

Spurgeon's Sermon Notes-Mark

MARK'S GOSPEL SERMON NOTES C H SPURGEON

Mark 4:24. — Hearing with Heed

"And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye meet, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given."—Mark 4:24.

In these days we have many instructions as to preaching; but our Lord principally gave directions as to hearing. The art of attention is as difficult as that of homiletics.

The text may be viewed as a note of discrimination. Hear the truth, and the truth only. Be not indifferent as to your spiritual meat, but use discernment. 1 John 4:1; Job 12:11.

We shall use it as a note of arousing. When you do hear the truth, give it such attention as it deserves. Give good heed to it.

I. Here is a precept.

"Take heed what ye hear."

The previous verse is—"If any man have ears to hear, let him hear"; that is—use your ears well, and to the best purpose.

1. Hear with discrimination, shunning false doctrine. John 10:5.
2. Hear with attention; really and earnestly hearing. Matt. 13:23.
3. Hear for yourself, with personal application. 1 Sam. 3:9.
4. Hear retentively, endeavoring to remember the truth.
5. Hear desiringly, praying that the Word may be blessed to you.
6. Hear practically, obeying the exhortation which has come to you.

This hearing is to be given, not to a favorite set of doctrines, but to the whole of the Word of God. Ps. 119:128.

II. Here is a proverb.

"With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you."

In proportion as you give yourself to hearing, you shall gain by hearing.

This is practically illustrated in the result of preaching.

1. Those who have no interest in the Word find it uninteresting.
2. Those who desire to find fault find faults enough.
3. Those who seek solid truth learn it from any faithful ministry.
4. Those who hunger find food.
5. Those who bring faith receive assurance.
6. Those who come joyfully are made glad.

But no man finds blessing by hearing error.

Nor by careless, forgetful, cavilling hearing of the truth.

III. Here is a promise.

"Unto you that hear shall more be given."

You that hear shall have—

1. More desire to hear.
2. More understanding of what you hear.
3. More conviction of the truth of what you hear.
4. More personal possession of the blessings of which you hear.
5. More delight while hearing the glorious gospel.
6. More practical benefit therefrom.

God giveth more to those who value what they have.

For practical application let us say—

Hear. It is your wisdom to know what God says.

Hear well. God's teaching deserves the deepest attention.

It will repay the best consideration.

Hear often. Waste no Sabbath, nor any one of its services.

Use week-day lectures and prayer meetings.

Hear better. You will grow the holier thereby.

You will find heavenly joy by hearing with faith.

Hear! Hear!

What care I to see a man run after a sermon if he cozens and cheats as soon as he comes home?—John Selden.

A heart-memory is better than a mere head-memory. It were better to carry away a little of the life of God in our souls than if we were able to repeat every word of every sermon we ever heard.—De Sales.

Ebenezer Blackwell was a rich banker, a zealous Methodist, and a great friend of the Wesleys. "Are you going to hear Mr. Wesley preach?" said one to Mr. Blackwell. "No," he answered, "I am going to hear God; I listen to him, whoever preaches; otherwise I lose all my labor."

Once-a-day-hearers, represented by a Perthshire landlord, were pithily rebuked by Mr. Walker, the minister of Muthill. The landowner, meeting the minister on Monday, explained to him that he had not been hearing him at the second service on the previous day, as he could not digest more than one sermon. "I rather think," said Mr. Walker, "the appetite is at fault rather than the digestion."

Alas, the place of hearing is the place of sleeping with many a fine professor! I have often observed that those that keep shops can briskly attend upon a twopenny customer, but when they come themselves to God's market, they spend their time too much in letting their thoughts wander from God's commandments, or in a nasty, drowsy way. The head, also, and hearts of most hearers, are to the Word as the sieve is to water; they can hold no sermons, remember no texts, bring home no proofs, produce none of the sermons to the edification and profit of others.—John Bunyan.

Some can be content to hear all pleasant things, as the promises and mercies of God; but judgments and reproofs, threats and checks, these they cannot brook; like unto those who, in medicine, care only for a pleasant smell or appearance in the remedy, as pills rolled in gold, but have no regard for the efficacy of the physic. Some can willingly hear that which concerns other men and their sins, their lives and manners, but nothing touching themselves or their own sins; as men can willingly abide to hear of other men's deaths, but cannot abide to think of their own.—Richard Stock.

If verse 23 exhorts us to hear, verse 24 exhorts us to look to that which we do hear, and use it rightly. "Take heed what ye hear," means "Look after it as you would look after money that you have received." Learning a truth is not the end, but the beginning. After

it is learned, it is to be applied, kept, obeyed. And it would appear from the next sentence that, unless it is shared with others, we can neither get it nor keep it for ourselves. "With what measure ye mete, [understand, 'mete out your light,'] it shall be measured unto you: and more shall be given unto you." (Revised Version.) To learn the truth of God you need to listen, but you need to tell it to another as well. The meaning of this passage is brought out in the words of the old Rabbi: "Much have I learned from my tutors; more from my companions; but most of all from my pupils." The more light you give another, the more you get yourself. You get a better grip of truth by pondering it with the wish to impart it. The love, which imparts what you have opens your heart to receive something still higher. It is true, not only in regard to money, but to knowledge, and all power of help, that, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." He is a dull teacher that does not learn by all he teaches. Rejoice in your work; it is worth doing well, for it is the best way of learning.—Richard Glover.

Mark 5:6. — He Ran, and HE Ran

But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him."— Mark 5:6.

"But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."— Luke 15:20.

These two texts have a measure of apparent likeness: the man runs to Jesus from afar, and the Father runs to the prodigal from afar.

They do, however, as much illustrate the difference as the likeness of our action towards the Lord, and the Lord's action towards us.

