

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE EAR BORED WITH AN AUL.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever.”—Exodus xxi. 5, 6.

THE slavery which existed amongst the ancient Jews was a very different thing from that which has disgraced humanity in modern times; and it ought also to be remembered that Moses did not institute slavery in any shape; the laws concerning it were made on purpose to repress it, to confine it within very narrow bounds, and ultimately to put an end to it. It was like the law of divorce: Moses found that law, and he knew that the people were so deeply rooted in it that it could not be forbidden; and therefore, as Jesus tells us, Moses, because of the hardness of their hearts, suffered them to put away their wives. And so, I may say, because of the hardness of their hearts he suffered them still to retain persons in servitude, but he made the laws very stringent, so as almost to prevent it. Among other repressive regulations, this was one, that when a slave ran away from his master it was contrary to law for any one to assist in sending him back again; and with such a law as that standing you can clearly see that nobody need remain a slave, since he could run away if he liked. It was nobody's business—nay, it was a sin for anybody—to force him back again. Now, if a man can go when he likes, his slavery is a very different thing from that which still curses many parts of the earth. But the case stood thus. Sometimes persons who were insolvent, who could not pay, were compelled by the law to give their services to their creditors for a certain number of years, always limited, as you see in this case, to six. A man who had committed theft, instead of putting the country to the expense of a prison, was sometimes fined for his theft sevenfold; and if he had no money he was placed in servitude till he had bought himself free again, an institution not altogether indefensible, I think, and having a good deal of rough

justice about it. Sometimes a person who was extremely poor would sell his services, for the six years which are here prescribed, to some wealthy person, who was bound to house him, clothe him, and feed him; very much like a system which still obtains in some parts of our own country, where a person's services are hired for the year, with so much of nourishment to be given, and so much of wage. Well, the law here says that if a man should have sold himself, or by insolvency should have come to be sold to his master, at the end of six years he might go free. He was quite free to leave his master's house and go whither he pleased. But it seems that the servitude was so exceedingly light, and, indeed, was so much for the benefit of the person in it, that frequently men would not go free. They preferred to continue as they were, servants to their masters. Now, as it was not desirable that this should often be the case, and as, if it were permitted, oppressive masters might sometimes frighten a servant into such an agreement, the law was made that in such a case the matter must be brought before the judges, and before them the man must say *plainly*—note that word—he must say it very distinctly and plainly, so that there was no doubt about it, that it really was his wish not to accept his liberty, but to remain as he was; and then, after he had stated his desire, and given as his reason that he loved his master, and loved the children, and the wife that he had obtained in his service, his ear was to be pierced against the door of the house. This ceremony was intended to put a little difficulty in the way, that he might hesitate and say, "No, I won't agree to that," and so might, as was most proper, go free. But if he agreed to that somewhat painful ceremony, and if he declared before the judges that it was his own act and deed, then he was to remain the servant of his chosen master as long as he lived.

We are going to use this as a type, and get some moral out of it, by God's blessing. And the first use is this. Men are by nature the slaves of sin. Some are the slaves of drunkenness, some of lasciviousness, some of covetousness, some of sloth; but there are generally times in men's lives when they have an opportunity of breaking loose. There will happen providential changes which take them away from old companions, and so give them a little hope of liberty, or there will come times of sickness, which take them away from temptation, and give them opportunities for thought. Above all, seasons will occur when conscience is set to work by the faithful preaching of the Word, and when the man pulls himself up, and questions his spirit thus:—"Which shall it be? I have been a servant of the devil, but here is an opportunity of getting free. Shall I give up this sin? Shall I pray God to give me grace to break right away, and become a new man; or shall I not?" Such a time may happen to some sinner here. I pray you, dear friend, do not slight it, because these times may not often come; and coming and being wilfully refused, they may never return to you. If you are resolved to be the slave of your passions, then your passions will indeed enslave you. If you are content to be a slave of the cup, you shall find that the cup will hold you by its fascinations as fast as captive in fetters of brass. If you are willing to be the slave of unbelief and of the pleasures of the flesh, you will find that they

