

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A PLAIN MAN'S SERMON.

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“It shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein.”—Leviticus xxii. 21.

THE ceremonial law, as ordained by the hand of Moses and Aaron, called the worshippers of God to *great carefulness before him*. Before their minds that solemn truth was ever made visible, “I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.” Nothing might be done thoughtlessly. Due heed was the first requisite in a man who would draw near unto the thrice-holy God, whose perfections demand lowly and considerate reverence from all those who are round about him. The spirit must be awake, and on the stretch, if it would please the great Father of spirits. There were little points—I may truthfully call them *minutiae*—upon which everything would depend as to right worship, and its acceptance with the Lord. No Israelite could come to the tabernacle door aright without thinking of what he had to do, and thinking it over with an anxious fear lest he should, by omission or error, make his offering into a vain oblation. He must draw nigh unto the Lord with great carefulness, or else he might miss his aim, spend his money upon a sacrifice, cause labour to the priest, and go home unaccepted. He might duly perform a large portion of a ceremony, and yet no good might come to him through it, because he had omitted a point of detail; for the Lord would be sought according to the due order, or he would not be found of the worshipper. Of every ceremony; it might be said, “It must be perfect to be accepted.” There was the rule, and the rule must be followed with the most careful exactness. God must have the minds and thoughts of men, or he counts that they are no worshippers.

This is no easy lesson to learn, dear friends; for I am afraid that in our usual worship we are not always as thoughtful as we ought to be. Mark well our singing. Do we join in it with the heartiness, the solemnity, and the correctness which are due to him who hears our psalms and hymns? I may not judge, but I have my suspicions. Look

at the way we pray. Is it not to be feared that at times we rush into God's presence and utter the first words that come to hand? Are not liturgies repeated with minds half asleep? Are not extempore prayers uttered in the most formal manner? I refer both to public and private prayer. Moreover, see the style in which some will even preach. With facility of language they will deliver themselves of their own thoughts, without seeking the anointing from on high, and the power of the Spirit of God. I do not say that any of you ever go into your Sunday-school classes without thought; I do not say that any of you ever take your tract-district, and go from door to door without seeking a blessing; I will not say that any of you ever come to the communion-table without examining yourselves, and discerning the Lord's body; but if I do not say it, I may think it, and possibly that thought may be true. O, my brethren, let conscience sit in judgment, and decide this matter! We need to think a great deal more about how we come before the Most High; and if we thought more, and prayed more, we should become more certain of our inability to do anything as we ought to do it, and we should be driven to a more entire dependence upon the Spirit of God in every act of worship. This in itself would be a great blessing.

I do not know, however, that the ceremonial law did make men thoughtful; since, for the most part, it failed of its designed effect through the hardness of men's hearts. Earnest heed was the design of it, but superstition and a spirit of bondage were the more usual results. Brethren, without a multitude of ceremonies, which might become a yoke to us, let us by other means arrive at the same, and even a better, thoughtfulness of heart! Let love to God so influence us that, in the least and most ordinary matters, we shall behave ourselves as in the immediate presence of the Lord, and so shall strive with the utmost watchfulness of holy care to please the Lord our God.

The ceremonial law also engendered in men who did think *a great respect for the holiness of God*. They could not help seeing that God required everything in his service to be of the very best.

The priest who stood for them before God must be himself in bodily presence the perfection of manhood. When old age crept upon him, he must give place to one who showed no such sign of decay. His garments must be perfectly white and clean in his daily service; and when once in a year there was a joy day, then for glory and beauty he shone in all the radiance that the purest gold and the most precious stones could put upon him.

The victims that were offered must all be without blemish. You are constantly meeting with that demand, and it was carried out with rigid care. You meet with a stringent instance in the text, "It must be perfect to be accepted."

