

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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REASONS FOR PARTING WITH SIN.

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## A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 13TH, 1876, BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

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“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”—Isaiah i. 18.

It is the great joy of our heart that we do not labour in vain, nor spend our strength for naught. God is calling out from the congregations which gather here a people unto himself, who shall show forth his praise. Our heart is filled with adoring joy while we find company after company coming forward and saying, “We have found the Lord, because the Lord in mercy has found us.” Unto the name of the Ever Merciful be praise for ever and ever, because his hand is stretched out still, and the Spirit of the living God is not restrained among us. Still there is a bass to this music : there are some, and these not a few, who remain unblest where others are saved : this plot of ground is rained upon and another is not rained upon : the sun shines, and hearts, like wax, are melted, but other hearts, like clay, are hardened. This last and saddest of results has happened to some for whom we hoped better things ; the almost persuaded have, in fact, been our peculiar trial. Some of you, my hearers, have remained under the sound of the gospel now for years, not without impression, but without conversion. The arrows of conviction have wounded your feelings, but they have not slain your sins. Ah, how many have disappointed their best friends in this respect ! They have manifested the most hopeful appearance at times : their tears have glittered like the dewdrops of the summer’s morning, but, alas, their goodness has been like the morning cloud and the early dew in another respect, for it has vanished away, and they are as dry and graceless as ever they were. Nor is this all : they are even worse than they were before, for they have added to their sin, they have increased their responsibility, they have diminished the sensitiveness of their conscience, and the probabilities are daily increasing that they will perish in their sin. How terrible that they should go from the invitation of the gospel to the condemnation of the judgment seat ; and

that after having looked God's minister of mercy in the face, they should have to confront the Greater Minister of justice, from whose face they will entreat the rocks and hills to hide them. Oh that these would come to their senses, and reason with themselves, then would they listen to the call of the text, which invites them to hold converse with their Lord, and receive his grace.

Amongst these persons there are some who in their hearts venture to lay the blame of their present condition upon God. They do not exactly say so, but they mean it. They would tremble to make the accusation in set terms, they would even think it blasphemy to do so, but this is the real intent of their thought. They complain that they cannot find peace with God, though they claim that they have used all means within their power, and have been really earnest, and prayerful. They go to hear the gospel, and love to hear it, they would be very sorry if they were not able to enter the place where their favourite minister preaches, for he affords them much delight, and even when he rebukes them they admire his boldness: but though they have heard the gospel, have heard it continuously, and claim to have heard it with good intent, yet no happy result has come to them; they have heard and their souls do not live, but they remain as they were, dead in trespasses and sin. It is not *their* fault, so they say, and we know, therefore, whose fault it must be. They have even prayed for salvation, and yet have not found it; their chambers can bear witness that sometimes they have bowed the knee in earnest supplication, and have cried to God, and this not once nor twice but many times: and yet they remain still in their sins as undecided, unregenerate, and unforgiven as ever. Surely, say they, "This is a strange thing, that hearing the gospel has not blessed us, and that crying unto God has not brought us an answer of peace. What can be the cause?"

It is obvious that something hinders. What can it be? The promises of God cannot fail. Why, then, are these seekers left in the dark? Some of these people are not anxious to know too much, and they will not be pleased when I state the true reason for their continuing without hope. They impute it to the sovereignty of God, or to some withholding of infinite love; they put the reason into some doctrinal shape or other, and quote a text or two, so as to look orthodox, but their meaning comes to this,—it is God's fault that they are unsaved, it is certainly none of theirs. I wish that this bold way of stating their secret thought may convince them of the falsehood of it. At any rate to such I speak. Hearken to me, O ye who declare that ye would fain be saved but cannot be, O ye who say that you have been in earnest about salvation but God has not been moved by your entreaties. He bids you come near and reason with him, and end this cavilling. Come now and settle this matter, and end the dispute. It is not God who shuts you out of mercy; he declares on the contrary that as far as he is concerned he is a God ready to be gracious, and though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool. He will not admit your insinuations against his grace, in the plainest possible terms he denies your imputations. He declares that the hindrance lies on your side and not on his, and he invites you to reason with him about it,

that the truth may be clear to you. Come now, and argue with him, for I would speak on God's behalf, and press his word upon you. Oh, that this morning, while the argument goes on, your reason might be taught right reason, and your conscience might be quickened to give assent to the truth which in God's name I will declare to you, that so by the Spirit's power, being subdued by the persuasions and reasonings which we would fain use this morning, you may yield yourselves unto God, for thus he says to you, "If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel ye shall be devoured by the sword, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

