

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

NATHANAEL; OR, THE READY BELIEVER AND HIS
REWARD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

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“Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.”—John i. 50.

NATHANAEL was by nature a man free from cunning and deceit. He was a specimen of that “honest and good ground” of which our Saviour speaks in the parable, upon which, when the seed fell, a hundredfold harvest was produced. We have some such men about us, thank God, in this country: regular John Blunts, as we say, clear as crystal, true as the sun in the heavens. Many men are well known to us, who are upright, downright, truthful, honest, candid, and open-hearted. You might trust them anywhere; yea, trust them to repeat a conversation without misrepresenting it, and that is saying a good deal in these times. Such people do not understand the clever arts of craft and cunning, for they do not take to them naturally, and have never been trained in the practice of policy. Speech is not to them the medium for concealing their thoughts. When they have a mind to speak, they speak their mind. You know where they are. They may have a great many faults, but they have not the faults of deception and dissimulation. They are Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile. You know the kind of people: they may at times speak too harshly, and hurt your feelings; they may put things in an ugly shape, and tread on people’s corns; but they are as straight as a plumb-line, and you may be sure that you know them when you have heard what they say. In the end they cause far less pain to people’s feelings than those who have a great deal of finesse and policy, whose words are softer than butter, but inwardly they are drawn swords. Smooth and oily tongues, with lying hearts at the back of them, are fit instruments for Satan; but truth-speaking lips, which are joined to an honest heart, are precious things which the Lord himself delights to use.

Now, when the good brethren who had joined the Saviour came to tell Nathanael that they had found the Christ, he blurted out his objection at once. They said, “We have found him, of whom Moses

in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth"; but he did not take everything for gospel which his friends told him. Nathanael had been born and bred in the midst of people prejudiced against Nazareth, and he had sucked in their prejudice, and felt sure that the Messiah could no more come from Nazareth than a profound philosopher could come from Gotham. He does not beat about the bush, but he says at once, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" It is always a good thing, when a man has a prejudice, if he will but state it, and "out" with it. You can always deal with this kind of fellow. If he will say what is troubling him, and tell you what keeps him back from faith, why, then you can put your finger on his difficulty, and try to remove it. It is a great miracle when a dumb devil is cast out; if the evil will but speak, and so declare itself, we have a chance of overcoming it.

Nathanael's question was met at once by his comrades, who said to him, "Come and see"; and, like the honest man that he was, he took up their challenge. He would "come and see." How many there are who make objections, but they will not "come and see"! They have heard concerning a certain preacher, perhaps, such and such absurd things; but another says, "It is not so. Come and see." Not they. They do not want to come and see: for they are unfair, and prefer to cherish a bad opinion of the man. They have heard that Calvinistic doctrine is cruel, harsh, and unjust. "Ah!" says a believer in free grace, "you have only seen a caricature of it. You should read for yourself, and judge by Scripture." Oh, no: they do not want to read! They have made up their minds: not that they have much of a mind to make up; if they had more mind, it might take them longer to make it up. But, having once made up their little mind, they have no mind to unmake it; but they prefer to go blindly on, whether they are right or wrong. They know so much that they do not wish to learn any more. Nathanael was not of that sort. "Come and see," was an invitation which commended itself to his judgment. "Oh, yes," said he, "by all means! I am open to conviction. I will come and see." I wish I could prevail on each one of my hearers to search the Bible for himself to see what the true doctrine is, that he may have a firm foundation to build upon, and not take his religion at second-hand from another.

Nathanael is on his way to see for himself, when the Lord Jesus Christ, turning to those round about him, says, in a voice loud enough for him to hear, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Here comes a man with no craft, no cunning in him. Nathanael is startled to find his real character so clearly read, and somewhat bluntly asks, "Whence knowest thou me?" I must do him the justice of believing that he said it respectfully, yet, nevertheless, he curtly said, "Whence knowest thou me?" As much as to say—"Thou hast hit the nail on the head; but how camest thou to know this?" You see, the enquiry that was in his mind is soon upon his tongue; his words at once declare his thought. It is a great mercy when men dare speak upon that which troubles them. Instead of letting a doubt or a difficulty fester in their souls, they bring it out, that the light may play upon it, and it is soon gone.

