

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THINKING AND TURNING.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 5TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.”—Psalm cxix. 59.

ALMOST every phase of spiritual life is depicted in the Psalms, but we shall not always find in them the interpretation of those deep exercises of soul with which the believer grows familiar. We must look to the New Testament for full discourses upon the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, upon the conflicting forces of grace, and depraved nature, and for the other causes which produce the mysterious experience of the Christian. In the Old Testament we get the facts; in the New Testament we find the explanation of the facts. The statement of David, which is now before us, doubtless sets forth the experience of many here present in this assembly; “I thought on my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies.” The Spirit’s operation in the heart is wont to produce thoughtfulness, and through thoughtfulness to effect conversion in the sinner. In the case of the believer, a restoration to the joy of salvation comes of like salutary reflections upon the negligence of one’s life. Repentance originates in thinking upon our ways; it proceeds to compare them with God’s precepts, and faith prompts us to revert to the way of God’s testimonies. I understand our text to be a brief but complete account of the conversion of the sinner, and of the restoration of the backslidden child of God. I hope that many of us, looking back to the time of our conversion, can use the words as our own, and oh, how many times since, if we have in any measure or degree departed from our right state with regard to our heavenly Father, have we had occasion to resort to the means suggested here: “I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.” The case stands thus. We are going on in the pro-

No. 1,181.

fession of a Christian life, with little or no soul trouble; temporal things are easy with us; by degrees we become unwatchful, and the world steals into our hearts, till the love of it creeps over us. We still pursue the even tenor of our way, unconscious of the dangers that threaten us, or the condition to which we have gradually descended. By-and-by discoveries startle us—we find ourselves unfit for the fellowship we once enjoyed. We lose our power in prayer. The duty which once was pleasant becomes irksome. All the symptoms point to serious derangement. This pulls us right up. We look about us. We ask in sad perplexity—"Where am I? How did I get here? Am I a child of God, how then can I have lost my former strength and happiness?" Thus we begin to deliberate, we survey our course during the last few months, and we soon detect many sorrowful omissions of duty and perhaps even commissions of sin, till the grace of God which is in us prompts us to seek the shortest way back to our right position. We have wandered into Byepath Meadow, and at the sight of Giant Despair's castle we endeavour to retrace our steps. The mariner has been gaily sailing on a smooth sea, and he has given no heed to his bearings; on a sudden he sees a rock ahead, from this he ought to have been far away; at that sight he shortens sail, looks about him, and in consequence of what he sees changes his course, sets a better watch, and is restless until once more he reaches the old familiar channel. Fellow-voyager on the sea of life, may not this be your case or mine? It is very likely that at this moment some of us, if enabled by God's Spirit to think upon our ways, may be led to pause and ponder our bearings. Thus by God's infinite mercy our course in life may be changed, our character may be altered for the better, so we may once more return to our rest. I pray that if we have never known the Saviour at all we may become his disciples to-day. Perhaps a single solemn thought lodged in your breast shall become the means of your conversion. God grant it may be so. This very day may some have to say, "At that time I thought upon my ways, and I turned my feet unto God's testimonies."

Two things will engage our attention this morning—a consideration and a consequence. The first is *right thinking*, and the next is *right turning*. "I thought," and "I turned." The two things go together.

I. Our first point is **RIGHT THINKING**—"I thought on my ways." That *this thought upon his ways caused him dissatisfaction is evident*; or otherwise he would not have turned. If in reviewing of my ways I find that they are all as God would have them, let me "go on"; it may be well in such a case to quicken one's pace; certainly it would be unwise to turn; so that it is clear that the right thinking of the text is a thinking which suggests dissatisfaction. Let your own reflections flow, I pray you, just now in this channel.

Think of the days of your youth, of the time before you were born unto God. Or, if you are not converted, consider your whole life. You are God's creature, and yet you have rendered to him no obedience! You would not keep a horse or a dog that did not do you some service, or follow at your whistle. But God has made you and kept you alive, yet hitherto he has not been in all, or, peradventure, in any of your thoughts. You have been an unprofitable servant, you are

like a fruitless tree, planted on good soil. Is this as it should be? Do you feel any comfort in such a retrospect? I am sure, if you ponder it fairly, and judge righteous judgment, you will be very disappointed. Must you not say to yourself, "This will not do"?