It is most certain that the real reason why men who have an earnest desire to be saved, and have sincere religiousness of a certain sort, do not find peace is this, because they are in love with sin. Either some one sin is secretly indulged, or many sins are unrepented of and unfor-saken. They provoke the Lord with their trespasses, and then hope to pacify him with their prayers. Hence it is altogether vain for them to tread God's courts: in vain they pray, and in vain they attend upon religious ceremonies with the view of finding peace, for they have hidden the accursed thing in the midst of the camp, they are harbouring a traitor, and until this accursed thing is destroyed, and this traitor is driven out, they cannot be acceptable to God. To all such the Word of God says, "What hast thou to do with peace while thy offences are so many?" O, ungodly man, thy heart can never rest in God while it goes forth after its idols. As long as thou and thy sins are at peace, God and thy soul must be at war. Until thou art ready to be divorced from sin thou canst never be married to Christ. God will give salvation and the pardon of sin, and give them freely to the very chief of sinners, but the sinner must confess and forsake his sin. The Lord graciously says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon": but "There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked," and his word solemnly declares that "God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on in his trespasses." About this matter we will talk this morning as the Lord shall help us, and may his Holy Spirit bless us therein.

I. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." Let us have this matter out, and hear what is to be urged in favour of God's demands. IT IS A REASONABLE THING THAT SIN SHOULD BE RENOUNCED. As soon as I make that statement, every conscience here agrees with it. It is most reasonable, that if the rebel be pardoned, he should ground his arms and cease to be a rebel. Look at the demand for a minute, and it will strike you as being founded in right. It is most reasonable that we should renounce sin; that our heart should henceforth loathe it—first, *because it is most inconsistent to suppose that pardon can be given while we continue in sin.* Dear brethren, suppose God were to say to the ungodly man, "You may continue in your sin, and I will forgive you; you may go on in your rebellion, but I will never punish you for it;" what would this be but granting license to sin, and offering a premium to iniquity? How could the Judge of all the earth thus wink at iniquity? Would not

the angels cease to sing, "Holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth," if the Lord could act in this manner? Where would his justice be? where his righteousness? This were to make him—I speak with reverence—an accomplice in man's sin, a justifier of transgression in the present, and a promoter of iniquity in the future. Where would moral government be, if the Lord bestowed his pardons upon those who persevere in transgression? Shall men fondle their sins, and yet be in a state of grace? Then might every adulterer and every thief say, "What mattereth it? I am forgiven. I will defile myself, and rob my neighbour yet more and more." Only fancy what the effect would be upon our country if a proclamation were issued, that henceforth all manner of offences against the law would be immediately forgiven, and men might continue still to perpetrate them. We should hasten to emigrate from such a pandemonium. The wicked might approve of such a relaxation of the bonds of law, but it would be an awful curse to the righteous. If the judge of all the earth could possibly forgive sin while men continue to indulge in it, I do not see how the world could be inhabited; it would become a den of beasts, wild and without restraint, raging against all goodness, and even against themselves. The very pillars of society would be moved if sin could be at the same time indulged by the sinner and pardoned by the Lord. And what would be the effect upon the sinner himself if such could be the case? Say to a man—you are not to be punished for your sin, and yet you may live in it still, and what worse turn could you do him? Why, sir, this would in some respects be a new curse to him. Here is a bleeding wound in my arm; the surgeon says he will allow it still to bleed, but he will remove my sense of faintness and pain. He will leave the mortal injury, but take away its attendant inconveniences, so that I may bleed to death and not know it? I would decline to have it so. Nay, let me bear the pain, if that will the more persuade me to seek the binding up of my wound. We do not want to be delivered from the punishment of sin, so much as from the sin itself, for sin bears its punishment in its bowels. Suppose there were no hell, no lake of fire into which the ungodly shall be cast, yet let the wicked live together, and indulge envy, revenge, and malice, and you will soon see that these passions would create hell. Turn men down together, and let them be selfish, ambitious, angry, lustful, jealous, and envious; take away all the restraints of moral government, and let their passions be indulged without a single hindrance. Oh, what a scene it would be! Imagine a den of wild beasts let loose upon one another! It would be a scene of peace and beauty compared with what this world would be if sin were patronised by a promise of pardon to the impenitent. Each man also would be hateful to himself; as long as he had sin within him it would be impossible for him to rest, his seething passions would boil against each other. Man is so constituted that sin means an unhealthy and unhappy condition. The machinery will not work easily unless it acts accurately; it is at once its glory and its burden that it is so. O mighty God, thy wisdom makes thee append suffering to sin. It is well that we should feel if we put our finger into the fire; it were a pity to take away the pain from the burning, lest a man should sit by the fire and lose limb after limb, and not be aware of it:

in the same manner, also, it is most meet that the unhappiness caused by sin should give us warning of the mischief it is doing to us. We do not ask God to separate the suffering from the sin (let them stand as they are), but we want to be severed from the sin, and then the suffering will go as a matter of course. It is unreasonable, man, it is unreasonable that you should expect that God will allow you to remain impenitent, and yet give you the kiss of forgiving love. It would be neither honourable to God, nor good to your fellow-men, nor really beneficial to yourself.

Is it not reasonable, too, that we should part with sin, because *sin is so grievous to God*? I never know how to express my feelings when I read this first chapter of the prophet Isaiah. I have felt a heart-breaking sympathy with God when I have read those words, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." It is so very sweet to us to have our children love us in return of our kindness to them; they are to us a very great joy and comfort, and we are very glad and thankful to God for their dutiful affection. But many a man has been ready to tear his hair when the boy that he dandled on his knee has treated him with wanton insult. With what sorrow and anguish has many a mother had to remember an ungrateful daughter! Such iron enters into the soul. Such draughts of gall embitter the inmost heart of life. And here is the good Lord, like David of old, crying, "O Israel, my son, my son." To let us see how he regards sin he describes himself as calling the universe to witness to the ingratitude which has assailed him "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider!" There is another plaintive expression in one of the prophets, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate:" as though the Creator turned pleader to his own creatures, and said, "Do not follow after that which so provokes me, and is so detestable to me." It is for our sakes that he is so grieved. We vex the Holy Spirit every time we go into sin, for he loves us much and cannot bear to see us so dreadfully hurting ourselves. Now, sinner, is it not most reasonable that if you would find peace with God you should cease from that which provokes him? Are you to go on thus vexing him and yet expect him to bless you? How would it be in your own case if you were a father? Would it not seem right and reasonable that the evil habit which vexed and broke your heart from day to day should be given up by your child? Would you not expect him to say, "My father, I did not know I was grieving thee so much as this, but now I do know it I turn from my folly: teach me how I may please thee and do that which is right in thy sight."

A third reason why sin should be given up may also be found in the chapter before us, for I am strictly following the connection of the text. Should it not be given up because of *the mischief it has already done to man*? Look at yourself, unconverted man or woman, what happiness have your transgressions brought you? What peace has the love of sin produced in your spirit? What are you now? Why, according to your own confession, you are dissatisfied and ill at ease; sometimes

thoughts of death haunt you and make you so wretched that you hardly know how to live : the dread of hell comes over you, and you have often wished you had never been born. You know it is so. You are well described in the chapter before us,—“The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint.” What has made you so sick and sorry? What but your wrong-doing? If you could prove that some good had come to yourself through sin, even then you ought to give it up for God’s sake, since it grieves him; but no good has ever come of it; ills of every sort are its only offspring. Look, prodigal, look at your rags, and see what your harlots and your boon companions have done for you! Look at what the citizens of the far-off country have done for you,—sent you into the fields to feed swine! In your degradation and your filthiness ask yourself is there not a cause? What has deprived you of the comforts of a father’s house? What has made you ready to eat the husks to stay your craving hunger? If you were wise you would hate the sin which has served you so badly; you would long to shake it off as Paul shook the viper into the fire, and cry to God, “Deliver me from it, O Lord, by thy Son Jesus Christ: for it is evil, only evil, and that continually; therefore cleanse thou me, O Lord.”

