

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE TURNING POINT.

A Sermon

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“And he arose, and came to his father.”—Luke xv. 20.

THIS sentence expresses the true turning point in the prodigal's life story. Many other matters led up to it, and before he came to it there was much in him that was very hopeful; but this was the point itself, and had he never reached it he would have remained a prodigal, but would never have been the prodigal restored, and his life would have been a warning rather than an instruction to us. “He arose, and came to his father.” Speaking, as I do, in extreme weakness, I have no words to spare; and while my voice holds out I shall speak straight to the point, and I pray the Lord to make every syllable practical and powerful by his Holy Spirit.

I. We shall begin by noticing that **HERE WAS ACTION**—“*He arose, and came to his father.*” He had already been in a state of thoughtfulness; he had come to himself, but now he was to go further, and come to his father. He had considered the past, and weighed it up, and seen the hollowness of all the world's pleasures; he had seen his condition in reference to his father, and his prospects if he remained in the far-off country; he had thought upon what he ought to do, and what would be the probable result of such a course; but now he passed beyond the dreaminess of thought into matter-of-fact acting and doing. How long will it be, dear hearers, before you will do the same? We are glad to have you thoughtful; we hope that a great point is gained when you are led to consider your ways, to ponder your condition, and to look earnestly into the future, for thoughtlessness is the ruin of many a traveller to eternity, and by its means the unwary fall into the deep pit of carnal security and perish therein. But some of you have been among the “thoughtful” quite long enough; it is time you passed into a more practical stage. It is high time that you came to action; it would have been better if you had acted already; for, in the matter of reconciliation to God, first thoughts are best. When a man's life hangs

on a thread, and hell is just before him, his path is clear, and a second thought is superfluous. The first impulse to escape from danger and lay hold on Christ is that which you would be wise to follow. Some of you whom I now address have been thinking, and thinking, and thinking, till I fear that you will think yourselves into perdition. May you, by divine grace, be turned from thinking to believing, or else your thoughts will become the undying worm of your torment.

The prodigal had also passed beyond mere regret. He was deeply grieved that he had left his father's house, he lamented his lavish expenditure upon wantonness and revelling, he mourned that the son of such a father should be degraded into a swineherd in a foreign land; but he now proceeded from regret to repentance, and bestirred himself to escape from the condition over which he mourned. What is the use of regret if we continue in sin? By all means pull up the sluices of your grief if the floods will turn the wheel of action, but you may as well reserve your tears, if they mean no more than idle sentimentalism. What avails it for a man to say he repents of his misconduct if he still perseveres in it? We are glad when sinners regret their sin and mourn the condition into which sin has brought them, but if they go no further, their regrets will only prepare them for eternal remorse. Had the prodigal become inactive through despondency, or stolid through sullen grief, he must have perished, far away from his father's home, as it is to be feared many will whose sorrow for sin leads them into a proud unbelief and wilful despair of God's love; but he was wise, for he shook off the drowsiness of his despondency, and, with resolute determination, "arose and came to his father." Oh, when will you sad ones be wise enough to do the same? When will your thinking and your sorrowing give place to practical obedience to the gospel?

The prodigal also pressed beyond mere resolving. That is a sweet verse which says, "I will arise," but that is far better which says, "And he arose." Resolves are good, like blossoms, but actions are better, for they are the fruits. We are glad to hear from you the resolution, "I will turn to God," but holy angels in heaven do not rejoice over resolutions, they reserve their music for sinners who actually repent. Many of you like the son in the parable have said, "I go, sir," but you have not gone. You are as ready at forgetting as you are at resolving. Every earnest sermon, every death in your family, every funeral knell for a neighbour, every pricking of conscience, every touch of sickness, sets you a resolving to amend, but your promissory notes are never honoured, your repentance ends in words. Your goodness is as the dew, which at early dawn hangs each blade of grass with gems, but leaves the fields all parched and dry when the sun's burning heat is poured upon the pasture. You mock your friends, and trifle with your own souls. You have often in this house said, "Let me reach my chamber and I will fall upon my knees," but on the way home you have forgotten what manner of men you were, and sin has confirmed its tottering throne. Have you not dallied long enough? Have you not lied unto God sufficiently? Should you not now give over resolving and proceed to the solemn business of your souls like men of common sense? You are in a sinking vessel, and the life-boat is near, but your mere resolve to enter it will not prevent your going

down with the sinking craft ; as sure as you are a living man, you will drown unless you take the actual leap for life.

