

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A SOLEMN IMPEACHMENT OF UNBELIEVERS.

A Sermon

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“He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.”—1 John v. 10.

No doubt if our Lord Jesus were on earth, he would find many persons for whom he would pray, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” It is no doubt true of many who are living in great sin that they do it ignorantly, not knowing the full measure of their guilt, or its real character in the sight of God. It is the duty of the Christian minister, and indeed of all Christians, to render sins of ignorance impossible by imparting scriptural knowledge; we must let men know what they are doing, and never suffer them to go on in the dark. If they will commit sin, let them at least know what is involved in it, for “that the soul be without knowledge is not good.” It is not meet that any man should continue in darkness now that the true light has dawned upon mankind. It is true our testimony will not always be received, for men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil, but our duty remains the same; we are to bear witness of the truth and to be in the hands of God the instruments of convincing the world of the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

The great sin of not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is often spoken of very lightly and in a very trifling spirit, as though it were scarcely any sin at all; yet, according to my text, and, indeed, according to the whole tenor of the Scriptures, unbelief is the giving of God the lie, and what can be worse? I earnestly desire that every unbeliever may see his unbelief at this time in its true colours, and perhaps, as the Spirit of God enables him to see the evil of his past unbelief, he will be so shocked at himself, and horrified at his crime, that he will continue in it no longer, but yield himself to the faith. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, that grace may be given to the unbelieving, that they may now believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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When our race had been lost by sin, it was infinite mercy on God's part to provide a way of salvation, and infinite condescension to make that way of salvation suitable to our lost condition. If it had been a salvation which depended upon works, it would have been impossible to us; it would have mocked our sorrow, but could not have relieved it. In abounding mercy God has set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation for sin, and he bids guilty men believe in him as the atoning sacrifice, and see in him the love of God made manifest. He bids sinners lay hold upon eternal life by accepting Jesus Christ by faith as their Saviour. Now, had not man been very vile and grossly wicked at heart, he would have leaped for joy at the proclamation of the gospel, and have believed at once the truth to which God bears witness; but being desperately set on mischief, man does not believe in Jesus Christ, and if you preach Christ to him, and set the crucified One before him, yet still, except where the Holy Spirit works effectually, he remains in his unbelief, refuses to receive the witness of God, and rejects the Redeemer. Now, what I desire to do this morning is to bring every man who is in that condition to look at himself as in a glass, and see clearly what he is doing. I wish to make him feel as he hears this discourse, "Yes, I see what I am doing: by not believing Jesus I am despising the blood of atonement, and I am telling God to his face that he is a liar." It is always well for every man to know exactly what he is at. On the sea of life the oftener we take observations as to our longitude and latitude the better. Many bankruptcies arise from careless trading, and in such cases the traders have no mind to consult their account books, but they go on with their eyes half open, hoping that things will take a turn, which turn is never taken. It is always good for a man to know who he is, what he is, where he is, and whither he is bound. I would plead with the unbeliever, to look well to his position, to see how God regards it, and to judge himself that he be not judged. If I should not seem to speak very tenderly at this time, you must not be astonished. I believe there is such a thing as pitying sinners and comforting them till they consider themselves to be no longer blameworthy, and even regard themselves as unhappy people who deserve sympathy. I talked not long ago with a troubled one, and after much battling I brought her to this point—"There is the way of salvation. Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners, and whosoever believeth in him is saved." She replied, "I cannot believe in him;" and then I came to push of bayonet and said, "Will you then stand up in the sight of Almighty God, and declare to him that you cannot believe him; which of course is the same thing as saying, in other words, that God is a liar! Rise, then, and let me hear you say what is in your heart." She replied most earnestly, "I could not say anything of the kind." My answer was, "But you did say so just now, and by your unbelief you have been saying so for years, and you are practically saying it every moment that you remain in unbelief." That troubled one said to me as she left, "I thank you for not trying to comfort me. I wanted to be faithfully dealt with, and I bless God that you have done so." Now I wish, out of love to the souls of those who do not believe in Jesus, to deal faithfully with them, giving them no comfort, for comfort there is none

for those who believe not; but making them see what their sin is, that they may be ashamed and confounded, and repent of their wicked unbelief. May the Spirit of God make them see that "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."

