

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

HELP FOR SEEKERS OF THE LIGHT.

A Sermon

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“We wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness.”
Isaiah lix. 9.

ISRAEL had greatly revolted from her God, and in consequence she had brought upon herself great sorrow. Still, instead of repenting of their faults, and returning to their allegiance to Jehovah, the nation continued to be duped by false prophets and presumptuous pride into the expectation of better days. The better days came not. They looked for the sunshine, but they wandered in the mists; they waited for brightness, but walked in gloom. Unhappy Israel! She turned aside from Jehovah to worship Baal; she went after the gods of the heathen, which were no gods; and from that hour her land was afflicted with pestilence and famine; the spoiler came up against her, he stopped her wells, cut down her vines, and barked her fig trees; and in the end he carried her away captive, made the sons and daughters of Zion to sit down by the waters of Babylon, and weep at the remembrance of the beloved city. Sin is evermore a bitter thing, and they who follow it expecting to arrive at the light of joy, are duped and deceived; they shall be plunged into denser and denser darkness, until they arrive at an unending midnight, unbroken by a solitary star. This historical example might be used by way of warning to any seekers after happiness who foolishly expect to find it in the pleasures of sin and the neglect of God. You will certainly be disappointed, for “joy is a plant that does not grow on nature’s barren soil”—only a renewed nature can be blessed. The more intensely you pursue happiness in the bewitching way of sin, the further will it fly from you; like the will-o-the-wisp, the glare of pleasure will entice you into the quagmire, but there will leave you to find that your chase has gained you nought but danger and weariness. The pearl of happiness lies not in the depths of dissipation. The broad road ends ever in destruction, never in peace. Hoist the sails of desire to the breeze, let go the helm of reason, and let your soul be borne wherever the blasts of temptation or the currents of custom may direct, and one thing you may make sure of, your unhappy bark will never be drifted by such means into the haven of peace: to such a voyage shipwreck is the certain termination. To other modes of

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Living disappointment is in like manner attached. Vain is it to pile up the gold, vain is it to awaken the clarion trump of fame, vain is it to gather learning or to master eloquence, eminence, rank, wealth, power—all these things are too little to satisfy the insatiable craving of an immortal soul. You must have God or you shall never have enough; you must be reconciled to him or you can never be at peace with yourself. Man must enter into covenant of peace with his God, or all the creatures of God shall conspire against him. Pilgrim of earth, thy way must be towards holiness and God, or in vain shalt thou expect the dawning: to the sinner there is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever, and even now his way is hard and his path is darkened with fear and disquietude.

I thought, however, this morning of addressing myself, through the words of the text, to another class of individuals—persons who are sincerely seeking better things, desirous of obtaining the true and heavenly light, who have waited hoping to receive it, but instead of obtaining it are in a worse, at least in a sadder, state than they were, and they are almost driven to-day into the dark foreboding that for them no light will ever come, they shall be prisoners chained for ever in the valley of the shadow of death. If God shall bless a few words of awakening and encouraging to such prisoners, so that some shall see the heavenly light to-day, thrice happy shall our heart be.

I. We will commence by depicting the character we wish to speak to. Our first head, therefore, may be remembered as **DESCRIPTIVE**.

These persons are *in some degree aware of their natural darkness*. According to the text, they are looking for light. They are not content with their obscurity, they are waiting for brightness. In this audience, there are a few who are not content to be what their first birth has made them; they discover in their nature much of evil, they would fain be rid of it; they find in their understanding much ignorance, and they would fain be illuminated; they do not understand the Scripture when they read it, and though they hear gospel terms, yet they fail to grasp gospel thought. They pant to escape from this ignorance, they desire to know the truth which saves the soul; and their desire is not only to know it in theory, but to know it by its practical power upon their inner man. They are really and anxiously desirous to be delivered from the state of nature, which they feel to be a dangerous one, and to be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Oh, but these are the best of hearers, these in whom right desires have begun to be awakened. Men who are dissatisfied with the darkness are evidently not altogether dead, for the dead shall slumber in the catacombs, heedless whether it be noon or night. Such men are evidently not altogether asleep, for they that slumber shall sleep the better for the darkness; they ask no sunbeams to molest their dreams. Such people are evidently not altogether blind, for to the blind little doth it matter whether the sun floods the landscape with glory, or night conceal it with her sable veil. Those to whom our thoughts are directly turned are evidently somewhat awakened, aroused, and bestirred, and this is no small blessing, for, alas! the most of men are a stolid mass as regards spiritual things, and the preacher might almost as hopefully strive to create a soul within the ribs of death, or

extort warm tears of pity from Sicilian marble, as to evoke spiritual emotions from the men of this generation. So far, the persons whom I seek this morning, are hopeful in their condition ; for as the trees twist their branches towards the sunlight, so do these long after Jesus, the light and life of men.

