous spot upon the cheek that marks the worm beneath, and you with the preternaturally bright eye that indicates the fire of consumption within, it is time ye sought the Lord. And ye whose crumbling frames, or aching bones or relaxed sinews, or trembling nerves, all betoken how weak your body is, and how readily it may be crumbled back into the dust - these tokens from the Lord are upon you - it is time ye sought him. He knocks gently as yet, and gives you warning. Take heed, he will come soon and remove the house of the wicked, and the tabernacle of the ungodly, and your souls must appear before his judgment-seat. It is high time ye sought the Lord. And, oh! all of you ungodly ones that listen to my voice, and have listened to it so long, I have asked the Lord to teach me how to preach that I may somehow get at your hearts. I seem not to have learnt the art as yet. May his Spirit come and give the right word with a barbed shaft that shall plough its way right through your armor and pierce its way through all the hardness of your heart until it breaks the conscience and wounds you, and compels you to cry for mercy. What! all the years - of Park Street, and Exeter Hall, and the time at the Surrey Gardens, and ever since this Tabernacle has been built, and yet unsaved! It is time to seek the Lord. The very seats you sit on cry out against you, some of you, and I, unwilling as I am to speak it, I must be

a swift witness against some of you, for to the best of my ability I have pointed to Christ, I have warned you from danger, I have told you of your great peril, I have warned you of the terrible punishment of sin, I have entreated you to fly to Jesus. It is time, ye gospel-hardened ones, that ye sought the Lord. If your lusts be gods, serve them; but decide ye and choke ye this day, and may God choose for you whom ye will serve. It is high time as well as time to seek the Lord.

Remember, too - and here is something solemn, but something sweet as well - it is God's time, for these are God's words put into the prophet's mouth - it is time to seek the Lord; God says, "It is time." When God says it is time, why, then, when I come I cannot be denied. God says, "It is time"; then if I do not come, I provoke him. Hear ye these words, ye that are dull of hearing, and ye whose hearts have a thick crust; hear ye, for Jehovah speaks to you this day. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation." "To-day" - he limiteth the time - "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts; for if you do so, the day will come when he will deal with you as he did with his people Israel, who, having long provoked him, received this as his answer to their face, "He sware in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest." Not yet hath he spoken, but he may, and that awful voice which comes from Solomon's Proverbs may come to you. "Because I have called and ye refused, I stretched out my hand and no man regarded it, I also will mock at your calamity; I will laugh when your fear cometh." "To-day is the accepted time; to-day is the day of salvation."

Once more only. It is time to seek the Lord, and it is but time. It is but a time. Ye have not given to you eternity in which to seek the Lord. It is the time, and the time is limited. It is still time, but it is limited. To some of you it is my limited. It is time to seek the Lord. The vessel lies in the harbor, and the favorable wind would take her out to sea, and bear her on to her port, but the sailor sleeps; the captain observes not the wind; the sails are furled. To-morrow the wind has changed. Now he may do as he will, he is land-locked, and there must he remain; he cannot put out to sea, for he cannot command the gale. So is it with you; there is a time which fled appoints you. 'Tis now! Slight it, and it may never come again. It is but a time. Oh! take this mercy at the flood; miss it not, I pray you. While God waits, come ye, lest there should come an hour when ye shall knock at his door and the voice shall be heard, "Too late, too late; ye cannot enter now." Ah! I would I had but power to put this as I should, and so that you would feel it; but, mayhap, you will feel it when I would wish you had no need to do so, I mean on a dying bed. The Puritans tell a story of a woman convinced of sin on her death-bed, who lived near Cambridge, who was visited by several ministers, all of whom had great skill in comforting seeking souls. When five or six of them had spoken gently and comfortingly to her, she opened her eyes upon them with a glare, and all she said was this, "Call back the time, call back the time, for otherwise I am damned." And so she died. And there are many, I hear, who might say that. "The time is gone! The time is gone; I cannot call it back!" Oh! take it on the wing while yet it - is time to seek the Lord. Ye know, perhaps, the story of the traveler on the prairie, when a fire in the distance could be seen. The prairie was on a blaze, and he knew that his only hope for life was to fight fire with fire. He searched for his matches. If he could make a ring around him and burn the grass so that when the fire came up it would have nothing to feed upon, then he might escape. He found but three matches in his box. He took one and struck it with some degree of care, but, alas! he be could light the train which he had laid, the match had gone out. He took another, and this time, very tremblingly, with much of tremulous anxiety about him, struck it. There was a light; he thought he was safe, but a gust of wind blew it out. And now all depended on the last match. He must be burnt to ashes, unhelped, unpitied by a friend, if that match failed him. Down he falls, and breathes the prayer, "God help me, God help me! Grant this may succeed." He struck it! You may guess with what care he had laid all the grass around it, and then he struck it as though he were loth to run the terrible risk; but he praised God when he saw its success, and that his life was saved. You have but one match left, O sinner; use it well - one light one time - the time to seek the Lord. Oh! seek him now to-night. This moment in the pew say "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Is that your prayer? 'Tis well. God hear and answer it! But now I must by your patience speak for a little while upon the second part of the text. There is another reason given for seeking the Lord, and that is.-