will fasten you as with bands of steel, and hold you down for ever. There are times when men might get free, their prison-door is for the moment on the latch. "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," cries Agrippa. Felix trembles, and resolves to hear more of this matter. Many others in the same condition have been all but free; but they have deliberately preferred to remain as they were, and the result has been that sin has bored their ear, and from that day forward they have seldom been troubled by conscience. They have sinned with impunity. The descending scale to hell has grown more and more rapid, and they have glided down it with ever-increasing pace. Have I not seen some such, for whom I hoped better things? The evil spirit went out of them and left them for a while; and oh, if grace had come and occupied the house, that evil spirit would never have returned; but they beckoned back that evil spirit, and he came with seven other devils more wicked than himself, and the last end of these once hopeful persons has become worse than the first. Slave of sin, will you be free? Your six years are up to-night. Will you be free? The Spirit of God will help you to break every chain; the Redeemer will snap your fetters: are you ready for liberty? Or does your heart deliberately choose to abide under the bondage of Satan? If so, take heed. That aul of habit may bore your ear, and then you will be beyond all hope of reformation, the victim of yourself, the slave of your sins, the idolater of your own belly, the abject menial of your own passions. "He that would be free himself must break the chain," is the old saying, but I will improve it,—he that would be free must cry to Christ to break the chain; but if he would not have it broken, and hugs his bonds, then on his own head be his blood.

Christian man, the lesson to you is this. Since the servants of Satan love their master so well, how well ought you to love yours! and since they will cling to his service, even when it brings misery into their homes, disease into their bodies, aches into their heads, redness into their eyes, and poverty into their purses, oh, can you ever think of leaving your good and blessed Master, whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light? If they follow Satan into hell, surely you may well say—

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,
I'll follow where he goes."

They are the willing servants of Satan; be ye, with more than equal ardour, the willing servants of Christ.

Our text reads us a second lesson, namely, this. In the forty-first Psalm, in the sixth verse, you will find the expression used by our Lord, or by David in prophecy personifying our Lord, "Mine ear hast thou opened," or "Mine ear hast thou digged." Jesus Christ is here, in all probability, speaking of himself as being for ever, for our sakes, the willing servant of God. Let us just dwell on that a moment. Ages ago, long ere the things which are seen had begun to exist, Jesus had entered into covenant with his Father that he would become the servant of servants for our sakes. All through the long ages he never started back from that compact. Though the Saviour knew the price of pardon was his blood, his pity ne'er withdrew, for his ear had been pierced. He had become for our sakes the lifelong servant of God.

He loved his spouse, the church. He loved his dear sons, his children whom he foresaw when he looked through the future ages, and he would not go out free. Our insolvency had made us slaves, and Christ became a servant in our stead. When he came to Bethlehem's manger, then it was that his ear was pierced indeed; for Paul quotes as a parallel expression—"A body hast thou prepared me." He was bound to God's service when he was found in fashion as a man, for then he "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." When he came to the waters of baptism at Jordan, and said, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," then did he, as it were, go before the judges and say plainly that he loved the Master, whom he was bound to serve, loved his spouse, the church, and loved her little ones, and would for their sakes be a servant for ever. When he stood foot to foot with Satan in the wilderness the arch-fiend offered to him all the kingdoms of this world, and why did he not accept them? Because he preferred a cross to a crown, for his ear was bored. Afterwards the people, in the height of his popularity, offered him a crown, but he hid himself away from them. And why? Because he came to suffer, not to reign; his ear was bored for redemption's work, and he was straitened until he had accomplished it. In the Garden, when the bloody sweat fell from his face, and he said, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," why did he not put away that cup? If it had pleased him he might have applied for twelve legions of angels, and they would have come to the rescue; why did he not summon that celestial body-guard? Was it not because he had wholly surrendered himself to the service of our salvation? Before his judges he might have saved himself. Why did he not? One word when he was before Pilate would have broken the spell of prophecy, but why like a sheep before her shearers was he dumb? Why did he give his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to those that plucked off the hair? Why did he condescend to die, and actually upon the cross pour out his heart's blood? It was all because he had undertaken for us, and he would go through. His ear was bored; he could not and he would not leave his dearly beloved church.