Moreover, these persons *have a high idea of what the light is*. In the text they call it "brightness." They wait for it, and are grieved because it comes not. If you greatly value spiritual light, my dear friend, you are under no mistake; if you count it to be a priceless thing to obtain an interest in Christ, the forgiveness of your sins, and peace with God, you judge according to solemnness. You shall never exaggerate in your valuation of the one thing needful. It is true that those who trust in God are a happy people; it is true that to be brought into sonship and adopted into the family of the great God, is a boon for which kings might well exchange their diadems. You cannot think too highly of the blessings of grace: I would the rather incite in you a sacred covetousness after them, than in the remotest degree lower your estimate of their preciousness. Salvation is such a blessing that heaven hangs upon it; if you win grace you have the germ of heaven within you, the security, the pledge and earnest of everlasting bliss. So far, again, there is much that is hopeful in you. It is well that you loathe the darkness and prize the light.

Furthermore, the persons I would fain speak with, *have some hope that they may yet obtain this light*; in fact, they are waiting for it, hopefully waiting, and are somewhat disappointed that after waiting for the light, behold, obscurity has come. They are evidently astonished at the failure of their hopes. Walking in darkness they are amazed to find themselves when they had fondly hoped that the candle of the Lord would shine round about them. My dear friend, I would encourage in thee that spark of hope, for despair is one of the most terrible hindrances to the reception of the gospel. So long as awakened sinners cherish a hope of mercy, we have hope for them. We hope, O seeker, that ere long you will be able to sing of pardon bought with blood, and when this scene is closed, shall enter through the gates into the pearly city amongst the blessed who for ever see the face of the Wellbeloved. Though it may seem too good to be true, yet even you, in your calmer moments think one day you will rejoice that Christ is yours, and take your seat amongst his people, though meanest of them all in your own estimation. Then you imagine in your heart, how fervently you will love your Redeemer, how rapturously you will kiss the very dust of his feet, how gratefully you will bless him who has lifted the poor from the dunghill, and made him to sit among princes. How I long to see this hope of yours transformed into joyful reality. May the chosen hour strike this morning. May you no longer look through the window wistfully at the banquet, but come in to sit at the table, and feed upon Christ, rejoicing with his chosen.

The persons I am describing are such as *have learned to plead their case with God*, for our text is a complaint addressed to the Lord himself. "We wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness." It is a declaration of inward feelings, a laying bare of the heart's agonies to the Most High. Ah, dear friend, although you

have not yet found the peace you seek, it is well that you have begun to pray. Perhaps you think it poor praying; indeed, you hardly dare call it prayer at all; but God judges not as you do. A groan is heard in heaven; a deep-fetched sigh and a falling tear are prevalent weapons at the throne of God. Yes, your soul cries to God, and you cannot help it. When you are about your daily work you find yourself sighing, "O that my load of guilt were gone! O that I could but call the Lord my Father with an unfaltering tongue!" Night after night and day after day this desire rises from you like the morning mist from the valleys. You would this morning tear off your right arm, and pluck out your right eye, if you might but gain the boon unspeakable. You are sincerely anxious for reconciliation with God, and your anxiety reveals itself in prayer and supplication. I hope these prayers will continue. I trust you will never cease your crying. May the Holy Ghost constrain you to sigh and groan still. Like the importunate woman, may you press your suit until the gracious answer shall be granted through the merits of Jesus. So far, dear friend, things are hopeful with you; but when I say hopeful, I wish I could say much more, for mere hopefulness is not enough. It is not enough to desire, it is not enough to seek, it is not enough to pray; you must actually obtain, you must in very deed lay hold on eternal life. You will never enjoy comfort and peace till you have passed out of the merely hopeful stage into a better and a brighter one, by making sure your interest in the Lord Jesus by a living, appropriating faith. In the exalted Saviour all the gifts and graces which you need are stored up, in readiness to supply your wants. O may you come to his fulness, and out of it receive grace for grace.