From the two together a blended lesson may be learned.

I. The sinner's place.

"Afar off." Jesus is afar off in the sinner's apprehension, and the sinner is in very deed far off from God.

1. As to character. What a difference between the demoniac and the Lord Jesus: between the prodigal son and the great Father!
2. As to knowledge. The demoniac knew Jesus, but knew little of his love. The prodigal knew little of his Father's great heart.
3. As to hope. The man possessed of a devil had no hope of recovery, or but a faint one, and that hope the demons tried to extinguish. The prodigal only hoped to be received as a hired servant: he felt that his sins had put him far away from the true position of a son.
4. As to possession. The demoniac had no hold upon the Saviour; on the contrary, he cried, "What have I to do with thee?" The prodigal thought he had lost all claim to his Father, and therefore said, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son."

Immeasurable is the distance between God and a sinner: it is wide as the gulf between sin and holiness, death and life, hell and heaven.

II. The sinner's privilege.

"He saw Jesus."

This much you, who are most under Satan's influence, are able to see concerning Jesus: you know that—

1. There is such a Person. He is God and man, the Saviour.
2. He has done great things.
3. He is able to cast out the powers of evil.
4. He may cast them out from you, and deliver you

III. The sinner's wisest course.

"He ran and worshipped him."

The demoniac was all in confusion, for he was under contending influences: his own spirit and the evil spirit strove together.

He ran towards Jesus, and worshipped him; and yet in the same breath he cried, "What have I to do with thee?" Thus are sinners tossed about.

But it is the sinner's wisest course to run to Jesus, for—

1. He is the Son of the Most High God. John 1:34.
2. He is the great enemy of our enemy, the devil. Heb. 2:14.
3. He is abundantly able to drive out a legion of devils.
4. He can cause us to be clothed, and in our right mind.
5. He permits us even now to draw near and worship him.

It was the prodigal's wisdom to hasten to his Father.

Like arguments may be easily found in his case.

IV. The secret hope for sinners.

"His Father saw him."

1. The returning sinner was seen from afar by omniscience.
2. He was recognized as a son is known by his Father.
3. He was understood, beloved, and accepted by his Father.

This is the basis of hope for lost ones: not so much what they can see, as the fact that the Lord of love and grace sees them in all their sin and misery.

V. The action of the sinner's Father.

He "ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

1. Here was great tenderness—"his Father saw him, and had compassion."
2. Here was great swiftness—"and ran."
3. Here was great condescension—he "ran, and fell on his neck."
4. Here were great love and mercy—"and kissed him."

The Father's running made an end of the son's fears, and brought swift realization of joyful acceptance.

Let us run to our Saviour, and our Father.

Let us rejoice that our Saviour and our Father run to meet us.

Running Comments

A needle will move towards a magnet when once a magnet has moved near to it. Our heart manifests a sweet willingness towards salvation and holiness when the great and glorious good-will of the Lord operates upon it. It is ours to run to Jesus as if all the runnings were ours; but the secret truth is that the Lord runs towards us, and this is the very heart of the business.—C. H. S.

The mother, as she sits in her house, hears a little one shriek, and knows the voice, and cries out, "Oh! 'tis my child!" Away she throws all she hath in her hands, and runs to her babe. Thus God takes the alarm of his children's cry. "I heard Ephraim bemoaning himself," saith the Lord; his cry pierced God's ear, and his ear affected his bowels, and his bowels called up his power to the rescue of him.—William Gurnall.

God will pardon a repentant sinner more quickly than a mother would snatch her child out of the fire.—Vianney.

When either God or man is strongly moved, the pace is running. A soul in distress runs to Jesus: God in compassion runs to meet returning wanderers. A slow pace evidences an unwilling heart; hence delay to repent is a deadly sign. With sin within thee, Christ before thee, time pressing thee, eternity awaiting thee, hell beneath thee, heaven above thee; O sinner, thou mayest well run! It is the pace of one hunting after the game he desires, one anxious to win a prize, one escaping the avenger of blood. He that would

have heaven must run for it.—C. H. S.

A father, whose affluence was considerable, mourned over a reckless son, whose misconduct brought shame upon himself and his family. From home the prodigal went into another country, and for years he was lost to his relatives. A chance occurring, the sorrowing parent sent by a friend this message, should he meet his boy, "Your father loves you still." The bearer long sought him in vain. At last he saw him enter a house of vice, and called him; and there, at a late hour of evening, he delivered this message. The dissolute gambler's heart was touched. The thought that his father still loved him, and wished to forgive him, broke the spell of Satan. He abandoned his profligacy, and returned to his father. Oh, the power of such a message of inalienable love from God!—The Preacher's Commentary

Mark 5:7. — Resistance to Salvation

"And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not."—Mark 5:7.

The coming of Jesus into a place puts all into commotion.

The gospel is a great disturber of sinful peace.

Like the sun among wild beasts, owls, and bats, it creates a stir. In this case, a legion of devils began to move.

I. The devil cries out against the intrusion of Christ.

"What have I to do with thee?"

1. Christ's nature is so contrary to that of the devil that war is inevitable as soon as Jesus comes upon the scene.
2. There are no designs of grace for Satan, and, therefore, as he has nothing to hope for from Jesus, he dreads his coming.
3. He wishes to be let alone; for thoughtlessness, stagnation, and despair suit his plans.
4. He knows his powerlessness against the Son of the Most High God, and has no wish to try a fall with him.
5. He dreads his doom; for Jesus will not hesitate to torment him by the sight of good done, and evil overcome.