Under the law of Moses, the guilt of sin and the need of atonement were always most vividly brought before the mind of the worshipping Israelite. If you stepped within the holy place, everywhere you saw the marks of blood. Our very delicate-minded friends, who raise the silly objection that they cannot bear the sound of the word "blood"—what would they have done if they had gone into the Jewish tabernacle, and had seen the floor, and the curtain, and every article stained, like a

shambles? How would they have endured to worship where the blood was poured in bowlfuls upon the floor, and sprinkled on almost every holy thing? How would they have borne with the continual bespattering of blood—all indicating that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin? Truly, there can be no approach to a thrice-holy God without the remission of sin, and that remission of sin must be obtained through the atoning blood. The Israelite, if he thought rightly, must have been deeply aware that he served a God who was terrible out of his holy places, a God who hated sin, and would by no means spare the guilty, or pardon man without atonement. All the more would this be sealed home upon the mind of the Israelite by the knowledge that in every case the sacrifice must be unblemished. As he looked on the blood of the victim, he would remember the sacred rule, "it shall be perfect to be accepted." He saw in the necessity for a perfect sacrifice a declaration of the holiness of God. He must have felt that sin was not a trifle—not a thing to be committed, winked at, and blotted out; but a thing for which there must be life given, and blood shed, before it could be removed; and that life and blood must be the life and blood of a perfect and unblemished offering.

Under the Jewish ceremonial law, one of the most prominent thoughts, next to a great respect for the holiness of God, would be *a deep regard for the law of God*. Everywhere that the Israelite went he was surrounded by law. He must not do this, and he must do that: the law was continually before him. Now, brethren, it is a blessed thing to declare the gospel, but I do not believe that any man can preach the gospel who does not preach the law. The book of Leviticus, and all the other typical books, are valuable as gospel-teaching to us, because there is always in them most clearly the law of God. The law is the needle, and you cannot draw the silken thread of the gospel through a man's heart, unless you first send the needle of the law through the centre thereof, to make way for it. If men do not understand the law, they will not feel that they are sinners; and if they are not consciously sinners, they will never value the sin-offering. If the ten commandments are never read in their hearing, they will not know wherein they are guilty; and how shall they make confession? If they are not assured that the law is holy, and just, and good, and that God has never demanded of any man more than he has a right to demand, how shall they feel the filthiness of sin, or see the need of flying to Christ for cleansing? There is no healing a man till the law has wounded him, no making him alive till the law has slain him.

I do pray, dear friends, that God, the Holy Spirit, may lay the law, like an axe, at the root of all our self-righteousness, for nothing else will ever hew down that Upas-tree. I pray that he may take the law, and use it as a looking-glass, that we may see ourselves in it, and discover our spots, and blots, and all the foulness of our lives, for then we shall be driven to wash until we are clean in the sight of the Lord. The law is our pedagogue to bring us to Christ; and there is no coming to Christ unless the stern pedagogue shall lead us there, with many a stripe and many a tear.

In this text we have law and gospel too: there is the law which tells us that the sacrifice must be perfect to be accepted; and behind it there

is the blessed hint that there is such an unblemished sacrifice which is accepted, which we may by faith bring to God without fear of being rejected. Oh, for grace to learn both law and gospel at this time!

This is the text for our present meditation, "It shall be perfect to be accepted." I want to preach this truth right home into every heart by the power of the Spirit of God. If I could be an orator, I would not be. The game of eloquence, with the souls of men for the counters, and eternity for the table, is the most wicked sport in the world. I have often wished that there were no such things as rhetoric and oratory left among ministers, but that we were all forced to speak in the pulpit as plainly as children do in their simplicity. Oh, that all would tell the gospel out with plain words! I long that all may understand what I have to say: I would be more simple if I knew how. The way of salvation is far too important a matter to be the theme of oratorical displays. The cross is far too sacred to be made a pole on which to hoist the flags of our fine language. I want just to tell you things that make for your peace, things which will save your souls. At least, I would declare truths which, if they do not save you, will leave you without excuse in that dread day when he, whose ambassador I am, shall come to judge both you and me.

I. First, then, THE RULE OF OUR TEXT, "IT SHALL BE PERFECT TO BE ACCEPTED," MAY BE USED TO SHUT OUT ALL THOSE FAULTY OFFERINGS WHEREON SO MANY PLACE THEIR CONFIDENCE.