“Jesus answered, and said to him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.” What Nathanael was doing under the fig tree I do not know. Some think that he was there in meditation; others say in prayer. Very possibly, but I do not know, and the wisest expositors do not know, and you do not know. Nobody knew but Jesus and Nathanael. He was doing something of which he was not ashamed, but which he modestly did not wish to have known, and so he had chosen a private place. That transaction was a secret between himself and the Lord his God, and he who knew that secret must have come from God. Perhaps he was doing nothing there, but sitting still before the Lord in anguish of spirit. Possibly he there had looked towards the God of his fathers with hope, or had enjoyed hallowed fellowship with heaven. Anyhow, Jesus mentioned to him a something which he remembered, and thought much of, though it was entirely between God and his own soul. Between Jesus and Nathanael, “under the fig tree” served as a pass-word. They were known to one another by that; and at once Nathanael cried, “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.” He is fairly won, and by an open confession he commits himself at once to what he believes. He is not ashamed of his convictions. He has enlisted beneath the banner of the King of Israel once for all. Forth he comes without a moment’s reservation with that blessed confession of faith—“Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.” Our Lord Jesus, charmed with the grace which he had himself given, delighted with the faith which he had himself created, answers, “Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.” This ready convert, so speedily convinced, was very acceptable to the Lord Jesus.

Now, we have to-night here, first, *one who believed readily*. I am going to speak of that. Secondly, here is *one who was highly commended for it*: “Thou shalt see greater things than these.” Thirdly, here is *one who might possibly in after days be subject to a peculiar temptation on account of his very readiness to believe*. And, lastly, here is *one who, I doubt not, was peculiarly grateful*; and if there is another here like him, he ought to be very grateful too.

I. First, then, HERE IS ONE WHO BELIEVED READILY. The first time he saw the Saviour he was converted to the faith. The first sentences that were addressed to him by the Lord Jesus Christ fairly won him to hearty faith and loyal service. Why was that? Why was he so soon brought to discipleship?

I think, perhaps, it was because *he was such a true man himself that the element of suspicion was not in his character*. Persons who are remarkably suspicious and constantly incredulous, are seldom very truthful themselves. If you follow them home, you will discover that they are suspicious of others because they are not true themselves, and their difficulty in believing others arises from the fact that they measure other people’s corn with their own bushel. They imagine that other people are as big liars as they are themselves. I believe that this is the bottom of much of the mistrust and questioning which seethes around us. Sometimes that suspiciousness comes upon men’s minds through long dealing with deceptive persons. But if you find

that a man began life with a general suspicion and doubt of others, you may conclude that he was a born deceiver, radically false from his birth. He judges human nature from his experience within his own heart. He has observed his own trickiness, and he thinks that everybody else is going to trick him; and so he is full of suspicion. Nathanael had never taken anybody in nor tried to mislead anyone in his life, and therefore he did not expect to be deceived. I wonder whether he was a sailor. I should think that he must have been, for sailors are generally as open as the sea they sail over. He never said anything with reserve. Not he. He was accustomed to wear his heart on his sleeve, even if daws did peck at it. He could not conceal anything, nor think that others did so. He was just as honest as the day; and so he came to the Saviour with a heart that was open to faith, ready to believe him. I should think the very sight of the Saviour's blessed face had half won him, and the tone of that truthful voice had moved him; but when it came to his laying bare a secret in his life which he was sure that nobody knew but himself and God, then Nathanael yielded to conviction at once, and became a believer straightway.

Now, I do hope that there are some here to whom the Lord has given, from their very birth, a truthful, open-hearted nature: now if you should believe in Jesus Christ to-night straightway, even though it be the first time you have ever heard of him, I shall bless the grace of God which has led you to so speedy a closing in with Christ. Oh that the Holy Ghost may complete the work of which there is already so hopeful a beginning!

