

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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GOD'S ADVOCATES BREAKING SILENCE.

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## A Sermon

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"Suffer me a little, and I will shew thee that I have yet to speak on God's behalf."—Job xxxvi. 2.

ELIHU was sufficiently severe with Job, but as this arose from his honest conviction that Job had spoken amiss, we cannot blame him. The style of his address is, in some points, highly commendable. We admire the courtesy which moved him to say, "*Suffer* me a little." It shows some little consideration for his audience. It is to be feared that under our preaching our people do suffer greatly, and we do not sympathize with their sense of weariness; else might we often apologize in the terms of Elihu, saying, "Suffer me a little."

I admire Elihu's attempt at brevity; I call it an attempt, for I am not quite sure that he succeeded, for he filled two chapters more. Yet he said, "Suffer me *a little*"; and thereby promised to make his oration as short as he could. Some lengthy divines, with their many divisions, their "Finallies," and "Lastlies," and concluding observations, spin and spin, and cause their congregations to suffer, and that not a little, but exceeding much. It is well when we have anything good to say to use as few words as possible, for if brevity be not the garment of grace it is the soul of wit, and all our wits should be set to work to put gospel teaching into such a form that it will be the better received. Assuredly, short and pointed addresses are more likely to reach the heart than long and dreary sermons. If our preaching be so poor that the people suffer, it is better that they suffer little rather than much; and if our ministry be very rich and satisfying, it is better to send the people home longing than loathing.

We may also admire the prudence of Elihu in dividing his discourse into four or five portions. If you turn to the book of Job you will see that he has been speaking ever since the thirty-second chapter, and he has made at least three pauses, and it may be that these filled up considerable intervals. His talk would have reached an unbearable length had he continued to speak on and on without a parenthesis of silence;

but he stopped and gave his hearers space to breathe. Doubtless four sermonettes were better than one long discourse; and teachers, and all those who seek to win the hearts of others, should imitate Elihu in this, and not say too much at one time, for the spirit of the hearer may be willing, but his flesh is weak. Be wise and do not attempt to say everything at once. Recollect that there is such a thing as undoing by overdoing. Many of those whom we try to teach are like bottles with narrow necks, and we must pour gently with a slender stream, or we shall spill the truth rather than convey it. Hungry children cannot eat a whole field of wheat; we must prepare the food and give them a loaf, and even that will often be better if cut into slices and handed out little at a time. Little and often in spiritual feeding is far better than much at long intervals. "Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little" is the way in which wisdom teaches her disciples. Often let the preacher or teacher pause as Elihu did, and say to himself, if not to his hearers, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

It is admirable in Elihu, also, that he knew what he was at when he spoke. He says, "I have yet to speak *on God's behalf*." He has a definite object before him. His subject has been considered, and his drift has been determined.

"I have yet to speak on God's behalf." Elihu felt the *necessity* of so doing. He had kept silence for awhile, but after what he had heard spoken by the patriarch's three friends, he came to the conclusion that "Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment." The speeches of Job also had stirred his soul, for in his judgment he drank up scorning like water (Job xxxiv. 7). He felt that he must speak, his swelling heart impelled him; woe was upon him if he kept silence, and therefore he burst forth with the exclamation, "I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me. Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles." He was forced to speak; duty called him, impulse compelled him. There is nothing like emptying out your heart when it is full; it is wretched work to hear the noise of an empty barrel. It is good speaking when you say what must be said, and give forth utterances which you cannot restrain. He who speaks from conscious necessity will speak with earnestness, readiness, and power. I suppose, too, that Elihu felt that he must continue to speak because he had once begun. "I have *yet* to speak," saith he, "on God's behalf"; he had started, and could not come to a stand all on a sudden. The theme which he had chosen when once adopted keeps its grip upon the soul: it holds the speaker spell-bound. Forgive us if we sometimes transgress the usual limits of time, for when we reach the height of our great argument we long to linger, and are drawn on and drawn out beyond our first intending, feeling that we have yet to speak on God's behalf. He who once beginneth to speak concerning the Lord his God feels that his heart inditeth a good matter, and his tongue is as the pen of a ready writer. On such a theme "Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words." Thus you see that Elihu spoke because he felt laid under a necessity to do so, and I believe that the like necessity is laid upon many of us. While we muse the fire burns, and we must speak with our tongue.