II. The Blessed Expectation.

It is that in due time he will rain righteousness upon us I understand by this that the ploughing and the sowing are ours, but these are nothing without the heavenly rain of grace. But God will be sure to send that in due time. In fact, our ploughing and sowing are results and tokens of his grace, and the grace of comfort will come where the grace of humiliation has already come. When it says "righteousness" I think it means to assure us that God can in a way of righteousness be gracious to us. Through his dear Son, who bore the punishment of our sine, God can righteously rain upon sinners. Now just a moment or two. You say you have not grace; you say you are not what you should be. 'Tis even so. But seek the Lord, and he will rain righteousness upon you. Observe all grace must come from him. Rain comes from God. He rains it. Every drop of grace comes from heaven. You, sinner, can never get any grace unless he gives it you. Remember this, and wait upon him now for it. It must be heavenly grace, or it will be no grace at all. It can come to you. There are some parts on earth that never could be watered if it did not rain. Nobody would ever think of watering the hilltops. But he watereth his hills from his chambers. We cannot give grace to you; you are in such a desolate, lonely, mountainous place, but he can get at you, and he will. See how it is he will rain righteousness upon you. Then. as there is a straight way for rain even to the wilderness, so is there a straight way for God's grace to drop into your desert heart. Rain comes sovereignly as God wills it, where he wills it, when he wills it. And in degree and duration according to his will. So does grace. Lift

up your soul, then, to him for it, and bow your head, feeling that you deserve it not.