But, further, this Nathanael, this rapid believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, had, I have no doubt, *been seeking guidance beforehand, and that guidance he had honestly followed.* I should think that he had for years been expecting the coming of the Messiah. The tone of his language argues that. Therefore, when Philip came to him, and told him that he had found the Messiah, and indicated to him that he had better come and see for himself, he was willing at once to come, and without delay he came with the view of seeing for himself whether this Jesus of Nazareth was the promised one. He was not only candid, but he was interested. He was concerned about divine things, and in thorough earnest to know the truth in reference to them. So that he came to Jesus with solemn intent and eager desire. O dear friends, if you came to hear the gospel, meaning business, we should expect to see more of you converted. But people come into our great assemblies to see the congregation, or to inspect the building, or to hear the preacher; their motive is mere idle curiosity. Well, if they get a blessing, we shall heartily thank God for it, and admire the sovereignty of his grace; but when persons come, as they often do, I thank God, even from a great distance, with the desire to know what the gospel is, and with a wish to find the Saviour for themselves, then we have surer hope. These enquirers are the people that are likely to be converted. When fish want to be caught, it is good fishing. When they are anxious to take the bait, then the fisherman has fine times. If, my dear hearers, you would come here saying, "I will go and see whether I can find salvation; I will hear with the intention that the

hearing may be a means of grace to my soul," none of you would come long in vain where Christ Jesus is faithfully preached. If you come with a desire of understanding and knowing him, he will come and reveal himself to you. This was one main reason why Nathanael so speedily believed—that he came meaning business, having sought guidance, and desiring really to find the Messiah of whom Philip had spoken.

Observe that *he was satisfied with one piece of clear evidence*. That one item of evidence convinced him. The Lord Jesus said, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." Nobody knew that he had been under the fig tree except the Lord who sees all things. No mortal living was aware of what Nathanael had done, or thought, or purposed in that shady retreat. When Jesus, therefore, with a peculiar look, said "I saw thee," Nathanael also saw him that spake to him. "Godhead alone could speak thus," said he: "there is the Spirit of God in that man. He knows the secret things of my life. He has revealed me to myself." "Rabbi," said he, "thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." The conclusion was a sound one, but how speedily it was reached!

One argument, if it is sound, is enough. If a matter is in dispute, and if one man can solemnly declare that he saw such and such a thing, and that one man is of high repute, his evidence is sufficient for a truthful man to rest upon. Twenty may come and say that they think it is so-and-so, but twenty weak links will not make a strong chain; and I would rather trust to one solid link than I would trust to a chain of twenty worn and rusted links, each one of which is ready to snap. If it is so, it is so. If it is not so, it is not so. If a man has proved anything to me by one infallible proof, that is enough. Hence, I believe that those who come to Christ on one bit of evidence are justified in so doing. They afterwards receive a host of confirming evidences, but one is quite enough for them to begin with. Oh, that I might have some to-night who shall hear in this sermon some one thing which shall strike them as being of the Lord! I pray that some secret matter, which I do not personally know, shall yet be uttered by me, so that my hearers will say to themselves, "How came that to be spoken? That fits me exactly, yet the minister could not have known it. God must have spoken to me. Only the Lord knew what I did in the back kitchen. Only he knew what I was thinking of this afternoon; but, speaking through his servant, he has touched a secret spring and opened a drawer in my cabinet that nobody knew of save myself! This is the finger of God." God grant that some may thus be led to Jesus Christ by one piece of evidence, and may not tarry to feel fifty impressions on their hearts. Oh, that you would not wait for whole weeks of invitations, and months of pressure, and years of expostulation; but oh, that you would yield to-night! Sometimes, in warfare, cities have been taken without a shot being fired. The valiant men have come up to the gates, and they have said, "Capitulate, and you shall be spared"; and the townsmen have opened wide their gates. I know that many other cities have had to be battered till there has been scarcely a house without tokens of shot and shell; but what has been their gain when they have been captured after all? Do not let it be so with your souls,

but yield at once to the conquering Saviour, who comes forth in the robes of his glorious grace, and bids you yield; and promises that, if you accept his sceptre, you shall see the greatness of his grace.