If you are converted, in looking back upon your unconverted days you will say, "Of all this I am now ashamed; what fruit had I of those pursuits in which I served myself, sought my own pleasures, revelled in my lusts, and made my belly my god, living for the world instead of loving my Creator and Benefactor?" Consider your ways, O you who have never yet sought forgiveness. Would God that you might come to yourselves, and so track the course of your sins, that the tear of penitence might be distilled from your heart, and begin to bedew your eye. Were it so, I know that ere long you would say, "I will arise and go to my Father, and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned." An unconverted state is an unhappy state; an unforgiven sinner is in constant peril. Even if the unsaved one should obtain the greatest success in business, the largest accumulation of wealth, the highest honours of fame, and the loftiest degree of rank, he would remain a pitiable object, because unblest of God. Such a soul in wretched unquietness walks through dry places, seeking rest and finding none. Till it comes home to its God, peace and prosperity it cannot know. May God in his infinite mercy lead unconverted men to review their ways and forsake them.

But, my brethren, if we think upon our ways since our new birth, we have little cause to be content with them. Think of the best things you have ever done; does the flush of self-congratulation colour your cheek? So far as I am concerned, far from me be every thought of glorying in anything which I have done for my Lord. Upon no sermon I have ever preached, though God knows I have preached my very soul out, am I able to look back without a measure of shame and confusion of face. I know I have preached the gospel, but the manner of my preaching does not satisfy me. I would fain wash every discourse in the tears of repentance, for in each one there are faults and failures that betray the weakness of a man, the infirmity of a creature, the unprofitableness of a servant. No deed of charity or act of devotion that I ever performed can I look back upon with unmixed feelings. I wish that my best had been a thousand times better, and had not been so sadly spoiled, as it often has been, by unbelief at the outset, or pride at the end, or by flagging zeal in the middle passage. This confession is no insincere regret, or a spurious attempt to appear humble—I mean what I say—and I believe that in the like confession the most devout of men would the most heartily concur. The sins of our holy things—how grievous they are! It is only because our consciences are so blind that we do not shudder at the sight of them. Do you ever think you have done well, in that very thinking you have done ill. When I hear any of my brethren talk of being perfect, I wonder what they mean. Do they use the English language? Do they know themselves or their God? In perfect ignorance they surely must be held captive. As to their own nature and its workings, they can have no knowledge, or else such boastful expressions could not come from their lips. Brethren, the saints are sinners still, our best tears need to be wept over,

the strongest faith is mixed with unbelief; our most flaming love is cold and chill compared with what Jesus deserves, and our intensest zeal still lacks the full fervour which the bleeding wounds and pierced heart of the Crucified might claim at our hands. Our best things need a sin offering, or they would condemn us. As for our worst things,—come, think of them. Remember your failures, your transgressions, and your provocations. Blush as you recall the times when the curb has been taken from your temper and anger has flashed forth in flames of fire though you had hoped that all your passions had been subdued: remember those times of levity, when, free from all restraints, your tongue has not spoken to edification or even within the bounds of propriety. Can we bear to think of hours when we have been tempted by avarice to withhold that which we ought to have given, or when we have given out of the pride which we fondly thought had died out of our blood-washed hearts? Have you not felt sluggish in the Lord's work? Have you not, like Jonah, in your peevishness and irritability been ready to flee from his face and forsake his calling? Have there not been seasons when you have gone into your chamber and shut the door and wept sore because of your folly, and half wished never to rise from your knees again? Have you not said, "Ah me, that ever I should be such a brute beast as this"? Truly had you not been proud and self-conceited you would not have been surprised to find yourself so like a beast, as indeed you are. Do you recoil at my language, and account it far too harsh? I am using Scriptural language, David's own words are—"So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee; nevertheless I am continually with thee; thou holdest me by my right hand." What a strange medley are we of the diabolical and the divine, the sinful and the heavenly, so sadly wedded to the earth, and yet so gloriously born from heaven. If you look at your worst side I am sure, beloved, you will abhor yourself and lie in the very dust before the Lord. You will not doubt the cleansing power of Jesus' blood, but you will be filled with holy wonder that it should have availed to cleanse such sins as yours.