It is evident that Elihu felt great *responsibility* in speaking on behalf of God, as who would not? It is no light thing to be called to advocate the cause of the King of kings. Therefore was he very thoughtful as to his speech, and he says, "I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker." It is not every sort of talk that is good enough to be used in pleading for the Lord our God: the best of the best is not so good as such a cause demands. Words should be fitly chosen, and statements should be carefully weighed when we are pleading on the behalf of God. It may well be a matter of prayer with us that all who speak for Jesus may feel the weight of their engagement, and go about it in the deepest solemnity of spirit. Feeling how awful is their work and calling, let us not fail to pray for them that they may be divinely helped and prospered. Let us speak unto the Lord on their behalf and say to our great Father,—

" We plead for those who plead for thee,  
Successful pleaders may they be."

Elihu surely felt it to be a high honour to be an advocate for God. What greater dignity can be bestowed upon us? He must have felt it an honour, for he spoke in tones of courage and confidence. He cried, "Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead." No flattering speeches were on his tongue. How can any man flatter his fellows when he is called to speak in the name of God? He might fear that in so doing his Maker would take him away. Ill would it become an ambassador for Christ to demean his office by stooping to flatter the king's enemies: his business is to reflect honour upon the Prince who has bestowed honour upon him.

We know also that Elihu felt it to be a great *privilege* to speak on the behalf of God, for he declares, "I will speak, that I may be refreshed." O beloved, when the Lord teaches you much of his love, you feel constrained to tell it. That is a secret which it is hard to keep; and, blessed be the name of the Lord, we are both permitted and commanded to divulge it. Hath *he* not said, whom we call Master and Lord, "That which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the housetops"? It is a delight to the renewed soul to speak concerning Christ as much as it is to a bird to sing. The faculty is given, and the impulse is bestowed, and we must exercise and indulge them both.

That I have yet to speak personally on God's behalf is to me a great joy. It is a delight in which few of you can fully sympathize; because you may not have spoken so much as I have done, nor have been so long and dolorously silent. Glory be unto the Lord my God, once more my tongue is loosed, and the opportunity to speak is given, and I say it with unfeigned joy, and perhaps with more joy than Elihu ever knew, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf." I hope, however, that all of you whose lives are spared, whose spheres of usefulness are enlarged, or who see new doors of utterance open to you, will with joy say, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf," and that you will not hesitate to avail yourselves of the privilege to the fullest possible extent. What a host will go forth to publish the gospel if you all feel that you must speak on God's behalf!

How will Satan's kingdom be moved if you all do it with power from on high, the power of the Holy Ghost!

In our text we have a duty set before us. First, *let us think of it*; secondly, *let us consider how to perform it*; and thirdly, *let us do it at once*.

I. We have before us a privilege and a duty,—“I have yet to speak on God's behalf:” LET US THINK OF IT. Speech is the high prerogative of man. It is given to him alone of all earthly creatures; he is the one sole articulate voice for this lower world. Birds and beasts, fishes and creeping things, mountains and seas, mean the praises of God, but they cannot express them. Man is the world's tongue: it were well if that tongue were always sanctified to the divine service, for otherwise it misrepresents the universe for which it should be the interpreter.

