

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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WHY IS FAITH SO FEEBLE?

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## A Sermon

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“And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?”—  
Mark iv. 40.

LAST Lord's-day morning our music was pitched upon a high key. We sought after great faith in the Master's name. It struck me that I might, perhaps, have discouraged some of the feebler sort, and that, therefore, it would be meet this morning to follow up that sermon by endeavouring to encourage those of weak faith to exercise it until it becomes stronger, and also to invite those who as yet have no faith to venture in the direction of childlike trust.

With this brief introduction, let us come at once to our subject.

I should not wonder if the disciples considered that they had much faith in Jesus, their Master and Lord. They had been with him all day listening to his teaching, believing it even when they did not understand it. They had afterwards gathered about him in private to listen to his fuller explanations, and they were thankful to be favoured with those expositions in which their Lord became their private tutor. I do not question that they each one of them esteemed himself a firm believer in Jesus. How could he tolerate a doubt? But, my brethren, we have none of us any idea how scanty our faith really is. When trial comes, the heap from the threshing-floor becomes very small beneath the influence of the winnowing fan. After a day of calm service with Jesus a storm came on, and that storm tested their faith, and left so little of it, that Jesus said to them, “Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?” Remember that we have no more faith at any time than we have in the hour of trial. All that which will not bear to be tested is mere carnal confidence. Fair-weather faith is no faith: only that is real faith in Jesus Christ which can trust him when it cannot trace him, and believe him when it cannot see him.

This storm was a special trial to the disciples, because it was so exceedingly severe. They had often been tossed upon that lake before; but this time the elements were moved to an excessive tumult: the winds poured down in all their force and fury. The war of nature raged around their devoted barque. When tribulation is heavier than

usual, it is a serious test to faith. When we appear to be tried above the common measure of men, the weak ones are full of trembling, and even the strong fall upon their knees and cry, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

The storm was the more trying because it came upon them when they were in the path of duty. Their Master had bidden them cross the sea; they were not upon a holiday trip. They had not even followed the suggestion of a brother who had said, "I go a-fishing"; but they were steering under their great Captain's orders. They were doing right, and suffering trouble in consequence. This has often perplexed good men. I have heard a believer say, "I prospered more before I was a Christian than I have done since. Things went smoothly with me before I knew the Lord. How can these things be? The very fact of my endeavouring to do what is right, and labouring to maintain my integrity, has become the cause of my severest trial." This is no new thing upon the earth. The living child of God will have to swim against the stream. Not without fighting will he win his crown.

Moreover, it was an item which helped to try their faith, that the storm assailed them when Jesus was in the ship. Had the Lord been absent, they could have understood it; but he was in the vessel with them! How could the sea be so boisterous with Christ in the vessel? If I am out of communion with Christ, I can understand why I am chastened; but if I am walking in conscious nearness and fellowship with him, and I am even then tried and perplexed, how can I account for it? Herein is the test of faith. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." This we forget, and fancy that trials must mean anger, when, indeed, they may be tokens and tests of love.

It may have seemed to them also, that the storm was very untimely, since there were with Jesus many other little ships, and all those boats were caught in the same storm. We are always anxious for those who come to hear the gospel, lest anything should prejudice them against it. The disciples may have feared that such ill weather would drive away from Christ those hearers who might otherwise have become converts. If they met with a storm so soon after rowing close to Jesus, they might judge him to be another Jonah, and resolve to give the Galilean preacher a wide berth next time. I know how I like to see fine weather at an open-air service, and a continuance of it till the country people can get home, and I suspect that the disciples felt much the same. They did not wish their Lord to be looked upon as a stormy petrel, or a man of evil omen: and you know that superstition was strong in those days. Had you and I been there, we should have said, "Gracious Lord, let us have a calm, that those who have come to thee in their boats may get home in comfort. Cause this wonderful service by the sea to end pleasantly, that the next time thou comest this way the people may gather in still larger numbers to hear thee." Sometimes the strange occasion of the trial makes it the harder to bear. Trial is never welcome, but sometimes it is peculiarly disagreeable.