"He arose and came to his father." Now, observe that *this action of the prodigal was immediate*, and without further parley. He did not go back to the citizen of that country and say, "Will you raise my wages? If not, I must leave." Had he parleyed he had been lost ; but he gave his old master no notice, he cancelled his indentures by running away. I would that sinners here would break their league with death, and violate their covenant with hell, by escaping for their lives to Jesus, who receives all such runaways. We want neither leave nor licence for quitting the service of sin and Satan, neither is it a subject which demands a month's consideration : in this matter instantaneous action is the surest wisdom. Lot did not stop to consult the king of Sodom as to whether he might quit his dominions, neither did he consult the parish officers as to the propriety of speedily deserting his home ; but with the angel's hand pressing them, he and his fled from the city. Nay, one fled not ; she looked and lingered, and that lingering cost her her life ! That pillar of salt is the eloquent monitor to us to avoid delays when we are bidden to flee for our lives. Sinner, dost thou wish to be a pillar of salt ? Wilt thou halt between two opinions, until God's anger shall doom thee to final impenitence ? Wilt thou trifle with mercy till justice smite thee ? Up, man, and while thy day of grace continues, fly thou into the arms of love.

The text implies that *the prodigal aroused himself*, and put forth all his energies. It is said, "he *arose*;" the word suggests that he had till then been asleep upon the bed of sloth, or the couch of presumption. Like Samson in Delilah's lap, he had been supine, inactive, and unstrung ; but now, startled from his lethargy, he lifts up his eyes, he girds up his loins, he shakes off the spell which had enthralled him, he puts forth every power, he arouses his whole nature, and he spares no exertion until he returns to his father.

Men are not saved between sleeping and waking. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Grace does not stupefy us, it but arouses us. Surely, sirs, it is worth while making an awful effort to escape from eternal wrath. It is worth while summoning up every faculty and power and emotion and passion of your being, and saying to yourself, "I cannot be lost ; I will not be lost : I am resolved that I will find mercy through Jesus Christ." The worst of it is, O sinners, ye are so sluggish, so indifferent, so ready to let things happen as they may. Sin has bewitched and benumbed you. You sleep as on beds of down and forget that you are in danger of hell fire. You cry, "A little more rest, and a little more slumber, and a little more folding of the arms to sleep," and so you sleep on, though your damnation slumbereth not. Would to God you could be awakened. It is not in the power of my voice to arouse you ; but may the Lord Himself alarm you, for never were men more in danger. Let but your breath fail, or your blood pause, and you are lost for ever. Frailer than a cobweb is that life on which your eternal destiny depends. If you were wise you would not give sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, till you had found your God and been forgiven. Oh, when will you come to a real action ? How long will it be ere

you believe in Jesus? How long will you sport between the jaws of hell? How long dare you provoke the living God?

II. Secondly, HERE WAS A SOUL COMING INTO ACTUAL CONTACT WITH GOD,—“*He arose and came to his father.*” It would have been of no avail for him to have arisen if he had not come to his father. This is what the sinner has to do, and what the Spirit enables him to do: namely, to come straight away to his God. But, alas! very commonly, when men begin to be anxious, they go round about and hasten to a friend to tell him about it, or they even resort to a deceitful priest, and seek help from him. They fly to a saint or a virgin, and ask these to be mediators for them, instead of accepting the only Mediator Jesus Christ, and going to God at once by him. They fly to outward forms and ceremonies, or they turn to their Bibles, their prayers, their repentances, or their sermon-hearings; in fact, to anything rather than their God. But the prodigal knew better; he went to his father, and it will be a grand day for you, O sinner, when you do the same. Go straight away to your God in Christ Jesus. “Come here,” says the priest. Pass that fellow by. Get away to your Father. Reject an angel from heaven if he would detain you from the Lord. Go personally, directly, and at once to God in Christ Jesus. But surely I must perform some ceremony first? Not so did the prodigal, he arose and went at once to his father. Sinner, you must come to God, and Jesus is the way; go to him then, tell him you have done wrong, confess your sins to him, and yield yourself to him. Cry, “Father, I have sinned: forgive me, for Jesus’ sake.”