Notice, however, that although Nathanael yielded at once and believed on one bit of evidence, *yet his faith went a long way!* He did not merely say, "Rabbi, I believe that thou art the Messiah," but he said, "Thou art the Son of God." This was farther than anybody else had gone at that time, so far as I remember. He added, "Thou art the King of Israel"; and this again was a great declaration to make. He worshipped Jesus, and he crowned him. He owned him as God, and he magnified him as King. Do not suppose that the faith which is quickly born is therefore weakly. Nay, but that faith which comes suddenly and quickly is often the very best and strongest faith in all the world; and I trust that some of you may prove it to be so to-night by flying to Christ at once, as the doves fly to their windows, and resting in him till you find fulness of peace.

Thus much concerning the Israelite indeed who believed readily.

II. In the second place, HERE IS ONE WHO WAS HIGHLY COMMENDED.

The Lord Jesus owned his faith to be true faith. He said, "Believest thou?" but he meant that he perceived that he truly believed. He owned that, though his faith was born then and there, it was the genuine article. Christ owns, as true faith, that faith which is not long in coming. Fear not, dear hearer, that if thou believest off-hand at this very moment thy faith will be any the less sincere and effectual.

Jesus did more than own it to be faith. *He commended it as rarely excellent.* He spoke as if he were astonished. "Because I said, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou?"—as much as to say, "Many see me work miracles, and do not believe; dost thou believe so soon? They see me heal lepers, and raise the dead, and yet they will not believe; but thou believest merely because I said, I saw thee under the fig tree." He is charmed with him for his readiness to own the truth. Why, there are some young people who come to Christ and believe in him by some one little word from their mother; and on the other hand, there are men and women who have been for fifty years hearers of the gospel, and yet have not believed. Now, the Christ has an admiration of those who readily, willingly, obediently, and cheerfully come, making no questions, raising no difficulties, but on comparatively slender evidence, that evidence being quite sufficient, yield their full trust to Jesus Christ their Lord.

And our blessed Lord was so pleased with this ready faith, that *he made a promise to Nathanael.* Said he, "Thou shalt see greater things than these. If thou canst see so much in my one saying, that I saw thee under the fig tree, thou hast the kind of eyes that are fit to see great sights." He that will see shall see, but he that closes his eyes shall be blinded. Many are the people in this world who, if you show them the greatest marvel, do not wonder. They look at it, and see nothing. When you meet with such an unobservant person, you say to yourself, "I shall not show that man anything more. It does not pay to unveil rarities to him, he has no appreciation of them." But here 's another who, when you show him some curio that you have in your

house, is pleased with it, and spies out at once the excellence and beauty of it. You say, "I have something more which I will gladly show you!" When your visitor appreciates your choice treasure, you say to him, "I will unlock all my cabinets. I will take you into my private room, and every little thing I have that can interest you, you shall see, because I perceive that you have eyes, and a mind which finds gratification in rare curiosities." Oh, you that readily believe in Christ, you are the men to whom Christ will make known his secrets! Those of you who are "fools, and slow of heart to believe" must mend your manners, or the Holy Spirit will never lead you into the mysteries of the kingdom. Did not Jesus say to one who came to him by night, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" But, you Israelites indeed, you quick believers, to you will he reveal himself as the ladder that father Jacob saw, reaching from earth to heaven, upon which the angels ascend and descend between God and his chosen. You shall see the deep things of God. You are the people out of whom he will make such men as John, who, in Patmos, beheld a glorious Apocalypse. O my beloved hearers, may it be so with you! Because your faith so readily chimes in with what Christ reveals, may you have visions of God, and may none of you be so dull of heart that it shall be said, "He could not show them many mighty works because of their unbelief"!

III. I have thus spoken, and I come, thirdly, to notice that **HERE IS A MAN WHO MIGHT POSSIBLY BE TROUBLED WITH A PECULIAR TEMPTATION.** People of this kind are subject to a special trial, with which I will now deal.