II. Men under the devil's influence cry out against the incoming of Christ by the gospel.

1. Conscience is feared by them: they do not wish to have it disturbed, instructed, and placed in power.
2. Change is dreaded by them; for they love sin, and its gains, and pleasures, and know that Jesus wars with these things.
3. They claim a right to be let alone: this is their idea of religious liberty. They would not be questioned either by God or man.
4. They argue that the gospel cannot bless them.

They expect nothing from it, for they do not know its rich benedictions, or the power of sovereign, almighty grace.

They think themselves too poor, too ignorant, too busy, too sinful, too weak, too involved, and perhaps too aged, to receive any good from the gospel.

5. They view Jesus as a tormentor, who will rob them of pleasure, sting their consciences, and drive them to obnoxious duties.

Therefore they cry out, "What have we to do with thee?"

III. Sober men can answer these outcries.

They endeavor to answer the question—"What have I to do with thee?" They remember a fact, and make an inquiry.

1. I have to do with him inevitably.

He has come to save, and I am responsible for accepting or refusing his grace.

I am his creature, as he is the Son of God, and he has power over me, and a right to my obedience.

I am under his rule, and he will judge me at the last day.

2. Has he to do with me graciously?

He has to do with me by the gospel which he has sent me.

He has abundantly much to do with me if he has wrought in me repentance, faith, prayer, etc.

He has everything to do with me if he has bestowed on me pardon, peace, sanctification, etc.

IV. Men saved from Satan raise an opposite cry.

According to the instance before us in the narrative—

1. They beg to sit at Jesus' feet, clothed, and in their right mind.
2. They ask to be with him always, and never to cease from personal attendance upon him.
3. They go at his bidding, and publish abroad what great things Jesus has done for them.
4. Henceforth they have nothing to do but to live for Jesus, and for him alone.

Come, ye despisers, and see yourselves as in a looking-glass!

Look until you see yourselves transformed.

Cases in point

Conversion is feared as a great danger by natural men, lest the promises put them on the pain and labor of godliness; for men do flee nothing but that which they apprehend as evil, dangerous, and so the true object of fear. Now, when Felix and Agrippa were both upon the wheel of the great Potter, I cannot say that conversion formally was begun, yet materially it was. The one trembled, and so was afraid and fled, and did put Paul away till another time. He saw the danger of grace (Acts 24:25, 26), and fled from it. The other said that he was half a Christian (but it was the poorer half), and "he arose, and went aside." (Acts 26:28, 30, 31.) "Their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." (Matt. 13:15.) In which words it is evident that conversion is feared as an evil.

A wretch once jested that he was once in danger of being caught, when a Puritan preacher, as he said, "was preaching with a divine power, and evidence of the Spirit of God."— Samuel Rutherford.

It is said that Voltaire, being pressed in his last moments to acknowledge the divinity of Christ, turned away, and said feebly, "For the love of God, don't mention that Man—allow me to die in peace!"

A number of young men were sitting together in a country store one evening, telling what they did not believe, and what they were not afraid to do. Finally, the leader in the group remarked that so far as he was concerned, he would be willing at any time to sign away all his interest in Christ for a five-dollar bill. "What did I understand you to say?" asked an old farmer, who happened to be in the store, and who had overheard the remark. "I said that for five dollars I would sign away all my interest in Christ, and so I will." The old farmer, who had learned to know the human heart pretty well, drew out his leathern wallet, took therefrom a five-dollar bill, and put it in the storekeepers' hand. Then calling for ink and paper, he said: "My young friend, if you will just step to the desk now, and write as I dictate, the money is yours." The young man took the pen, and began: "In the presence of these witnesses, I, A—— B——, for the sum of five dollars received, do now, once for all, and for ever, sign away all my interest"— then he dropped the pen, and with a forced smile said: "I take it back, I was only fooling." That young man did not dare to sign that paper. Why? He had an accusing conscience. He knew that there was a God. He believed in religion. He meant to be a Christian sometime. And so do you, reader. Notwithstanding your apparent indifference, your trifling conduct, your boasting speech, you would not today for ten thousand dollars sign away, if such a thing were possible, your interest in Jesus Christ. You do not desire or expect to lose heaven.— The Congregationalist (American).

Mark 8:22-25 — The Free-agency of Christ

"And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.

"And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.

"And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

"After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly."—Mark 8:22, 23, 24, 25.

Men arrive at Christ by different processes: one is found by Christ himself, another comes to him, another is borne of four, and this blind man is led. This matters little, so long as we do come to him.

The act of bringing men to Jesus is most commendable.

It proves kindly feeling.

It shows practical faith in the power of Jesus.

It is thus an act of true wisdom.

It is exceedingly acceptable to the Lord; and is sure to prove effectual when the person himself willingly comes.

In this case there was something faulty in the bringing, since there was a measure of dictation as to the method in which the Lord should operate.

I. It is a common weakness of faith to expect the blessing in a certain fixed way.

"They besought him to touch him."

The Lord has his usual ways, but he is not bound to them.

Yet too often we think and act as if he were so.

1. We dream that deliverance from trouble must come in one way.
2. We look for sanctification either by afflictions or by ecstasies.
3. We hope for salvation only by one form of experience.
4. We look to see others converted in one fashion of feeling only, or by some one favorite ministry.
5. We expect a revival to take the stereotyped shape.

II. While our Lord honors faith, he does not defer to its weakness.

He did not consent to work in the prescribed manner.

He touched, but no healing came; and thus he proved that the miracle was not attached to that special form of operation.

He did nothing to the blind man before their eyes; but led him out of the town. He would not indulge their observation or curiosity.

He did not heal him instantly, as they expected.

He used a means never suggested by them—"spit on his eyes," etc.

When he did put his hands on him, he did it twice, so that, even in compliance with their wish, he vindicated his own freedom.