The person I am desirous of comforting this morning, may be described by one other touch of the pencil. He is one who is *quite willing to lay bare his heart before God*, to confess his desires whether right or wrong, and to expose his condition whether unhealthy or sound. While we try to cloak anything from God, we are both wicked and foolish. It argues a rebellious spirit when we have a desire to hide away from our Maker; but when a man uncovers his wound, invites inspection of its sore, bids the surgeon cut away the leprous film which covered its corruption, and saith to him, "Here, probe into its depths, see what evil there is in it; spare not, but make a sure cure of the wound," then he is in a fair way to be recovered. When a man is willing to make God his confessor, and doth freely, and without hypocrisy, pour out his heart like water before the Lord, there is good hope for him. I believe I have some such here this morning. You have told the Lord your case, you have spread your petitions before him—I trust you will continue to do so until you find relief; but I have yet a higher hope, namely, that you may soon obtain peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

II. So I shall pass on to the second point, which is that of ASSISTANCE.

It shall now be my happy task to endeavour to assist into the light these who would fain flee from the darkness. We will do so by trying to answer the query, "How is it that I, being desirous of light, have not found it yet? Why am I left to grope like a blind man for the wall, and stumble at noonday as in the night? Why has not the Lord revealed himself to me?" The first answer. My dear friend, *you*

may have been seeking the light in the wrong place. Many, like Mary, seek the living amongst the dead. You, it is possible, may have been the victim of the false doctrine that peace with God can be found in the use of ceremonies. It may be you have been brought in connection with that church which vainly rests its faith upon the figment of apostolical succession, and the empty parade of episcopal ordination. You have been taught to believe on aquatic regeneration, and confirmation by palmistry; you are the dupe of the dogma of sacramental efficacy, and priestly potency; if so, it is little marvel that you have not found peace, for, believe me, there is no peace to be found in the whole round of ceremonies, even if they were such as God himself prescribed; there is no peace to be found in them, except it be that deadly peace which rocks souls in the cradle of superstition into that deep sleep from which only the judgment trumpet shall awaken them. These are they that receive strong delusion to believe a lie that they all may be damned. May you, my hearers, escape from so terrible a doom. God has never promised salvation to the use of ceremonies. The gospel which he sent his servants to preach was never a gospel of postures, genuflexions, symbols, and rituals. The gospel is revealed in these words, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"—a mental thing, a spiritual thing, an inner thing, but not at all an outward display, a matter of the senses and the flesh. Our gospel is altogether a matter for heart, and soul, and spirit. And such must be your salvation, or saved you can never be.

It is possible too, dear friend, that you have been looking for salvation in the mere belief of a certain creed. You have thought that if you could discover pure orthodoxy, and could then consign your soul into its mould, you would be a saved man; and you have consequently believed unreservedly, as far as you have been able to do so, the set of truths which have been handed to you by the tradition of your ancestors. It may be that your creed is Calvinistic, it is possible that it is Arminian, it may be Protestant, it may be Romish, it may be truth, it may be a lie; but, believe me, solid peace with God is not to be found through the mere reception of any creed, however true or scriptural. Mere head-notion is not the road to heaven. "Ye must be born again," means a great deal more than that you must believe certain dogmas. It is of the utmost possible importance, I grant you, that you should search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; but recollect how our Lord upbraided the Pharisees. As the passage may be read, he told them that they searched the Scriptures, but he added, "Ye will not come unto *me* that ye might have life." Ye stop short at the Scriptures, and therefore short of eternal life. The study of these, good as it is, cannot save you; you must press beyond this—you must come to the living, personal Christ, once crucified, but now living to plead at the right hand of God, or else your acceptance of the soundest creed cannot avail for the salvation of your soul. You may be misled in some other manner which I have not time to mention; some other mistaken way of seeking peace may have beguiled you, and if so, I pray God you may see the mistake and understand that there is but one door to salvation, and that is Christ; there is one way, and that is Christ; one truth, and that is Christ; one life, and that is

Christ. Salvation lies in Jesus only; it lies not in you, in your doings, or your feelings, or your knowings, or your resolvings. In him all life and light for the sons of men are stored up by the mercy of God the Father. It may be one reason why you have not found the light because you have sought it in the wrong place.