Remember also, my friend, that *unless sin is repented of and forsaken no act of yours, nor ceremony of religion, nor hearing, nor praying can possibly save you.* Do you see what these Jews did? They brought expensive offerings; they said, “We will be very generous to the cause of God,” and therefore they brought bullocks and rams and goats by hundreds. And what does God say of it? “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.” If their hearts had been right he would have accepted the smallest offering; a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons would have been acceptable to him, but as long as they lived in uncleanness their sacrifices were vain oblations, and their sweet smelling incense was an abomination unto him. “Ah,” you have said, “I have given to the cause of God, and yet I have had no peace.” Does God accept what is given by one who practises dishonesty, or lives in pride, or revels in vice? “Ah,” say you, “but I have always attended the means of grace.” Yes, but suppose you go from the Tabernacle to the gin palace, will your coming here be acceptable with God? Suppose you go home to practice unholy living or continue in malice against your brother, can the Lord regard you? Suppose you go away from the assembly of the saints to find equally congenial company in the society of sinners: then I say to you in God’s name, who hath required this at your hands, that you should tread his courts? Does he want courtiers to surround his throne whose garments stink of the dens of Belial? Does he want your hymns, O ye who have been singing lascivious songs? Think ye he will endure it that men should rise from the bed of uncleanness and draw nigh to his altars? It is scandalous to decency:

it is insulting to the infinite majesty of heaven; and yet how many there are who are secretly doing this. Let the consciences of those who hear the gospel, and yet live in known sin, attest the truth of my words; does not reason itself teach them that God must be rather angered than pleased by the worship of those who live in sin? I heard to my deep sorrow the other day of one who will walk several miles to hear me preach, and yet in the place where he lives he is known to be a drunkard. He glories in his admiration of the preacher, and yet lives scandalously. O sir, do you think the preacher gains by the admiration of such as you are? How much less can God be pleased with the adoration of men who live in open sin? Their worship is a dishonour to his blessed name. He calls your attendance at public worship the treading of his courts; it is nothing more than a mere trampling upon holy things, and if you dream that there is anything acceptable in such conduct you are grievously mistaken. If you come here that you may repent of your sins and forsake them, come and welcome; but if you imagine that coming up to the worship of God will procure the condoning of your offences you dote on a falsehood. Be not so deluded by Satan, but cast away this lie from your right hand.

“Well,” saith one, “but there must be something in prayer.” Hear, then, from the Lord’s own mouth what there is in prayer while you continue in sin. “When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.” Though I cannot say of you that your hands are full of blood, yet if they are full of any sin which you love in your heart, your sacrifice will be an abomination unto God. Do you dare to bow the knee, and say, “O God, forgive me my sin, though I mean to continue in it”? How dare you offer such an impudent petition to the majesty of heaven? Is God to give you a dispensation,—a permit to sin with impunity? Is he such an One as you are, that he should answer such a wicked prayer? “O God,” you practically say, “give me a sense of peace with thee, and let me still be unholy.” God cannot hear such a request: I speak with reverence to his blessed name; God’s holy nature forbids that he should ever listen to such a blasphemous prayer. Alter it, and say “Lord, help me to give up my sin; Lord, help me to deal righteously with my neighbours; help me to love my fellow-men, and at the same time grant me forgiveness for the past for Jesus’ sake.” If this be your heart-felt language, the heavenly Father meets you freely, and says, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” But if you reply to that gracious word, “I am willing to accept the pardon, but am resolved to keep the sin,” his reply to you will be, “Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.” If you refuse and rebel there is no mercy for you, but the sword shall devour you, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