But in the metaphor of rain there is the idea of plenteousness. He will rain righteousness upon you. If you have no grace, he will give you much grace if you have great needs; he will give you great supplies; he will rain it upon you. God is not stinting in his love; he will not give you a drop or two, but he will give you a sea of mercy. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground." Now is not this good reason for seeking the Lord? Ye cannot get grace anywhere but from the Lord. God can give it you very abundantly. It is in his hands to give or not as he wills. Oh! seek it. He holdeth the stars; he guideth the clouds; he wingeth the tempest. Seek ye him, for his grace; he will give it to you. It can come from none besides. But it will come. There is the mercy of it. And you are told in the text to seek it until it does come. Seek him until the grace comes. I have known a sinner cry to God once, and mercy has come directly; but there have been many cases where souls have cried again and again, and only after a long while have they had success. I saw as I came here to-night - it all happened in a moment - I saw a little child just come home from school I suppose a very little child, and she tapped at her mother's door, and the mother did not come, and she did what was the best thing to do under the circumstances - cried as loud as ever she could, and her mother came to her. If ye have knocked at mercy's door, and mercy has not come, cry for it. Oh! a groan, a tear, a cry, a sigh, will quicken the steps of mercy. God cannot linger when a sinner cries. When a sinner weeps, Christ will soon have pity on him. But, anyhow, keep on till he comes. Seek till he rain righteousness upon you. Elijah got the fire in prayer very soon, but he did not get the rain very soon. He had to say to his servant "Go and look towards the sea." There was Elias, with his head between his knees, in mighty prayer, but not a drop of rain or sign of a cloud. "Go again, go again," repeated till he had made up seven times, and then there is a cloud the size of a man's hand. Sinner, hast thou prayed? Go again. Hast thou prayed twice? Go again. Has it come to three times? Go again. Has it come to four times, Go again. Does it amount to six times? Go again. Let there be no stint in prayer. Thou hast kept God waiting long enough. Thou must not marvel if he should now tarry awhile. Go again; go again. Say, "I am resolved that I will not give it up until thou shalt rain thy comfort, thy righteousness, thy grace, upon me." He will surely do it, and you do not know how soon - you do not know how soon - you will get comfort. And when it comes it will make up for all delays. You know the woman, when the child is born, remembereth no more the travail, for joy that a man is born into the world; and, oh! when Christ is yours, you will forget your travail in your joy and your rejoicing. I am thinking just now of Columbus and his crew. They had sailed long across the Atlantic, and had not found the golden land, the El Dorado, and so the sailors talked of going back, and many a scheme he had, by which he tempted them a little further on to that unknown shore. At last it came to this, they mutinied; they would go no farther; they would not seek the land again; wherefore should they drift away and be lost for ever? He said, "Give me but three days, and if between now and the third day we see not the shore, then we will reverse the helm." Within those three days shore stood the fair shores of the New World before the mariners' eyes. Suppose they had turned back the second day, and had gone home and never found it. Well, I don't know that it would have mattered much to those sailors. Somebody else would have found it, but you are, perhaps, within three days now of being accepted in the Beloved - perhaps within three hours. Pray God that it may be within three minutes. And will you not go on little farther; will you not still cry, and will you not take the gospel step, the grand step of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved? That brings you to the El Dorado, to the land of gold, to the land of mercy, to the bosom of Christ, to the safety of the blessed, to the security of the glory that shall be revealed hereafter. Oh! sinner, be thou not discouraged, but seek the Lord, for thou hast his promise he will be found of thee. Some even of God's servants have been a good while seeking, and they have not found him. When that dear martyr of Christ, Mr. Glover, lay in prison he was in a very sad state of heart, and he said, "I love him, and I will burn for him; but, oh! that I had some glimpses of his face." And his fellow-sufferer who lay in prison with him used to tell him, "He will appear to you; you shall have joy." But day after day all through that weary time spent in prison, he would constantly be saying, "Am I his? Hath he forgotten to be gracious? Hath he shut up the bowels of his compassion? But," said Glover, "if he never speak comfortably to me again, I know his truth, and I know his gospel, and I will burn for him. By his grace, I will never turn away"; and the morning came on which he was to be burned, and he awoke with some heaviness on his spirit. There seemed to be no comfort in any promise to which he turned, and prayer brought no relief. And they came and put the chains on him, and they led him out, and he came to where the stake was and where the faggots were, and he was about to strip and put on his shirt for the burning, and suddenly he leapt up and said, "He is come! He is come! He is come! Glory be unto his name." His friends had asked him to give some sign that his spirit had revived, and he stood and burned as though he scarcely felt the fire, singing Psalms and praying. And so it will be with every earnest seeker. If the looks of love have never come to you for years, you will have them yet, for never soul believed but what was safe. Some have believed, but not been comfortable, but they are safe; the comfort will come. Only seek ye, for he will rain righteousness on you.

"So I must maintain my hold, 'Tis the goodness makes me bold; I can no denial take, For I plead for Jesus' sake."

Oh! sinner, never let go. Cling close to Christ, and he cannot cast you away, for this is his promise, "Him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out." Come ye, and the Lord bless you. Amen and amen.

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Hosea 11:4 Silken Cords

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“I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.” — Hosea 11:4.