First we shall see *the sinner's inability to believe dissected; then, the nature of his sin detected; then, the unbeliever's sin execrated; and fourthly, his fate predicted.*

I. First, THE SINNER'S INABILITY TO BELIEVE DISSECTED. He pleads that he cannot believe. He often says this, and quiets his conscience with it. When he is aroused and awakened he declares that he cannot believe in Jesus Christ, and cannot believe God, and goes off to his deadly sleep again. He quotes the Scriptures to back up his excuse, and perhaps reminds us of the words of the Lord Jesus himself—"No man cometh to me except the Father who hath sent me draw him." To which we reply that the words of our Lord are always very weighty with us, and we would not wrest one of them for a moment; but our Lord explains his own words in another place, where he says, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." So then the sinner's inability lies in his will; it is because he will not that he cannot. Let every sinner be assured of this, and let his conscience confirm the truth of the statement. Harken, O unbeliever, you have said, "I cannot believe," but it would be more honest if you had said, "*I will not believe.*" The mischief lies there. Your unbelief is your fault, not your misfortune. It is a disease, but it is also a crime: it is a terrible source of misery to you, but it is justly so, for it is an atrocious offence against the God of truth.

Let me take your unbelief to pieces, and show why it is that you cannot believe. The inability of many of you lies in the fact that *you do not care to think about the matter at all.* A great many of you do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ because you do not care about your souls, or see the importance of being saved. You give your minds to your business, your pleasure, or your sin: you dream that there is time enough yet to think of heavenly things, and you think them to be of secondary importance. This is the source of a large proportion of ordinary unbelief. Let any man who disbelieves the Bible, for instance, answer this question,—Did you ever candidly read that book with the view of seeing for yourself whether or no it is the book of God? Did you ever sit down seriously to study the evidences of its being the revelation of God? It is very seldom that any infidel can be found who will say "yes" to that question. They rail at what they do not understand, and condemn off-hand what they have never studied. Is this right?

Many, however, say, "Oh, yes, I believe the Bible, I believe it is God's book, I believe the gospel to be God's gospel." Why, then, do you not believe in Jesus? It must be because you do not think the gospel message important enough to be obeyed; and in so doing you are giving God the lie practically, for you tell him that your soul is not so precious as he says it is, neither is your state so perilous as he declares it to be. You are dying: the doctor says, "Here is a medicine which will cure your disease; it is the only medicine that

will save your life, and you will die if you do not take it." Suppose you do not take the medicine, I shall be right in saying that however you may view the matter, you give that physician the lie direct in the most practical manner. You do not say in so many words, "I am not as bad as you say I am." You do not say, "I do not believe in your medicine," but, by refusing to take it, you say so most unmistakeably. The physician will quite understand your action, even if you do not speak a sentence, and, as he sees you die before his eyes, he will feel that your death lies at your own door. In refusing to come to the gospel feast you do as good as tell the Lord that he makes too much of it, that he makes heaven and earth ring with the glory of it, but in your esteem your farm and your merchandise are far more worthy of attention. You by your neglect of the great salvation declare that you are not in any pressing danger, and do not stand in urgent need of a Saviour; you also say that the pardon of sin, the favour of God, and a good hope of heaven are not worthy to be sought first and above all other things, neither is Jesus the chief among ten thousand, nor is his love needful to make you truly happy. In all these points and many others your carelessness gives the Lord the lie.

A second reason of the sinner's inability to believe lies in the fact that *the gospel is true*. "No," you reply, "that is precisely why we would believe it." Yes, but what does Jesus say in John viii. 45? he says, "Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." Strange reason for not believing a statement!—because it is true! Yet there are thousands of individuals whose capacity for believing a lie is enormous, but their ability for accepting truth appears to have gone from them. When religious impostures have arisen the very men who have heard the gospel from their youth up, and have not received it because it is true, have become dupes of imposition at once. The truth did not suit their nature, which was under the dominion of the father of lies, but no sooner was a transparent lie brought under their notice than they leaped at it at once like a fish at a fly. The monstrous credulity of unbelief amazes me! I meet with persons who consider themselves to be bold thinkers and philosophers, and they express their astonishment that I can really believe the things which I preach: but no sooner do I learn from them what their positive creed is, than the astonishment comes to be on my side, and is a thousand times greater than theirs could be. The faith which accepts Christ has but a small throat indeed compared with that credulity which believes for instance in the development of man from a protoplasm—that creed requires the swallow of the great fish which swallowed Jonah entire. A lie ye will believe, but because the gospel is true ye do not believe it. "You give us a bad character," says one. It is your true character. Some of you are so in the habit of accepting no teaching but that which chimes in with your depraved tastes and sceptical notions, that because the gospel is true, and therefore comes across your vitiated tastes, you cannot endure it. If we were to trim it a little, and cut it down, and make it suit you, you would accept it; but in the name of the everlasting God we assure you we will not do it: we dare not do it for God's sake, nor even for your sakes, for to preach to you another gospel would only be to deceive you.