Of our text we note that *the subject is sublime*. “I have yet to speak on God's behalf.” Is it not a high calling and an exalted theme? The cause of God and truth deserves seraphic eloquence. At first sight it seems as if it were needless to speak on behalf of God. He is so great that human opinion can be of no consequence to him; he is so good that he cannot need defence. His claims are so clear, does he need that they should be pleaded? Alas, my brethren, pleaders for God and advocates of his cause have always been needed since that evil day when he was slandered in Paradise, and our first parents lifted disobedient hands to pluck the forbidden fruit. Though no voice is so sweet as the divine, man is hardened against his God, and it is the office of the whole church with a thousand voices to be continually crying in the world's dull ear and speaking on the behalf of God. There is need, and growing need, that we should lift up our voices for our God and his gospel; yet may we tremble as we enter upon the enterprise. Who shall fitly commend perfection? Who shall vindicate spotless purity? Who shall rightly tell of insulted justice, or who shall declare boundless love? The theme will exhaust every faculty when elevated to the highest degree and strengthened to its utmost possibility. To speak on God's behalf: this is a lofty argument indeed, and yet we will not flinch from it, for it is natural that we should speak for him to whom we owe everything. If we have a tongue at all we ought to speak here; if silent upon all other themes, yet never should we be unwilling to speak for our God. The stones themselves might speak if we should hold our speech in such a cause. The theme might make slow speaking Moses wax as eloquent as his brother Aaron. A God so good, so good to us, so good beyond all imagination, deserves that we shake off our cowardice and speak out for him manfully! Reflect, my brothers, who are called to speak on the behalf of God, that since he has provided an advocate for you, you are bound to become advocates for him. What a pleader has he set apart for you! It is Christ of whom we read “Never man spake like this man.” Our glorious Mediator stands for ever pleading the causes of our souls, and it is but natural and right, therefore, that his redeemed should with all their hearts plead his cause before the sons of men.

And yet there are few who speak on the behalf of God. I mean more than perhaps you think. There are few who vindicate the honour of Jehovah, and view matters from his throne. Their eyes look elsewhere, and not to the sacred Majesty of the Supreme Being. Many are the

preachers of the gospel, but still I note but few who even preach the gospel *on behalf of God*. There are two aspects of the gospel, the one which looks towards man, and the other which looks towards God: he who preaches the gospel only from its manward side is apt to forget its major part. He regards man with a pity and sympathy most fitting and proper; but, alas, too often he fails in sympathy with God, and in distinct recognition of the claims and rights of the great Sovereign. How seldom is divine sovereignty spoken of! Man is looked upon as though he were a deserving creature and had a right to salvation. One would think, to hear some preachers, that God was under obligation to man, or, at least, that he had no will of his own, but had left man's will to be supreme. The truth is that if all the race had been condemned, God would have been infinitely just, and if he spares one and not another none can say unto him "What doest thou?" His declaration is "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." I sympathize with man, but I have in my very soul an infinitely deeper sympathy with God. I am bound to love my neighbour as myself, but the still higher law calls on me to love the Lord my God with all my heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. Speaking on behalf of man may be carried so far that you come at length to look upon sin as his misfortune rather than his fault, and to view the fact that sin is punished at all as a matter to be deplored. In some professed Christians their pity for the criminal has overcome their horror at the crime. Eternal punishment is denied, not because the scriptures are not plain enough on that point, but because man has become the god of man, and everything must be toned down to suit the tender feelings of an age which excuses sin but denounces its penalties, which has no condemnation for the offence, but spends its denunciations upon the Judge and his righteous sentence. By all means have sympathies manward, but at the same time show some tenderness towards the dishonoured law and the insulted Lord. Is justice a figment? Is there no necessity for divine anger? Is mercy itself become a debt due to mankind? See you nothing horrible in sin? Is there no guilt in rejecting Christ and trampling on his blood? Ay, and is there none in closing the eyes even to the feebler light which streams from the visible works of God, and reveals his power and Godhead? Few, I say, look at the matter in this light, and yet it should be the main business of every believer "to speak on God's behalf." It becomes, therefore, all the more needful that those who have been led to side with God, and who feel their hearts drawn to adore and magnify and vindicate their glorious Lord, should count it a privilege still to be spared to speak on the behalf of God. I would silence no voice that speaks for man so far as it speaks truthfully, but oh for more voices to speak for God and maintain his crown rights. It needs that we vindicate his law and the terrors of it, his gospel and the sovereignty of it, his nature and the completeness of it, his providence and the wisdom of it, his redemption and the efficacy of it, his eternal purpose and the accomplishment of it. May this theme, though silent long, be sounded forth till its voice is heard in every street of Zion. Not the exaggeration of divine truth, but that truth itself, we desire to hear, and God grant we may live to hear it. May many a man of God be constrained to say, "I have yet

to speak on God's behalf." Let others plead what cause they will, it is ours with the greatest of poets "To justify the ways of God to men."