In this church a considerable number of us, beginning with the pastor, came to Christ after an awful amount of conviction and despondency. We are none the better for this, but we are at least free from one particular temptation of the evil one. Oh, how I look back upon those times in which I felt my bondage, but could not attain to liberty—those days in which Christ was preached to me, but I could not hear him, and I wandered up and down everywhere before I found peace! In this church, and in the officers of the church among the deacons, there is especially one dear brother who sometimes can hardly understand me when I speak about the difficulties some have in coming to Christ, for he never experienced them. You all know him, one of the sweetest and best of men; but he came to Jesus Christ as a boy readily enough. He heard the gospel, and he believed it, and without any sort of terror he rejoiced in the Lord, and he continues to do so to this day. He is none the worse saint for this, but in some respects all the better. I know, however, what is the peculiar temptation of those who come so readily to Christ. The devil comes to them, and he says, "Now, look you. You have read Mr. Bunyan's 'Grace Abounding,' have you not?" "Yes," says the good man. "Well," says he, "you never went through the like battle and struggle." "No, I never did." "Then," says he, "You are no child of God. You see, you were easily converted: there was no deep work in your soul. You came to Jesus Christ one sunshiny day, and you will go away from him one dark day. You are like the

stony-ground hearer, the seed sprang up in you on a sudden, because there was no depth of earth, and you will soon die away when the sun is risen with fervent heat." Now, the next time the devil comes to any of you with that, I want you to talk to him, if he is worth it, for your own good. I want you to quench the fiery dart which he will fling at you. It is true that many come to the Lord Jesus under extreme difficulties, and are long before they can rest in faith; but you must not compare yourself with others, nor expect that the work of God will take precisely the same shape in every heart. Some, like Nicodemus, say, "How can these things be?" but others believe in Jesus as readily as Nathanael did, and they come just as truly, just as really, just as lastingly as those who find it difficult to come.

Let me help you with a few considerations. Those you have read of, who came to Christ under so much terror, *it may be that they had some other trouble at the same time*, as well as the trouble of their conscience. Perhaps, in addition to being convinced of sin, they were suffering from poverty, or sickness, or dyspepsia, or remorse, or some other vexation of spirit. Discern carefully between spiritual trouble and temporal trouble. Temporal trouble may help to aggravate the spiritual, but it is not a necessary part of it, but very much the reverse. It may increase the apparent depth of the work of repentance, but it may detract from its real worth.

In the next place, it may be, and probably is the fact, that those who found so much difficulty in coming to Christ *were worried by Satan*. Perhaps he injected into their minds blasphemous thoughts, or he suggested doubts concerning the Scriptures, or the truth of God. Because they were just escaping from his power he worried them most maliciously. Do you want to be worried in that way? Do you think that there is any advantage in Satan's attacks? If you can get to Christ without them, ought you not to be thankful to escape them? How can you desire an affliction so utterly undesirable? How can you wish to feel that which those who suffer from it would give their eyes to be rid of? I beseech you, do be reasonable.

In many persons their difficulties in coming to Christ were *caused very largely by their melancholy temperament*. We are not all alike cheerful by natural constitution. Why, here is one man who is bright-eyed by nature, and when he is down he is higher up than others are when they are up. He is always bright and hopeful. Yonder is another brother who seems inevitably to take a dark view of matters. He is an unhappily constituted person; a person with whom it is not easy to live except in a very large hotel, in which the dinner-table is many yards long. You know and avoid the style of man. If there is a melancholy disposition, it tends to darken the work of the Spirit in the heart; and whereas the work of the Spirit makes the man sorrowful, his own melancholy disposition, perhaps caused by mental disease, darkens that sorrow into black despair. Few of us are perfectly sane. In fact, I do not think anybody is altogether so. I see you smile, but I am not jesting: we have each one a peculiarity, which we could hardly defend by the rules of strict reasoning. Have we not? We are all a little "touched" by that black hand which sin stretched out when it shook our universal manhood in all its faculties. Some are

touched with melancholy from their birth, and so a part of their great terror when under conviction may arise from the fact that they are not absolutely free to form a hopeful judgment. Why should you wish to be like them? What can there be desirable about feelings which spring from a disease?

Again, there is no doubt that many in coming to Christ are *greatly troubled because they are ignorant*. They do not know that which would comfort them if they did but know it. They are vexed with fears which would not exist if they were better acquainted with Scripture. If they knew more of the doctrines of grace they would not be vexed with the fears which their ignorance creates. You who are taught in the Word are all the more likely to find speedy peace. Now, dear friends, do you want to be bothered with fears which only spring out of ignorance? Must it not be much better for you, having a clearer light and a brighter knowledge, to say, "Yes, that is it. I believe in Jesus Christ, and I am saved. Blessed be his name! I ask no questions. I believe, and am saved at once"?