There are persons who do not receive the gospel because *it is despised among men*. The gospel is sneered at by the great ones of the earth, and the mass of mankind ridicule it, and therefore cowards turn their backs upon it. If princes and great men followed after the truth then there might be something in it, but are not believers in Jesus generally a poor company? Do you not virtually say, "I cannot believe God's witness alone, but I would believe it if a learned professor or a great lord would add his testimony." What did they say in Christ's day? "Have any of the rulers believed?" The opinions of the rulers were evidently more considered than the witness of the blessed God. We know a certain class of people who always ask, "Is it fashionable?" And there are others of another class who cautiously inquire, "What do the men in our shop think about it?" They set more store by the judgment of men than by the declarations of God. They will believe their fellow creatures, who are as fallible as themselves, but God they will not believe. Let me tell you that even if you were after a fashion to believe God because his testimony is supported by the great ones of the earth, or by the many around you, it would not be believing God at all, it would at bottom resolve itself into believing the testimony of men. Sinner, this is no small offence, to be ready to accept the verdict of your fellow men, but not ready to accept the declaration of your God.

Many, however, do not receive the gospel because *they are much too proud to believe it*. The gospel is a very humbling thing. It says to the sinner, "Now, sir, you have no merits of your own, and what is more you have no power to obtain merit in the future." The man claims to have been temperate, chaste, honest, and generous, but the gospel says to him, "You have broken God's law, and you are condemned for it." All that you have done was but your duty, and cannot avail to blot out your shortcomings in other respects. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," so says the book which cannot err (James ii. 10). If you are to be saved, you must be saved as a sinner, or not at all, for Christ has not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. You must be saved through the merits of another, and washed from sin in the precious blood of Jesus; your own works must not have a finger in it, it must be by grace, and grace alone. Of course the proud man cannot believe that; he turns his back upon it in scorn. Why cannot he believe it? Because he will not believe it, he is so proud that it offends him, it goes against the grain, and he will not endure it. Many of you must confess that you do not like the gospel, because it does not leave you room to stow away your pride. If it said to you, "Attend to the sacraments," why, you would be baptised to-morrow and come to the Lord's Table, if that would save you; and if I were allowed to preach that if any man walked barefooted from his house to the Land's End he would be saved, you would start off this afternoon, wet as it is. If there were any great thing for you to do you would do it, but because there is nothing for you to do but to accept what another has done, you will not have it. Your detestable pride is at the bottom of your rejection of free grace. If this is the secret of your inability, does it excuse you? Does it not make your offence the greater?

Another reason why men cannot believe God's testimony concerning Jesus, lies *in the holiness of the gospel*. If the gospel came to them and said, "You can confess your sins and obtain absolution, and then go and sin again," would not that suit many of you? That is the religion for sinful men! Do you think there ever will be a time when such teaching will cease to be popular? It is a most attractive religion the devil himself could invent, and it shews his genius in lying. Confess your sin to a priest, pay a shilling, get absolved, and go away and live as you like till next time. Rub sin off as you go along with a little penance. Human nature rejoices in that religion. But the gospel says to the man, "You must forsake your evil ways. What is more, the very nature that suggests these sins must be changed. You must be born again." The gospel cries, "Repent." Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him. The gospel proclaims Jesus, who saves men *from* their sins, but you do not want that. The impurity of your hearts is that which makes it hard to believe a pure gospel.