1. Thus he refused to foster the superstition which limited his power.
2. Thus he used a method more suited to the case.
3. Thus he gave to the people larger instruction.
4. Thus he displayed to the individual a more personal care.

The like happens in each distinct conversion: its specialty is justified in a multitude of ways.

III. While our Lord rebukes the weakness of faith, he honors faith itself.

1. The blind man had consented to be led to Jesus, and Jesus leads him further. He refuses none because their coming to him has been less their own spontaneous act than yielding to the persuasion of others.

2. His friends had asked for sight, and the Lord gave sight. If we have praying faith, he will keep pace with it.
3. The man and his friends had exhibited confidence in him, and he gave them even more than they expected. If we can confide, we shall receive.
4. The cure was perfect, and the method used displayed the completeness of it. Jesus gives perfect gifts to imperfect faith.

Faith ever honors the Lord, and therefore the Lord honors it.

If faith were not thus rewarded, Jesus himself would suffer dishonor.

He who has faith shall surely see; he who demands signs shall not be satisfied.

Let us for ever have done with prescribing methods to our Lord.

Jesus will surely heal those who believe in him; he knows the best method; and he is to be trusted without reserve.

Examples

This case, and that of the deaf and stammering man brought to Christ in Decapolis, have many points of resemblance. In both, those who brought the diseased to Jesus prescribed to him the mode of cure. Was it for the purpose of reproving and counteracting the prejudice which connected the cure with a certain kind of manipulation on the part of the curer, that Jesus, in both instances, went so far out of his usual course, varying the manner of his action so singularly that, out of all his miracles of healing, these two stand distinguished by the unique mode of their performance? It is certain that, had Jesus observed one uniform method of healing, the spirit of formalism and superstition which lies so deep in our nature would have seized upon it, and linked it, inseparably, with the divine virtue that went out of him, confounding the channel with the blessing it conveyed. As we ponder the life of our Redeemer, dwelling particularly on those parts of it—such as his institutions of the sacraments—in which food might have been furnished upon which the spirit of formalism might have fed, more and more do we admire the pains evidently taken to give to that strong tendency of our nature as little material as possible to fasten on.—Dr. Hanna.

Is the sick man the doctor, that he should choose the remedy? —Madam Swetchine.

John Newton's hymn is a case in point. We quote a verse or two:—

I asked the Lord that I might grow

In faith, and love, and every grace,

Might more of His salvation know,

And seek, more earnestly, His face.

I hoped that in some favored hour,

At once He'd answer my request;

And, by His love's constraining power,

Subdue my sins, and give me rest.

Instead of this He made me feel

The hidden evils of my heart,

And let the angry powers of hell

Assault my soul in every part.

Thus did infinite wisdom answer his prayer in a way which he had never dreamed of, and yet it was the right way, as he confessed.

So apt are people, as in the case of Naaman, to settle in their own minds the method of the work of grace, that it is hard to overcome their preconceptions. I met with one young woman, before whom I set the way of salvation by faith alone. She was long in accepting, or even understanding it; and when she did grasp it, and the joy of it filled her heart, she exclaimed with surprise, "I never thought that people could find peace in this way." "Why not?" I asked her, and she replied very energetically, "I always believed that one must almost go to hell to get to heaven. My father was so full of despair that they locked him up in the asylum for six months, and then at last he got religion."—C. H. S

Mark 9:24. — Feeble Faith Appealing to a Strong Savior

"And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."—Mark 9:24.

Here was a man fully aroused to anxiety, prayer, and the use of means, and yet his desire was not at once granted to him.

Even so, many are in earnest about their souls, and yet do not immediately find conscious salvation.

This drives them to yet deeper grief.

Perhaps this father's case may help them to understand their own.

His child was not cured, but even appeared to be worse than ever.

Yet the matter came to a happy issue through the power of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us note the case carefully, and observe—

I. The suspected difficulty.

1. The father may have thought it lay with the disciples.

Yet alone they could never have done anything.

Had their Lord been with them, they could have done everything.

The main difficulty was not with the disciples, though it was partly there.

2. He probably thought that the case itself was well-nigh hopeless.

The disease was—

So fitful and mysterious.

So terribly violent and sudden in its attacks.

So deep-seated, and of such long continuance.

So near to utterly destroying life.

But, after all, it is not our own case, or the case of those for whom we plead, which presents any unusual impediment to divine power. The Lord delights to work impossibilities.

3. He half hinted that the difficulty might lie with the Master. "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us."

"If thou canst." Had he seen the transfiguration, he would have known the power and glory of the Lord.

"Have compassion." Could he have read the Lord's heart, he would have felt sure that the Saviour's pity was already aroused.

Rest assured, O anxious heart, that the difficulty of your case lies alone in your want of faith!

II. The tearful discovery.

"He said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

The Lord Jesus repudiated the insinuation that there was any question as to his power, and cast the "if" back upon the father with "If thou canst believe." Then—

1. The man's little faith discovered his unbelief.

2. He was distressed and alarmed at the sight of his own unbelief.

3. He turned his thoughts and prayers in that direction. It was now not so much "Help my child," as "Help my unbelief."

4. He became deeply sensible of the sin and danger of unbelief.

Let us look in the same direction personally, and we shall see that unbelief is an alarming and criminal thing; for it doubts—

The power of Omnipotence.

The value of the promise of God.

The efficacy of Christ's blood.

The prevalence of his plea.

The almightiness of the Spirit.

The truth of the gospel.

In fact, unbelief robs God of his glory in every way, and therefore it cannot receive a blessing from the Lord. Heb. 11:6.

III. The intelligent appeal.

"Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

In his great perplexity he cries to Jesus only.

1. On the basis of faith—"Lord, I believe!"
2. With confession of sin—"mine unbelief."
3. To One who knows how to help in this matter, "Lord, help."
4. To One who is himself the best remedy for unbelief—"help thou."