II. Thus have I reasoned upon one point: let me now go further, and declare that IT IS MOST REASONABLE THAT MAN SHOULD SEEK PURITY OF HEART. You ask for pardon and forgiveness, and in return God says to you, “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the

widow." Is there not reason in this command? You practically say, "Lord, enter into amity and peace with me." The Lord replies, "There is no peace to the wicked: only as you become renewed in nature can there be any peace between us." Do you dare to ask God to commune with you while you are a lover of sin? Can two walk together except they be agreed? What communion hath Christ with Belial, what fellowship hath light with darkness? You cannot have amity with God till the evil of your doings is put away from before his eyes, and this he will enable you to do. Do you refuse the work of his grace? Do you decline to be purged from every false way? Then you also decline friendship with God. You ask the Lord to make you his child; when you pray you call him "Our Father, which art in heaven," but do you not see that it is unreasonable to expect to be enrolled in his family and yet to remain the servant of Satan? What would the world say? "If this is one of God's children, what a Father he must be who has such a family!" As it is, the faults and imperfections of the Lord's children often cause men to blaspheme his name, but at any rate his children desire to be clean from sin, and he has not a child in the world that is in love with evil; this is one of the marks of his children, that they hate iniquity, and that sin is a plague and burden to them. John says, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." Shall the drunkard, the liar, the oppressor, the revengeful, the pitiless, the greedy, the dishonest be called the sons of God? Shall fornicators and persons of unclean lives be called his children? True, he takes such into his household, by his mighty grace, but he washes, cleanses, and sanctifies them, making them new creatures in Christ Jesus. He receives them while they are sick with sin, but it is in order to their healing, and if that healing be refused they cannot become his sons at all.

You have asked to be a disciple of Christ in your prayer. I ask you again, how is it reasonable that you should be recognised as a disciple of Christ if you will not imitate his character, and if you do not desire to obey his commands? This man a disciple of Christ! And yet he remains an habitual drunkard, or carries on a dishonest trade, or lives in unchastity! Can he really be a Christian? Every hallowed name forbids. Such a man is a servant of the devil, not of Jesus. His servants ye are whom ye obey; there is no mistake about that matter. He that doeth sin is the servant of sin. If you yield yourselves unto evil then ye are the servants of evil, and the wrath of God abides upon you.

Often, too, you pray the Lord to take you to heaven when you die, and yet you intend to remain in your sins. Whence is this folly? Are you devoid of thought? What, carry your sins into heaven! Carry hell into heaven! Man, hast thou any reason left in thee to expect God to have it so? Shall even his own courts, where his glory blazes forth with ineffable splendour, be defiled with that which his soul abhors? Shall his enemies be admitted to insult him to his face in his own palace? It cannot be. Holiness will never brook such an intrusion; heaven's portals are guarded by omnipotence, and cannot be invaded by his enemies.

“ Those holy gates for ever bar  
 Pollution, sin, and shame ;  
 None can obtain admission there  
 But followers of the Lamb.”

Now, my hearer, let us reason together still in God's name, while the word of the Lord shows you what it is you must be willing to become as the result of salvation. Look at the portrait drawn by Isaiah ; it pictures the truly pardoned man's life towards his fellow-man. It sets him forth in those lovely colours in which the Spirit of God has adorned him. Read the 16th and 17th verses. The pardoned man has by grace been washed and made clean, his life is pure, upright, and commendable. He has put away the evil of his doings from before God's eyes, that is to say, he not only shuns open sin before the eyes of man, but he hates that also which is only seen by the eyes of God ; he desires to be cleansed from secret faults, and to be pure within. He has also, by grace, been led to cease to do evil ; he breaks off his sins by righteousness, and flees from unholy habits ; at the same time he learns to do well ; he is not perfect yet, he is a scholar and he is learning, but with all his heart he studies to be practically holy, and by divine teaching he is instructed in righteousness. He seeks judgment, and desires to deal faithfully with all, to be honest and upright, and to walk in all integrity, true to the word he speaks, even when it is to his own loss ; he counts his simple word to be as binding as another man's oath, and scorns to profit by a falsehood. Nor is this all, the grace of God teaches him to love his neighbour as himself, and, therefore, he relieves the poor and oppressed, and is the generous friend of the fatherless and the widow. In almsgiving and deeds of Christian love he abounds. Here is the portrait. Do you admire it ? Do you wish to be made like it ? God's grace is willing to make you this, are you willing that it should operate upon you ? If on the other hand your hard heart cries out, “ No, I want pardon and peace, but I do not wish to be renewed in heart,” then the reply is—there is no peace for you. You are not to be saved by or for your good works, but God's salvation brings these to those in whom it works. God will not separate sanctification from justification, nor free remission from regeneration. Pardon must be followed by purity, and grace by the graces. If any man will be forgiven his sin, he must also be renewed in nature, and submit to be moulded into the blessed likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you been made willing that such should be your case ?