No man ever does come to God unless he is drawn. There is no better proof that man is totally depraved than that he needs to be effectually called. Man is so utterly “dead in trespasses and sins” that the same divine power which provided a Savior must make him willing to accept a Savior, or else saved he never will be. You see a ship upon the stocks. She is finished and complete. She cannot, however, move herself into the water. You see a tree; it is growing; it brings forth branch, leaf, and fruit, but it cannot fashion itself into a ship. Now, if the finished ship can do nothing, much less the untouched log; and if the tree, which hath life, can do nothing, much less that piece of timber out of which the sap has long since gone. Christ’s declaration, “Without me ye can do nothing,” is true of believers; but it is just, as true, and with a profounder emphasis, of those who have not believed in Jesus. They must be drawn, or else to God they never will come.

But many make a mistake about divine drawings. They seem to fancy that God takes men by the hair of their heads, and drags them to heaven, whether they will or not, and that, when the time comes, they will, by some irresistible power, without any exercise of thought or reasoning, be compelled to be saved. Such people understand neither man nor God; for man is not to be compelled in this way. He is not a being so controlled.

“Convince a man against his will.
He’s of the same opinion still”

As the old proverb says, “One man may bring a horse to the water, but twenty men cannot make him drink;” so, a man may be brought to know what repentance is, and to understand what Christ is, but no man can make another man lay hold upon Christ. Nay, God himself doth not do it by compulsion. He hath respect unto man as a reasoning creature. God never acteth with men as though they were blocks of wood, or senseless stones. Having made them men, he doth not violate their manhood. Having determined by man to glorify himself, he uses means to show forth his glory, — not such as are fit for beasts, Or for inanimate nature, but such as are adapted to the constitution of man. My text says as much as this, “I drew them with cords;” — not the cords that are fit for bullocks, but “with cords of a man;” — not the cart-ropes with which men would draw a cart, but the cords with which a man would draw a man; and, as if to explain himself, the Lord puts it, “I drew them with bands of love.” Love is that mighty power which acts upon man. There must be loving appeals to the different parts of his nature, and so he shall be constrained by sovereign grace.

Understand, then, it is true that no man comes to God except he is drawn; but it is equally true that God draweth no man contrary to the constitution of man, but his methods of drawing are in strict accordance with ordinary mental operations. He finds the human mind what it is, and he acts upon it, not as upon matter, but as upon mind. The compulsions, the constraints, the cords that he uses, are “cords of a man.” The bands he employs are “bands of love.”

This is clear enough. Now I am about to try — and may the Lord enable me! — to show you some of these cords, these bands, which the Lord fastens round the hearts of sinners. I may be the means in his hands of putting these cords round you, but I cannot pull them after they are on. It is one thing to put the rope on, but another thing to draw with all ones might at that rope. So it may be that I shall introduce the arguments and, by the prayers of the faithful now present, God will be pleased, in his infinite mercy, to pull these cords, and that your soul will be sweetly drawn, with full consent, with the blessed yielding of your will to come and lay hold upon eternal life.

First, some are drawn to Christ by seeing the happiness of true believers.

A true believer is the happiest being out of heaven. In some respects, he is superior to an angel, for he hath a brighter hope and a grander destiny than even cherubim and seraphim can know. He is one with Christ, which an angel never was. He is a son of God, and has the Spirit of adoption within him, which a cherub never had. There are some Christians who show this happiness in their lives. Watch them, and you will always find them cheerful. If, for a moment, a cloud should pass over their brow, it is but for a moment, and soon they rejoice again. I know such people, and glad am I to think that I ever came across their pathway. Wherever they go, they make sunshine. Into whatever company they come, it is as if an angel shook his wings. Let them talk when times may, it is always for the comfort of others, with kindness upon their lips, and the law of love within their hearts. Many a young person, watching, such Christians as these, is led to say, “I wish I were as happy, I wish I were as joyful, as they are; they always have a

smile upon their face.” And I do not doubt that many have been brought to lay hold on Jesus through being drawn by that band of love.

And let me say to you, dear friend, that this is a most fitting cord with which to draw you; for if you would know the sweets of life, if you would have peace like a river, if you would have a peace that shall be with you in the morning, and go with you into your business; — that shall be with you at night, and close your eyes in tranquil slumber; — a peace that shall enable you to live, and shall strengthen you in the prospect of death, — nay, that shall make you sing in the midst of the black and chill stream; — be a Christian. My testimony is that, if I had to die like a dog; if this life were all, and there were no hereafter, I would prefer to be a Christian for the joy and peace which, in this present life, godliness will afford. “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” It hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Thou wouldst be happy, young man; then do not kill thy happiness. Thou wouldst have a bright eye; then do not put it out. Thou wouldst rejoice with joy unspeakable; then do not go into those places where sorrow is sure to follow thine every act. Wouldst thou be happy? Come to Jesus. Let this band of love sweetly draw thee.