Unbelief is overcome when we fly to Jesus, and consider—

The majesty of his divine nature.

The tenderness of his humanity.

The graciousness of his offices.

The grandeur of his atonement.

The glorious object of his work.

Come to Jesus with any case, and in every case.

Come with your little faith and with your great unbelief, for in this matter also he can help as none other can.

Helps

There is no sin which may not be traced up to unbelief. —Mason.

"Lord, I believe," etc. This act of his, in putting forth his faith to believe as he could, was the way to believe as he would. —Trapp.

A young man in the seventeenth century, being in deep distress of mind, applied to Dr. Goodwin for advice and consolation. After he had laid before him the long and black list of sins that troubled his conscience, the doctor reminded him that there was one blacker still, which he had not named. "What can that be, sir?" he despondingly asked. "The sin," replied the doctor, "I refer to is that of refusing to believe in Christ Jesus as a Saviour." The simple word banished the anxious one's guilty fears.

There was once a good woman who was well-known among her circle for her simple faith, and her great calmness in the midst of many trials. Another woman, living at a distance, hearing of her, said, "I must go and see that woman, and learn the secret of her holy, happy life." She went; and accosting the woman, said, "Are you the woman with the great faith?" "No," replied she, "I am not the woman with the great faith; but I am the woman with a little faith in the great God."

O help us, through the prayer of faith,
More firmly to believe;
For still the more thy servant hath,
The more shall he receive.
—Milman.

A friend complained to Gotthold of the weakness of his faith, and the distress this gave him. Gotthold pointed to a vine, which had twined itself around a pole, and was hanging loaded with beautiful clusters, and said, "Frail is that plant; but what harm is done to it

by its frailty, especially as the Creator has been pleased to make it what it is? As little will it prejudice your faith that it is weak, provided only it be sincere and unfeigned. Faith is the work of God, and he bestows it in such measure as he wills and judges right. Let the measure of it which he has given you be deemed sufficient by you. Take for pole and prop the cross of the Saviour and the Word of God; twine around these with all the power which God vouchsafes. A heart sensible of its weakness, and prostrating itself continually at the feet of the divine mercy, is more acceptable than that which presumes upon the strength of its faith, and falls into false security and pride. Can you suppose that the sinful woman, who lay and wept at the Lord's feet, was less approved than the swelling and haughty Pharisee?" —Christian Scriver.

Mark 10:49-50. — The Blind Beggar of Jericho

"And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. "And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus."—Mark 10:49, 50.

This man is a picture of what we would fain have every seeker of Christ to become.

In his lonely darkness, and deep poverty, he thought and became persuaded that Jesus was the Son of David.

Though he had no sight, he made good use of his hearing. If we have not all gifts, let us use those which we have.

I. He sought the Lord under discouragements.

1. No one prompted his seeking.
2. Many opposed his attempts. "Many charged him that he should hold his peace": Mk 10:48.
3. For a while he was unheeded by the Lord himself.
4. He was but a blind beggar, and this alone might have checked some pleaders.

Let our hearers imitate his dogged resolution.

II. He received encouragement.

This came from our Lord's commanding him to be called.

There are several kinds of calls which come to men at the bidding of our Lord Jesus. There is the—

1. Universal call. Jesus is lifted up that all who look to him may live. John 3:14, 15. The gospel is preached to every creature.
2. Character call. To those who labor, and are heavy laden. Many are the gospel promises which call the sinful, the mourning, the weary to Jesus. Isa. 55:7. Matt. 11:28. Acts 2:38, 39.
3. Ministerial call. Given by the Lord's sent servants, and so backed by his authority. Acts. 13:26, 38, 39; 16:31.
4. Effectual call. Sent home by the Holy Spirit. This is the calling of which we read, "whom he called, them he also justified": Rom. 8:30.

III. But encouragement did not content him; he still sought Jesus.

To stop short of Jesus and healing would have been folly indeed.

1. He arose. Hopefully, resolutely, he quitted his begging posture. In order to gain salvation we must be on the alert, and in earnest.
2. He cast away his garment, and every hindrance. Our righteousness, our comfortable sin, our habit—anything, everything we must quit for Christ.
3. He came to Jesus. In the darkness occasioned by his blindness, he followed the Saviour's voice.
4. He stated his case. "Lord, that I might receive my sight!"
5. He received salvation. Jesus said unto him, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." He obtained perfect eyesight; and in all respects he was in complete health.

IV. Having found Jesus, he kept to him.

1. He used his sight to see his Lord.
2. He became his avowed disciple. See Mk 10:52.
3. He went with Jesus on his way to the cross, and to the crown.
4. He remained a well-known disciple, whose father's name is given.

This man came out of cursed Jericho: are there not some to come from our slums and degraded districts? This man at best was a beggar, but the Lord Jesus did not disdain his company. He was a standing glory to the Lord, for everyone would know him as the blind man whose eyes had been opened.

Let seeking souls persevere under all drawbacks. Do not mind those who would keep you back. Let none hinder you from finding Christ and salvation.

Though blind, and poor, and miserable, you shall yet see, and smile, and sing, and follow Jesus.

Encouragements

"And commanded him to be called." By this circumstance he administered reproof and instruction; reproof by ordering those to help the poor man who had endeavored to check him: instruction, by teaching us that, though he does not stand in need of our help, he will not dispense with our services; that we are to aid each other; that though we cannot recover our fellow-creatures, we may frequently bring them to the place and means of cure.—William Jay.

Sad one, in secret, bending low,

A dart in thy breast that the world may not know,

Striving the favor of God to win,

Asking his pardon for days of sin;

Press on, press on, with thy earnest cry,

"Jesus of Nazareth passeth by."