Alas! there are many anxious souls who do not go to others, but they look to themselves. They sit down and cry, “I want to repent; I want to feel my need; I want to be humble.” O man, get up! What are you at? Leave yourself and go to your Father. “Oh, but I have so little hope; my faith is very weak, and I am full of fears.” What matters your hopes or your fears while you are away from your Father? Your salvation does not lie within yourself, but in the Lord’s good will to you. You will never be at peace till, leaving all your doubts and your hopes, you come to your God and rest in his bosom. “Oh, but I want to conquer my propensities to sin, I want to master my strong temptations.” I know what it is you want. You want the best robe without your Father’s giving it you, and shoes on your feet of your own procuring; you do not like going in a beggar’s suit and receiving all from the Lord’s loving hand; but this pride of yours must be given up, and you must get away to God, or perish for ever. You must forget yourself, or only remember yourself so as to feel that you are bad throughout, and no more worthy to be called God’s son. Give yourself up as a sinking vessel that is not worth pumping, but must be left to go down, and get you into the life-boat of free grace. Think of God your Father—of him, I say, and of his dear Son, the one Mediator and Redeemer of the sons of men. There is your hope—to fly away from self and to reach your Father.

Do I hear you say, “Well, I shall continue in the means of grace, and I hope there to find my God.” I tell you, if you do that, and refuse to go to God, the means of grace will be the means of damnation to you. “I must wait at the pool,” says one. Then I solemnly

warn you that you will lie there and die ; for Jesus does not command you to lie there, his bidding is, "Take up thy bed, and walk." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." You have to go unto your Father, and not to the pool of Bethesda, or any other pool of ordinances or means of grace. "But I mean to pray," says one. What would you pray for ? Can you expect the Lord to hear you while you will not hear him ? You will pray best with your head in your Father's bosom, but the prayers of an unyielding, disobedient, unbelieving heart are mockeries. Prayers themselves will ruin you if they are made a substitute for going at once to God. Suppose the prodigal had sat down at the swine trough and said, "I will pray here," what would it have availed him ? or suppose he had wept there, what good would have come of it ? Praying and weeping were good enough when he had come to his father, but they could not have been substituted for it. Sinner, your business is with God. Hasten to him at once. You have nothing to do with yourself, or your own doings, or what others can do for you, the turning point of salvation is, "he arose and came to his father." There must be a real, living, earnest, contact of your poor guilty soul with God, a recognition that there is a God, and that God can be spoken to, and an actual speech of your soul to him, through Jesus Christ, for it is only God in Christ Jesus that is accessible at all. Going thus to God, we tell him that we are all wrong, and want to be set right ; we tell him we wish to be reconciled to him, and are ashamed that we should have sinned against him ; we then put our trust in his Son, and we are saved. O soul, go to God : it matters not though the prayer you come with may be a very broken prayer, or even if it has mistakes in it, as the prodigal's prayer had when he said, "Make me as one of thy hired servants ;" the language of the prayer will not signify so long as you really approach to God. "Him that cometh to me," says Jesus, "I will in no wise cast out ;" and Jesus ever liveth to make intercessions for them that come to God through him.

Here, then, is the great Protestant doctrine. The Romish doctrine says you must go round by the back door, and half-a-dozen of the Lord's servants must knock for you, and even then you may never be heard ; but the grand old Protestant doctrine is, come to God yourself ; come with no other mediator than Jesus Christ ; come just as you are without merits and good works ; trust in Jesus and your sins will be forgiven you.

There is my second point : there was action, and that action was contact with God.

III. Now, thirdly, IN THAT ACTION THERE WAS AN ENTIRE YIELDING UP OF HIMSELF. In the prodigal's case, his proud independence and self-will were gone. In other days he demanded his portion, and resolved to spend it as he pleased, but now he is willing to be as much under rule as a hired servant, he has had enough of being his own master, and is weary of the distance from God which self-will always creates. He longs to get into a child's true place, namely, that of dependence and loving submission. The great mischief of all was his distance from his father, and he now feels it to be so. His great thought is to remove that distance by humbly returning, for then he feels that all other ills will come to an end. He yields up his

cherished freedom, his boasted independence, his liberty to think and do and say whatever he chose, and he longs to come under loving rule and wise guidance. Sinner, are you ready for this? If so, come and welcome; your father longs to press you to his bosom!