See, my brethren, how these disciples came out of the tempest! They went into the trial well enough, but they were in an evil plight before long. We have seen a bird of glossy plumage, bearing half

the colours of the rainbow on its breast, glorifying itself in the sunlight, and we have admired its beauty; but anon the heavens have poured down pitiless showers, and we have seen our brave bird in quite another form. Dripping and draggled, he has sought ignominious shelter. You would hardly have known him to be the same creature, whose crowing challenged all his fellows: truly his glory had departed. Such are we, as a rule, after severe trial. We make a fair show in the flesh till we are tried, and then our feathers cling around us, and we droop and hide away, till our Master has to say to us, "Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?"

These two questions of the Master we will use this morning with a view to spiritual profit: may the Spirit of God make it so! First, we shall view the text as *the exclamation of pity*: "Why are ye so fearful?" Secondly, we shall regard it as *the censure of love*: "How is it that ye have no faith?" And, thirdly, we shall consider it as *the enquiry of wisdom*: "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" May our threefold meditation richly profit us all!

I. We will first use the questions as THE EXCLAMATION OF PITY. The dear Master waking up from his sleep, calm as if it were a bright summer's morning, though it was the dead of night and the midst of a storm, looks upon them with wonder, finding them so strangely different from himself; and he asks, in all the calmness of his own brave spirit, "Why are ye so fearful?" He pitied them, and he pitied them, I think, for several reasons.

First, that *their fears had made them so unlike himself*. They were his servants, and they should have been as their Master; they were learning of him, and they should have put in practice the lessons of his example. He was delightfully quiet, and the contagion of his peace ought to have affected them. He was ever restful in himself, and hence he gave rest to those who came to him: yet these were missing the blessing, and so he compassionately cried, "Why are ye so fearful?" He marvelled not that they were fearful in such a hurricane, but he was sorry that they were so fearful as to act as if they had no faith. They were little like him as yet, although the great design of all his teaching was to make them like himself. Our blessed Master must often look upon us, dear friends, with much pity, and grieve over us, that after being with him so long—for some of us are getting grey in his service—we still fall so far short of his glory. We are predestinated to be conformed to his image; but the process is a slow one. After copying his handwriting our own writing is still greatly marred with crooks and turns. Each page of the copybook of life is marred with errors and blots; therefore the great Teacher pities his poor scholars. How is it that we are so fearful when Christ is so calm? Is this our imitation of Jesus? Our doubts, fears, alarms, mistrusts of God, are these such as a follower of Jesus should exhibit?

He pitied them, next, because *it made them so unlike themselves*. They were men, but their fears unmanned them. They were fishermen, but you would have thought them mere landsmen if you observed their fears. Like frightened children they cried, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" They were by no means over wise; but now they were at their wits' ends. When you and I get fearful, how foolishly we

think and speak and act ! We could have done well enough if faith had steadied us ; but unbelief makes us stagger, and reel to and fro. We could have weathered the storm had we not given way upon the point of confidence in God : but, failing there, we became weak as water. How are the mighty fallen ! Alas, the children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, turn back in the day of battle ! Those who once were patterns of courage become cowards when faith fails. Fathers in Israel act like babes in grace when faith ebbs out ! Our Lord is grieved for us when he sees us fall so low that instead of being like himself, we are not even like ourselves.

Jesus pitied them again, because *their fears made them so unhappy*. Terror was depicted on their countenances. They were white as a sheet when they saw that the boat could not be baled, but was evidently filling, and sinking. What caused their terror ? Were they afraid of death ? Their fears were causing them more pain than death itself could have cost them. We "feel a thousand deaths in fearing one." To die is nothing compared with fearing to die. All the agony of death lies in the foresight of it ; death itself is the end of all agony ! Death is not the storm, but the *quietus* of the disturbing elements. Through death souls enter into rest. The apostles were made wretched by their fears. I know some Christian people who suffer greatly from the same cause. I know a man who lives where I live, and stands in this pulpit where I stand, who has to confess his own faults this day ; for he might enjoy unbroken peace were it not that in the care and labour of this great church, and all its various agencies, he looks to the difficulties and the necessities of the case, and to his own weakness, and then fears rush in. Beloved, we must not for ever be thus childishly timorous. Let us strive after a courageous bearing. Let us crush the eggs of our woes while they lie in the nest of our unbelief. Our sorrows are mostly manufactured at home, beaten out upon the anvil of unbelief with the hammer of our foreboding. The Lord pardon us ! Jesus pities us that we should lacerate ourselves by our needless fears, and miss the joy of a restful faith.