III. IF THE SINNER REMAIN IMPENITENT IT IS MOST UNREASONABLE FOR HIM TO LAY THE BLAME OF HIS NOT BEING FORGIVEN UPON THE CHARACTER OF GOD, FOR GOD IS READY TO FORGIVE. Those who impute an unforgiving spirit to the Lord do lie, and know not the truth. God gives the master argument to confute that slander by saying—“ Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool.” He is both willing and able to forgive. He is prepared to remove the ingrained sins of our nature. Scarlet dye was fixed in the very wool of the fabric before it was made up, and so is sin inwrought into our being. We were sinners by nature before we were sinners by practice : but this deep-seated stain of our nature he is able to remove, so as

to make us white as snow. Though your sins should be double-dyed as crimson was, though you should have sinned again and again and again, multiplying your transgressions, yet he is able to cleanse you; and though you should have continued long in sin as the scarlet cloth lies long in the dye, and though your sins should be glaring and startling as scarlet and crimson colours are, yea, though they should be imperial sins, as though you had put on a royal robe to defy the sovereignty of God, yet even these shall be forgiven perfectly by his grace. Not only shall some of the more glaring colour be taken out of our character, but the scarlet shall be white as snow, and the crimson, red as it was, shall be as wool; and all this by the free, unmerited grace of God. There is perfect pardon to be had by the vilest transgressor; immediate and irreversible pardon is freely given according to God's infinite mercy and abounding grace to the very chief of sinners. He waits to bestow mercy on the sons of men, and, therefore, if you have it not it is not because God is hard to propitiate. He delighteth in mercy; to the ends of the earth he makes proclamation "Let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."

IV. Here is the last point upon which we will argue. IT IS A REASONABLE THING THAT GOD SHOULD DEMAND WITH THIS PARDON OBEDIENCE TO HIS COMMAND. And what is that command? It is, "If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel the sword shall devour you." Great Lord, it seems most strange that men should be unwilling to be saved from their sins, and unwilling to follow the direction of perfect love! Yet, so perverse is human nature, that till thy grace makes men willing they never will lay hold upon thy abounding mercy and transcendent forgiveness, but prefer to abide in their sins. Sinner, here is the great question—are you willing? "Willing for what? I am willing to be saved from hell." Ah, who is not? What criminal is not willing to be saved from prison or the gallows? Are you willing to be saved from yourself, to be saved from loving the sin which now enthralls you, to be saved from finding pleasure in the unholiness which now enchants you, to be saved from the indulgence of evil passions which tyrannize over you; to be saved, in a word, from sin? Are you willing? Some say that they are, but when it comes to the test, and a sweet sin comes before them, like a painted Jezebel, then they are bewitched by it, they fall into its arms, and let Jesus go. Are you willing to give up any sin for Christ and every sin for Christ? The Lord demands this of you. Oh, may he also grant it to you, turning your heart of stone into a heart of flesh. May you be made truly willing to be saved from sin in God's way, that is, by simply believing in Jesus, believing in Jesus not that you may get rid of the past merely, but be delivered from the present dominion of evil. *If ye be willing*, there is the point. His people shall be willing in the day of his power, and if you are not willing, and live and die unwilling, you are none of his. Then it is added, "If ye be obedient." Whenever the Lord saves a soul he will make that soul obedient, for Jesus Christ will not take into his army soldiers who mutiny against his commands. "If ye be willing and obedient." Obedient to what? Obedient to all