He gave up all idea of self-justification, for he said, "*I have sinned.*" Before he would have said, "I have a right to do as I like with my own; who is to dictate how I shall spend my own money. If I do sow a few wild oats, every young man does the same. I have been very generous, if nothing else; nobody can call me greedy. I am no hypocrite. Look at your canting Methodists, how they deceive people! There's nothing of that in me, I'll warrant you; I am an outspoken man of the world; and after all, a good deal better in disposition than my elder brother, fine fellow though he pretends to be." But now the prodigal boasts no longer. Not a syllable of self-praise falls from his lips; he mournfully confesses, "I have sinned against heaven and before thee." Sinner, if you would be saved you also must come down from your high places, and acknowledge your iniquity. Confess that you have done wrong, and do not try to extenuate your offence; do not offer apologies and make your case better than it is, but humbly plead guilty and leave your soul in Jesu's hands. Of two things, to sin or to deny the sin, probably to deny the sin is the worse of the two, and shows a blacker heart. Acknowledge your fault, man, and tell your heavenly Father that if it were not for his mercy you would have been in hell, and that as it is you richly deserve to be there even now. Make your case rather blacker than it is if you can; this I say because I know you cannot do any such thing. When a man is in the hospital it cannot be of any service to him to pretend to be better than he is; he will not receive any more medical attention on that account, but rather the other way, for the worse his case the more likely is the physician to give him special notice. Oh, sinner, lay bare before God thy sores, thy putrifying sores of sin, the horrid ulcers of thy deep depravity, and cry, "O Lord, have mercy upon me?" This is the way of wisdom. Have done with pride and self-righteousness, and make thy appeal to the undeserved pity of the Lord, and thou wilt speed.

Observe that the prodigal yielded up himself so thoroughly that he owned his father's love to him to be an aggravation of his guilt: so I take it he means when he says, "Father, I have sinned." It adds an emphasis to the "*I have sinned*" when it follows after the word "*father.*" "Thou good God, I have broken thy good laws; thou loving, tender, merciful God, I have done wrong wantonly and wickedly against thee. Thou hast been a very loving Father to me, and I have been a most ungenerous and shameless traitor to thee, rebelling without cause. I confess this frankly and humbly, and with many tears. Ah! hadst thou been a tyrant I might have gathered some apology from thy severity, but thou hast been a Father, and this makes it worse that I should sin against thee." It is sweet to hear such a confession as this poured out into the Father's bosom.

The penitent also yielded up all his supposed rights and claims upon his father, saying, "I am not worthy to be called thy son." He might have said, "I have sinned, but still I am thy child," and most of us would have thought it a very justifiable argument; but he does not

say so, he is too humble for that, he owns, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." A sinner is really broken down when he acknowledges that if God would have no mercy on him, but cast him away for ever, it would be no more than justice.

"Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
I must pronounce thee just in death ;
And, if my soul were sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well."

That soul is not far from peace which has ceased arguing and submits to the sentence. Oh, sinner, I urge thee, if thou wouldst find speedy rest, go and throw thyself at the foot of the cross where God meets such as thou art, and say, "Lord, here I am ; do what thou wilt with me. Never a word of excuse will I offer, nor one single plea by way of extenuation. I am a mass of guilt and misery, but pity me, oh, pity me ! No rights or claims have I ; I have forfeited the rights of creatureship by becoming a rebel against thee. I am lost and utterly undone before the bar of thy justice. From that justice I flee and hide myself in the wounds of thy Son. According to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions !"

Once again, here was such a yielding up of himself to his father that no terms or conditions are mentioned or implied. He begs to be received, but a servant's place is good enough for him ; amongst the scullions of the kitchen he is content to take his place, so long as he may be forgiven. He does not ask for a little liberty to sin, or stipulate for a little self-righteousness wherein he may boast ; he gives all up. He is willing to be anything or nothing, just as his father pleases, so that he may but be numbered with his household. No weapons of rebellion are in his hands now. No secret opposition to his father's rule lingers in his soul, he is completely subdued, and lies at his father's feet. Our Lord never crushed a soul yet that lay prostrate at his feet, and he never will. He will stoop down and say, "Rise, my child ; rise, for I have forgiven thee. Go and sin no more. I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Come and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us ; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.