Again, the Master felt pity for them because *their fears made them so unkind*. Does unbelief make the timid unkind ? I am sure it does. The disciples were ungenerous to their sleeping Master. If they had only considered a little, they would have said, "No, do not wake him ! He has had so weary a day. The cares of the world rest on him ; he is a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief ; if he can sleep, let him sleep. Let us sooner suffer than disturb him." If they must needs wake him, might they not have addressed him in fitter words ? To say, "Master, carest thou not that we perish ?" was fretful and wicked. It was enough to wound their Lord's tender heart to be thus spoken to. Our unbelief has a tendency to make *us* unkind also. We are not tender of others when we are disturbed about ourselves.

Here let me digress to teach a lesson of pitying love. It is well to recognize that sour speeches often proceed from a sad heart. It is wise to view ungenerous language as one of the symptoms of disease, and rather pity the sufferer than become irritated with the offensive speech. It is a pity to take much notice of what some sufferers say, for they will be sorry for it soon. If we knew the real reason for many a harsh word,

our sympathy would prevent even momentary anger. Our Lord did overlook the petulance of the apostles; for he did not say, "Why are ye so unkind?" but he enquired, "Why are ye so fearful?" In every case let us cure unkindness with double love. I heard yesterday of a wise old Welsh minister of a generous spirit, who was afflicted with a horrible deacon: and if a deacon is unkind, he can wound terribly. This deacon was most perverse and cruel, and tormented the old gentleman in all sorts of ways. At last he fell sick, after having said certain dreadful things which were more bitter than even his usual gall and wormwood. The patient pastor soon went to see him, and on the road he bought some of the best oranges, and took them with him. "Brother Jones," he said, "I am sorry you are so ill; I have come to see you, and I have brought you a few oranges." Brother Jones was very much astonished at this kind act, and had not much to say on the matter. The minister gently talked on, and said, "I think it would refresh you to eat one of these. I will peel you one." So he went on with peeling the orange, and talked with him pleasantly. Then he divided the fruit very neatly, and handed the sick man a nice tempting piece in the gentlest possible manner. The bitter-spirited man ate it, and began to melt a little: the conversation became hearty, and the prayer was pleasant. Brother Jones was getting better in more ways than one. An outsider, who knew all about brother Jones and his ill-humour, could hardly believe that the minister had acted thus to one who had opposed him constantly, and slandered him foully, and so he asked, "Did you really go and see that cruel old Jones?" "Oh yes," he said, "I went to see him; I was bound to do so." "And did you take him some oranges?" "Oh yes, I took him some oranges; I was glad to do so." "And did you sit down by his bedside, and peel him an orange?" "Yes, I peeled him an orange, and I was pleased to see him enjoy it; for I have learned, brother, that when a man is afflicted with a very bad temper, an orange is a good thing for him to take. At any rate, it is a good thing for me to give." The lesson is—if you wish to cure a man of ill-feeling, be very kind to him. View unkind and petulant speeches as symptoms of a disease for which the best medicine is not a dose of bitters, but an orange. Yet, beloved, if you have used such speeches yourself, do not repeat them. Cease from being so fearful, that you may cease from being so ill-humoured. Our blessed Master did not find fault with the unkindness of his disciples, but he went to the root of the evil by silencing their fears. He said to them, "Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?"

Here you perceive our Lord's pity. I wish I could speak the words as he spoke them, and you would wonder at their surprising tenderness.

II. But now, secondly, these words were spoken also as THE CENSURE OF LOVE. They were intended to convey a measure of gentle rebuke to their mistrustful hearts.

*Their unbelief was grievous to the Lord Jesus.* They ought to have believed him, and it was an injury to his perfect love that they should so readily mistrust him, or even mistrust him at all. How could they think that he would let them sink? He was in the vessel with them: did they suppose that, after all, he was a mere pretender to Deity, and that the ship would go down with him on board? Beloved, let us smite

upon our breasts to think that we should ever have caused a pang of heart to that dear Lord who yielded up his life for our salvation. He must not be doubted any more : it is wanton cruelty. What if I call it "a superfluity of naughtiness" to doubt him whose life and death are crowded with infallible proofs of his unchanging love to us ?