gospel precepts. "Repent;" let sin be hateful to you; "Repent and be converted," that is, turn round to seek after other things and better things than you sought before. Are you willing to obey his command to love one another as Christ also hath loved you? Are you willing to be obedient to the command, "Cease to do evil, learn to do well"? "Oh," saith one, "I am willing enough to be obedient, but where is the strength to come from?" Ah, my blessed Lord does not ask you to find the strength; for that you may look to him. If you are willing he will grant you the power; nay, in making you willing he has already begun the work. If this morning he has made you truly willing to give up sin, his blessed Spirit will never leave you till sin is overcome. Jesus is able to cleanse you from the power of sin as well as from the guilt of it. The point is this—has he made you willing to be made holy? Are you at this present moment willing to be washed and cleansed? Do not answer this question till you have looked at it and marked the self-denial it will cost you. After doing so I fear that honesty will compel some of you to say, "I am not prepared to undergo the change which is here proposed." You know, my hearer, that sin in some attractive form is very sweet to you, and while it is so there can be no hope of pardon for you.

You think, perhaps, that I spoke sharply just now. The Lord knows I desire to speak in all gentleness of spirit, but I must be faithful to your souls, and by God's help I will be. As I look round I am not so utterly ignorant of you all as not to know that there are some here who love to hear me preach, and yet they love their sins. They know their characters are disgraceful, and yet they pretend to believe that they are going to heaven because they have a notional faith in Jesus. Now, sirs, when you wake up in the day of judgment and find yourselves deceived, you will be forced to own that I have not deceived you. I have never preached to you that you may live in sin if you only believe in Jesus: I have never preached that you shall be saved without being purified in heart. No, the salvation which this pulpit has proclaimed is not salvation *in* sin but salvation *from* sin, not a licence to evil but a deliverance from evil. The two-edged sword of our gospel divides between men and sin, and slays all the hopes of the impenitent and disobedient. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord": this holiness is his gift to you. Deliverance from sin is not a work of the flesh, but a work of grace: it does not spring from legal bondage, but from the gracious work of the blessed Spirit: but you must have it, you must have it, and if you will not have holiness neither shall you have heaven. There shall be no blotting out of sin unless there is a ransom from the dominion of sin. May God help you to be honest with yourself and honest with your God, who again invites you to reason with him, and entreats you not to be so unreasonable as to continue in sin and yet expect forgiveness. He invites you to cast out that evil, which is as much your enemy as it is his. He points to this stumbling-block which lies at your door, and bids you will to have it removed. He begs you to come to your senses, and awake from your dreams. Your past sin he is fully prepared to obliterate for ever, but it is your love of sin which lies

in the way. O that you would from your heart give it up, and follow after better things. May he help you now to say, "O Lord, I desire to be made pure and holy; give me strength, I pray thee, to overcome temptation, and walk in the way of thy commandments. I would be holy, even as thou art holy. To will is present with me, give me also power to do that which I would. O Lord, I would renounce my old sins, my constitutional sins, my once beloved sins. I do not ask to be tolerated in any one of them, but would be delivered from every false way, for Jesus' sake. Help me, O Lord." Your heavenly Father stands ready to help you, prepared to help you. Though you are as yet a great way off, he comes to meet you and opens his arms to embrace you. For the sake of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus he has passed an act of amnesty and oblivion for all the past, and he will rule over you for the future with the gentle sceptre of his holy love. "If ye be willing and obedient"—are you indeed so? May God grant you a subdued will and a submissive mind, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah i.

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CONTENTS FOR FEBRUARY, 1876.

Concentration and Diffusion. Sermonette by C. H. Spurgeon.	The Divine Wooer and the Trembling Believer.
Sleep.	The Lion Fountain.
A Few Words from Mrs. Spurgeon concerning her Book Fund.	Baptist Chapel, Charles Street, Camberwell New Road, S.E.
William West, the Veteran Sunday School Superintendent. By Vernon J. Charlesworth.	Messrs. Moody and Sankey in Great Britain.
On a Squatter's Run in Victoria. An interesting Letter from Mr. Bunning, of Geelong.	Notices of Books.
John Knox—Reformer and Hero. By G. Holden Pike.	Notes.
	Pastors' College.
	Stockwell Orphanage.
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