IV. Notice further, and fourthly, that IN THIS ACT THERE WAS A MEASURE OF FAITH IN HIS FATHER—a measure, I say, meaning thereby not much faith, but some. A little faith saves the soul. There was faith in his father's power. He said, "In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare." Sinner, dost thou not believe that God is able to save thee ; that through Jesus Christ he is able to supply thy soul's needs. Canst thou not get as far as this, "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean." The prodigal had also some faith in his father's readiness to pardon ; for if he had not so hoped, he would never have returned to his father at all : if he had been sure that his father would never smile upon him he would never have returned to him. Sinner, do believe that God is merciful, for so he is. Believe, through Jesus Christ, that he willeth not the death of the sinner, but had rather that he should turn to him and live ; for as

surely as God liveth, this is truth, and do not thou believe a lie concerning thy God. The Lord is not hard or harsh, but he rejoices to pardon great transgressions. The prodigal also believed in his father's readiness to bless him. He felt sure that his father would go as far as propriety would permit, for he said, "I am not worthy to be called thy son, but make me at least thy servant." In this also he admitted that his father was so good, that even to be his servant would be a great matter. He was contented even to get the lowest place, so long as he might be under the shade of so good a protector

Ah, poor sinner, dost thou not believe that God will have mercy on thee if he can do so consistently with his justice? If thou believest that, I have good news to tell thee. Jesus Christ, his Son, has offered such an atonement, that God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth; he has mercy upon the vilest, and justifieth the ungodly, and accepteth the very chief of sinners through his dear Son. Oh, soul, have faith in the atonement. The atonement made by the personal sacrifice of the Son of God must be infinitely precious; believe thou that there is efficacy enough in it for thee. It is thy safety to fly to that atonement and cling to the Cross of Christ, and thou wilt honour God by so doing; is the only way in which thou canst honour him. Thou canst honour him by believing that he can save thee, even thee. The truest faith is that which believes in the mercy of God in the teeth of conscious unworthiness. The penitent in the parable went to his father too unworthy to be called his son, and yet he said, "My father." Faith has a way of seeing the blackness of sin, and yet believing that God can make the soul as white as snow. It is not faith that says, "I am a little sinner, and therefore God can forgive me;" but that is faith which cries, "I am a great sinner, an accursed and condemned sinner, and yet, for all that, God's infinite mercy can forgive me, and the blood of Christ can make me clean." Believe in the teeth of thy feelings, and in spite of thy conscience; believe in God, though everything within thee seems to say, "He cannot save thee; he will not save thee." Believe in God, sinner, over the tops of mountain sins. Do as John Bunyan says he did, for he was so afraid of his sins and of the punishment thereof, that he could not but run into God's arms, and he said, "Though he had held a drawn sword in his hands, I would have run on the very point of it, rather than have kept away from him." So do thou, poor sinner. Believe thy God. Believe in nothing else, but trust thy God, and thou wilt get the blessing. It is wonderful the power of faith over God, it binds his justice and constrains his grace. I do not know how to illustrate it better than by a little story. When I walked down my garden some time ago I found a dog amusing himself among the flowers. I knew that he was not a good gardener, and no dog of mine, so I threw a stick at him and bade him begone. After I had done so, he conquered me, and made me ashamed of having spoken roughly to him, for he picked up my stick, and, wagging his tail right pleasantly, he brought the stick to me, and dropped it at my feet. Do you think I could strike him or drive him away after that? No, I patted him and called him good names. The dog had conquered the man. And if you, poor sinner, dog as you are, can have confidence

enough in God to come to him just as you are, it is not in his heart to spurn you. There is an omnipotence in simple faith which will conquer even the divine Being himself. Only do but trust him as he reveals himself in Jesus, and you shall find salvation.