—Mrs. Sigourney.

"And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus." I remember once reading these words on a memorial tablet in a country church. Inscriptions on tombstones are often unsatisfactory, and scriptural quotations upon them most inappropriate; but this one was as suitable as it was singular. The squire of the village, a high-churchman, and an ardent sportsman, had late in life come under the influence of Christian friends, who brought him to a knowledge of the gospel; and to him the words of the Evangelist were applied. They were very suggestive. They told of pride, and worldly pursuits, and self-righteousness, of all to which the man had clung for a lifetime, cast away that he might come to the Saviour. For a sinner saved in life's last hours a better epitaph could hardly have been chosen. I admired the piety that compared the rich man lying there to the poor blind beggar of the gospel story; the once highly esteemed garment of personal righteousness to the beggar's worthless robe; and that expressed the one hope and refuge of the soul in Christ by the words "he came to Jesus." It reminded me of the lines on William Carey's tomb—

A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,

On thy kind arms I fall;

Be Thou my strength and righteousness,

My Jesus and my all.

—P.

Success in this world comes only to those who exhibit determination. Can we hope for salvation unless our mind is truly set upon it? Grace makes a man to be as resolved to be saved as this beggar was to get to Jesus, and gain his sight. "I must see him," said an applicant at the door of a public person. "You cannot see him," said the servant; but the man waited at the door. A friend went out to him, and said, "You cannot see the master, but I can give you an answer." "No," said the unfortunate pleader, "I will stay all night on the doorstep, but I will see the man himself. He alone will serve my turn." You do not wonder that, after many rebuffs, he ultimately gained his point: it would be an infinitely greater wonder if an importunate sinner did not obtain an audience from the Lord Jesus. If you must have grace, you shall have it. If you will not be put off, you shall not be put off. Whether things look favorable, or

unfavorable, press you on till you find Jesus, and you shall find him.—C. H. S.

Mark 12:34. — So Near

"And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."—Mark 12:34.

The kingdom of God is set up among men.

Those who are in it are—

Quickened with divine life. "He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living": verse 27.

Received under the reign of grace. Rom. 5:21.

Obedient to the law of love. 1 John 4:7.

Favored with divine privileges. Matt. 6:33; Luke 12:32.

Raised to special dignities. Rev. 1:6.

Indulged with peculiar happiness. Matt. 25:34.

Those who are outside of it are in some respects on a level.

But in other regards, some are "far off," and others "not far."

The scribe in the narrative was on the borders of the kingdom.

Of such a character we will now treat.

I. What are its marks?

1. Truthfulness of spirit.

This man was candid as a student of the law.

This man was honest as a teacher of the law.

This man was fair as a controversialist.

A spirit of general uprightness, sincerity, and fairness is a great moral advantage.

2. Spiritual perception. This scribe must have spoken with great discretion, or the Lord Jesus would not have taken such special notice of his reply. He saw—

More than a Papist, who makes everything of ceremonies.

More than a mere doctrinalist, who puts head-knowledge above heart-experience and holiness.

More than a moralist, who forgets the love of the heart.

3. Acquaintance with the law.

Those who see the unity, and yet the breadth and spirituality of the law's demands are in a hopeful condition.

Still more those who perceive that their own lives fall short of those demands, and grieve on that account.

4. Teachableness, which this man clearly exhibited, is a good sign; especially if we are willing to learn truth, although its advocate is unpopular.

5. A sense of need of Christ, which did not appear in the case of this scribe, but is seen in many who attend the ministry.

6. A horror of wrong-doing, and of impurity of every kind.

7. A high regard for holy things, and a practical interest in them.

8. A diligent commencement of prayer, Bible-reading, meditation, regular hearing of the word, and other gracious habits.

There are other signs, but time would fail us to mention more.

Many of these appear, like blossoms on a tree, but they disappoint the hopes which they excite.

II. What are its dangers?

No man is safe till he is actually in the kingdom: the border-land is full of peril. There is the danger.

1. Lest you slip back from this hopefulness.
2. Lest you rest content to stop where you are.
3. Lest you grow proud and self-righteous.
4. Lest you proceed from being candid to become indifferent.
5. Lest you die ere the decisive step be taken.

III. What are its duties?

Though your condition is not one in which to rest, it is one which involves you in many responsibilities, since it is a condition of singular privilege.

1. Thank God for dealing so mercifully with you.
2. Admit with deep sincerity that you need supernatural help for entrance into the kingdom.
3. Tremble lest that decisive and saving step be never taken.
4. Decide at once through divine grace. Oh, for the Spirit of God to work effectually upon you!

What a pity that any should perish who are so near!

What horror to see such hopeful ones cast away!

How fatal to stop short of saving faith!

Expostulations

Among those who have turned out to be the most determined enemies of the gospel are many who once were so near to conversion that it was a wonder that they avoided it. Such persons seem ever after to take vengeance upon the holy influence which had almost proved too much for them. Hence our fear for persons under gracious impressions; for if they do not now decide for God, they will become the more desperate in sin. That which is set in the sun, if it be not softened, will be hardened. I remember well a man, who, under the influence of an earnest revivalist, was brought to his knees, to cry for mercy, in the presence of his wife and others; but never afterwards would he enter a place of worship, or pay attention to religious conversation. He declared that his escape was so narrow that he would never run the risk again. Alas, that one should graze the gates of heaven, and yet drive on to hell! —C. H. S.

Some are in the suburbs of the city of refuge. I warn you against staying there. Oh, what pity is it that any should perish at the gates of salvation for want of another step!