It most effectually judges, and casts forth as vile, *all self-righteousness*, although this is the great deceit wherewith thousands are buoyed up with false hopes. Alas! this is the destroyer of myriads; and, therefore, I must speak as with voice of thunder, and words of lightning. Hearken unto me, ye that hope to be accepted of God by your own doings! Look to what will be demanded of you if you are to be accepted on your own merits! "It shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein." If you can come up to this rule you shall be saved by your righteousness; but if you cannot reach this mark, if you come short in any degree whatever, you must fail of acceptance. It is not said, "It shall be partially good to be accepted:" or "it shall be hopefully good." No. "It shall be perfect to be accepted." It is not written, "It shall have no great and grievous blemish"; but "There shall be no blemish therein." See you not the height of the standard, the absolute completeness of the model set before you? Let the plummet hang straight, and see whether you can build to it; whether, after all, your building is not as a bowing wall, and as a tottering fence, altogether out of the perpendicular as tested by this uncompromising text—"It shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein."

Why, look ye, sirs, ye that hope to be saved by your own doings, *your nature at the very first is tainted!* God's Word assures you that it is so. There is evil in your heart from the very beginning; so that you are not perfect, and are not without blemish. This sad fact spoils all at the very beginning. You are yourself blemished and imperfect. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. If the fountain be tainted, shall the streams be pure? Do you think it possible that you, who are a fallen man in your very parentage, in whom there is a bias

towards evil, can possibly render perfect service unto God? Your hands are foul; how can your work be clean? How can it possibly be that you should produce sweet fruit when you as a tree are of sour stock, and of bitter nature? O my friend, it cannot be that darkness should produce light, nor death bring forth life! How can your thoughts, and words, and ways, be perfect? And yet all must be perfect to be accepted.

Look again; for I feel sure that *there must have been a blemish somewhere as matter of fact.* As yet you are not conscious of a blemish, or of a fault; and possibly there is some justification for this unconscientiousness. Looking upon you, I feel inclined to love you, as Jesus loved that young man who could say of the commandments, "All these have I kept from my youth up." But I must beg you to answer this question—*Has there not been a blemish in your motives?* What have you been doing all these good things for? "Why, that I might be saved!" Precisely so. Therefore, selfishness has been the motive which has ruled your life. Every self-righteous man is a selfish man. I am sure he is. At the bottom, that is the motive of the best life that is ever lived which is not actuated by faith in Jesus Christ. The law is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." But you have loved yourself, and lived for yourself: how then can you have kept the first precept of the law? What has been done by you has been done either out of a servile fear of hell, or else out of a proud and selfish hope that you would win heaven by your own merits. These are not love, nor even akin to it. The absence of love is a flaw, and a very serious one; it taints and spoils the whole of your life. "It shall be perfect to be accepted;" and, if the motive be imperfect, then the life is imperfect altogether.

Moreover, it is not only your nature and your motive which are imperfect. My dear friend, you certainly must have erred somewhere or other, in some act of your life. If you can say that you have served God and man without fault throughout all your days, you can say much more than I would venture to do. The Scripture also is dead against you when it says, "there is none righteous; no, not one." If you can say that in no one action of your life, select what you may, was there anything blameworthy, anything that fell short, anything that could be censured, you say very much more than the best of men have ever claimed for themselves. As for the poor faulty being who now addresses you, I dare not claim that the best deed I have ever done, or the most fervent prayer I have ever prayed, could have been accepted in and of itself before God. I know that I have no perfection in my best things, much less in my worst. Tell me, my friend, was there not something amiss in your spirit? Was there not a shortcoming in the humility with which you worshipped? or in the zeal with which you served? or in the faith with which you prayed? Was there not somewhat of omission, even if nothing of commission? Could not the work have been better done? If so, it is clear that it was not perfect, for had it been perfect it could have been no better. Might you not have lived better than you have lived? Might you not have been more pure, more generous, more upright, more loving, more gentle, more firm, more heavenly-minded, than you have been? Then this confession shows

that, to some extent, you must have fallen short; and, remember, "it shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein."