V. I have not time or strength to dwell longer here, and so I must notice, fifthly, that THIS ACT OF COMING INTO CONTACT WITH GOD IS PERFORMED BY THE SINNER JUST AS HE IS. I do not know how wretched the prodigal's appearance may have been, but I will be bound to say he had grown none the sweeter by having fed swine, nor do I suppose his garments had been very sumptuously embroidered by gathering husks for them from the trees. Yet, just as he was, he came. Surely he might have spent an hour profitably in cleansing his flesh and his clothes. But no, he said, "I will arise," and no sooner said than done! he did arise, and he came to his father. Every moment that a sinner stops away from God in order to get better he is but adding to his sin, for the radical sin of all is his being away from God and the longer he stays in it the more he sins. The attempt to perform good works apart from God is like the effort of a thief to set his stolen goods in order, his sole duty is to return them at once. The very same pride which leads men away from God may be seen in their self-conceited notion that they can improve themselves while still they refuse to return to him. The essence of their fault is that they are far off from God, and whatever they do, so long as that distance remains, nothing is effectually done. I say the radical of the whole matter is distance from God, and therefore the commencement of setting matters right lies in arising and returning to him from whom they have departed.

The prodigal was bound to go home just as he was, for there was nothing that he could do. He was reduced to such extremities that he could not purchase a fresh piece of cloth to mend his garments, nor a farthing's worth of soap with which to cleanse his flesh; and it is a great mercy when a man is so spiritually reduced that he cannot do anything but go to his God as a beggar, when he is so bankrupt that he cannot pay a farthing in the pound, when he is so lost that he cannot even repent or believe apart from God, but feels that he is for ever undone unless the Lord shall interpose. It is our wisdom to go to God for everything.

Moreover, there was nothing needed from the prodigal but to return to his father. When a child who has done wrong comes back, the more its face is blurred with tears the better. When a beggar asks for charity, the more his clothes are in rags the better. Are not rags and sores the very livery of beggars? I once gave a man a pair of shoes because he said he was in need of them; but after he had put them on and gone a little way I overtook him in a gateway taking them off in order to go barefooted again. I think they were patent leather, and what should a beggar do in such attire? He was changing them for "old shoes and clouted," those were suitable to his business. A sinner is never so well arrayed for pleading as when he comes in rags. At his worst, the sinner, for making an appeal to mercy, is at his best. And so, sinners, there is no need for you to linger; come just as you are. "But must we not wait for the Holy Spirit?" Ah, beloved, he

who is willing to arise and go to his Father has the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who moves us to return to God, and it is the spirit of the flesh or of the devil that would bid us wait.

How now, sinners? Some of you are sitting in those pews; where are you? I cannot find you out, but my Master can, he has made this sermon on purpose for you. "Well, but I would like to get home and pray." Pray where you are, in the pew. "But I cannot speak out aloud." You may if you like, I won't stop you. "But I should not like." Well, don't, then. God can hear you without a sound, though I wish sometimes we did hear people cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" I would gladly hear the prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But if men cannot hear you, the Lord can hear the cries of their hearts. Now, just sit still a minute, and say, "My God I must come to thee. Thou art in Jesus Christ, and in him thou has already come a great way to meet me. My soul wants thee; take me now, and make me what I ought to be. Forgive me, and accept me." It is the turning-point of a man's life when that is done, wherever it is, whether in a workshop, or in a saw-pit, in a church, or in a tabernacle; it does not matter where. There is the point—the getting to God in Christ, giving all up, and by faith resting in the mercy of God.

VI. The last point of all is this—THAT ACT WROUGHT THE GREATEST CONCEIVABLE CHANGE IN THE MAN. He was a new man after that. Harlots, winebibbers, you have lost your old companion now! He has gone to his Father, and his Father's company and yours will never agree. A man's return to his God means his leaving the chambers of vice and the tables of riot. You may depend upon it whenever you hear of a professing Christian living in uncleanness, he has not been living anywhere near his God. He may have talked a great deal about it, but God and unchastity never agree; if you have friendship with God you will have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

Now, too, the penitent has done with all degrading works to support himself. You will not find him feeding swine any more, or making a swine of himself either by trusting in priests or sacraments; he will not confess to a priest again, or pay a penny to get his mother out of purgatory; he is not such a fool as that any more. He has been to his God on his own account, and he does not want any of these shavelings to go to God for him. He has got away from that bondage. No more pig-feeding; no more superstition for him! "Why," says he, "I have access with boldness to the mercy-seat, and what have I to do with the priests of Rome?"