Our Lord questioned his apostles thus, not only because their unbelief grieved him, but because *it was most unreasonable*. The most unreasonable thing in the world is to doubt God. Faith is pure reason. That may seem a strange paradox, but it is literally true : nothing is so reasonable as to believe the word of God, who cannot err or lie.

The fears of the tempest-tossed disciples were unreasonable because they were contrary to their own belief. They did believe that Jesus was sent of God upon a glorious mission ; how could that mission be accomplished if he was drowned ? If they sank in the sea, he must sink, too ; for they were embarked in the same bottom. Ought not the faith they had in his divine mission to have kept them hopeful even in the worst moment of the storm ? My brethren, be not inconsistent with what you do believe. Do not deny your own creed, however slender it may be, for that is irrational.

Moreover, their fears were opposed to their own experience : they had seen their Lord work miracles, and miracles for them, too. They had already beheld abundant proofs of his power and Godhead, and of his care on their behalf. Is not this true of us also ? Has the Lord ever failed us ? Has he not helped us to this day ? Are you going to fly in the teeth of all your past experience ? Is all that you have ever believed of God a fiction ? Have you been under a gross delusion up to this day ? You that are advanced in years, how can you doubt ? With so many Ebenezers to look back upon, you ought to rise above all fear.

Their fears were altogether inconsistent with their observation. They had seen Jesus heal the sick and feed the multitudes. I am not quite sure how many of his miracles had already been wrought before them, but certainly enough for their observation to compel them to believe that he was able to save them from death. How, then, could they doubt ? But have not we, also, seen enough of the finger of God to be confident in the day of trouble ? If we believe not, we dare not lay the blame upon the want of evidence. To mistrust is irrational, because it is contrary to all the experience of our hearts, and the observation of our eyes.

Moreover, their unbelief was contrary to their common-sense. Some people make a great deal of common-sense ; and well they may, for it is the most uncommon of all the senses. Was it reasonable for these men to think that he, who could foresee the future, would take them on board a ship when he foreknew that a storm would wreck them ? Would so kind a leader have taken them to sea to drown them ? Was it reasonable to think that he who was so favoured of God would be left to perish ? Would he have gone to sleep if they had really been in danger ? Was it reasonable to believe that the King of Israel was about to be drowned, even he whom they knew to be the light of the world ? Our unbelief, my brethren, seldom deserves to be reasoned with. Our fears are often intensely silly, and when we get over them,

and ourselves look back upon them, we are full of shame that we should have been so foolish. Our Lord kindly censured their unbelief because it was unreasonable.

In very truth their unbelief deserved censure, because *it sprang from low views of the Lord Jesus*. When they afterwards saw what wonders he wrought upon the deep, they said one to another, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!" Should they not have known that beforehand? If they had remembered it, could they have been so overwhelmed with fear? Oh that we thought more of Jesus! We cannot think too much of him. If we took him to be what he really is, if we regarded him as most truly God, we should rest in him, and say farewell to suspicions and complaints. If Jesus were greater in our esteem, our lives would be grander far.

Jesus censured his friends because *he foresaw that such unbelief as theirs would unfit them for their future lives*. That ship was the symbol of the church of Christ, and the crew of the ship were the apostles of Christ. The storm represented in parable the persecutions which the church would have to endure; and they, if they were cast down as cowards in a storm on the paltry lake of Galilee, would be proving themselves altogether unfit for those more tremendous spiritual storms which in after years tossed the church, and mingled earth and hell in dire confusion. Peter and James and John and the rest of them were to steer the ship of the church of God through seas of blood, and to stand at the helm in the midst of hurricanes of error; and therefore fearfulness was a sad evil, because it would render them unfit for their solemn task. Jesus might have said to them, If ye have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, what will ye do when ye contend with horses? If these winds and waves have been too much for you, what will you do when you wrestle with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places? If natural causes destroy your peace, how will spiritual influences distract you? Brethren, our present trials may be a training-ground for more serious conflicts. We do not know what we have yet to endure; the adversities of to-day are a preparatory school for the higher learning. If we do not play the man now, what shall we do by-and-by? If because of some little domestic discomfort we are ready to give up, what shall we do in the swellings of Jordan? If a little toil oppresses us, what shall we do when the death sweat trickles from our brow? My Christian brethren, let us attentively hear our Lord as he lovingly rebukes us; let us shake off our fears, and resolve that by his grace we will have no more of them, but will trust, and not be afraid. Oh, for calm hope, and a childlike repose on the love which cannot fail! I have hurried over ground where I might profitably have tarried, because I want to have an earnest word with you upon the third point.