O souls, I pray you, look at this truth. When you say, "I cannot believe," it is either because you are too careless, or else because your nature itself is too deceitful and too impure to accept the truth. It would be easy enough to believe if these things were gone. Do the angels find it difficult to believe? Would pure spirits find it difficult to believe? No, your sin lies at the foundation of your unbelief; it is the root which beareth this wormwood. We cannot expect a spendthrift to believe in the excellence of economy, or a vicious man to believe in the pleasures of chastity. Loose men even deny that any one is pure. What an opinion bad men have of all mankind! Why think they so ill of others? Because they judge them by themselves. When a dove flies over a landscape it sees the clear streams and the fields of corn; but when a vulture passes over the same landscape what does it see? A dead horse here and there, a carcass, or a piece of carrion. Everybody sees according to his eyes. A graceless, impure minded man cannot see purity. Christ said to the proud Pharisees, "How can ye believe that receive honour one of another?" Their pride stood in the way; and in every case in which a man declares concerning the Lord Jesus, "I cannot believe" the difficulty is in himself, and not in the facts to be believed, nor in the evidence of those facts. There is one excuse for unbelief, and only one. "How can they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" That excuse will avail for the heathen, but not for you, for you have heard and read about Jesus, and know the gospel, so that the only excuse that can be accepted is not for you. Of you it must be said, "He that believeth not hath made him a liar."

II. Secondly, I must now come to closer quarters, and describe **THE NATURE OF THE SIN OF UNBELIEF**, in that it makes God a liar. I will take many forms of it, and show this to be the case.

Those are guilty of this sin who deny that Jesus is the Messiah, the promised Saviour, the Son of God. Out of heaven God himself declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Peter truly said at Pentecost (Acts ii. 22) that Jesus of Nazareth was

“a man approved of God by miracles, and signs, and wonders, which God did by him.” God says in many ways “he is my beloved Son,” and if you say he is not you make God a liar. That is clear enough.

Some there be who deny his deity. Now, over and over in Scripture we are told that Jesus Christ is “God manifest in the flesh.” “The Word was God.” “By him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible” (Col. i. 16). He is “called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God.” The miracles which Christ wrought, and especially his resurrection from the dead, all prove his deity, the Father bearing witness that he is his equal and his fellow. When a man says that Jesus is not God, and the Father says he is, the lie direct is given; but, as I believe there are very few of that kind of unbelievers here, I will leave such persons and pass on.

A poor trembling, weeping sinner comes to me, and amongst other things he says, “My sins are so great, that I do not believe they can be pardoned.” I meet him thus. God says, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “But, Sir, my sin is very great indeed.” “The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” “But my transgressions have been exceedingly aggravated.” “Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” “Sir, I cannot believe it.” Stand up, then, and tell the Lord so in the plainest manner,—“O God, thou hast said thou wilt abundantly pardon, but it is a lie.” I challenge you to make that avowal outright, for you are making it in your hearts. It is idle to deny it, for it is so. God says, “I will and I can pardon,” and you say he cannot—what is that but accusing the Lord of falsehood?

Another will say, “Oh, but my heart is so hard I cannot believe in the power of God to make a new man of me, and deliver me from the love of sin.” Yet God declares in his word, “A new heart also will I give them, and a new spirit will I put within them. I will take away the heart of stone out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh.” That is what God says. “It cannot be,” say you. Very well, then, do not deny it, you give God the lie. God says, “I can;” you say he cannot. There is your position.

In many there exists a doubt about the willingness of God to save. They say, “I believe that the blood of Jesus Christ does blot out sin, but is he willing to pardon me?” Now, listen to what Jehovah says, for he says it with an oath, and to me it is a very startling thing that God should swear, he swears by himself, because he can swear by no greater. Mark that! “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he turn unto me and live.” Over and over again, in all sorts of shapes, he gives us assurance that he delighteth in mercy. Now, then, sinner, if you say God is unwilling, and Christ is unwilling, and yet the Lord swears that he is willing, and Christ dies to prove it—what, then, is your unbelief? I hardly like to utter what I feel I must say—you do deliberately charge God with perjury, and what could the greatest blasphemer out of hell,

or the blackest devil in hell do more than that? That is exactly what you have done, and are doing now.