Come, my brother, bow thyself in self-abasement, follow up this examination and take stock of thy ways since thou hast known the Lord. How behavedst thou thyself in thy poverty? Did thy heart repine? wast thou envious of the foolish? Seemed it to thee that God's providence was harsh while thy lot was hard? And how didst thou act in thy wealth? Hadst thou a deep solicitude to render unto the Lord according to all that he had done for thee? Or didst thou count thy cash and grudge thy tithes? Was thy hand closed to thy kinsman in his adversity, because thou wouldst rival thy neighbour in his extravagance? How went it with thee in thy sickness? Wast thou patient on the bed of languishing? Didst thou kiss the hand that smote thee, and minister to those that waited on thee? How went it with thee in thy health? Didst thou consecrate thy strength wholly unto thy Lord? How was it with thee in thine honour? Couldst thou lay thy crown at his feet? How was it with thee in thy shame? Didst thou glory in being despised for Christ's sake? How has it been with thee in private, and how in public? How hast thou comported thyself on thy knees, and with the sacred book open before thee? What

progress hast thou made in the knowledge of God's will? How hast thou behaved thyself in thy house, and how do thy children speak of thee? What opinion has thy servant formed of thy conduct? How hast thou acted towards sinners? Didst thou ever wet thy pillow with tears for them? Thou seest them going down to hell by millions; did thy heart never break while thou wast interceding for them? Come, the retrospection is painful, and I have marked out lines enough if you choose to follow them. Surely there is no room for boasting, but much need of turning. The very best man among us ought to be far better; the best man is but a man at his best. Lord, what is man! What is man that thou art mindful of him?

It will be wise to think of our ways in the light of God's law, that mirror of perfect holiness. How far short do we come of the divine requirements? Think of them also in the light of God's favour: what innumerable good things we have received from the Lord's hands! Have our returns been at all commensurate? Think of your life in the light of the cross. You have sinned in the presence of your crucified Lord. Have you been dead indeed unto sin? Think of your life in view of your risen Saviour. Have you been alive to righteousness? Are you not ashamed? Think of your life in the light of the day of judgment, and the coming of the Lord from heaven. How will your actions appear in the light of the tremendous day? How will they weigh in the infallible balances of unerring justice? Truly, as we think of our ways we sit humbled before the Lord, and boasting is excluded.

This right thinking upon our ways will suggest a practical change. When we have erred in the past, it is certain that we have been sufferers thereby. We have been greatly injured by sin, and if we are now in a sinful condition, will not a worse thing happen to us? If I am an unconverted man, what will become of me ere long? God is already angry with me, for he is angry with the wicked every day. What will that anger lead to? What must be the end of a life that is unprofitable to God? What must be the eternal future of one who has resisted the gospel, disobeyed God, and neglected him in all ways? Am I a child of God, the tendency of sin must be fearfully injurious to me. It must pierce me through with many sorrows; and if I am now out of order with God in some degree, how much further may this disorder go? What if I should make shipwreck of my profession? What if I should grievously transgress, and have to go the rest of my journey with broken bones? What if it should be declared in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die? My soul, sin even now hath not profited thee while it is in the bud; what will it be when it ripens, and its scattered seeds fly over the whole of my being, and turn that which should be a fruitful field into a tangled mass of weeds? Surely it is time for a change. There may be some few saints among you who do not need much changing, who have gone on so well that you may pray to continue as you are; but I am not one of such myself. I am afraid that there are few who are. I pine for something better, I pant to rise higher, to climb nearer my God, to love him more, to serve him better, and to be more fully consecrated to him.

A retrospect of our ways suggests the need of a practical alteration, not merely of planning or resolving, but of practically amending our course. "I thought upon my ways," says David, "and I turned myself unto thy testimonies," that is to say, he really did leave the old trail, and follow the better track. He rose from coldness into fervour, from neglect of prayer into intense pleadings; he left the faulty for the more excellent way.

Dear brethren, *the retrospect we take of our life should suggest that any turn we make should be Godward*—"I turned my steps unto thy testimonies." It is no use turning if you do not turn to something better. There are certain people about who are always shifting; they hear some new dogma, and that is *the* thing, straightway they are all agog for that. To-morrow they will meet with some other new theory, and straightway they will be mad in pursuit of it. They remind me of Luther's expression, when he says, "There are certain people who, the moment they see a heresy, stare at it like a cow at a new gate"; they look and look and look again at the new thing, as if it must be wonderful because it is new. The cow at length sees enough of the new gate, and goes back to her grass, but these people still stand staring, and another new frivolity bewitches them as soon as the former nine days' wonder has grown stale. If I turn, God grant I may turn from good to better, or else it is ill to turn at all. The best turn in the world is when a man turns to God. Such an one turns with purpose of heart. "Now," saith he, "I will follow the word to the very letter, I will yield to the Spirit; his every monition shall be law to me: I will live with Jesus, and my spirit, soul, and body shall be dedicated to him." Such a holy resolve is greatly needed now-a-days. The divisions of churches would be healed, the errors of the times would die out, the lukewarmness of this present age would pass away, if once sinners were turned to God's testimonies, and saints were more fully turned to them also.