"Yea, said his love, for her I'll go
Through all the depths of pain and woe;
And on the cross will even dare
The bitter pangs of death to bear."

He would not accept deliverance though he might have done so. "He saved others, himself he could not save."

Now, hear it, ye believers! If Jesus would not go free from his blessed undertaking, will you ever desire to go free from the service of his love? Since he pushed onwards till he said, "It is finished," will not his love by God's Holy Spirit inspire you to push forward till you can say, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"? Can you go back when Jesus goes before you? Can you think of retreating? Can desertion or apostasy be regarded by you with any other feelings than those of detestation when you see your Master bound to the gibbet of Calvary, to bleed to death and then to lie in the cold grave for your sakes? Will you not say, "Let my ear be bored to his service, even as his ear was digged for me"?

Let these observations stand as the preface for our sermon ; for my discourse, though I will try to make it brief, deals with ourselves, in an earnest fashion. Brethren in Christ, I think I speak for all of you who love Jesus, when I say,—we are willing to undertake to-night perpetual service for Christ. To lead you all to renew your dedication I shall speak upon *our choice of perpetual service, and our reasons for making that choice*, and then I shall call you up, *and try to pierce your ears* with some one of certain sharp auls, which I have here ready for the purpose.

I. First, let us speak upon our CHOICE OF PERPETUAL SERVICE.

The first thing is, *we have the power to go free if we will*. This is a very memorable night to me. Pardon my speaking of myself, I cannot help it. It is exactly twenty-four years this night that I put on the Lord Jesus Christ publicly in baptism, avowing myself to be his servant ; and now at this present time I have served him four times six years, and I think he says to me, “You may go free if you will.” In effect he says the same to every one of you, “You may go free if you will, I will not hold you in unwilling servitude.” There are plenty of places you can go to ; there are the world, the flesh, and the devil. For a master you may have either of these three if you choose. Jesus will not hold you against your will. Do you desire to go free, brethren, free from the yoke of Jesus ? I can only speak for myself, and you may say “Amen” for yourselves if you wish, but not else. “Blessed be his name,” I never wish to be free from his dear yoke. Rather would I say :—

“Oh, to grace how great a debtor,
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my willing heart to thee.”

I will speak of him as I find : I wish to serve him not another four and twenty years, but four and twenty million years, yea, and for ever and for ever, for his yoke is easy and his burden is light. It is said of the Hebrews, “If they had been mindful of the country from which they came out, they had opportunity to return,” and so have we ; but will we return to the land of destruction ? Will we go back unto perdition ? Will we renounce our Lord ? No, by God's grace it cannot be ! We are bound for the land of Canaan, and to Canaan we will go. Wandering hearts we have, but grace still holds them fast, and our prayer is :—

“Prone to wander, Lord, we feel it,
Prone to leave the God we love ;
Here's our heart, Lord, take and seal it,
Seal it from thy courts above.”

Well, then, since we might go free if we would, but wish not to do so, we are willing to declare before the judges—that is, before the public here assembled to-night, who shall be our judges—that, though quite able to go free (we say it plainly and without stammering), *we have not the remotest wish to do so*. If the service of Christ has been a fetter, Lord, put on double fetters. If thy service has been a bond, Lord, tie us up hand and foot, for, to us, bondage to thee is the only perfect liberty. Yes, if it must be so, we will say it here,

“ ’Tis done! The great transaction’s done.
 I am my Lord’s, and he is mine;
 He drew me, and I follow’d on,
 Charmed to obey the voice divine.”

And we will add the words,

“ High heaven that heard the solemn vow,
 That vow renewed shall daily hear,
 Till in life’s latest hour we bow,
 And bless in death a bond so dear.”