Again, it is possible that *you may have sought it in the wrong spirit*. My dear friend, when we ask for pardon, reconciliation, salvation, we must remember to whom we speak, and who we are who ask the favour. Some appear to deal with God as if he were bound to give salvation; as if salvation indeed were the inevitable result of a round of performances, or the deserved reward of a certain amount of virtue. They refuse to see that salvation is a pure gift of God, not of works, not the result of merit, but of free favour only; not of man, neither by man, but of the Lord alone. Though the Lord has placed it on record in his word, in the plainest language, that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," yet the most of men in their hearts imagine that everlasting life is tied to duties and earned by service. Dear friend, thou must come down from such vainglorious notions; thou must sue out thy pardon, as our law courts put it, *in formâ pauperis*; thou must come before God as a humble petitioner, pleading the promises of mercy, abhorring all idea of merit, confessing that if the Lord condemn thee he has a right to do it, and that if he save thee, it will be an act of pure, gratuitous mercy, a deed of sovereign grace. Oh! but too many of you seekers hold your heads too high; to enter the lowly gate of light you must stoop. On the bended knee is the penitent's true place. "God be merciful to me, a sinner," is the penitent's true prayer. Why, man, if God should damn thee, thou couldst never complain of injustice, for thou hast deserved it a thousand times; and if those prayers of thine were never answered, if no mercy ever came, thou couldst not accuse the Lord, for thou hast no right to be heard. He could righteously withhold an answer of peace if so he willed to do. Confess that you are an undeserving, ill-deserving, hell-deserving sinner, and begin to pray as you have never before prayed. Cry out of the depths of self-abasement if you would be heard. Come as a beggar, not as a creditor. Come to crave, not to demand. Use only this argument, "Lord, hear me, for thou art gracious, and Jesus died; I cry to thee as a condemned criminal who seeks pardon. Deliver me from going down into the pit, that I may praise thy name." This, I fear, may have been a great source of mischief with many of you, this harbouring of a proud spirit; and, if it hath been so, amend it, I beseech you, and go now with humble and contrite hearts, in lowliness and brokenness of spirit, unto your Father whom you have offended, for he will surely accept you as his children.

Others have not obtained peace, I fear, *because they have not yet a clear idea of the true way of finding it*. This, though it be preached to us so often, is still but little understood. The way of peace with God is seen through a haze by most men, so that if you put it ever so plainly, they will, if it be possible, misunderstand you. Dear hearer, thy salvation does not depend upon what thou dost, but upon what Christ did eighteen hundred and sixty years ago, when he offered

himself a sacrifice for sin. All thy salvation takes root in the death-throes of Calvary; the great Substitute did then in very deed bear thy sin and suffer its penalty. Thy sin shall never destroy thee if upon that bloody tree the Lord's chosen High Priest made a full expiation for thy sins; they shall not be laid against thee any more for ever. What thou hast to do is but to accept what Jesus has finished. I know thy notion is that thou art to bring something to him; but that vainglorious idea has ruined many, and will ruin more. When thou shalt be brought to come empty-handed, made willing to accept a free and full salvation from the hand of the Crucified, then, and then only, shalt thou be saved.

“There is life for a look at the Crucified One.”

But men will not look to the cross. No, they conspire to raise another cross; or they aspire to adorn that cross with jewels, or they labour to wreath it with sweet flowers; but they will not give a simple look to the Saviour, and rely alone on him. Yet, dear hearer, peace with God no soul ever can obtain by any other means; while this means is so effectual that it never did fail, and never shall. The waters of Abana and Pharpar are preferred by proud human nature, but the waters of Jordan alone can take away the leprosy. Our repentings, our doings, our resolvings, these are but broken cisterns; but the only life-draught is to be found in the fountain of living water opened up by our Immanuel's death. Do you understand that a simple trust, a sincere dependence, a hearty reliance upon Christ, is the way of salvation? If you do know this, may the God who taught you to understand the way, give you grace to run in it, and then your light has come; arise and shine. Your peace has come, for Christ has bought it with his blood. For as many as trust in him he has been punished; their sins are gone—

“Lost as in a shoreless flood,
Drown'd in the Redeemer's blood;
Pardon'd soul, how bless'd art thou,
Justified from all things now!”