Thus right thinking about our ways suggests that we ought to be dissatisfied, suggests a turning, suggests a turning to God, but *it also suggests that such a turning is possible*. Many a man in thinking upon his ways contents himself—"Well, they are bad, and they always will be bad," and when a sinner once accepts that notion he will abide in his sin, and go from worse to worse. I know of nothing which makes a man so grossly vicious as to be persuaded that virtue is impossible to him. "If I cannot repent, then I may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, and damned for much as little." So the sinner feels, and he advances in sin to its utmost degree. But, O beloved, the right way of thinking of your ways is to remember that you still may turn unto God's testimonies. No man's case is hopeless. Every man's condition would be hopeless apart from God and the precious blood, and the power of the Holy Ghost; but in connection with these no man's career, however habitually bad, is desperate; he may be changed, his feet may be turned to God's testimonies.

You also, O Christian, may have fallen to-day into a very dull state, you hardly know whether you have true godliness or not, religion is almost a weariness to you. Ah, dear soul, let not despair imprison you; you can yet turn your feet to God's testimonies; by the power of

the eternal Spirit you can be lifted out of your backsliding condition. As a child of God, you must not sit down and say, "I am delivered unto these corruptions, and given over to the power of Satan." The Son has made you free, and free you are. Shake thyself from the dust, arise and sit down, O Jerusalem. Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. Thou hast been redeemed, and thou art no more a slave; thy chains are broken, Christ with his mighty hammer has beaten them to pieces upon the anvil of his cross. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give thee light." While the Lord liveth, and the eternal Spirit goeth forth to save, there yet is hope of restoration.

This is very simple talk. I mean it to be simple. Yet I want it to be practical. Let me pause here and entreat every sinner to indulge the preacher with this favour—just now for a few minutes look upon your past life. Perhaps you have been so moral in your character and so amiable in your disposition, that you can reflect on years past without blushing. But there is one thing that ought to fill you with shame. You have entirely failed to love, or trust, or serve God. Wherefore should it be so? Is it right? Can you in any way make it consistent with honour that you should live as you do, wronging none but your God, saving all your injustice for him? You are kind, ay, you are kind even to a dog, but not to your God! Tender towards the sick and the poor, to every one but our dear Lord, who on the bloody tree revealed his love to men! Wherefore this exception to the usual current of your life? Wherefore is the good God singled out as the one person to be treated with unkindness and injustice?

But, possibly, your life has not been pure; gross deeds of sin have stained it. Well, I shall not recall these things; *your memory will serve for that, and your own conscience will upbraid you.* What I do suggest is that you should give enough thought to your ways at least to breathe some such prayer as this:—Lord, turn me and I shall be turned; may this be the hour in which I shall put away old things, and enter upon a new life through Jesus Christ.

If any of you who are children of God have become gross backsliders, I would urge you to the like self-examination and self-accusation. Think upon your ways with a stern censorship, a bitter penitence, a strong resolve. Take time and calmly deliberate. Sum up the evidence impartially in your own case. "For if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

Christian people, you who are walking, in a measure, in fellowship with God, I press upon you, nevertheless, the same considerateness, not that there may be a reason for entire dissatisfaction, yet it is always wise to observe your conduct with scrupulous fidelity. Tradesmen generally give up attention to their books when things are out of sorts with them; they do not like their books, for their books do not like them. The man who does not like self-examination may be pretty certain that things need examining. Let us look diligently to our ways, and may good come of it to the profit of our souls.

II. Secondly, our text treats of RIGHT TURNING, which grows out of right thinking. The turning of the text is thus described: "I turned my feet unto thy testimonies." Here observe how *complete* this turn was. A man may turn his head, and turn but little; he may turn his hand—there is not much movement of the whole body in that; but when he turns his feet, he turns himself completely. The turn we sinners all need is a whole turn. The nature must be changed. The things we love must no longer be the supreme objects of our affection; the pursuits of the world which were our idols must no longer be such. The things we have despised we must now esteem. Eternity which seemed distant must be brought near; earthly things which ruled us must be put beneath our feet. There must be an entire revolution in our nature to make us right. The child of God when he gets wrong must come right away from everything which has misled him, and follow the Lord fully, with purpose of heart.