Another band of love — it was the one which brought me to the saviour, — is the sense of the security of God’s people, as a desire to be as secure as they are. I do not know what may be the peculiarity of my constitution, but safe things have I always loved. I have not, that I know of, one grain of speculation in my nature. Safe things — things that I can see to be made of rock, and that will bear the test of time, — I lay hold on with avidity. I was reasoning thus in my boyish spirit: — Scripture tells me that he that believeth in Christ shall never perish. Then, if I believe in Jesus, I shall be safe for time and for eternity too. There will be no fear of my ever being in hell; I shall run no risk as to my eternal state; that will be secure for ever. I shall have the certainty that, when my eyes are closed in death, I shall see the face of Christ, and behold him in glory. Whenever I heard the doctrine of the final preservation of the saints preached, my mouth used to water, and I used to long to be a child of God. When I heard the old saints sing that hymn, —

“My name from the palms of his hands

Eternity will not erase;

Impress’d on his heart it remains

In marks of indelible grace:

Yes, I to the end shall endure,

As sure as the earnest is given;

Are happy, but not more secure,

The glorified spirits in heaven;”

— my heart, was as if it would leap out of this body, and I would cry to God, “Oh, that I had a part and job in such a salvation as that! “Now, young man, what do you think of this band of loves? Do you not think there is something reasonable and something powerful in it, — to secure yourself against all risk of eternal ruin, and that, by the grace of God, in a moment? “He that believeth on him is not condemned.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.” What say you to this? Doth not this truth attract you? Doth not this band draw you? Lord, draw the sinner, by the sweet allurements of security, and let him say, “I will lay hold on Christ to-night.”

Certain Christians will tell you that they were first drawn to Christ by the holiness of godly relatives, — not so much by their happiness as by their holiness. There is an Eastern fable that a man, wishing to attract all the doves from the neighboring dovecotes into his own, took a dove, and smeared her wings with sweet perfume. Away she flew, and all her fellow-doves observed her, and, attracted by the sweet incense, flew after her, and the dovecote was soon full. There are some Christians of that sort. They have had their wings smeared with the precious ointment of likeness to Jesus, and wherever they go, such is their kindness and their consistency, their gentleness and yet their honesty, their lovely spirit and yet their boldness for Jesus, that others take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus, and they say, “Where does he dwell, for I would fain see him, and love him too? “I am afraid I cannot attract you, sinner, in such a charming way as that, but I would have you read the lives of godly men. Study the actions, perhaps, of your own mother. Is she dead? Then remember what she used to be what her life of devotedness to God was; and I charge you, by the love of God, by her many prayers and tears, by the pity of her soul, and the yearning of her bowels towards you, let your mother’s example be one of the bands of love to draw you towards God. Lord, pull at that cord! Lord, pull at that cord! If the cord be round about you, and the Lord will pull at it, I shall have good hope that you will close with Christ tonight.

You see, I only show you the cord, and then leave it, hoping that perhaps one or another may be taken by its power. Now for