While thinking over the work described in the text we would further remark that *the call is personal*,—"I have yet to speak on God's behalf." Do we not as believers in Jesus recognise ourselves in that little word *I*? "I have yet to speak," though hitherto a listener as Elihu was while the elders gave each one his opinion. *I*, though silenced for awhile, blessed be his name, have yet to speak on God's behalf. The harp has hung awhile upon the wall, and pined in silence; but now the Chief Musician takes it down again, and almost before he sweeps the chords every string begins to thrill with delight at the thought that he will make them resound again; for the cobweb and the dust suit not the lyre which for so many years has welcomed the sacred touch. Have you been laid aside awhile, brother or sister? Then rejoice in the day of your restoration and say, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf." *I*, again, though not the wisest nor the best, have my testimony to bear even as Elihu did, who had aforesaid given place to those whom he thought to be wiser than he. His words were, "I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid and durst not shew you mine opinion. I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding": and so though esteeming himself to be least, and therefore fitly coming last, he rose in his place and faithfully delivered his soul. O you that are not eloquent, whose tongues will scarce respond to your thoughts, nevertheless ye have to speak in the name of the Lord in ways as forcible as uttered language. Take care that ye do so, and make no long delays, but look forward eagerly for times when you shall speak on God's behalf after your own manner. The smallest bell in the steeple is needed to complete the chime, and the tiniest bird in the wood would be missed if its note were hushed; therefore come thou forth, O least of all the brotherhood, for without thy presence the Father's family is not complete. All voices are needed; no child of God may be dumb. You, too, who are conscious of great weakness and unworthiness, I invite you to say, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf"; for this man Elihu was a trembler like yourselves. In the thirty-seventh chapter he says, "At this also my heart trembleth, and is moved out of his place." Nor did he feel that his abilities were equal to his subject, for in the nineteenth verse of the same chapter he breathed this prayer, "Teach us what we shall say unto him; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness;" and yet though conscious of his inability to handle the theme, and trembling under its power, he nevertheless rejoiced to feel that he must speak something and somehow, and he opened his mouth boldly in the name of the Lord. Brother, work for God, whether you can or not; power will increase as you use the little you possess. You will learn to speak more graciously as you proceed, if not more fluently and accurately. Therefore plunge into the middle of the matter, saying, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf." Glory be to God, the devil himself cannot silence the man whose mouth the Lord has opened and whose heart he has quickened by his truth. He may be laid aside for many a day, and it may seem to his fellow-men that he is useless and worthless, but the hour will want the man, and the man will seize the hour, and he will speak so as

to be heard. Only let thy heart be ready and thy spirit watchful and waiting, and the time shall surely come when, though thou art now a poor prattling babe, thou shalt speak like a man on God's behalf.

I think, dear friends, I may now make a third remark, namely, that in the text, *the reminder is seasonable*, and may be addressed most opportunely to many of us, "I have *yet* to speak on God's behalf." Does not this arouse thee, O silent and sluggish soul? Hast thou been hidden among the stuff all these days? Art thou on the Lord's side but of a faint heart? Hast thou never found a tongue? Wake up, my brother, and say, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf." Is it not written, "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing"? How canst thou bear a life-long silence, when to me even a few weeks become irksome? Our children need no encouragement to talk, and should the children of God be tongue-tied?

I have thought lately a great deal about Zacharias who was struck dumb while sacrificing in the temple, on account of his unbelief, but was assured that in a few months he should speak again. How I should have watched those weary weeks until the day should come when my tongue should once more express my thoughts. How glad should I be as the day drew near! Hast thou been shut up, brother, so that thou couldst not come forth? Then cheer thyself and look out for the day when thou wilt say, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf."

This thought may justly occur to us after times of great deliverance. David had been seized by the Philistines and taken before king Abimelech, and had only escaped by feigning madness. No sooner was he safe than he said, "I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Ps. xxxiv. 1). Amongst the verses of that grateful song you read the following, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord." He felt bound to tell the Lord's goodness both to old and young. When we are raised from deep distress we should never fail to say, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf."