We are willing to say it publicly and plainly, and *we are willing to take the consequences too*. Are we? That is the question. If we mean to be Christ’s servants for ever, we must expect to have special troubles such as the world knows nothing of. The boring of our ear is a special pain, but both ears are ready for the aul. The Lord’s service involves peculiar trials, for he has told us, “ Every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it.” Are we willing to take the purging? What son is there whom his father chasteneth not? Are we willing to take the chastening? Yes, we would deliberately say, “ Whatever it is, we will bear it, so long as the Lord will keep us and help us to remain faithful.” We dare not run away from his service, would not, could not: and nothing can drive us to abscond from his house or his work, for, exulting in persevering grace, we venture to say, “ Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” We will bear the boring of the ear. Perhaps it will come in the shape of more reproach from men. Some of us have had a very fair share of that, and have been tolerably well abused up till now, but none of these things move us. Will there be more cruel mockings between here and heaven? No doubt there will. Then let them come and welcome. My solemn personal declaration at this hour is,—

“ If on my face for thy dear name
 Shame and reproach shall be,
 I’ll hail reproach and welcome shame,
 For thou’lt remember me.

Do you not say the same, beloved? Will you not serve Christ without any conditions, at all hazards? Will you not follow him through the mire and through the slough, and up the bleak side of the hill, and along the crest of the field where the battle rages most fiercely? Ay, that we will, if but grace be given: if the Holy Ghost will abide in us. Do you not desire to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth? Do you shrink from the supreme sacrifice? Do you not long to abide faithful though all should forsake the truth? Yes, we desire perpetual servitude to Christ, and to bear whatever that involves. I speak the heart of every lover of Christ when I say, we do not want to serve Christ a little, we wish to serve him much; and the more he will give us to do the better we shall love him; ay, and the more he will give us to bear for his dear sake, if he will give us corresponding grace, the more will we rejoice. That is a great life which is greatly useful, or greatly suffering, or greatly laborious for Jesus Christ the Saviour. Do you not feel in your inmost souls that instead of wishing to be set free, you wish to plunge deeper into this blessed bondage,—

to bear in your body the marks of the Lord Jesus, and to be his branded slaves for ever? Is not this the perfect freedom you desire?

So, then, there is the first point,—our choice of perpetual service.

II. Now, secondly, OUR REASONS FOR IT.

A man ought to have a reason for so weighty a decision as this. We have served our Master now for four-and-twenty years and do not want to change, but should like to live with him and die with him and live for ever with him. We speak boldly on a very weighty business. What reasons can we give for such decided language?

Well, first, we can give some reasons connected with himself. The servant in our text who would not accept his liberty, said, "I love my Master." Can we say that? I cannot feel content with merely saying it. It is true, true, true; but if I were to begin to talk of how I love him, or how I ought to love him, I should break down altogether to-night. Even now I choke with emotion. I can feel love in my heart, but my heart is too full for expression. Oh, what a blessed Master he is! Not love him? My whole nature heaves with affection for him. Who can help it? Look at his wounds, and you must love him, if you have been redeemed. Look at the great gash which reached his heart, whence flowed the water and the blood to be of your sin the double cure. Could you fail to love him? I mean him who died for you and bought you, not with silver and gold, but with his own pangs and griefs and bloody sweat and death. Leave him? O Saviour, let us not be such devils as to leave thee, for worse than demons should we be if we could apostatise from such a sweet Master as thou art!

We love our Master, for he has bought us and saved us from the miseries of hell. And we love him because there never was such a Master, so good, so tender, so royal, so inconceivably lovely, so altogether glorious. Our Lord is perfection's self, and the whole universe cannot produce his equal. We cannot now praise the stars, for we have seen the sun. We could not take up with the mean things of earth, for the Lord of heaven has looked upon us, and one glance of his eyes has enamoured us of him for ever and for ever. Want to leave the service of Jesus? By no means. No such wish crosses our soul. Beloved, I am sure you have no desire to change masters; have you? Are you not abundantly well pleased with his treatment of you? When a servant comes up from the country to take a situation in town, if he goes back to the village, his old friends come round him, and they say, "Well, John, how did you find the service? Did your master treat you well? Was the work very hard? Were you well fed and well clothed?" Now, Christian people, I am not going to talk for you, but you shall talk for yourselves, to your friends and kinsfolk, and answer for yourselves their various questions. If you can find any fault with Jesus tell them of it. Say whether he has ever treated you badly, and, if he has, report it to all the world. Do not allow any to be led into a bad service if you have found it to be such. As for me, there was never a worse servant, but never servant had a better master than I have. He has borne with my ill manners, and treated me like one of his own family. I have been at times a dead weight to his household, but he has never given me a rough word.

