

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

OUR PLACE; AT JESUS' FEET.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

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“At his feet.”—Luke vii. 38.

THE Easterns pay more attention to posture than we do. They are demonstrative, and express by outward signs much which we do not express, or express less energetically. In their courts certain positions must be taken up by courtiers. Oriental monarchs are approached in positions which indicate the greatness of the king and the submissiveness of the petitioner. So, in their worship, the Easterns abound in postures significant of the humility which should be felt in the presence of God. The most of us think very little indeed of outward postures, perhaps we do not even think enough of them. Inasmuch as in devotion we think little of the position of the body, let us pay all the more attention to the posture of the soul; and if it seems to us to be a matter of indifference whether a man prays standing as Abraham did, or sitting as David did, or kneeling as Elias did; yet let us take care that the posture of the soul is carefully observed. One of the best positions in which our heart can be found is at Jesus' feet. Here we may fall, or here we may sit, and follow excellent examples to our exceeding benefit.

The first thing that is necessary to spiritual life at all, is to recognize the presence of Jesus, and to come into relationship with him. *To look at him is salvation.* As to look at the brazen serpent was healing, so to look at Jesus Christ brings life eternal to the soul. After we have come to look at Jesus, and so there is a connecting link between us and him through which salvation comes to us, we are described as being in various positions with regard to our Lord. *We are on his heart.* Just as the priest of old carried the names of the twelve tribes, so doth Jesus carry all his people on his heart; and that is where we are at this time. There are favoured times when, like John also, *we are on his bosom.* We feel his heart beating with true affection to us. We not only believe his love, but there is a kind of sense—which I may not call sense either, for it belongs not to the grosser forms of sensation, but there is a kind of spiritual sensitiveness which causes us to feel that Jesus loves us. We seem to say, “God is love, I know,

I feel"; for in our very hearts the love of God is shed abroad by the Holy Ghost. Then are we raised to his bosom; and it is a blessed posture to be in.

"Oh, that we could with holy John
For ever lean our heads upon
The bosom of our Lord"!

We are described, also, as being *in the hand of Christ*. All his saints are in his hand. He gives unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, for he says "none shall pluck them out of my hand." See your position in the hollow of his hand, while in the Father's hand the hand of Christ is embraced, and he tells us "none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

Then, too, we are described as being *on his shoulders*. Does not the good Shepherd, when he finds the strayed sheep, cast it upon his shoulders and carry it home? When Aaron stood pleading before the Lord he not only carried the names of the tribes upon his breastplate, but he had them in ouches of gold upon his shoulders. Christ carries us on the heart of his love and on the shoulders of his power. Thus are we perfectly safe.

You see, then, where we are; and I do not want you to forget this, while I urge upon all the Lord's people that they should seek to be "at his feet." You can keep all the other positions, and this too; for, though that were impossible for the body, it is quite possible for the spirit. The highest delight and the fullest assurance are perfectly consistent with the lowliest reverence. You may rise even to *the Master's lips*, until you can say with the spouse, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine"; and yet you may still be lying at his feet, conscious of your unworthiness, and bowed into the very dust under a sense of his love.

We must leave those other positions, and consider the one in our text. And we have only two remarks to make—namely, first, that *at his feet is a becoming posture*; and, secondly, *at his feet is a helpful posture*.

I. First, AT HIS FEET IS A BECOMING POSTURE.

This is proper because of the majesty of his person. As he is divine, "at his feet" is the creature's becoming place. Jesus is "God over all, blessed for ever." Let us exhibit the lowliest reverence whenever we think of him. He comes very near us, and, we sing at the communion-table—

"His sacred name a common word
On earth he loves to hear;
There is no majesty in him
Which love may not come near."

But there is majesty: there is divine majesty. Jesus is our brother, but he is the first born among many brethren. He has a human head, but on that head are many crowns. He wears a nature like our own, but that nature is in union with his Godhead, and we cannot think of him without bowing with lowly adoration before him. The sun, and the moon, and the eleven stars make obeisance to this star of Bethlehem. All the sheaves bow before this Joseph's sheaf, as it stands upright in the midst. Jesus, thou art he whom thy brethren

shall praise! All thy mother's sons shall bow down before thee, for thou art glorious exceedingly. Behold! every tongue shall confess that thou art Lord, and every knee shall bow before thee. Therefore with glad prostration of spirit we bow at thy feet even now.