The same is true if you have been conscious of a grave fault and have received forgiveness; then, too, you have yet to speak on God's behalf, and you may be very glad of it, for it will serve as a pledge of your forgiveness. Poor Peter might very naturally have remained quiet throughout the rest of his life after having denied his Master, but it must have cheered him to remember that the Lord had said beforehand, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Moreover, he felt the certainty of his Lord's forgiving love when by the sea of Galilee in loving tones he said, "Feed my sheep." Do you wonder that, on the day of Pentecost, Peter felt a joy not to be expressed as he said to himself, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf; even I, who once denied him, am yet allowed to be his advocate and to proclaim his grace"?

Beloved friends, if any of you have been disappointed in your Christian work and are therefore cast down, I want you to take my text as a motto still. Have you fallen into the condition of the prophet Jeremiah, of whom we read, "Then I said I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name"? Have you been despised and defamed, laughed at and rejected; and you fear that you have done no good, and that you are altogether unfit for the service? Do you therefore cry,

"I will speak no more in the name of the Lord"? Mark, my brother, you will not easily abide in silence, for your experience will soon be like that of the prophet: "But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." You will be obliged to speak; yea, again and again you will be compelled to say, "I have yet to speak in the name of the Lord." Perhaps you have been foolish like Jonah, and have run away from the Lord's service, and now you have just escaped from the deeps, with the sea slime upon you, and the tokens of the whale's belly about you. What then? Why, the first thing you have to do, almost before you brush your clothes, is to hasten to Nineveh and deliver your Lord's message, for you have yet to speak on God's behalf. Though you have once refused, you will be brought to do it, and it will be well to yield at once, and go boldly with this doctrine in your heart, "Salvation is of the Lord"; and with this message upon your tongue, "Repent and seek the Lord." If you go at once your voice shall ring through the streets of Nineveh, and the man with the salt-sea smell upon him shall be more revered in the streets of Nineveh than if he had come there perfumed from the courts of kings.

Take the text home as coming seasonably to many characters here. I cannot tell the exact condition of each brother's and sister's heart, and yet I think if I could read your inmost souls I should see the strongest reasons why this should be the soliloquy of each one, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf."

Furthermore, while thinking this matter over, let us remark that *this duty is a very solemn and arduous one*, and consequently it deserves our best possible preparations. When a young barrister was chosen years ago, almost within the recollection of our older folks, to advocate the cause of a queen whose character had been questioned, I can imagine him sitting up late and rising early that he might study his brief and get the whole matter well into his mind, and choose out goodly words with which to urge her suit. I can conceive the trepidation with which he stood up in the Hall at Westminster to plead for one whom many in the nation regarded as an injured queen. But all that feeling of responsibility should be far outdone by every one who has to speak for God. To rush from your bed to the pulpit to talk what first comes to hand seems to me to be next door to profanity. Even to talk to little children about Jesus without the slightest anxiety beforehand cannot be excused. We should not offer unto God that which costs us nothing; and if we stand up to plead for him, surely it should not be said that the first time we saw our brief was when we appeared in court. No, fetch your words from far; let them be gained by diving into the deeps of your own soul and into the depths of the divine word. Say to yourself, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf, and I would do it with my utmost ability. O ye powers of mind, be ready; but, above all, O power divine, rest thou on me, for he that speaks *for* God should speak *by* God, or else he speaks in vain."

If we have to speak for God we should certainly do it with all zeal and earnestness. A cold advocacy of the cause of God is next door to an attack upon it. To speak for God with careless air, with bated breath, or with affected tone is gravely unbecoming in a case where faith and fire should be the main attributes of the speaker. Let us throw

ourselves into every word we utter for God, even though we speak only to one poor ragged child.

At the same time let us cultivate a constant promptitude in this work. We should be ready to give an answer to him that asketh us; we should be eager to seize opportunities; we should be on the watch for openings for advancing the great suit. Be always in trim for this great business. When you leave home say to yourself, "I may have to speak for God in the omnibus, or in the workshop, in the parlour, or in the kitchen; I may have to speak on the behalf of God when least I expect it, let me have my heart in order for it." May the Holy Ghost enable you so to do. The mercy of the Lord to us never faileth, and let our zeal to honour him never cease.

Thus we have thought upon the subject, and I trust are prepared to enquire into the way in which we can show our practical interest in it. I can only give brief hints, and there is no need of more, for the work itself will open before you when you once get at it.