another. I believe that not a few are brought to Christ by gratitude for mercies received. The sailor has escaped from shipwreck, or, perhaps, even in the River Thames, he has had many a narrow escape for his life. The sportsman has had his gun burst in his hand, and yet he has been himself unharmed. The traveler has escaped from a terrific railway accident, himself picked out of the debris of the broken carriages unhurt. The parent has seen his children, one after another, laid upon a bed of sickness with fever, but yet they have all been spared; or he himself has had loss upon loss in business, till at last it seemed as if a crash must come; but just then, God interposed in a gracious providence, and forthwith a strong tide of prosperity set in. Some have thought over these things, and said, "Is God so good to us, and shall we not love him? Shall we live every day despising him who thus tenderly watches over us, and graciously provides for our wants," O sirs, methinks this band of love ought to fall about some, of you! How good God has been to you, dear hearer! I will not tell your case out in public; but when you have sometimes talked with a friend, you have said, "How graciously has providence dealt with me! "Give the Lord thy heart, young man; surely thou canst do no less for such favor as he has shown thee. Mother, give Jesus thy heart; he well deserves it, for he has spared it from being broken. Woman, consecrate — may the Lord help thee to do it! — consecrate thy hearts warmest affections to him who hath thus generously dealt with thee in providence. He deserves it, doth he not? Wilt thou be guilty of ingratitude? Is there not something within thee that says, "Stay no longer an enemy to so kind a Friend, but be reconciled to him; be reconciled to God by the death of his Son." May that cord lay hold of some of you, and may God draw it, and so attract, you to himself!

Persons whose characteristic is thinking rather than loving are often caught by another cord. I do not know what may be; your mode of thinking of things; but it strikes me that, if I had not laid hold of Christ now, if anybody should meet me, and say, "The religion of Christ is the most reasonable religion in the world," I should lend him my ear for a little time, and ask him to prove it to me. I have frequently caught the ears of travelers, and held them fast bound, when I have tried to show the entire reasonableness of the plan of salvation. God is just, that is taken for granted. If God be just, sin must be punished; that is clear. Then, how can God be just, and yet not punish the sinner? That is the question, and the gospel answers that question. It declares that Christ, the Son of God, became a man; that he stood in the room, placed and stead of such men as were chosen of God to be saved. These men may be known by their believing in Christ. Christ stood, then, in the place, and stead of those whom I will now call believers. He suffered at God's hand everything that was due to God from them. Nay, he did more. Inasmuch as they were bound to keep God's law, but could not do it, Christ kept it for them; and now, what Christ did becomes theirs by an act of faith. They trust Christ, to save them. Christ's sufferings are put in the stead of their being sent to hell, and they are justly delivered from their sins. Christ's righteousness is put in them stead of their keeping the law of God, and they are justly rewarded with a place in paradise, as if they had themselves been perfectly holy.

Now, it strikes me that this looks reasonable enough. In everyday life, we see the same thing done. A man is drawn for the militia; he pays for a substitute, and he himself goes free. A man owes a debt; some friend comes in, and discharges the bill for him, and he himself is clear. The ends of justice are answered through substitution. There seems to me to be something as unique about, the whole affair of God taking the place of man, and God's suffering in man's form for man that justice may by no means be marred, that my reason falls down at the feet of this great mystery, and cries, "I would have an interest in it; Lord, let, me be one of those for whom Jesus died; let me have the peace which springs from a complete atonement wrought out by Jesus Christ."

My brother, I wish I could draw thee with this cord; but I cannot. I can only show them this cord, and tell thee how well it would draw thee. If thou rejectest it, thy blood shall be upon thine own head. I know too well thou wilt reject it, unless the mighty hand of God shall begin to tug at that band of love, and draw them to Jesus.

Far larger numbers, however, are doubtless attracted to Jesus by a sense of his exceeding great love. It is not so much the reasonableness of the atonement, as the love of God which shines in it which seems to attract many souls. There once lived, in the city of London, a rich merchant, a man of generous spirit, a Lollard, one of those who were subjected to fines, and imprisonment, and even death for the truth's sake. Near him there lived a miserable cobbler, — a poor, mean, despicable creature. The merchant, for some reason unknown, had taken a very great liking to the poor cobbler, and was in the habit, of giving him all his work to do, and recommending him to many friends, and as this man would not always work as he should, when the merchant saw his family in any need, he would send them meat from his own table, and frequently he clothed his children. Well, notwithstanding that he had acted thus, had often advanced him sums of money, and had acted with great kindness, a reward was offered to anyone who would betray a Lollard, or would discover such person or persons as read the Bible, to the magistrates. The cobbler, to obtain this reward, went to the magistrates, and betrayed the merchant. As God would have it, however, through some skillful advocate, the merchant escaped. He forgave — freely forgave the cobbler, and never said a word to him about it; but, in the streets, the cobbler would always turn his head the other way, and try to get out of the way of the man whom he felt he had so grievously ill-treated. Still, the merchant never altered his treatment of him, but sent him meat as usual, and attended to his wife and children if they were sick, the same as before; but he never could get the cobbler to give him a good word. If he did speak, it was to abuse him. One day, in a very narrow lane in the city, — for the streets were narrow, and narrower still were the lanes, — the merchant saw the cobbler coming, and he thought, "Now is my time; he cannot pass me now without facing me." Of course, the cobbler grew very red in the face, and made up his mind that, if the merchant should begin to upbraid him, he would answer him in as saucy a manner as