Ah! I am talking very smoothly now, for I am only touching the surface, and dealing with guess-work; but I fear there are greater evils underneath, could all be known. Methinks, if I could read all hearts, there is not one here, however self-righteous he may be, who would not have to *confess distinct acts of sin*. Still, I will keep to the smooth strain, and believe that you are as good as you seem to be; indeed, I have a high opinion of many of you. I know how some of you have lived. You were amiable girls and excellent young women, and have grown up to be careful, loving wives; and therefore you say, "I never did anybody any harm; surely I may be accepted." Or, perhaps, you are quiet young men, blessed with excellent parents, and screened from temptation, and so you have never gone into open vice, but have gained a most respectable character. I wish that there were more like you. I am not condemning you; far from it; but I know that your tendency is to think that, because of all this, you must in yourselves be accepted of God. Give me your hand, and let me say to you, with tears: "It is not so, my sister; it is not so, my brother. It must be perfect to be accepted; there must be no blemish in it." This is a death-blow for your self-confidence; for there was a time, some day or other in your life, in which you did wrong. What! have you no hasty temper? Have no quick words escaped you, which you would wish to recall? What! have you never murmured against God, or complained of his providence? Have you never been slothful when you ought to have been diligent? Have you never been careless when you ought to have been prayerful? Have you always spoken the truth? Has a falsehood never fallen from your lips? Can you say that your heart has never desired evil—never imagined impurity? Recollect, the thought of evil is sin; even a wanton desire is a blemish in the life, and an unchaste imagination is a stain upon the character in the sight of God, though not in the sight of man. "It shall be perfect to be accepted."

I verily used to think concerning myself that I was a quiet, good, hopeful lad, addicted much to reading, seldom in brawls, and doing nobody any hurt. Oh! it was the outside of the cup and the platter I had seen; and when I was led by grace to look inside, I was astonished to see what filthiness was there. When I heard in my heart that sentence of the law, "It shall be perfect to be accepted," I gave up all hope of self-righteousness; and now I hate myself for having doted upon such a falsehood as that I could be acceptable with God in myself.

Have you never gone to live in an old house which looked like new? You had fresh paint, and varnish, and paper in superabundance; and you thought yourself dwelling in one of the sweetest of places, till, one day, it happened that a board was taken up, and you saw under the floor. What a gathering of every foul thing! You could not have lived in that house at peace for a minute had you known what had been covered up. Rottenness had been hidden, decay had been doctored, death had been decorated. That is just like our humanity. We put on fresh paper, and varnish, and paint, and we look very respectable; and yet from below an abomination of the sewer-gas of sin comes steaming up, enough

to kill everything that is like goodness within us ; while all manner of creeping lusts and venomous passions swarm in the secret corners of our nature. When lusts are quiet, they are all there. The best man in this place, who is not a believer in Christ, would go mad if he were to see himself as God sees him. No eye could bear the horrible sight of the hell within the human breast. Yes, I mean you good people—you very nice, amiable, lovable sort of people ! You will have to be born again, and you will have to give up all trust in yourselves, as much as even the worst of men must do. As surely as the chief of sinners are unaccepted, so surely are you ; for a righteousness must be perfect to be accepted, there must be no blemish in it ; and that is not the case with your righteousness. You know it is not.

“ Well,” says one, “ this is very hard doctrine.” I mean it to be so ; for I love you too well to deceive you. When a door has to be shut to save life, there is no use in half-shutting it. If a person may be killed by going through it, you had better board it up, or brick it up. I want to brick up the dangerous opening of self-confidence, for it leads to deception, disappointment, and despair. The way to heaven by works is only possible to a man who is absolutely perfect ; and none of you are in that condition. Do not pretend to it, or you will be arrant liars. I put no fine face upon it—you are not perfect, no, not one of you ; for “ all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

Thus, then, our text shuts out all self-righteousness. *It also shuts out all priestly performances.* There is a notion among some people that the priest is to save them, *alias* the minister, for men easily in these charitable days make even Dissenting ministers into priests. I have heard people say, “ Just as I employ a lawyer to attend to my temporal business, and I do not bother my head any more about it ; so I employ my priest or my clergyman to attend to my spiritual business, and there is an end of it.” This is evil talk, and ruinous to the man who indulges in it. I will speak of this priestcraft very plainly. Recollect, “ it shall be perfect to be accepted ;” therefore all that this gentleman does for you must be perfect. I do not know what it is that he does, I am sure. I never could make out what a priest of the Roman or Anglican order can be supposed to do in his highest function of the mass. I have seen him walk this way, and I have seen him walk that way ; and I have seen him turn his back, and it has been decorated with crosses and other embellishments ; and I have seen him turn his face ; and I have seen him bow ; and I have seen him drink wine and water ; and I have seen him munch wafers ; and I have seen him perform many genuflections and prostrations ; but what the performance meant I have not been able to gather. To me it seemed a meaningless display. I should not like to risk my soul on it ; for suppose that during that service he should think of something that he ought not to think upon, and suppose he should have no intention whatever of performing the mass, what then becomes of those who trust in him and it ? Everything, you know, depends upon the intention of the priest. If a good intention be not there, according to the dictates of his own church, it is all good for nothing, so that your souls all hang upon the intention of a poor mortal in a certain dress. Perhaps he has not after all been rightly anointed, and is not in the apostolical succession ! Perhaps there is no apostolical