"Alas," cries one, "my ground for doubt is deeper, I hear that God can pardon, regenerate, and all that, and I believe it, but then I cannot see that any of this is for me. I do not see that these things are sent for me." Listen, then, to what God says, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, let him come buy wine and milk." You adroitly reply, "But I do not thirst." More shame for you then! Listen again—"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "But I do not labour." Do not labour? How do you get your living? I am sorry for you if you are such a lazy man that you have no labour. That text includes every labouring man and every heavy laden man under heaven. Listen yet again, "Whosoever will, let him come." Does not that invite every living man who is willing to come? If you say, "I am not willing," then I leave you, for you confess that you are unwilling to be saved, unwilling to be reconciled to God, and that is exactly what I am trying to prove:—you cannot believe, because you are unwilling to do so. On your own head be your blood. I do not know what more I can say to you; you must be mad to be willing to incur the flames of hell and the wrath of God for ever. It is not for me to comfort you when you are in such a condition as that: if you choose your own destruction, why, so must it be. Yet hear me once again. Jesus has said to his disciples, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." Are you a creature? "Yes, I am a creature." Well, man, God has put it as plain as it can be put, that the gospel is to be preached to you, and, therefore, it has a relation to you. Would God send it to you to tantalise you? When you say, "It is not for me," you give God the lie. He says it is for "every creature;" and you know you are a creature, how then dare you say it is not for you? In speaking thus, you accuse the Lord of trifling with you and mocking you.

"Well," says one, "but I cannot see how simply trusting in Christ, and believing God's witness of him, would save my soul." My dear man, are you never to believe anything but what you can see, and how are you to see this thing till you have tried it? A physician says "that medicine will heal you." The patient replies, "I want to see that it does heal me before I take it." The man is a fool, and so are you if that is how you trifle with God. You must believe the gospel on the evidence of God, and not otherwise, or your faith is not faith in God at all. The faith which is commanded in the gospel is faith in the record which God has given concerning his Son, a faith which takes God at his word. Believe, then, on the Lord Jesus Christ and you have believed God to be true: refuse to trust in Jesus Christ, unless you get some other evidence beyond the witness of God, and you have practically said that God's testimony is not enough, that is to say, you have made God a liar.

Many a time I have heard men say, "Oh, but I cannot believe it, it seems so wonderful." Is not that why you should believe it? What should come from the glorious Lord but that which is wonderful? He is glorious in holiness, fearful in praise, doing wonders.

Another cries out "that it is too good to be true." Ah, poor soul, but have you never read, "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are my ways above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts"? A less salvation would not avail for you, nor glorify God. Some feel that the gospel is too simple. They want a more complicated system than—"believe and live." How can it be too simple for finite minds like ours? Then I have heard them turn round and say, "It is too mysterious," and yet after all where is this mystery? "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." What can be more plain than that? Anyhow, dear friends, let me say to you, whether it is a mystery or not, God bears witness to it, and if you do not believe it you make God a liar. Whether you think it too simple, or too good, or too wonderful, or too anything, you must either believe God or make him a liar, there is no third course; for, be it simple or mysterious, wonderful or commonplace, the Lord asserts it to be true, and if you refuse his witness you make him a liar, and must take the consequences.

III. And now I pray the Holy Spirit to rest upon my words while I treat for a few minutes upon the third most awful point, namely, THE EXECRATION OF THIS SIN. To disbelieve God is a sin indeed! It was the mother sin of all, the door by which all other evil came into the world. The devil whispered in the ear of mother Eve, "Yea, hath God said?" That insinuated doubt commenced our fall; and when that had tarnished the brightness of her intellect, the fiend added, "Ye shall not surely die"—giving God the lie direct; when she believed him, and her husband joined her in it, our ruin was complete. Unbelief of God turned our race out of Eden, and in consequence we are born in sore travail, and plough the ground with toil. Oh, accursed unbelief! It is time thou wert hung up on a gallows high as that of Haman! Alas, that any man should hug thee to his heart! Thou destroyer of our race, thou art loathsome indeed! When the children of Israel were in the wilderness journeying towards Canaan, how was it that so many graves were digged in the desert, and that out of six hundred thousand footmen who came out of Egypt only two survived to enter the promised land? Who slew all these? The inspired apostle tells us, "They could not enter in because of unbelief." Go ye at this day to Jerusalem, look beneath the buildings of the modern town, and mark the excavations which reveal the utter ruin of the holy city. See how fully the prophecy was fulfilled that not one stone should remain upon another. Stand upon the steepes of Zion and ask, "Who destroyed this fair city? Who burned her holy and beautiful house with fire? She was beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, who cast her down to the dust, and why? The palaces of David and Solomon are overthrown, and the ploughshare has been driven over their foundations—why all this? Why was the siege of Jerusalem the most bloody and horrible in all history?" It was because the Jews rejected the Messiah, and would not believe the testimony of the living God. O, accursed unbelief! It spits its venom against the holy God, and he cannot but abhor it. How can the absolutely true submit to be charged with falsehood? This sin of making God a liar I do pray you look at it very solemnly, for it is a stab at God himself.