We may well bow at his feet when we remember *the unworthiness of ourselves*. We are insignificant creatures. That is saying little. We are sinful creatures. Even though we have been redeemed by his precious blood, and shall never come into condemnation if we are indeed believers, yet we "were by nature children of wrath, even as others." Undeserved mercy has made us what we are; and if, even now, his grace were withdrawn from us, we are fit fuel for the fires of hell. There is nothing in ourselves of which we can glory; and, when we come near to Jesus, our place is "at his feet." There may be some—no, I think there cannot be among his people any—that would aspire to any higher position than "at his feet" when they think of their sinfulness; when they even think of their wanderings since they have known his love, of their shortcomings and coldness of heart towards him. But if there be any that can take a higher place, I know that I cannot. Oh, if I may but sit for ever at his feet, if I may only look up, and bless him, that he loved me and gave himself for me, it shall be everlastingly heaven to my spirit! And do you not say the same? Oh, utter nothingness, thou art something as compared with us; for we are less than nothing! The blank of nothingness stood not in God's way when he came to create; but in us there was an opposition to the divine will—a something, I say, which was worse than nothing, which resisted our Lord's grace; but he has triumphed, and he has saved us, and now it is ours, with deep humiliation, to lie "at his feet."

"At his feet," again, is a place well suited to us, because of *his well-beloved claims upon us*. As many of us as have been renewed by grace have been rescued from the slavery of Satan, and we have come into the sweet service of Christ, and now it is our great joy to call him Master and Lord. When we are right-minded we make a full submission of everything to him. We place "at his feet" all our time, our talents, our substance. We desire to bring every thought into captivity to his dear sway. Our ambition is that he would rule us entirely. It is a sceptre of grace with which Jesus reigns over his trusting people, but it is quite as powerful as the iron sceptre. Oh, that he would use it, and crush our lusts with it, and break our sinful desires with it like potter's vessels, till we should be wholly given up to him!

"In my spirit rule and conquer,
There set up thy eternal throne;
Wean my heart from every creature,
Thee to love, and thee alone."

This is the Christian's desire. He would lie joyfully submissive at the Saviour's feet, completely subjected by the conquering Lord.

Once more: *he is all in all*, and we would lie at his feet to find salvation in him, and seek it nowhere else. Perhaps I am speaking to those who long after eternal life, and are crying after salvation. Come, beloved friend, I do not know you, but my Lord does; come

and lie at his feet, and cry, "I never will depart until thou speak peace to me." You are not far from finding peace in Christ when you are satisfied that you cannot find it anywhere else. When you are weaned from every hope except that which is found in Jesus, you will soon have a hope in him. Come, lie prostrate there, and say, "If I perish here, I will perish 'at his feet.'" None perish there. Beneath the cross, where the full sacrifice was offered, there I cast myself. I will never stir an inch beyond this. If the eternal thunderbolts can smite the cross, they shall blast me at the self-same time, for here I will stay. At Jesus' feet, I lie, in despair as to all else, but with strong resolve never to go away from him, resolved with him to live or die. This is what I mean, then, by the posture of being at Jesus' feet.

But now recollect, dear friends, that at Jesus' feet is the position which the very brightest of the saints delight to take up. When John was in the Isle of Patmos, and saw his Master whom he loved, he did not essay to place his head upon his bosom. Remember his words: "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." Now if such a one as John the Divine lay there, that is a high enough place for you and for me. "At his feet." Oh, let us get there! Down, down, down, high looks! Proud thoughts, down with you! Legal hopes, self-confidence, down with you! Away, away, with everything that lifts up man; and may Christ alone be exalted while we lie at his feet; for if we do not bow willingly, we shall have to come to it by a humbling experience. The Lord hath put all things under his feet; let us put ourselves "at his feet." If we will not accept him now to be our Master and Lord, we shall be flung into the winepress of the wrath of God, and then shall he trample upon us in his wrath and crush us in his sore displeasure. God save us from such a doom, and may we rejoice to be at his feet.

II. Now we shall attend to our second observation. We have shown, I think, that it is a becoming posture; but now, secondly, it is **A VERY HELPFUL POSTURE.**

Turn to my text and see that it is a very helpful posture for *a weeping penitent*. "Behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping." It helps us to repent. Do not go and stand at Moses' feet. You will never repent there. To stand at the foot of Sinai and tremble may have its uses; but gospel repentance does not spring from legal terror. Gracious tears are wept at Jesus' feet. Oh, if thou wouldst have thy heart broken till the rock shall gush with rivers of repentance, stand at Jesus' feet. Stand there now. If thou wouldst have a tender heart, think of the Beloved who died for thee! Think of how those feet were pierced. This woman could not see that, for it was not then done; but thou canst see it, and mark where the nail has bored each blessed foot.