succession! Perhaps the man himself is living in mortal sin! Ah, me! there are many dangers about your confidence. Are you going to hang your soul on that man's orders or disorders? Mine is too heavy to hang upon so slender a nail, driven into such rotten wood. If you have a soul big enough to think, you will feel, "No, no; there cannot be sufficient ground of dependence in the best pontiff that ever officiated at an altar. God requires of me, myself, that I bring to him a perfect sacrifice; and it is all a device of my folly that I should try and get a sponsor, and lay this burden on him. It cannot be done. I have to stand before the judgment-bar of God in my own person, to be tried for the sins that I have done in the body; and I must not deceive myself with the idea that another man's performance of ceremonies can clear me at the judgment-seat of Christ. This man cannot bring a perfect sacrifice for me, and it must be perfect to be accepted." O sirs, do not be deluded by priestcraft and sacramentarianism, whether the priest be of the school of Rome, or of Oxford: you must believe in the Lord Jesus for yourselves, or you will be lost for ever!

This text makes a clean sweep of all other kinds of human confidences. Some are deceived in this sort: "Well," they say, "I do not trust in my works; but I am a religious person, and I attend the sacrament, and I go to my place of worship pretty regularly. I feel that I must certainly be right. I have faith in Jesus Christ and in myself." In various ways men thus compose an image whose feet are part of iron and part of clay. With that kind of mangle-mangle, many unconsciously are contenting themselves. But hear ye this word, "it shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein." If we trust Christ and nothing else, that will be perfect; but if you are trusting Christ up to fifteen ounces in the pound, and yourself for the last ounce of the sixteen, you will be a lost man; for that last ounce is an ounce of imperfection, and therefore you cannot be accepted of God.

There are some others who say, "I have suffered a great deal, and that will make amends." There is a current idea among men, that all will go well with poor people, and hard-working people, because they have had their bad times here. When a man has had a long illness, and suffered a great deal in the hospital, his friends say, "Poor soul, he has gone where he is better off!" They feel sure of it, because he has suffered so much. Ah, me! but "it shall be perfect to be accepted;" and what is there perfect in a human life, even if it be chequered with suffering, poverty, and want? Ah, no! poverty does not work perfection; sickness does not make perfection. My text stands like a cherub, waving a fiery sword before the gates of Paradise, shutting out all fancies and notions, of which I will not now speak particularly, by this dread sentence, "It shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein."

II. This brings me to note, with great delight of heart, that as this rule shuts out all other confidences, so THIS RULE SHUTS US UP TO THE SACRIFICE OF JESUS CHRIST. O beloved, if I had the tongues of men and of angels, I could never fitly tell you of him who offered himself without spot unto God, for he is absolutely perfect; there is no blemish in him!

He is perfect in his nature as God and man. No stain defiled his

birth, no pollution touched his body or his soul. The prince of this world himself, with keenest eyes, came and searched the Saviour, but he found nothing in him. "In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." There was not the possibility of sinning about the Saviour,—no tendency that way, no desire that way. Nothing that could be construed into evil ever came upon his character. Our perfect sacrifice is without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

As he was perfect in his nature, so was he in his *motive*. What brought him from above but love to God and man? You can find no trace of ambition in Christ Jesus. In him there is no thought of self. No sinister or sordid motive ever lingered in his breast, or even crossed his mind. He was purity and holiness in the highest degree. Even his enemies have nothing to allege against the purity of the motive of Jesus of Nazareth.

As his nature was perfect, so was his *spirit*. He was never sinfully angry, nor harsh, nor untrue, nor idle. The air of his soul was the atmosphere of heaven rather than of earth.