possible. But when the merchant came close to him, he said, "I am very sorry that you shun me; I have no ill-will towards you; I would do anything for you or for your family, and nothing would give me greater pleasure than to be friends with you." The cobbler stopped, and presently a moisture suffused his eyes; and, anon, a flood of tears poured down his cheeks, and he said, "I have been such a base wretch to you that I hated you, for I thought that you would never forgive me. I have always shunned you; but when you talk to me like this, I cannot be your enemy any longer. Pray, sir, assure me of your forgiveness." Forthwith, he began to fall upon his knees. That was the way to draw him with the cords of a man, and with the bands of love! and, in a nobler sense, this is just what Jesus Christ has done for sinners. He has offered you mercy; he has proclaimed to you eternal life, and you reject it. Every day he gives you of his bounties, makes you to feed at the table of his providence, and clothes you with the livery of his generosity. And yet, after all this, some of you curse him; you break his Sabbaths; you despise his name; you are his enemies. Yet, what does he say to you? He loves you still; he follows you, not to rebuke you, but to woo you, and to entreat you to come to him, and have him for your Friend. Can you hold out against my Master's wounds? Can you stand out against his bloody sweat? Can you resist his passion? Oh! by the name of him who bowed his head upon the tree, who cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" can you hold out against him? If he had not died for me, I think I must love him for dying for other people. But he has died for you; you may know this if so I trust him now with your soul, just as you are. This is the evidence that he died for you. Oh, may God enable you to trust Jesus now, drawing you with this band of love, this cord of a man!

There are many more cords, but my strength fails me, and therefore I will mention but one more. The privileges which a Christian enjoys ought to draw some of you to Christ. Do you know what will take place in these aisles tonight if the Holy Spirit should lead a sinner to Christ? I will tell you. There he stands, he is as vile a sinner as walks this earth. He knows it; he is wretched; he has a burden on his back. If that man is led to look to Christ tonight, his sins will roll off from him at once; they will roll into the sepulcher of Jesus, and be buried, and never have a resurrection. In a moment, he will be clothed from head to foot with white raiment. The kiss of a Father's love shall be upon his cheek, and the seal of the Spirit's witness shall be fixed upon his brow. He shall be made, tonight, a child of God, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. His feet shall be shod with the preparation of the goal of peace. He shall be clothed with the righteousness of Jesus. He shall go to his house, not wretched, but as though he could dance for joy the whole way home. And when he gets home, it may be never so poor a cottage, but it will look brighter than it ever did before. His children he will look upon as jewels entrusted to his care, instead of being burdens, as he once said they were. His very trials he will come to thank God for; while his ordinary mercies will be sweetened, and made very dear to him. The man, instead of leading a life like a hell upon earth, will live a life like heaven begun below; and all this shall take place in an instant.

Nay, that is not all; the effect of this night's work shall tell throughout his entire life. He shall be a new creature in Christ Jesus; so that, when the time shall come that his hair is grey, and he lies stretched upon his bed, and breathes out his life, he shall, in his last moments, look back upon a path that has been lit with the grace of God, and look forward across the black river to an eternity in which the glory of God shall shine forth with as great a fullness as a creature can endure. This is enough, surely, to tempt a sinner to come to Jesus. This must be a strong cord! draw him, O man, Jesus will accept you; he will accept you now, just as you are! He has received millions like you already; let heaven's music witness to the fact. Millions more like you he is still willing to receive; some of us can bear our testimony to them. Come and welcome, then; come and welcome. Never mind thy rags, prodigal; a Father's hand will take them off; never mind thy filth; never mind having fed the swine. Come as thou art; come just now.