My dear friend, if none of these things have touched thy case, let me further suggest that perhaps thou hast not found light *because thou hast sought it in a half-hearted manner*. None enter heaven who are but half inclined to go there. Cold prayers ask God to refuse them. When a man manifestly does not value the mercy which he asks, and would be perfectly content not to receive it, it is small wonder if he be denied. Many a sinner lies by the year together freezing outside the door of God's mercy, because he has never thoroughly bestirred himself to take the kingdom of heaven by violence. If you can by any means be made willing to be unsaved, you shall be left to perish; but if you are inwardly set and resolved that you will give God no rest until you win a pardon from him, he will give you your heart's desire. The man who must be saved shall be. The man whose heart is set to find the way to Sion's hill, shall find that way. I believe that usually a sense of our pardon comes to us when, Samson-like, we grasp the posts of mercy's door with desperate vehemence, as though we would pluck them up, post and bar and all, sooner than remain any longer shut out from

peace and safety. Strong cryings and tears, groanings of spirit, vehement longings, and ceaseless pleadings—these are the weapons which, through the blood of Jesus, win us the victory in our warfare of seeking the Lord. Perhaps, then, my dear friend, thou hast not bestirred thyself as thou shouldst. May the Lord help thee to be a mighty wrestler, and then a prevailing prince.

To come close home to thy conscience, is it not possible, is it not rather fearfully probable, that *there may be some sin within thee which thou art harbouring to thy soul's peril?* When a soldier's foot has refused to heal, the surgeon has been known to examine it very minutely, and manipulate every part. Each bone is there, and in its place; there is no apparent cause for the inflammation, but yet the wound refuses to heal. The surgeon probes and probes again, until his lancet comes into contact with a hard foreign substance. "Here it is," saith he, "a bullet is lodged here; this must come out, or the wound will never close." So my probe, dear hearer, may this morning discover a secret in thee, and if so, it must out, or thou must die. You cannot expect to have peace with God, and still indulge in that drunkard's glass. What, a drunkard reconciled to God? You cannot hope to enjoy peace with God, and yet refuse to speak with that relative who offended you years ago. What, look to be forgiven, when you will not yourself forgive? There are doubtful practices in your trade behind the counter; do you dare to hope that God will accept a thief?—for that is what you are, a thief and a liar. You brand your goods dishonestly, call them twenty when they are fifteen; do you expect God to be your friend while you remain a rogue? Do you think he will smile on you in your knavery, and walk with you when you choose dirty ways? Perhaps you indulge a haughty spirit, or it may be an idle disposition; it little signifies which kind of devil is in you, it must come out, or else the peace of God cannot come in. Now, art thou willing to give sin up? If not, it is all lost time for me to preach Christ to thee, for he is not meant to be a Saviour of those who persevere in sin. He came to save his people *from* their sins, not *in* them; and if thou still must needs cling to a darling sin, be not deceived, for within the gates of heaven thou canst never enter.

Have I yet to seek a reason why some of you have not found the light? *It may be that you have only sought peace with God occasionally;* after an earnest sermon you have been awakened, but when the sermon has been concluded, you have gone back to your slumber like the sluggard who turns again upon his bed. After a sickness, or when there has been a death in the family, you have then zealously bestirred yourself; but anon you have declined into the same carelessness as before. Oh! fool that you are, remember he wins not the race who runs by spurts, but he who continues running to the end. He gets not

Christ who doth but think of him now and then, and in the meantime regards vanity and falsehood in his heart. He only shall have Christ who must have him, who must have him now, and who giveth his whole heart to him, and crieth, "I will seek him till I find him, and when I find him I will never let him go."