Look at his *life of obedience*, and see how perfect that was. Which commandment did he ever break? Which duty of relationship did he ever forget? He honoured the law of God, and loved the souls of men. He gave the character of God perfect reflection in his human life. You can see what God is as you see what Christ is. He is perfect, even as his Father who is in heaven is perfect. There is no redundance, or excess, or superfluity in his character, even as there is no coming short in any point.

Look at the perfection of his *sacrifice*. He gave his body to be tortured, and his mind to be crushed and broken, even unto the death-agony. He gave himself for us a perfect sacrifice. All that the law could ask was in him. Stretch the measure to its utmost length, and still Christ goes beyond, rather than falls short of the measure of the requirements of justice. He has given to his Father double for all our sins. He has given him suffering for sin committed, and yet a perfect obedience to the law. The Lord God is well pleased with him; he rests in the Son of his love, and for his sake he smiles upon multitudes of sinners who are represented in him. My heart rejoices as I think of Gethsemane, and Calvary, and of him who by one offering hath perfectly sanctified all who put their trust in him. "It is finished," said he, and finished it is for ever. Our Lord has presented a perfect sacrifice. "It shall be perfect to be accepted;" and it is perfect. "There shall be no blemish therein;" and there is no blemish in it. Glory be to God Most High!

Now, I want you just to let me stop preaching, as it were, while every man among you brings this sacrifice to God. By faith take it to be yours. You may. Christ belongs to every believer. If thou trustest him, he is thine. Poor guilty soul, as thou art, whether thou hast been a Christian fifty years or ten years, or whether thou art just now converted, if thou believest, thou mayest now come with Christ in thy hand, and say to the Father, "O my Lord, thou hast provided for me what thy law requires—a perfect sacrifice; there is no blemish in it. Behold, I bring it unto thee as mine!" God is satisfied. What joy! God is satisfied! The Father is well pleased! He has raised Christ from the

dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places in token of that satisfaction. Let us be satisfied too. That which contents God may well content me. My soul, when thy eyes are full of tears on account of thy sin, and thy heart is disquieted on account of thy infirmities and imperfections, look thou right away from thyself "to the full atonement made, to the utmost ransom paid." The offering of Jesus is perfect and accepted. The righteousness of thy Lord Jesus is without blemish; and thou art "accepted in the Beloved."

That delightful passage in Exodus came flashing up to my mind just now, where the Israelite sprinkled the blood on the lintel and the two side-posts. Then he shut the door. *He* was inside: he did not see the blood any more. The blood was outside upon the posts, and he could not see it himself; but was he safe? Yes, because it is written, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." It is God's sight of the blood of his dear Son that is the everlasting safeguard of all who are in Christ. Though it is most precious and sweet to me to look at that blood once shed for many for the remission of sins, and I do look at it; yet if ever there should come a dark night to me in which I cannot see it, still God will see it, and I am safe. I am saved, because it is written, not "when *you* see it," but "when *I* see the blood I will pass over you." It is the perfection of the sacrifice, not your perfection of sight, which is your safeguard. It is the absence of all blemish from the sacrifice—not the absence of blemish from your faith—that makes you to be "accepted in the Beloved."

Well, now, as is too often the case, I have run on so much upon the first points that I have not time enough for much more; but I was going to finish up by saying that I address myself for a minute or two to Christians only. Listen, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that know the Lord! You are saved. You have not, therefore, to bring any sacrifice by way of a sin-offering, but you have to bring sacrifices of thanksgiving. It is your reasonable service that you offer your bodies a living sacrifice unto God. If you do this you cannot bring an absolutely perfect sacrifice, but you must labour to let it be perfect in what is often the Biblical sense of perfection.

Beloved brethren, you must take care that what you bring is not blind, for the blind were not to be offered. You must serve God with a single eye to the glory of God. If you attend a prayer-meeting, or teach a class, or preach a sermon, you must not do it with a view to your own selves in any way, or it cannot be accepted. The sacrifice must see; it must be intelligent, reasonable service, having for its object the glory of God. It must in that sense be perfect to be accepted.