“My cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” To-night I must, even though I be thought egotistical, speak of his lovingkindness towards me. Twenty-four years ago I was a lad in jackets, and I walked into the open river on a cold May day to be baptised into the name of Jesus as timid and timorous a youth as you well might see; but when I rose from that water the fear of man was gone from my mind, I hope never to return. For the first time that night I prayed at the prayer-meeting, and this tongue has never since ceased to talk of his dear love—

“Ere since by faith I saw the stream
His flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.”

Now see what my Lord has done for me! If any one had said to me, “Twenty-four years from this time you will preach to a vast crowd, and will have spiritual children whose number cannot be told,” I never could have believed it. It would have seemed impossible that such a thing could be. Yet so it is. His right hand has done for me wonderful things, and my heart reverently extols him. Glory be unto his name for ever and for evermore. Leave my Master! Grant, O glorious Lord, that no such base and loathsome thought may even alight upon my breast. No, dear Master, I am thine for ever, let me kiss thy feet again, and be for ever bound to thee by new cords of love.

Well, my brother, the Lord has treated you kindly, has he not? Come, speak for yourselves. You could rise and tell stories, in their own way, equally as remarkable as mine, and you could wind each one up by saying, “I love my Master. I cannot but love him.”

The servant in our text, who would not go free, plainly declared that he loved his wife, so that there are reasons connected not only with his Master, but with those in his Master's house, which detain each servant of Jesus in happy bondage. Beloved, some of us could not leave Jesus, not only because of what he is, but because of some that are very dear to us who are in his service. How could I leave my mother's God? How could I leave my father's God, my grandfather's God, my great-grandfather's God? My brother, how could I leave your God, to be separated from you, whom I have loved so long, so well? * Husband, tender and affectionate, could you leave your wife's God? Wife, could you forsake the God of those dear babes in heaven? They are resting there on the breast of Jesus, and you hope to see them soon, do you not love Jesus for the sake of those who once nestled in your bosom? Ay, and it is not merely earthly relationship that binds us thus, but we love all the people of God, because of our relationship in Christ. Truly we can say of his church, “Here my best friends, my kindred dwell.” Some of the dearest associations we have ever formed commenced at the foot of the cross. Our best friends are those with whom we go up to the house of God in company. Why, most of the friends that some of us have on earth we won through our being one in Jesus Christ; and we mean to stand fast for the

* Here the preacher turned to his brother, Mr. J. A. Spurgeon, who was upon the platform with him.

grand old cause, and the old gospel, for the sake not only of Christ but of his people.

“ Now, for my friends and brethren's sake,
Peace be in thee, I'll say ;
And for the sake of God our Lord
I'll seek thy good alway ”

“ Because I love my wife and my children,” says the man, “ I cannot go out free.” And so say we.

Besides, let me add, there are some of us who must keep to Christ, because we have children in his family whom we could not leave,— dear ones who first learned of Christ from us. Many in this place were first led to the Lord by our teaching, and by our prayers. We could not run away from them, their loving prayers hold us fast. In them the Lord has hold upon us by new ties. You do not find a woman leave her husband, as a rule, when there are seven or eight little children at home ; no, and no man can leave Christ who has been spiritually fruitful ; the seals of his ministry seal anew the indentures which bind him to his Lord. The successful pastor will be kept faithful ; he must stand fast by the church, and by the church's Head, when there are children begotten unto him by the power of the Holy Ghost through faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There are reasons also why we cannot forsake our Lord which arise out of ourselves ; and the first is that reason which Peter felt to be so powerful. The Master said, “ Will ye also go away ? ” Peter answered by another question. He said, “ Lord, to whom shall we go ? ” Ah, Christian, there is no way for you but to go straight on to heaven, for where would you go ? Where *could* you go else ? Some of us are so thoroughly identified with Jesus and his gospel that the world would have nothing to do with us if we were to ask its friendship. We are committed too much to our Master ever to reckon upon receiving love and friendship from his foes. We have given the world too many slaps in the face to be forgiven by it. We have crossed the Rubicon, and there remains nothing for us but victory or death. Where could a poor wretch hide, who has been a well-known minister of the gospel, should he apostatise ? Where could he dwell ? Should he journey to the ends of the earth some would remember his name and say, “ Hast thou apostatised ? ” In the remotest regions of the globe some would jeeringly say to him, “ Hast thou fallen, hast thou gone aside ? ” Where could we go, then ? We *must* cleave to Christ. It is of necessity we must.