II. "I have yet to speak on God's behalf." Let us now consider HOW IT IS TO BE DONE. A great number of Christians will do it best by *manifesting holiness in their daily lives*; by their common conversation being seasoned with salt; and by taking such opportunities as the providence of God puts in their way of speaking to their Redeemer's praise. "I have yet to speak on God's behalf" as the master of a family to my children and to my servants, as a mistress to my domestics, as a servant by my life, as a merchant in my trade. I have so to speak on God's behalf that those about me may see what religion is by watching my life. Whatever my lot, condition, or occupation, I have a witness to bear; for those who never read the Bible may read me, and those who never think of Christ may at least think of one of his disciples, and see in some degree what the Master is by what the servant is. Let this object tone and tune your lives, my brothers and sisters; and let the members of this church especially bear in mind that they are bound from morning to night in all that they are and all that they do to be speaking on the behalf of God.

But, further, we are bound to do this by *giving instruction*. All of you who have been taught should also teach, and I am sure there is a great want of instruction in this age: instruction, I mean, upon the things of God. We have probably more present need of instruction than of exhortation. We have many who exhort, but few who edify. Do, dear friends, whether you teach in the Sunday-school, or stand up at the corner of the street, or talk with friends and comrades, try to make known the name and nature and attributes of God; show his claims, the perfect righteousness demanded by his law, and the penalties due to disobedience; speak on God's behalf of his gospel's freeness, fulness, and sureness; speak on God's behalf concerning the doctrine of his providence and the great truths of his grace and sovereignty. Do not let those around you die for lack of knowledge: make the name of the Lord to be known as much as lieth in you. All themes, if rightly regarded, point to God, and are best seen when he is our standpoint. There is a great need that we should be continually putting gospel truths in the sunlight of God, giving clear instruction to the sons of men in reference to the character, the work, the purposes, the will, the supremacy of God in

Christ Jesus; for the Lord he is God, even he is God alone, and the whole earth shall yet know this. For this end we have yet to speak on God's behalf.

Thirdly, there is another way of doing this, namely, by *bearing personal testimony* to what you have known and felt and experienced of the good things of God. This is a very powerful way of speaking on God's behalf. Tell of your own sense of sin wrought in you by the Holy Ghost; tell of your own delight in the pardoning blood; tell of the power of prayer as proved by yourself; tell of the reality of faith, and the fidelity of God to his promise; and illustrate these by your own history. Perhaps you are too slow to do this, from alarm lest you should be thought egotistical. If Paul had never spoken of himself in his Epistles we should have been great losers, and I do not suppose that Paul would have been any the humbler for his silence. It is a mock humility, it is a detestable humility, which robs God of his glory because we are afraid somebody will criticise us if we spoke to his praise. Such a motive is sheer selfishness: it is base pride when a man, to make himself the better thought of, dares not say, "My God did this and that for me, and this and that by me, and unto him be praise." Bear your testimony in your homes, and tell your friends what great things God hath done for you. Say among the heathen, "The Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad." Be witnesses for the Lord in all companies.

Sometimes, too, we may have to bear our testimony by way of *controversy*. We are to contend earnestly for the faith. Have you not heard it said, "Why cannot a man preach his own views and let other people alone?" Yes, why did not Luther do so? Why did he not take the advice of Staupnitz when he said, "Go thou to thy cell and pray, and leave these matters to God, and hold thy tongue"? Where had been the Reformation if he had followed that sage advice? Could not Calvin have done so, and studied the decrees of God by himself, and have made made no war on Rome? Where would have been the church of the present day? It is an easy way to save your skin, to believe what you believe and let other people alone. Martyrs at the stake and confessors in prison were fools on the hypothesis that controversy is wrong. No, it is a part of our religion to let no error alone, to draw the sword and fight the good fight, warring against the many false spirits which have come into the world. If you ever hear severe criticisms upon bold and strong speeches which assail error, do not join in those criticisms. If you do, I do not know that those who are the victims of your remarks will care much about it, but you will be fighting on the wrong side, and that is an important point for you to think of. If you are wise you will let the Christian soldier war his warfare, and at the very least not oppose. Surely, if error is to have liberty, the truth ought not to be bound. Our "modern thought" men are the least liberal of all professors, their bigotry outbigots all that has gone before. They have a warm side for every error, but the old-fashioned orthodox gospel is sneered at, run down, and caricatured. Well, there is the end of the matter; by God's grace we have believed, and what we have believed we hold fast, and this day again we lift up a banner because of the truth, and rejoice that we have yet to speak on God's behalf.