"At his feet" is the best place for a penitent, for it helps faith; for as you look down at those dear feet, and think, "He is God, and he became a man to suffer in my stead, and those dear feet were pierced that my heart might be delivered from death," you will find

faith spring up in your soul at the sight of the great Substitute. Such faith will bring with it pardon. Standing at his feet, you will find him turn his head, and say to you what he said to the woman, "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee. Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Repentance, apart from Christ, will need to be repented of. Repentance at Christ's feet is the only repentance worth having. When thou dost weep for sin, so that thou canst not see Christ through thy tears, away with them. Unbelieving tears are not such as God delights in. But it is a sweet, sweet thing to taste a salt repentance, and then to taste the honey of a honeyed pardon: to have the soul smarting, and then to have it rejoicing too, because it stands at Jesus' feet.

And let me say to all weeping penitents—Get ye away to Jesus' feet, because it is there your love will flow, and there you will begin to think of doing something for him who will blot out your sin. Did not this woman unbind the luxuriant tresses of her head to make a towel? Did she not, instead of ewer and basin, use the fountains of her eyes, nay, the fountains of her heart, with which to bathe his feet? And then for ointment she brake the alabaster box, and kissed, and kissed, and kissed, and kissed again those dear, dear feet of him who had brought salvation to her. O penitents, I pray you stand not outside in the cold porch with Moses, but come indoors, where Jesus welcomes you; and stand at his feet, and he will give you that blessed repentance after a godly sort, which shall bring you an answer of peace, and shall nourish life in your soul.

"At his feet," then, is a helpful posture to the weeping penitent.

Now you have got your Bibles open at Luke's seventh chapter, turn over to the eighth chapter and the thirty-fifth verse. You know the story of the man that had a legion of devils in him who used to cut himself, and who lived among the tombs. Now we read, "They went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus."

At Jesus' feet is the best place for a *new convert*. What a state of mind and body this poor man must have been in who was possessed of devils that carried him over hedge and ditch and field and flood, he knew not whither! Men bound him with chains, but like another Samson, he snapped them. He tore himself with flints and knives and thorns. Poor wretch! he rested not day nor night; but ever with his dolorous cry he made night hideous, so that they that passed by the cemeteries startled, feeling that they had come near the gates of hell. A whole legion of devils dwelt within this poor wretch; and when Christ cast all the devils out of him, he must have been spent and exhausted, just as after a delirium there seems no life left. He wanted rest. Where was he to get it? He sat at Jesus' feet. Do you know why he rested there? It was because he felt the devil could not press on to Jesus' feet. He felt quite sure the devil would never enter into his body again while he sat at Jesus' feet. Why, no; the devils had been afraid of Jesus, and had gone into the swine, and rushed into the sea, to escape from him. While he sat at the feet of that great One who had rescued him from so terrible a fate, he seemed to feel, "I am safe here." At Jesus' feet

he plucked up courage; and gathered strength! With his new clothes on (he had not worn any for many a day), and his tangled hair combed out again, and his poor face, that had been covered with filth, all cleansed again, I can hardly imagine the pleasurable sensation and the happiness that he felt, except I remember how I have sometimes felt myself, after sharp pains and long diseases, when I have come forth to breathe the air again, free from pain. Convalescence is very sweet, and fairly pictures how souls feel when they get Christ at last. "He has saved me, but, oh! I am weary, I am weary. I will sit at his feet." And as we sit at his feet, we feel all weariness pass away.

"Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." We see a new heaven and a new earth, and we are made completely new creatures, and where should we sit but at his feet who makes all things new? You that have found Christ, and now greatly need rest, do not try to find rest anywhere but in him. Come, and sit "at his feet." Have no more cries, no more fears, no more doubts, no more despairs. Christ has saved you. Sit still and remember what he has done, and what he is doing. Sit still and look up at his dear face, and say, "Blessed be the altogether lovely one who plucked me out of the jaws of hell, and delivered me from between the teeth of the dragon." O dear friends, there is no rest like resting at Jesus' feet!

" Here it is I find my heaven
While upon the cross I gaze."

Now, turn with your finger a little farther to the forty-first verse of the same chapter and you will find out that "at Jesus' feet" is a very helpful posture for a *pleading intercessor*—for one who is himself saved, and is pleading for others. "Behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: for he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying."

Many of us know what it is to intercede with God for others; but there is no interceding that is so efficacious as that which is done at Jesus' feet. When your heart breaks—when you feel that you do not deserve the mercy that you are seeking for—when, like Abraham, you cry, "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes," it is then that you prevail. Lie "at his feet." But do not lie there as if it were somebody else's feet. Let it be Jesus' feet, the feet of your dear Lord, who came to save you. Lie there, and say, "Lord, save my daughter. Lord, save my wife," or, "Lord, have mercy upon my wandering, wilful boy, and save him, for thy mercy's sake." Plead with your whole soul. Plead importunately; but do not plead despairingly.