May it not also be that those who are so hard put to it in coming to Christ *are without the helps that you have*? Perhaps they cannot read. Possibly they have nobody to explain the Scriptures to them. They may be misled by their religious guides, and have no one to keep them out of the ditch. It may be that they are placed where they are rather hindered than helped; they have no Sunday-school teacher, no Christian friend to sympathize with them; and so they have a hard fight of it. Many a man who is wounded in battle is soon restored, because the surgeon takes him up as soon as the bullet lays him low; whereas the wound of another, who has to lie and bleed for hours, will prove far more serious. Do you not think that you ought to be very thankful that you have so many things to help you, and that thus you the more readily come to Christ?

Very possibly, too, many of those who had those terrors and horrors in coming to Christ, as I had myself, *must lay them to the door of their unbelief*. Had they believed, they might have had comfort long before; but they went to the law for comfort, or they looked to feelings instead of looking to Christ, and so they remained in darkness. Now, if you have the privilege of believing at once, as I pray you may have, should you not be glad of it, and, instead of envying those others, should you not thank God that you were brought to find Jesus Christ by so sunny and speedy a route?

There is a story that I have told you before, but I must tell it to you again, for I do not know anything better. A young man in Edinburgh went out, and he thought he would speak about Jesus to the first person that he met with. He met a Musselburgh fishwife carrying a great load on her back. I cannot speak Scotch: I have not that useful acquirement; so I will put the conversation into English. He said to her, "Here you are with your burden." "Ay," said she. "Well," he said, "did you ever feel a spiritual burden?" "Ay," said she, "that I did, long ago, long ago, and I soon got rid of it; for I did not go the same way to work that John Bunyan's pilgrim did." "Oh," thought the young man, "I hoped that I had met with a Christian woman, but she must be a great heretic to talk in that way."

“Now,” said she, “Bunyan’s Evangelist that he speaks of was not half a gospel preacher. He was one of the usual sort. He was not clear in the gospel; for when he met with the poor pilgrim, weary with his burden, he said to him, ‘Do you see that wicket-gate?’ ‘No,’ said the man, ‘I do not see it.’ ‘Do you see that light over the gate?’ ‘Well,’ he said, ‘I think I do.’ ‘Now,’ he said, ‘you run that way with your burden.’ Why man,” said she, “that was not the way to do at all. What had that man to do with the wicket-gate or with the light over it? The gospel does not say run to a gate or a light. What he should have said was, ‘Do you see that cross? Look at that, and your burden will fall from your shoulder.’ I looked straight away to the cross, and not to the wicket-gate; and at the cross I lost my burden. Now,” said she, “what did pilgrim get by going round to the wicket-gate? He tumbled into the Slough of Despond, and was like to have lost his life there.” “Ah!” said the young man, “did you never go through the Slough of Despond?” “Ah, yes!” she said, “I have been through that slough many a time; but, let me tell you, it is much better to go through it with your burden off than it is with your burden on.” And so it is. I do not want any of you to attempt to flounder through the Slough of Despond with your burden on. I want you to have done with the Slough of Despond, and the wicket-gate, and all that bother, and just look to Christ alone; for salvation lies in a look at him, and there is salvation in none other. Peace comes to sinners by nothing else but faith in Jesus. All else is vain, be it what it may. Frames and feelings, sinkings and risings, doings and frettings—all these may go for nothing. Believe in Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. This is God’s short way to heaven, and blessed is he who knows how to take it.

Listen yet once more. Thou sayest, “But I have heard of some who endured a dreadful law work within their souls. They were ploughed and cut up dreadfully, and I never was.” I will further tell thee that certain persons need rougher handling than others. The needle in surgery will do for certain cases, whereas the lancet is wanted for others. If the Lord can with a needle do for thee all that is needed, why dost thou ask more? The Lord required to take the knife to me, and art thou going to fret because thou hast never felt the deep gashes which made me cry out in agony? I pray thee, be not such a fool: I cannot speak a softer word if thou hast a craving after anguish.