The turning of the text is also a *practical* one. Whenever the foot or the hand is mentioned in Scripture, something practical is meant. "I turned my feet": I did not merely say, "I turned my eyes," but I showed the reality of the change of heart by change of life. It will not suffice for a sinner to say, "Oh, I am converted; I love Jesus Christ," and then go to his business and cheat as he did before, or resort to his old habits and drink as freely as he did before, or keep company with his former associates and use profane language, as was his previous wont, or act as a worldling acts in following the lusts of the flesh and pursuing the vanities of the age. A change of life alone can prove a change of heart.

When the child of God gets out of order with the Lord, his change must be a practical change too. He must not waste himself in regrets, but arouse himself to action. Let him immediately "arise and go to his Father." The Spirit of God must stir him to action. He must sleep no longer. He must procrastinate no more. There is vital energy and urgent haste in all positive reformation.

It must be, moreover, a *scriptural* turn too. "I turned my feet *unto thy testimonies*." There is a spurious conversion which is not true conversion to God. A man may have another heart and yet he may not have a new heart. We read of King Saul that he had another heart, but he remained unsaved. A man may change his idols; he may change his sins, but may not be changed in heart. Drunkards have become sober, and renounced their intoxicating cups, which is so far so good, but they have presently become intoxicated with a conceit of their own virtue, and extolled themselves as models of purity. Ah, then! it is a poor gain to change drunkenness for self-righteousness. Both sins are deadly. A man may as easily go to hell by trusting in himself as by resigning himself to a besetting vice. Hell has

many gates, though heaven has but one. We must experience the change, which is according to the word of God, and so the text saith, "I turned my feet unto thy testimonies," that is, to believe what God has revealed, to accept what God presents, to do what God commands, and to be what God would have us to be. May God give us to experience within and to manifest without such a radical turn as that.

The truth I want to bring out most prominently is this—the turning was *immediate*. "I thought on my ways,"—well, what then? "I turned my feet," directly, immediately. And can this be so? Can the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots? Can the sinner immediately be made a saint? Can the saint who has backslidden be at once restored? Can I, who come into the house of God dull and dead, suddenly brighten up, and become full of light and life and joy? Well, the text puts it so. "I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." Indeed it is so. But mark you, if it be so *it must be a divine work*. David does not tell us this in so many words, but the testimonies to which David refers are clear and conclusive on the point. To take a man and put him through a long process, as some do, of law-work and repentance, and so set before him gradual enlightenment and assurance of faith as a distant result—well, I do not see so much to marvel at as a divine operation in that sort of renovation; but to take a man right away from his former self, and save him there and then is certainly the work of God. Zacchæus is up in the tree, Jesus bids him "Come down"; down he comes, his heart is changed directly: salvation has come to him, and he forthwith makes and pays the vows that prove his sincerity—that is surely divine. Yonder is a person who through a long course of experiences and performances has gradually attained to the belief that he is a Christian; I hope he is so, but I am not his judge. But here is a man, a jailer, who has been putting his prisoners' feet fast in the stocks, he is cruel, hard, wicked, an old soldier, used to war, with no tenderness in him; in the middle of the night there comes an earthquake, and he holds his sword to his breast to kill himself, because he fears the prisoners have escaped; a voice cries to him, "Do thyself no harm," and he inquires, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Within half an hour that man becomes a Christian, a Baptist, and a saved man. The Lord did that, I am sure. But does he work in that manner now? Are not these the exceptions? No, they are the rule. How know I that? There was a man once who hated the church of Christ so bitterly that he meant to cut it up root and branch, and riding on his horse to Damascus with warrants to put to death all the saints in Damascus, on a sudden he saw a bright light, he was smitten down, and in a few minutes he was lying down prostrate at Jesus' feet, a

penitent. That is God's work, it must be, and this is how he works still. But does he work ordinarily as he did in the apostle? Hear Paul's words. "In me first did God show forth all longsuffering for a pattern." If a thing is a pattern, the intention is to produce other articles like it; the original is:—"For a *tupos*, or a type." Paul's conversion was a typical or representative conversion. There may be conversions which are not of that type, but many will be according to that pattern; indeed, to speak the full truth, every conversion must in a sense be sudden. The actual point of the conversion is instantaneous. I am walking through a wood, and I am going wrong; well, I pause and look about, but whenever I actually turn there is a critical moment when I turn, is there not? It may be that I take some time to consider and look about me; but when I do actually go back there is a particular moment when I turn and take the first step. I desire that this present moment may be the instant of conversion to each one of you who are dead in sin. You have been thinking of your ways, now may you turn your feet to his testimonies. This must be the work of grace. The omnipotent power of God must turn you to himself.