III. We may now regard these words as AN ENQUIRY OF WISDOM. It is always good to probe a sorrow to the bottom, if there is any hope of finding out its cause, and putting it away. If you are in fear you may rise above it by removing its cause. If there be clearly no reason for fear, you will cease to fear; and if there be a cause of fearfulness, you can deal with it. My utterances will be as short as telegrams; please enlarge on them at your leisure.

"How is it that ye have no faith?" This is the enquiry.

*Is it want of knowledge?* If the disciples had known Jesus better they would have had no fear, but would have exhibited firm faith. Is it so with any of you? Are you badly taught in the gospel? Do you as yet know only half the doctrines? Have you a cloudy view of the covenant of grace, and of the great salvation which is wrapped up in the person of your Lord? If it be so, your quickest way to faith will be to read your Bible more, to study it with greater attention, and to hear the gospel oftener. Come out to week-night services, and commune more with Christ in private. Spend three, four, five times the amount of time you now do in devotion, and so draw nearer to your Lord, entreating the Holy Spirit to lead you into all truth. If you kill your fears and strengthen your faith, you will have invested your time admirably in acquiring more knowledge. Remember the word—"Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace: for thereby good shall come unto thee." Learn more of Jesus, and when you know him better, the main causes of your fear will be removed.

Next, *is it want of thought?* Did these good people know and yet forget? Did they fail to consider? Were they superficial in their thinking? Is that the reason why you, also, are so fearful and have so little faith? Are you a skimmer and not a digger? Are you content with the surface soil when nuggets of gold lie just below? Is it so? Do you think too little of the invisible and the eternal? Are your thoughts incessantly occupied with business, and is God thus shut out? Are you always using the muckrake of greed, and never using the telescope of faith? Are the abiding treasures covered up and buried amidst the seeming and shadowy things of time and sense? If so, mend your ways, my brethren. Mend them at once. Have more thought, more prayer—much more prayer, more praise—much more praise, more meditation, more calm investigation of your own heart, and more acquaintance with the things of God. Do you not think that often you might find the remedy for your fears in the direction of holy intimacy with unseen realities? Be these more true to you, and the troubles of this life will sink into their proper places as light afflictions which are but for a moment.

The enquiry as to why we are so fearful may be helped by another question: *is it that our trials take us by surprise?* Perhaps the disciples reckoned that everything must be right, since they had Christ on board. Let us not indulge such a notion. Never let any affliction surprise you; for your Lord has told you, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." If your children die, do not be surprised: shall mortal parents bring forth immortal offspring? If your riches disappear, do not be surprised—they always had wings; what wonder if they fly! If any other adversity happeneth to you, be not surprised; for "man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." The Lord has told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass you may believe. Reckon upon tribulation, and then you will not be overtaken by surprise, nor fret as though some strange thing had happened unto you.

Why were they so full of fear? *Was it want of simplicity of confidence?* Did they trust in their good barque, or feel that they were safe because of their seamanship? Perhaps not; but I am sure that

we too often mingle reliance upon self, or upon some other arm of flesh, with our reliance upon our Lord. Good, easy men, we whisper to ourselves, "We can manage." Oh, yes, we have had trouble before, and we are persons of experience and shrewdness, and therefore we can see our way. Brethren, we are never so weak as when we feel strongest, and never so foolish as when we dream that we are wise. When you are "up to the mark" you will soon be down to the mark. When our confidence is partly in God and partly in ourselves, our overthrow is not far off. That angel who stood with one foot upon the sea and the other upon the earth, would have been drowned if he had not been an angel. As you are not an angel, take care that you put both feet upon the *terra firma* of divine strength and truth. If you trust in yourself in the least degree, one link of the chain is too weak to bear you, and it is of no avail that the other links are strong. Is this the reason why you are so fearful, that your faith is alloyed with self-confidence?