There is a change in him in all ways. Now he has come to his father his pride is broken down. He no longer glories in that which he calls his own; all his glory is in his father's free pardoning love. He never boasts of what he has, for he owns that he has nothing but what his father gives him; and though he is far better off than ever he was in his spendthrift days, yet he is as unassuming as a little child. He is a gentleman-commoner upon the bounty of his God, and lives from day to day by a royal grant from the table of the King of kings. Pride is gone, but content fills its room. He would have been contented to be one of the servants of the house, much more satisfied is he

to be a child. He loves his father with a new love; he cannot even mention his name without saying, "And he forgave me, he forgave me freely, he forgave me all, and he said, 'Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet.'" From the day of his restoration the prodigal is bound to his Father's home, and reckons it to be one of his greatest blessings that it is written in the covenant of grace, "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."

This morning I believe that God in his mercy means to call many sinners to himself. I am often very much surprised to find how the Lord guides my word according to the persons before me. Last Sunday there came here a young son of a gentleman, a foreigner, from a distant land, under considerable impressions as to the truth of the Christian religion. His father is a follower of one of the ancient religions of the East, and this young gentleman naturally felt it a great difficulty that he would probably make his father angry if he became a Christian. Judge, then, how closely the message of last Sabbath came home to him, when the text was, "What if thy father answer thee roughly?" He came to tell me that he thanked God for that message, and he hoped to bear up under the trial, should persecution arise. I feel that I am with equal plainness speaking to some of you. I know I am. You are saying, "May I now go to God just as I am, and through Jesus Christ yield myself up; and will he forgive me?" Dear brother, or dear sister, wherever you may be, *try it*. That is the best thing to do: *try it*; and, if the angels do not set the bells in heaven ringing, God has altered from what he was last week, for I know he received poor sinners then, and he will receive them now. The worst thing I dread about you is, lest you should say, "I will think of it." *Don't think of it. Do it!* Concerning this no more thinking is needed; but to do it. Get away to God. Is it not according to nature that the creature should be at peace with its Creator? Is it not according to your conscience? Is there not something within you which cries, "Go to God in Christ Jesus." In the case of that poor prodigal, the famine said to him, "Go home!" Bread was dear, meat was scarce, he was hungry, and every pang of want said, "Go home! Go home!" When he went to his old friend the citizen, and he asked him for help, his scowling looks said, "Why don't you go home?" There is a time with sinners when even their old companions seem to say, "We do not want you. You are too miserable and melancholy. Why don't you go home?" They sent him to feed swine, and the very hogs grunted, "Go home?" When he picked up those carob husks and tried to eat them, they crackled, "Go home." He looked upon his rags, and they gaped at him, "Go home." His hungry belly and his faintness cried, "Go home." Then he thought of his father's face, and how kindly it had looked at him, and it seemed to say, "Come home!" He remembered the bread enough and to spare, and every morsel seemed to say, "Come home!" He pictured the servants sitting down to dinner and feasting to the full, and every one of them seemed to look right away over the wilderness to him and to say, "Come home! Thy father feeds us well. Come home!" Everything said, "Come home!" Only the devil whispered, "Never go back. Fight

it out! Better starve than yield! Die game!" But then he had got away from the devil this once, for he had come to himself, and he said, "No; I will arise and go to my father." Oh that you would be equally wise. Sinner, what is the use of being damned for the sake of a little pride. Yield thee, man! Down with thy pride! You will not find it so hard to submit if you remember that dear Father who loved us and gave himself for us in the person of his own dear Son. You will find it sweet to yield to such a friend. And when you get your head in his bosom, and feel his warm kisses on your cheek, you will soon feel that it is sweet to weep for sin—sweet to confess your wrong doing, and sweeter still to hear him say, "I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thy transgressions." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

God Almighty grant this may be the case with hundreds of you this morning. He shall have all the glory of it, but my heart shall be very glad, for I feel nothing of the spirit of the elder brother within me, but the greatest conceivable joy at the thought of making merry with you by-and-by, when you come to own my Lord and Master, and we sit together at the sacramental feast, rejoicing in his love. God bless you, for his sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—136 (Song I.), 614, 612.