He that makes but one step up a stair, though he be not much nearer to the top of the house, yet he has stepped from the ground, and is delivered from the foulness and dampness of that. So, he that taketh the first step of prayer by truly crying—"O Lord, be merciful unto me!" though he be not established in heaven, yet he has stepped from off the world, and the miserable comforts thereof.—Dr. Donne.

A Christian minister says, "When, after safely circumnavigating the globe, The Royal Charter went to pieces in Moelfra Bay, on the coast of Wales, it was my melancholy duty to visit and seek to comfort the wife of the first officer, made by that calamity a widow. The ship had been telegraphed from Queenstown, and the lady was sitting in the parlor expecting her husband, with the table spread for the evening meal, when the messenger came to tell her he was drowned. Never can I forget the grief, so stricken and tearless, with which she wrung my hand, as she said, 'So near home, and yet lost!' That seemed to me the most terrible of human sorrow. But, ah! that is nothing to the anguish which must wring the soul which is compelled to say at last, 'Once I was at the very gate of heaven, and had almost entered in, but now I am in hell!' "

I remember a man coming to me in great distress of soul, and his case made a deep impression upon my mind. He was a man-of-war's man, with all the frankness of a British tar, but, alas! also, with a sailor's fondness for strong drink. As we talked and prayed together, the tears literally rained down the poor fellow's weather-beaten face, and he trembled violently. "Oh, sir," he exclaimed, "I

could fight for it!" Truly, if salvation could have been obtained by some deed of daring, he would have won it. He left me without finding peace, and the next day he went back drunk, to join his ship; and I have never heard of him since.—J. W. H.

Mark 14:32. — Gethsemane

And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane."—Mark 14:32.

Our Lord left the table of happy fellowship, and passed over the brook Kedron, so associated with the sorrows of David. 2Sa 15:23.

He then entered into the garden named Gethsemane, not to hide himself from death, but to prepare for it by a season of special prayer.

Gethsemane was our Lord's place of secret prayer. John 18:1, 2.

If he resorted to his closet in the hour of trial, we need to do so far more.

In his solitary supplication he was oppressed with a great grief, and overwhelmed with a terrible anguish.

It was a killing change from the cheerful communion of the Supper to the lone agony of the garden.

Let us think with great solemnity of the olive-garden where the Saviour sweat as it were great drops of blood.

I. The choice of the spot—

1. Showed his serenity of mind, and his courage.

He goes to his usual place of secret prayer.

He goes there though Judas knew the place.

2. Manifested his wisdom.

Holy memories there aided his faith.

Deep solitude was suitable for his prayers and cries.

Congenial gloom fitted his exceeding sorrow.

3. Bequeathed us lessons.

In a garden, Paradise was lost and won.

In Gethsemane, the olive-press, our Lord himself was crushed.

In our griefs, let us retreat to our God in secret.

In our special prayers, let us not be ashamed to let them be known to our choicer friends, for Jesus took his disciples with him to his secret devotions in Gethsemane.

II. The exercise upon the spot.

Every item is worthy of attention and imitation.

1. He took all due precautions for others.

He would not have his disciples surprised, and therefore bade them watch. So should we care for others in our own extremity. The intensity of his intercourse with God did not cause him to forget one of his companions.

2. He solicited the sympathy of friends.

We may not despise this; though like our Lord, we shall prove the feebleness of it, and cry, "Could ye not watch with me?"

3. He prayed and wrestled with God.

In lowliest posture and manner. See Mark 14:35.

In piteous repetition of his cry. See Mark 14:36, 39.

In awful agony of spirit even to a bloody sweat. Luke 22:44.

In full and true submission. Matt. 26:42, 44.

4. He again and again sought human sympathy, but made excuse for his friends when they failed him.

See Mk 14:38. We ought not to be soured in spirit even when we are bitterly disappointed.

5. He returned to his God, and poured out his soul in strong crying and tears, until he was heard in that he feared. Heb. 5:7.

III. The triumph upon the spot.

1. Behold his perfect resignation. He struggles with "if it be possible," but conquers with "not what I will, but what thou wilt." He is our example of patience.

2. Rejoice in his strong resolve. He had undertaken, and would go through with it. Luke 9:51; 12:50.

3. Mark the angelic service rendered. The blood-bestained Sufferer has still all heaven at his call. Matt. 26:53.

4. Remember his majestic bearing towards his enemies.

He meets them bravely. Matt. 26:55.

He makes them fall. John 18:6.

He yields himself, but not to force. John 18:8

He goes to the cross, but transforms it to a throne.

We too, may expect our minor Gethsemane.

We shall not be there without a Friend, for he is with us.

We shall conquer by his might, and in his manner.

In Memoriam

The late Rev. W. H. Krause, of Dublin, was visiting a lady in a depressed state, "weak, oh, so weak!" She told him that she had been very much troubled in mind that day, because in meditation and prayer she had found it impossible to govern her thoughts, and kept merely going over the same things again and again. "Well, my dear friend," was his prompt reply, "there is provision in the gospel for that too. Our Lord Jesus Christ, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, three times prayed, and spoke the same words." This seasonable application of Scripture was a source of great comfort to her.

Gethsemane, the olive-press!
(And why so called let Christians guess.)
Fit name, fit place, where vengeance strove,
And griped and grappled hard with love.
—Joseph Hart.

"My will, not thine, be done," turned paradise into a desert. "Thy will, not mine, be done," turned the desert into Paradise, and made Gethsemane the gate of heaven.—E. de Pressensé.

An inscription in a garden in Wales runs thus:—
In a garden the first of our race was deceived,
In a garden the promise of grace he received,
In a garden was Jesus betrayed to his doom,
In a garden his body was laid in a tomb.

There will be no Christian but what will have a Gethsemane, but every praying Christian will find that there is no Gethsemane without its angel.—Thomas Binney.