Again, *was it absorption in their trial* which led to their excessive fearfulness? If they had described their case, they would, no doubt, have dwelt upon the darkness, the hideous "darkness which might be felt." They would have bidden us hearken to the howling of the winds, and their terrific screams, like the neighing of wild horses maddened in fight. Mark how the wind descends in cataracts from the hills, and forces the boat under water! and this, again, is resented by the sea, which hurls the frail vessel aloft, and tosses it to and fro with watery hands, as though it were a juggler's ball. The storm was very fierce, and the boat was very frail. See how it is spun round and round in the whirlwind! Suppose we had urged them to be trustful and quiet, might they not have answered that we were not in their case, or we should not find it quite so easy to be calm? "Ah!" says one, "I have a wife and family at home who depend upon my fishing. How can I be calm when I think of them as widow and orphans? A man cannot afford to be drowned who has a household depending on him. It is all very well for you to talk, but you do not know what it is to be drenched to the skin and near to death." Well, brother, perhaps we do not; but this we do know, that when we fix our thoughts solely and alone on the winds and the waves and the wives, and all that, it is then that we are troubled. If we could put the master-thought first, it would be different. The thought which covers all is that Jesus is with us. The winds blow, but Jesus is on board! The waves rage, but Jesus is on board! These poor sailors will not perish, for Jesus is on board! If they could have kept this cheering fact to the front, they would have banished their alarms, and, like their Lord, they would have been grandly calm. Instead of that, their brooding upon the present trial was too much for their faith, and they became childishly fearful.

Have I yet hit the nail on the head? If you have not found out the cause of your fearfulness I must leave you to look for it yourselves, and I trust you may discover it and destroy it at once. We must not continue to be of little faith. We must glorify our Lord by a believing confidence in him, such as neither storm of sorrow nor tempest of temptation can shake.

I shall conclude by carrying this enquiry into another region for another purpose. In this congregation there are a considerable number of friends who are not yet believers in Jesus Christ, and I want to know from them this morning why they have no faith. I entreat them to help me in the enquiry, Why it is that they are still so fearful, still so undecided? My dear friend, you will want faith soon, for you will have to die. Whether you live in Christ or not, you will have to die; and dying is hard work to those who have no Saviour. Perhaps before another Sabbath day you may be in the swellings of Jordan, and what will you do if you have no faith in Christ? Do you say that you desire to have faith? I am glad to hear it, but I should like to press this matter home, and to ascertain whether this desire is earnest, thorough, and hearty.

Do you know what it is that you desire? are you in earnest to be saved? I do not mean, are you in earnest to escape from hell? That I should think is very likely, if you are in your senses; but are you in earnest to escape from *sin*? Do you want to be saved from the power of evil? Do you desire to be made good, and obedient, and true, and pure in life? If you do, then I would remind you that faith in Jesus is the only way of salvation; and I would press upon you eagerly to desire immediate faith. Yes, I would urge you now to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart.

"I want to believe," say you. Well, then, what is to hinder? If you cannot sit still in your seat, and make yourself believe all at once, yet there are ways to that end. If I were told that the King of Tartary was dead, and it was a matter of interest to me, I do not know whether I should be able to believe it or not, because I do not know anything about the King of Tartary, nor even whether there is such a person. If I wanted to believe the news, I should get the newspaper and read about it; and I dare say I should either believe it or disbelieve it within the next ten minutes. Knowledge and evidence lead up to faith. It is just the same with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, but it comes to us in a certain manner. Consider a minute. *Consider who the Saviour is.* He is God and man. He came down to earth on purpose to save sinners. Do you not think that this Divine Person can save you? Is he not able? Do you not think that this loving Man will receive you? Is he not willing to save? Well, then, trust him. Next, *consider what Jesus did.* He lived on earth a life of labour and sorrow, and he died on the cross to make atonement for sin. Stand and look at him as crucified for men. "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." The greatest source of faith is the contemplation of the cross of Christ. Look to his agonies, and say to yourself, "I can believe that by the merit of such a wondrous death, endured by such a person as this, God can justly forgive sin." Believe, then, for yourself, and see your own sins put away by the death of Christ. Will you also *consider what Jesus Christ is doing now?* He has risen from the dead; he has gone up into heaven; he is making intercession for transgressors—even for such persons as you are. Trust him, then: trust Jesus because of what he is, what he has done, and what he is doing for sinners. Remember that this is the whole of the business, as far as you are concerned. You are