There is another way of speaking on God's behalf, and that is by

*pleading* with sinners, setting forth God's claims, urging them to accept God's gracious way of mercy, reminding them of God's right to our obedience, and of the demand of his justice that sin should be punished; setting before them the sovereignty of God, so that they shall admit that they have no claims upon his goodness, and urging them to yield to him and accept the grace which he so spontaneously gives. You can all do something of this; I pray you do a great deal more. During the late special-services many of you have been diligent in speaking to strangers in the pews: keep up the custom, brethren. You used to do it years ago; renew the habit. Your hearts are warm, and your tongues have come into practice; go on, I pray you, as you have begun; say, each one, "I have permitted many to go in and out of the pew without a word for Christ; but it shall not be so again, for I have yet to speak on God's behalf."

III. My third head was, **LET US DO IT**, but I have no time to attempt it, except it be in the briefest fashion. I have to speak on behalf of God to those among you who are utterly *careless* about divine claims. How long will ye provoke the majesty of heaven? Hear, O heavens, and give ear O earth! The Lord hath nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against him. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but ye do not know him and do not consider." Are ye honest towards everybody but God? Will you consider everyone but your Maker? Do you cast an eye of love on all except the great Being who is love itself? Some of you have lived half a century, and yet have neglected all the claims of your God. I beseech you, recollect that the time will come when he will reckon with you, and call you to account. The talents committed to you have all been buried as yet: what will you say in that day when he shall call you to his bar? Oh, for God's sake, even if you leave out all considerations of your own eternal condition, by the common honesty which suggests that each one should have his own, I pray you turn your eyes to God and think upon his Christ.

I speak again on God's behalf to many who are *undecided*; and this is my message,—How long halt ye between two opinions? If God be God, serve him: if Baal be God, serve him. It is time that you should put an end to these hesitations, that the equivocal life which you are now leading should close in one way or the other. You said years ago that you were almost persuaded; you are no further now; you are worse, and will grow worse still; and in the end you will perish in your sin unless you come to a dead halt and consider your way, and acquaint yourself with God, and be at peace. Oh, I pray you hear the voice which cries to you to cease your wanderings and return unto your God.

I would speak to you *new converts* on the behalf of God just these few sentences. See to it that your conversion is true. Have no superficial religion. Pray God to plough you deep that there may be a sure harvest. Remember, if you get healed before you are wounded it will serve no useful purpose. Many a surgeon has filmed a wound and found that he has done more hurt than good. You must be killed before you can be made alive; you must be stripped before you can be clothed. See to it that you repent as well as believe the gospel, for a dry-eyed faith is not the faith of God's elect, and will not save you. Repent and be converted. Let sin be abhorred, lamented, and forsaken; then, with the precious blood of Christ to make you clean, go on your way rejoicing.

O you *new converts* who are to be brought into the church, I speak on God's behalf to you. I hope you will be better than your fathers, better far than some of us who have been a stiff-necked generation. I hope you will come in among us as plastic material, which the Lord Jesus will mould according to his will. I trust you will come into the church like firebrands, like coals of juniper which have a most vehement flame, that all of us may anew be set on fire. There are some of us, I will not say who, but each one may judge for himself, who are quite cold enough; O that their arctic hearts may become a torrid region: may the Lord warm the mass right through, that we may praise and bless his name.

And now, to you *Christians*, I have yet to speak on the behalf of God. Do you need I should? Do you love the Lord? Do you really love him? "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Mary, Hannah, do you indeed love your Lord? Then what manner of persons ought we to be? What lives should love prompt us to lead? Come, let us gird our garments about us, and give ourselves up once again to his service, by whom we are brought nigh unto God. May the Holy Spirit come upon us in a sevenfold measure from this day forward, to the praise of the glory of his name who gives us the great privilege of saying, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf."

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PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Job xxxvi.

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HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—138, 34 (Version I.),  
103 (Version III.)

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