If you are at Jesus' feet, you are near to the fountain of help. You are near to him who tenderly loves you, one who would not have had feet if he had not loved mankind, for he took his body upon him out of love, and his feet are a part of his frame. Oh, to realize the presence of Christ when we pray, for if not we pray out into the open

common, or across the cruel sea. I like praying right into the Mediator's ear. It is grand praying when Jesus is near, and you speak to him as a man speaketh to his friend. Thus do I pray now. "Lord, have mercy upon my congregation. Save the people. Lord, have mercy upon those whom I have prayed for many a time, who still are not renewed in heart." We always prevail when we pray so? When I know that I have gained Christ's ear I look out for the answer as confidently as I expect an answer to a letter that I send by post. Some of our prayers do not go that way for want of our believing that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; but when we believe that he will hear us, he does hear us. So, Jairus, if your daughter is sick, pray for her, but do it "at Jesus' feet." You have an ungodly relative, and you have prayed often, but perhaps you have not prayed at Jesus' feet, and I urge you now to try that hallowed place.

This fourth time will you turn a little farther, to Luke x. 39? "She had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word"; so that "at Jesus' feet" is the fitting place for a *willing learner*. A lowly sense of our own ignorance so that we do not dare to sit higher than "at his feet," but a believing confidence in his infinite wisdom so that we do sit "at his feet" to learn of him—this is suitable. How much better scholars we should be if we tried to learn at Jesus' feet! Some even of the Lord's people are a deal too knowing. Many a boy at school does not learn anything of an excellent master, for he is conceited: he knows nothing, and he teaches himself. I am afraid we are like that scholar. We know nothing, and we teach ourselves. We have prejudices—opinions of what truth ought to be. This is evil. But, oh, it is very sweet to feel, "I do not know anything. I come, and take the Bible, and ask it to photograph itself upon my heart"! Some minds are like stained glass windows; they shut out much of the light, and the little light that does struggle through, they colour after their own manner. It is well to be plain glass, so that the Lord's light, with all its colour and delicacy of shade, may come in just as it comes from heaven, with nothing gathered from ourselves. Beloved, I pray the Lord to free us all from prejudice, from self-conceit, and from opinions which originate with others.

We must learn at Jesus' feet; not at the feet of man, when man goes away from Christ. At times the Lord may send a man whom he teaches, and what we gather from him may be God's own voice to us. Still we must always be ready to discriminate between what the man says of himself, and what he says in his Master's name; for there is a grave difference. "At Jesus' feet" we must take up our seat. Dear young men, that are beginning to study theology, and that wish to become teachers of others, do not give yourselves up to any system, and say, "I follow this doctor, or that." John Wesley is not our master; but Jesus Christ. John Calvin is not our Master, but Jesus Christ. It does not signify how great and good these men were: they were worthy of the love of all the church of God, but we call them not Rabbi. We may follow the man as far as the man follows Christ, but not an inch farther. We must sit at Jesus' feet,

humble, teachable, child-like, confidently believing what Jesus says, but having no "know" of our own—taking it all from him.

But my time fails me, and so I must take you to the last instance that I will give you in Luke. Look at Luke xvii. and the sixteenth verse—the chapter which I read to you. We find that the Samaritan who had been healed fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks. Well, then, that position is most helpful to every grateful worshipper. I think I see the angels and the blood-bought ones commencing one of their celestial chorales. The eye of my imagination is almost smitten with blindness as I gaze upon the scene. They are all brighter than the sun, and the whole company shines with the light of more than a thousandfold midday. Hear them as they commence the rapturous strain! Their notes how sweet, how seraphic, as they praise the eternal Father and the glorious Lamb of God and worship! We hear the song. How it swells! Harken to the soft touches of the harpers harping with their harps! Do you note how the singers and the players of instruments seem caught up in the ecstasy? But mark! As the song rises they begin to bow. As it rises higher they bow lower, and lower, and lower. Hark! The enthusiastic fervour of their love has made them lift their loudest hallelujah; and lo! they cast their crowns at his sacred feet. The whole company are still lifting up the song to its utmost glory, but anon they fall on their faces, prostrate before the throne. "At his feet" is their loftiest position. Let us imitate them, and making the worship more ecstatic than before, bow before him.

"Lo, at his feet, with awful joy,
The adoring armies fall!
With joy they shrink to nothing there,
Before the eternal All."

So let us praise him for all that he has done for us; and, as we praise him, let us sink lower, and lower, and lower, till in ourselves we are nothing and Christ alone lives in us. Let no thought of self, nor wish for self, nor dream of self intrude, but let Jesus be all in all. "At his feet," there shall our heaven be found. When our soul is deepest bathed in grateful praise we shall fall down on our faces and worship the Lamb. The Lord bless you, and keep you at his feet for ever. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xvii. 1—19;
Psalm ii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—353, 578, 281, 417 (v. 1).