And *why* should we go ? Come, brethren, can you find any reason why we should leave Jesus Christ ? Can you imagine one ? As my imaginative faculty is not strong enough I will not attempt it. I can see a million reasons for cleaving to him, but not a pretence of a reason for leaving him.

And *when* should we leave him, if we must leave him ? Leave him while we are young ? It is then that we need him to be the guide of our youth. Leave him when we are in middle life ? Why, then it is we want him to help us to bear our cross, lest we sink under our daily load. Leave him in old age ? Ah, no ! It is then we require him to cheer our declining hours. Leave him in life ? How

could we live without him? Leave him in death? How could we die without him? No, we must cling to him: we must follow him whithersoever he goeth.

These are a few of the reasons why we would be his servants for ever.

III. In the last place, I want to bore your ear.

Do you mean to be bound for life? Christians, do you really mean it? Come, sit ye down and count the cost, and, if ye mean it, come and welcome! There is the standard! The blood-red cross waves at the top of it, will you now in cool blood enlist for life? Every man who wishes to desert may go home. Christ wants no press-men. Ho, ye volunteers! Come hither! We want you, and none but you. The Lord desires no slaves to dishonour his camp. Cowards, you may go! Double-minded men, ye may get to your tents! But what say you, ye true believers? Will you cleave to him and his cause? Do you leap forward and say, "Never can we separate from Jesus; we give ourselves to him for life, for death, for time, and for eternity. We are his altogether and for ever"? Come, then, and have your ears bored.

And, first, let them be bored with the sharp aul of *the Saviour's sufferings*. No story wrings a Christian's heart with such anguish as the griefs and woes of Christ. We preached the other morning upon the crown of thorns, and it was our task to bring before you the different items of our Saviour's griefs; now, whenever you are hearing about him, you ought to say within yourself, "Ah, he is piercing my ear, he is fastening me to his cross, he is marking me for himself, I cannot forsake my bleeding Lord. His wounds attract me. I fly to him afresh. When the world would fain draw me off from Jesus, I find a central force drawing me back to his dear heart. I must be Christ's. His sufferings have won me. The bleeding Lamb entralls me. I am his, and his for ever." That is one way of marking the ear.

Next, let your ear be fastened by *the truth*, so that you are determined to hear only the gospel. The gospel ought to monopolise the believer's ear. Some professors can hear any stuff in all the world if it is prettily put, and so long as the man is a "clever" man (I think that is the word). When they hear a preacher of whom they can say, "He is very clever, very clever!" they appear perfectly satisfied, whether the man's doctrine is good or bad. Now is not this foolishness? What does it matter about a man's being clever? The devil is clever; and every great thief is clever. There is nothing in cleverness to gain the approval of a spiritual mind. I pray God to give every one of you an ear that will not hear false doctrine. I do not think we ought to blame a man who gets up and goes out of a place of worship when he hears the truth of God denied; I think we ought far rather to commend him. There is a great deal of that soft, willow-pattern style of man about now-a-days. Let a man talk loudly and prettily, and many hearers will believe anything he says. Dear brethren, we must have discernment, or we shall be found aiding and abetting error. "My sheep," says Christ, "hear my voice, and a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." Now, if you mean to be Christ's for ever, you must not allow that ear of yours to hear bad doctrine. You must take care that, knowing the truth,

you hold to it, and renounce every false way. Do not make your ear a common sewer, into which foul doctrine may be poured, in the hope that afterwards Jesus Christ may make it clean again. "Take care what ye hear" is one of the precepts of infinite wisdom; and let it not fail to impress your souls.