What is it that would most easily provoke yourself? If a person stole your goods, if he smote you in your person, if he injured you in business, you might bear it patiently, but when a man tells you to your face that he cannot believe you, the insult is acutely felt. You are not truthful if you can be content to be called a liar. Nothing stings like it: it is the unkindest cut of all. Oh, do not tell me that you find it difficult to believe my word, for that will cut me to the quick; yet would I a thousand times rather have you treat me thus than offer the same insult to the Lord my God.

Then, remember, this unbelief insults God on a very tender point. He comes to the guilty sinner and says, "I am ready to forgive." The sinner says, "I do not believe thee." "Hear me," says the Lord, "What proof do you ask? See, I have given my only-begotten Son, he has died upon the tree to save sinners." "Still I do not believe thee," says the unbeliever. Now, what further evidence can be given? Infinite mercy has gone its utmost length in giving the Saviour to bleed and die: God has laid bare his inmost heart in the wounds of his dying Son, and still he is not believed. Surely, man has reached the climax of enmity to God in this: nothing proves the utter baseness of man so much as this refusal to believe his God, and nothing proves so much the greatness of almighty grace as that God should after all this condescend to work faith in a heart so depraved. O miracle of sin! O greater miracle of love!

I would have you recollect that you are not only giving God the lie once or twice, but you deny what he has over and over again declared. To tell a man that he is a liar once is a great insult, but if he continues to asseverate the truth and you still contradict him, the provocation gathers force. If the man be perfectly truthful, it is a piece of wickedness on your part to refuse him credence when he repeats his evidence again and again: but the Lord has gone further than repeating his word, he has sworn it, and yet you will not believe him. I pray you remember that you are in the presence of God at this very moment, and that the Lord is now looking right into your heart, and sees clearly that in your inmost soul your unbelief is saying to him, "O God, the maker of heaven and earth, thou art a liar. O God, who gave thy Son to die, I do believe that fact, but I will not even now trust thee. I do not believe in thy power or willingness to pardon me, though thy word very clearly declares thee to be both able and willing. Thou hast promised to forgive all who in thy Son believe, but I cannot believe. Thou art ready now at once to put away sin from every man that believes thy witness with regard to Christ, but I do not believe thy witness; thou liest." I know you shudder at such sentiments, and there is good need that you should; but why do you continue to act upon them? Did I not hear some one say, "Ah, sir, I have been *trying to believe* for years." Terrible words! They make the case still worse. Imagine that after I had made a statement, a man should declare that he did not believe me, in fact, he could not believe me though he would like to do so. I should feel aggrieved certainly; but it would make matters worse if he added, "In fact, I have been for years trying to believe you, and I cannot do it." What does he mean by that? What can he mean but

that I am so incorrigibly false, and such a confirmed liar, that though he would like to give me some credit, he really cannot do it? With all the effort he can make in my favour, he finds it quite beyond his power to believe me? Now, a man who says, "I have been trying to believe in God," in reality says just that with regard to the Most High. How idle is it to talk of trying to believe! If a statement is true, a right judgment believes it, not of choice, but because the evidence commands faith. The *trying* lies in the other direction: men do not want to believe the truth, therefore they are careless and negligent, they raise quibbles and questions, they demand signs and wonders, and feelings, and impressions; they struggle against the evidence, they shut out the light. In you who believe the Bible to be God's word, and yet are unbelievers, it is evidently so; for if Jesus be the Saviour why do you not believe him? The talk about trying to believe is a mere pretence. But whether pretence or no, let me remind you that there is no text in the Bible which says, "Try and believe," but it says "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." He is the Son of God, he has proved it by his miracles, he died to save sinners, therefore trust him; he deserves implicit trust and child-like confidence. Will you refuse him these? Then you have maligned his character and given him the lie.