The Father heard; and angels, there,
Sustained the Son of God in prayer,
In sad Gethsemane;
He drank the dreadful cup of pain—

Then rose to life and joy again.
When storms of sorrow round us sweep,
And scenes of anguish make us weep;
To sad Gethsemane
We'll look, and see the Saviour there,
And humbly bow, like Him, in prayer.
—S. F. Smith.

"And there appeared an angel unto him, from heaven, strengthening him."—What! The Son of God receives help from an angel, who is but his creature? Yes. And we learn thereby to expect help and comfort from simple persons and common things, when God pleases. All strength and comfort come from God, but he makes creatures his ministers to bring it. We should thank both them and him.—Practical Reflections on every verse of the Holy Gospels, by a Clergyman.

There is something in an olive-garden, on a hillside, which makes it most suitable for prayer and meditation. The shade is solemn, the terraces divide better than distance, the ground is suitable for kneeling upon, and the surroundings are all in accord with holy thoughts. I can hardly tell why it is, but often as I have sat in an olive-garden, I have never been without the sense that it was the place and the hour of prayer.—C. H. S.

Mark 14:72. — Fountains of Repentant Tears

"And when he thought thereon, he wept."—Mark 14:72.

Repentance is wrought by the Spirit of God. But he works it in us by leading us to think upon the evil of sin.

Peter could not help weeping when he remembered his grievous fault.

Let us at this time—

I. Study Peter's case, and use it for our own instruction.

1. He considered that he had denied his Lord.

Have we never done the like?

This may be done in many ways.

2. He reflected upon the excellence of the Lord whom he had denied.

3. He remembered the position in which his Lord had placed him,—making him an apostle, and one of the first of them.

Have we not been placed in positions of trust?

4. He bethought him of the special intercourse which he had enjoyed. He and James and John had been most favored. Matt. 17:1-13; 26:36-46; Mark 5:37-43.

Have not we known joyous fellowship with our Lord?

5. He recollected that he had been solemnly forewarned by his Lord.

Have we not sinned against light and knowledge?

6. He recalled his own vows, pledges, and boasts.

"Although all shall be offended, yet will not I": Mark 14:29.

Have we not broken very earnest declarations?

7. He thought upon the special circumstances of his Lord when he had so wickedly denied him.

Are there no aggravations in our case?

8. He revolved in his mind his repetitions of the offense, and those repetitions with added aggravations: his lie, his oath, etc.

We ought to dwell on each item of our transgressions, that we may be brought to a more thorough repentance of them.

II. Study our own lives, and use the study for our further humiliation.

1. Think upon our transgressions while unregenerate.
2. Think upon our resistance of light, and conscience, and the Holy Spirit before we were overcome by divine grace.
3. Think upon our small progress in the divine life.
4. Think upon our backslidings and heart-wanderings.
5. Think upon our neglect of the souls of others.
6. Think upon our little communion with our Lord.
7. Think upon the little glory we are bringing to his great name.
8. Think upon our matchless obligations to his infinite love.

Each of these meditations is calculated to make us weep.

III. Study the effect of these thoughts upon our minds.

1. Can we think of these things without emotion?

This is possible; for many excuse their sin on the ground of their circumstances, their constitution, their company, their trade, their fate: they even lay the blame on Satan, or some other tempter. Certain hard hearts treat the matter with supreme indifference.

This is perilous. It is to be feared that such a man is not Peter, but Judas: not a fallen saint, but a son of perdition.

2. Are we moved by thoughts of these things?

There are other reflections which may move us far more.

Our Lord forgives us, and numbers us with his brethren.

He asks us if we love him, and he bids us feed his sheep.

Surely, when we dwell on these themes, it must be true of each of us—"When he thought thereon, he wept."

Recollections

Peter's recollection of what he had formerly heard was another occasion of his repentance. We do not sufficiently consider how much more we need recollection than information. We know a thousand things, but it is necessary that they should be kept alive in our hearts by a constant and vivid recollection. It is, therefore, extremely absurd and childish for people to say, "You tell me nothing but what I know." I answer, you forget many things; and therefore, it is necessary that line should be upon line, and precept upon precept. Peter himself afterwards said in his Epistles, "I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them." We are prone to forget what we do know; whereas we should consider that, whatever good thing we know is only so far good to us as it is remembered to purpose.—Richard Cecil.

Peter falls dreadfully, but by repentance rises sweetly; a look of love from Christ melts him into tears. He knew that repentance was the key to the kingdom of grace. At once his faith was so great that he leaped, as it were, into a sea of waters to come to Christ; so now his repentance was so great that he leaped, as it were, into a sea of tears, for that he had gone from Christ. Some say that, after his sad fall, he was ever and anon weeping, and that his face was even furrowed with continual tears. He had no sooner taken in poison but he vomited it up again, ere it got to the vitals; he had no sooner handled this serpent but he turned it into a rod, to scourge his soul with remorse for sinning against such clear light, and strong love, and sweet discoveries of the heart of Christ to him.

Clement notes that Peter so repented that, all his life after, every night when he heard the cock crow, he would fall upon his knees, and, weeping bitterly, would beg pardon for his sin. Ah! souls, you can easily sin as the saints, but can you repent with the saints? Many can sin with David and Peter, who cannot repent with David and Peter, and so must perish for ever. —Thomas Brooks.

Nothing will make the faces of God's children more fair than for them to wash themselves every morning in their tears.—Samuel Clark.

The old Greeks thought that memory must be a source of torture in the next world, so they interposed between the two worlds the

waters of Lethe, the river of forgetfulness; but believers in Christ want no river of oblivion on the borders of Elysium. Calvary is on this side, and that is enough.—Alexander Maclaren.