I hear somebody saying, "Well, I am inclined to come; but I do not know what it means to come to Christ." To come to Christ is to trust him. You have been trying to save yourself; do not try any more. You have been going to church, or going to chapel, and you have been trying to keep the commandments; but you cannot keep them. No man ever did keep them, and no man ever will keep them. You have been, in fact, like a prisoner who has been sentenced to hard labor; you have been walking upon the treadmill in order to get to the stars, and you are not an inch higher. After all you have done, you are just where you were. Now, leave this off; have done with it. Christ did keep the law; let his keeping it stand in the stead of your keeping it. Christ did suffer the anger of God; let his sufferings stand to you in the stead of your sufferings. Take him now, just as you are, and believe that he can save you, — nay, that he will save you, and trust him to do it. This is all the gospel I have to preach. Very seldom do I finish a sermon without going over this simple matter of trusting Christ. There are some, perhaps, who enquire for something new. I cannot give it to you; I have not got anything new, but only the same old story over and over again. Trust Christ, and you are saved.

We have heard, in our church meetings, that, on several occasions, when, at the close of the sermon, I have merely said as much as that, it has been enough to lead sinners into life and peace; and, therefore, I will keep on at it. My heart yearns to bring some of you to Christ tonight, but I know not what arguments to use with you. You surely do not wish to be damned. Surely you cannot make the calculation that the short pleasures of this world are worth an eternity of torment; but damned you must be except you lay hold on Christ. Doth not this cord draw you? Surely you want to be in heaven. You have some desire toward that better land in the realms of the hereafter; but you cannot be there except you lay hold on Christ. Will not this cord of love draw you? Surely it would be a good thing to get rid of fear, and suspense, and doubt, and anxiety. It would be, a good thing to be able to lay your head on your pillow, and say, "I do not care whether I wake or not;" to go to sea, and reckon it a matter of perfect indifference whenever you reach land or no. Nay, some times the wish with us to depart preponderates over that of remaining here. Do you not wish for that.

But you can never have it, except by laying hold on Christ. Will not this draw you?

My dear heart, you, whose face I look upon every Sabbath, and into whose ears this poor, dry voice has spoken so many hundreds of times, we do not wish to be parted. I know that, to some of you, this is the very happiest, as well as the holiest spot you ever occupied. You love to be here. I am glad you do, and I am glad to see you. I do not like to be separated from you. When any of you remove to other towns, it gives me pain to miss your faces. I hope we shall not be separated in the world to come. My beloved friends around me, who have been in Christ these many years, you also love them. We do not wish to be divided. I would like that all this ship's company should meet on the other side of the sea. I do not know one among you that I could spare. I would not like to miss any of you who sit yonder, nor any of you who sit near; neither the youngest nor the oldest of you. Well, but we cannot meet in heaven unless we met in Jesus Christ. We cannot meet father, and mother, and pastor, and friends, unless we have a good hope through Jesus Christ our Lord. Will not that band of love draw you? Mother, from the battlements of heaven, a little angel-child is looking down tonight, beckoning with his finger. He is looking out for you, and he is saying, "Mother, follow your babe to heaven." Father, your daughter charged you, as she died, to give your heart to Christ, and from her seat in heaven her charge comes down to you with as great force as it came from her sick-bed, I trust, "Follow me, follow me to heaven." Friends who have gone before, — godly ones who have fallen asleep in Jesus, — in one chorus, say to you, "Come up hither; come up hither, for we without you cannot be made perfect." Will not this band of love draw you? Oh, will not this cord of a man lay hold upon you, and bring you to the Savior's feet! The Lord grant that it may, but, as I have said, I can only show you the cords. It is God's work to pull them, and they will be pulled if the saints will join in earnest prayer, invoking a blessing upon sinners. The Lord grant it, for his love's sake! Amen. (Copyright [AGES Software](#). Used by permission. All rights reserved. See [AGES Software](#) for their full selection of highly recommended resources)