to accept what the Lord Jesus presents to you. Accept him. Yes, take him to be your own. Look you here. I turn to this friend behind me, and I say, "Will you take my hand?"\* See! he takes it freely. Jesus Christ is as free to every sinner that feels his need of him as my hand was to my friend. He took my hand at once without question—will you not take Jesus? Take him now. If you take him, he is yours for ever. Take his hand, and he will not withdraw it from your grasp. Oh that you would cry out, Lord I accept thee!

Have you any doubts about the truth of the gospel? If so, I want to know what you think of us who preach to you. Do we deceive you? What do you think of your mother's confidence in Christ—is she also deceived? Those dear friends of yours who died so happy in the Lord, were they all deceivers or deceived? No. You know that the Word of God is true. Then believe it. Believe it for yourselves, and it will be as true to you as it has been true to us. You cannot, I am sure, deny the Scriptures; you dare not say that the gospel is a forgery; it bears its own proof upon its forefront. Salvation by the substitution of our Lord is so grand an idea that no one could have invented it. It is self-evidently a divine fact. That God can be just, and yet pass by our sins, is a marvel past the conception of men; it could only have come from the heart of God. Believe it then, accept it as being true, and trust yourself to it. May the Spirit of God lead you so to do!

If you are not believing in Christ, I should like to know why not. Is it that you are believing in yourself? If so, give up such folly. You cannot trust yourself and trust Christ too; away with all notion of such a conjunction. Hang up self-confidence on a gallows high as that whereon Haman was suspended, for it is an abominable thing.

Perhaps it is your great sin that leads you to despair of pardon. There is no occasion for such unbelief, for God is abundant in mercy, and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. If you have great sin, remember that there is a great Saviour. He that came to save us is the Son of God, and he laid down his life for us, and, therefore, he can save to the uttermost. Instead of doubting, I pray you to glorify God by believing in the greatness of his salvation. It was a pleasure to me in years past to enjoy the friendship of Mr. Brownlow North. Before conversion he was a thorough man of the world, and, I suppose, about as frivolous and dissipated as men of his station and character often are. After his conversion he began to preach the gospel with great fervour, and certain of his old companions were full of spite against him, probably considering him to be a hypocrite. One day when he was about to address a large congregation, a stranger passed him a letter, saying, "Read that before you preach." This letter contained a statement of certain irregularities of conduct committed by Brownlow North, and it ended with words to this effect, "How dare you, being conscious of the truth of all the above, pray and speak to the people this evening, when you are such a vile sinner?" The preacher put the letter into his pocket, entered the pulpit, and after prayer and praise, commenced his address to a very crowded

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\* The preacher suited the action to the word, and his hand was readily grasped by one of the deacons.

congregation; but before speaking on his text, he produced the letter, and informed the people of its contents, and then added, "All that is here said is true, and it is a correct picture of the degraded sinner that I once was; and oh! how wonderful must the grace be that could quicken and raise me up from such a death in trespasses and sins, and make me what I appear before you to-night, a vessel of mercy, one who knows that all his past sins have been cleansed away through the atoning blood of the Lamb of God! It is of his redeeming love that I have now to tell you, and to entreat any here who are not yet reconciled to God, to come this night in faith to Jesus, that he may take their sins away and heal them." Thus, instead of closing the preacher's mouth by this letter, the enemy's attempt only opened the hearts of the people, and the word was with power. Oh that you, my dear hearers, would believe the Lord Jesus to be a real Saviour of real sinners, and come to him with all your sins about you! Do not hope because you think yourselves pure; but come to Jesus because you are impure, and need to be cleansed by him. Cast yourselves at his dear feet at once. Take *The Sinner's Friend* to be your friend, because you are a sinner. Let the Saviour be your Saviour, because you need saving. God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark iv. 21—41

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