And as it must not be blind, so it must not be broken. Whenever we serve God, we must do it with the whole of our being, for if we try to serve God with a bit of our nature, and leave the rest unconsecrated, we shall not be accepted. Certain professors prefer one class of Christian duties, and they neglect others; this must not be. Christ gave "himself" for you, and you must give your whole self to him. To be acceptable the life must be entire; there must be complete consecration of every faculty. How is it with you? Have you brought to the Lord a divided sacrifice? If so, he claims the whole.

Next, they were not to bring a maimed sacrifice : that is, one without its limbs. Some people give grudgingly, that is to say, they come up to the collection-box with a limp. Many serve Christ with a broken arm. The holy work is done, but it is painfully and slowly done. Among the heathen, I believe, they never offered in sacrifice to the gods a calf that had to be carried. The reason was that they considered that the sacrifice ought to be willing to be offered, and so it must be able to walk up to the altar. Notice in the Old Testament, though there were many creatures both birds and beasts, that were offered to God, they never offered any fish on the holy altar. The reason probably is that a fish could not come there alive. Its life would be spent before it came to the altar, and therefore it could not render a life unto God. Take care that you bring your bodies a living sacrifice. I notice that many men are all alive when they are in the shop. The way they talk, the way they call out to the men, and the way they bustle everybody about, are conclusive evidence that their life is abundant. But when they get into the church of God, what a difference ! There may be life somewhere or other, but nobody knows where it is. You have to look for it with a microscope. You see no activity, no energy. Oh, that these people would remember, "it shall be perfect to be accepted !" That is to say, there must be energy put into it, soul put into it, heart put into it, or God will not accept it. We must not bring him the mere chrysalis of a man, out of which the life has gone ; but we must bring before him our living, unmaimed selves if we would be acceptable before him.

It is then added, "or having a wen." It does not look as though it would hurt the sacrifice much to have a wen ; yet there must not be a wen, or spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Above all, avoid that big wen of pride. When we feel that we are doing a grand thing, and are acting in a most satisfactory manner, we may know that we are not accepted. A sermon wept over is more acceptable with God than one gloried over. That which is given to God with a sigh because you cannot do more, and with the humble hope that he may accept it for Christ's sake, is infinitely superior to that which is bestowed with the proud consciousness that you deserve well of your fellow-men, if not of your God.

The sacrifice was not to be scabbed, or to have the scurvy. That is to say, it was to be without any sort of outward fault. I have heard men say, "It is true I did not do that thing well, but my heart was right." That may be, my dear brother, but you must try and make the whole matter as good as it can be. What a deal of scabbed service our Lord gets ! Men try to be benevolent to their fellow-creatures with an irritable temper. Certain people try to serve God, and write stinging letters to promote brotherly love, and dogmatical epistles in favour of large-mindedness. Too many render to the Lord hurried, thoughtless worship ; and many more give for offerings their smallest coins, and such things as they will never miss. God has many a scurvy sheep brought before him. Did you never bring any, my brother ? Did I never bring any ? Ah, me ! ah, me ! But still, let us mend our ways ; and since the Lord Jesus offered himself without spot, let us try to serve him

with our utmost care. The best of the best should be given to the Best of the best. We sometimes sing,

“All that I am, and all I have,
Shall be for ever thine.”

Oh, that we practised it as well as sang it! Would God that the best of our lives, the best hours of the morning, the best skill of our hands, the best thoughts of our minds, the very cream of our being, were given to our God! But, alas! Christ's cause is sent round to the back door to get the broken meat; and, “Mind you do not leave too much meat on the bone,” is the kind of instruction that is given to her who hands it out. Christ Jesus is sent to the dust-heap for the odds and ends. Cheese-parings, and candle-ends are given to the Missionary Society. Perhaps the statement is too liberal: it would be well if they were. Threepennies and fourpennies are gracious gifts from struggling tradesmen and poor work-people; but they are hardly decent when sent in by folk who spend hundreds of pounds upon their own pleasure. To God's altar we ought to bring the best bullock from the stall, and the best sheep from the fold. I leave you to yourselves to judge whether it be not so. If you are not over head and ears in debt to the mercy of God in Christ, then it is not so; but if you are debtors to divine mercy beyond all compute, you shall each one reckon up for himself,—“How much owest thou unto my Lord?” If it be a debt you can never calculate, then give the Lord from this day forth the fulness of your being. May God grant that you and your offerings may be accepted in Christ Jesus! Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews ix.

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