Furthermore, if you really give yourself to Christ, you must have your ear opened to hear and obey the whispers of *the Spirit of God*, so that you yield to his teaching, and to his teaching only. I am afraid some Christians give their ears to an eminent preacher, and follow him whichever way he goes, very much to their own injury. The right thing is to yield to the Spirit of God. Which way the Scripture goes—that is the way for you to go; and though we, or an angel from heaven, preach to you any other gospel than what this sacred book contains—though I trust we may not be accursed if we do it in ignorance—yet, certainly, *you* will be accursed if, knowing it to be wrong, you follow us in preference to following the Lord. Let your ear be open to the faintest monitions of the Holy Spirit. There would be an end to all the sects and divisions in the church if all Christians were willing to do what the Holy Spirit tells them. Alas! there are many people who do not want to know too much of the mind of God. What the Bible says is no great concern of theirs, because, perhaps, that may not say quite the same thing as the Prayer Book, and they had rather not be disturbed in their minds. Perhaps the Bible may not confirm all the doctrines of their sect, and therefore they leave it unread, for they had rather not be perplexed. Oh, brethren, let names, and parties, and prayer-books, and catechisms, and everything else go to the dogs sooner than one word of Jesus shall be neglected. Let us give ourselves up to the Spirit of God and to the teaching of his own Word, for as Christ's servants our ears have been pierced. Your ear has thus been bored with three auls, and none of them has pained you.

Many young women have had their ears pierced; I do not know whether it hurt them or not. I do not suppose that the operation described in the text pained the man much, though there was a little blood lost, perhaps, when the aul went through the lobe of the ear. I will tell you what some would do with their ears if they were pierced; I would not do it with mine, but an oriental would be sure to do it. What would he do? Why, put a ring in it, and hang it with ornaments. When a Christian man has his ears bored to belong to Christ for ever and ever, God will be sure to put a jewel in it for him. And what jewels ought to hang in the Christian's ear? Why, the jewel of obedience. Practise the doctrine which your ear has heard. Then there would follow the diamond of joy; the ear which belongs wholly to Jesus will be sure to be adorned with the jewel of the Spirit, which is joy. If we give our heart up to Christ he will hang in our ear many costly gems of knowledge,—we shall know the deep things of God when we are willing to learn them. The ear being pierced, we shall sit like children at Jesu's feet and learn of him; and rubies and emeralds and pearls, such as deep-sea fisheries never knew, shall belong to us; and our ear will be hung with the priceless gem of "quickness of understanding in the fear of the Lord." "He wakeneth me morning by morning; he opened my ear to hear as the learned." There, too, will hang that

precious gem of separation from the world. The distinguishing mark of "Holiness unto the Lord" will be in the Christian's ear like a precious jewel of inestimable price. When they were selling the Duke of Brunswick's gems the other day, they found that ever so many of them were not what they were supposed to be; he had guarded them with great care, and scarcely had enjoyed a happy hour in his great anxiety for his valuables, and yet some of them were not worth the keeping. If you will give yourself to Christ, and if your ear be bored, these precious graces which I have mentioned will be pearls of exceeding great price, such as angels might envy you the wearing of. There, young women, put these jewels in your ears, and nobody will blame you for wearing such goodly ornaments. There, good man, you also may go with rings in your ears if these are the rings and these are the gems, and you will not be thought foppish and singular. May the Lord give them to you. As you come to the communion table, come with this feeling: "I am going there to renew my covenant, I have been a Christian these many years, I love my Lord better than ever I did, and I will, therefore, dedicate myself to him again."

And now, you unconverted people, do you think I have spoken the truth? If my Master had behaved badly to me I would have run away from him long ago; I would not stand here to tell you that he was a good Master if he were not; but, since he is so good, oh that you would say, "I would like to be in his service." Have you such a desire? then, dear heart, remember his own words, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." If thou art willing to be his, he is willing to have thee. He is so great a Prince that he can maintain an endless company of servants without embarrassing himself. There was never a soul that wanted Christ but what Christ wanted that soul. Depend upon it, if you go to him he will enrol you among his household retainers, and allot you an honourable portion day by day. Seeking sinner, believe in Jesus and live. God grant you grace for Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

John vi. 37 to end of Chapter.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—660, 658, 663.