IV. I shall leave this matter when I have, with a heavy burden on my soul, said a few words upon THE FATE OF THE UNBELIEVER. If this man continues to say he cannot believe God, and that Christ is not to be trusted, what will happen to him? I wonder what the angels think must befall a being who calls God a liar. They see his glory, and as they see it they veil their faces, and cry, "Holy, holy, holy;" what horror would they feel at the idea of making God untrue! The saints in heaven when they see the glory of God fall down on their faces and adore him. Ask them what they think must happen to those who persist in calling God a liar, and a liar in the matter of his mercy to rebels through Jesus Christ. As for me, I cannot conceive any punishment too severe for final unbelief. Only this I know, it is written, "He that believeth not shall be damned." May you never know what that means, but you will know it as sure as you live if you continue in unbelief. God is not a liar, but if he does not damn the man who dies an unbeliever he will be; and therefore depend upon it he will do it. He has said, "He that believeth not shall be damned:" if he be false he may let you escape, but if he be true he will cast you into hell. There is nothing else before you. The other day an enquirer said to me, "I cannot believe," and I gave him no answer but this—"then you must be damned." Had I nothing else to say? No, nothing else; I had no comforts to offer, no hopes to present to an unbeliever. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." There is an honest intolerance about these words of our Lord; he does not stammer and hesitate and say, "I fear some ill may occur to you;" but he says outright that you will be damned. Nothing on earth or in heaven can save you except you believe in Jesus. You may knock at a thousand doors, and you may cry, and pray, and groan, and agonise, and sweat, ay, even to drops of blood, but there is only one door to

heaven, and that door is faith in Jesus Christ. If you will not enter by that door God himself will not open another. God has been pleased to empty out the infinite mercy of his heart into the person of his dear Son, and he cries, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely": but, if Jesus be rejected by you, and God's witness about him be refused, do not look for any other help. Think you that God has another son who will die for you? You would not believe in him if he had. Do you think he will alter the whole plan of salvation and the covenant of grace, and reverse the purposes of his wisdom to gratify your wicked whims? That were to make him an accomplice in your wickedness and a patron of your insolence. Believe me, he will keep his word, and if you believe not in Christ, you shall be utterly ashamed at the last great day.

The last word I have to say is this, not only will the unbeliever be lost, but he will be lost by his unbelief. Thus saith the Lord, "He that believeth not is condemned already." Why? "Because he hath not believed on the Son of God." Has he not committed a great deal else that will condemn him? Oh, yes, a thousand other sins are upon him, but justice looks for the most flagrant offence, that it may be written as a superscription over his condemned head, and it selects this monster sin and writes "*condemned, because he hath not believed on the Son of God.*" When the Spirit of God came into the world to convince men of sin, he began by convincing them of the greatest of all. Which did he choose as the most glaring? "Of sin because they believed not on me." I am only telling you what I find in the Scriptures. Certain brethren will say, "This sermon is not orthodox." I care nothing for their criticism: what I have advanced is God's word, and God's word against any man's word all the world over. His word is sharper than a two-edged sword, and I pray him to make it cut to your very marrow this morning,—to wound and kill that afterwards Christ may make alive. If any one of you should be finally cast into the prison of despair, to suffer in hell the wrath of God, the accusation which will appear over your condemned cell will run thus, "This man knew the gospel to be true, and yet he would not believe it." That thought will torture you with a vengeance, "I am condemned because I believed not the truth, because I made my God a liar, because I trusted not in Christ. He told me it would be so, and it is so. This is the sting of it all, that for my unbelief I am justly left to perish." Oh, dear hearers, belie the Lord not. By your reason which is yet left to you, by your love to yourselves, by heaven and by hell, by the bleeding wounds of Jesus, and by the truth of God, I entreat you accept Jesus. May the Holy Ghost go with my entreaties that your souls may relent, that your stony hearts may melt before the cross, and you may receive Jesus Christ to be your all in all this day. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John v.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—485, 600, 483.