This leads me to observe that it must be by faith, because a man cannot be altogether changed in a moment by works. If works had a changing power—which they have not, since the fruit cannot change the root, and no number of bushels of figs could turn a nettle into a fig-tree—the man must have time to do the works, whereas time is not an element here. It is "I thought," and "I turned," and, therefore, it must be by faith. Many a sinner has been for years desiring a change which he would find in one moment if he did but believe in Jesus. He has been praying, and reading, and repenting, and I do not know what beside, trying to find salvation, whereas the Saviour has found it for him. Let him but look to Jesus, and simply trust in him, he will be saved in a moment, he will be a renewed man, and he will be able to say, in the language of the text, "I thought upon my ways and turned unto thy testimonies." I would drive home this point, but my time fails me. May God the Eternal Spirit bring many to God's testimonies at this very moment.

I have these closing words to the child of God: are you this morning in a sad, sorrowful, unholy condition? Do you desire to get out of it? Then, my brother, arise, for Jesus calls you. "But I cannot," say you. *You* cannot, I grant you that, for without Jesus you can do nothing; but I am not talking about what you can do. I would remind you that there is no reason why you should not ascend into a noble condition at once. Are you not one with Jesus still? Despite the state into which you have fallen, you are still a member of his body. Who can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus

our Lord ? In him all fulness dwells, why should you pine in poverty ? You are naked, poor, and miserable in yourself, but all things are yours. Come, brother, these things are to be had for the asking, God waiteth to give these things to you, why not enjoy them ? “Oh, but I have strayed so far from God, and have fallen into such a state.” Is the Spirit of God straightened ? Cannot he raise you out of your sad state ? What condition were you in when you were converted ? You were dead, yet he quickened you ; you are not dead now, there is some life in you, though that life is sickly. Whether is easier, to make the sick man whole, or to make the dead man live ? He has done the greater ; he can certainly do the less. “But can he do it at once ?” Did he not at once regenerate you ? Was there not a moment in which you passed from death to life ? Well, at this moment, you can pass from a state of sickness into one of spiritual health. “But how ?” Why, by the same way in which you passed into spiritual life at first, namely, by an act of faith. Come to the cross again, my dear brother ; wipe these eyes of yours. Jesus died for sinners. Come away, just as you are, just as you came at first, and though your life be blotted with sins, and your evidences blighted, your comforts shall come again. Wherefore do you hesitate ? Thus saith the Lord, “I have blotted out like a cloud thy transgressions, and like a thick cloud thy sins.” “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as snow.” Why dost thou need so much persuasion to bring thee to the heart which bled for thee ? Married to Christ, and yet ashamed to come to your husband ! A member of his body, and yet afraid to approach your Head ! Come along, man ; the Lord liveth, and his bowels move with compassion towards you. He loves you, he will love you, he must love you. Though you have sinned he cannot change. Though you believe not, he abideth faithful. “He hateth putting away.” Your transgressions have separated you for a while from your God, but hearken to this : “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord who hath mercy on thee.” “For a small moment have I forsaken thee ; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.” Come back, then, child of God, and in an instant your soul shall be restored.

And you, poor sinner, the same is true to you. Do not fancy that you need remain any longer in your lost condition ; do not even say, “I will go home to pray for a blessing ;” but believe in Jesus even now, for he is able now to change your heart, now to give you peace, now to press you to his bosom. Young woman, you are like Lydia. When she went that

morning to the prayer-meeting by the river, she did not think to find Jesus, but the Lord who opened her heart sent Paul to speak to her, and Lydia went home a convert, and why should not you? And you, young man of business, a money-taker like Matthew, who sat at the receipt of customs, remember Jesus said "Follow me," and Matthew did not stop a moment, but followed Jesus at his call. May the like happen to you to-day! You were not a disciple of Christ yesterday, but when you go to business to-morrow they will soon find out that you are a new man, and this will be the happy day to you, the day of your turning to God. If it be so, they will hear about it in heaven, and there will be joy in the presence of the angels of God over one who thought upon his ways, and turned his feet unto God's testimonies. The Lord bless you, every one of you, for his name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxix. 49—72.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—104, 424, 605.