Again, the Lord may deal roughly with some because *he means to qualify them for comforting despairing souls*. He puts his servants through the furnace when he means them to work at pulling others out of the fire. He chastens them every morning because he means to make Barnabases of them, that they may be sons of consolation to souls in distress. I have been through the thick darkness at times for your sakes. If ever a soul was in a horror of great darkness, I was one day when I preached in this pulpit from “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” I could not understand why I felt in such an awful state as I did, till that evening there came into the vestry a man whose hair seemed to stand on end. He looked at me, and said, “I have never found a preacher that met my experience before.”

We sat down, and he told out his tale of woe. I rescued that man, by seasonable comfort, from being sent to a lunatic asylum, and perhaps from committing suicide; and then I said to the Lord my God, "Let me go through the fire again if it will help me to meet the case of thy poor afflicted children. Let me feel the horror of great darkness, if so I may thereby find light with which to cheer the victims of despair." But you, my dear brother, my dear sister, may not be called thus to cut your way through the forests of sorrow as the pioneer of others. You are not sent to be a guide to thousands, but quietly to pursue your own lowly way; and why do you want all this painful experience? You cannot make use of it; be thankful that you are spared the ordeal. Those who have to be champions must be trained for war after a sterner sort than those who only make up the rank and file of the army. If thy Lord means to lead thee only as sheep at his heel into the green pastures, by the still waters, thou wilt see but little of the war, and little of the rough side of the march; and why shouldst thou be so stupid as to desire distress, and condemn thyself because thou hast it not? Be a Nathanael. Take the happier and better side, and believe thou thy God without a doubt or a quibble; and go thou to heaven following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, without doubt or fear.

I was going to have another head, but I think that I will not, I will venture no further, but close with a word to sinners, although I have in truth been speaking to them all through my discourse.

Hear me, thou that wouldst be saved. The way of salvation is by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, by trusting him. There are two things I have to say to thee. First, God commands thee to believe in Jesus Christ: and, secondly, nothing thou canst do will please God so much as for thee at once to believe in his Only-begotten Son, whom he has set forth to be the propitiation for sin.

These are two strong things to say, and so I will not say them, of myself, but give you God's Word for them. Please note these texts down, all of you. First Epistle General of John, third chapter, at the twenty-third verse:—"And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Let me tell you where it is again. First Epistle of John, third chapter, twenty-third verse:—"This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." If thou art commanded to do it, do it. If thou hast salvation promised thee when thou dost believe on the name of Jesus, why then believe, and have salvation. Believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ. That is the first point. God commands thee: wilt thou disobey?

The second thing I said was that nothing thou canst do will please God so much as for thee now to believe in Jesus Christ. Look at the sixth chapter of John's gospel, and the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth verses. There you have it. "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" They meant, "What are the best works, the works most pleasing to God?" "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." If you could build a row of almshouses, or endow a church, or pay the salaries of a hundred missionaries,

it would not half so well please God as for you to believe on his Son Jesus Christ. Trust Christ, and thou hast worshipped God as acceptably as cherubim and seraphim. Trust Christ, and thou hast brought unto the Lord that which will charm him more than the hallelujahs which, day without night, circle his throne with praise. Thou poor guilty man, thou poor guilty woman, humble, unknown, obscure, a nobody, God bids thee trust his Son, and assures thee that this will please him more than all else thou canst do! Wilt thou not do it? Oh, end your ramblings; end your strivings; end your seekings. Come and trust my Lord Jesus, and thou shalt receive eternal life. Your frettings, and your hopings, and your doubtings, your comings, and your goings—end them all by simply trusting Jesus, and it is finished: thou art saved from wrath, and the life of holiness has begun in thee. Now shalt thou live after a nobler sort. Now shalt thou be filled with good works to the praise of his glory, seeing thou art no more trusting in them. I beseech thee trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone, and thou shalt receive power to become a child of God.

May the Lord bless you, dear friends! May we all meet in heaven, the whole company of us, without exception, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John i. 35—51.

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