I shall not dwell upon this, but let me remind you that the great reason after all, let us say what we will, why earnest souls do not get speedy rest, lies in this, that *they are disobedient to the one plain gospel precept*, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." I would pin them to this point. It is not needful at all to combat their doubts and fears; we may do it, but I do not know that we are called upon to do so; the plain matter of fact is, God lays down a way of peace, and you will not have it. God saith believing in Jesus you shall live: you will not believe in Christ, and yet hope to live! God reveals to you his dear Son and saith, "Trust him," and moreover saith, "He that believeth not hath made God a liar," and yet you dare to make God a liar; every minute that you live, in a state of unbelief, you, so far as you can, make God to be a liar! What an atrocity for any one of us to fall into! What an amazing presumption for a sinner to live in who professes to be seeking peace with God! O hear me now, I pray you. My soul for your soul if you are not this day saved, if you confide in the work of Jesus Christ. If you find not eternal life in Jesus, then we also must perish with you, for this is our hope, our only hope, and if it fail you it shall also fail us. Therefore do we with confidence, knowing it can fail neither of us, declare to you this faithful saying, which is worthy of all acceptation, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the chief. "Whosoever believeth in him hath everlasting life." "Believe then in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" for "he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved;" he that believeth not must be damned.

III. A few words by way of AROUSING.

My dear friend, I will suppose that I have thee by the hand, and am gazing intently into thine eyes. I fear for thee lest thou become frost-bitten by thy long sorrow, and fall into a fatal slumber. Thou hast been seeking rest, but thou hast not found it; *what an unhappy state is thine!* Thou art now unreconciled to God; thy sin clamours for punishment; thou art amongst those with whom God is angry every day. Canst thou bear to be in such a condition? Doth not something bid thee arise and flee out of this city of destruction, lest thou be consumed? What happiness you are missing every day! Did you lay hold on Christ by faith, you would possess a joy and peace passing all understanding. You are fretting in this low and miserable dungeon, like that poor nun at Cracow; you have been in the dark year after year, when the sun is shining, the sweet flowers are blooming, and everything waiting to lead thee forth

with gladness. Oh, what joys you lose by being an unbeliever! Why abidest thou so long in this evil state? Meanwhile, what good you might have done! Oh, if you had been led to look to Jesus Christ these months ago, instead of sitting in darkness yourself, you would have been leading others to Christ, and pointing other eyes to that dear cross that brought peace to you.

What sin you are daily committing! for you are daily an unbeliever, daily doing despite to the precious blood, daily denying the ability of Christ, and so doing injury to his honour. Doth not the Spirit of God within you make you say this morning, "I will arise, and go to my Father"? Oh, if there be such a thought trembling in your soul, quench it not, obey it, arise and go, and may thy Father's arms be about thy neck ere this day's sun goes down. Meanwhile, dear friend, as I press thy hand again, permit me to say, what a hardening process is insensibly going on within thee! If thou art not better, thou art certainly worse than thou wast twelve months ago. Why, those promises that cheered thee then, now yield thee no comfort! Those threatenings which once startled thee, now cause thee no alarm! Wilt thou tarry longer? Thou hast waited to be better, and thou art growing worse and worse. Thou hast said, "I will come at a more convenient season," and every season is more inconvenient than that which came before it. You doubted then, you are the victim of deeper and more dastardly doubts to-day. O that thou couldst believe in him who must be true. O that thou couldst trust in him who ought to be trusted, for he never can deceive. I pray God the day may come, come now this very moment, that thou mayst shake thyself from the dust, and arise and put on thy beautiful garments, for every hour thou sittest on the dunghill of thy soul-destroying doubts thou art being fastened by strong bands of iron to the seat of despair. Thine eye is growing dimmer, thine hand more palsied; and the poison in thy veins is raging more furiously. Yonder is the Saviour's cross, and there is efficacy in his blood for you. Trust Jesus now, and this moment you enter into peace. The gate of mercy swings readily on its hinge and opens wide to every soul that casts itself upon the bosom of the Saviour. O why tarriest thou? Mischiefs will befall thee. The sun is going down; haste thee, traveller, lest thou be overtaken with an everlasting night.

What else can I say to arouse thee but this—every man and every woman in this house to-day who is unconverted, however hopeful you may be, is running the awful risk of sinking into the place where hope cometh not! As the Lord my God liveth, my hearer, with all the hopefulness which is now about thee, except thou believe in Jesus, thou shalt be damned. There may be ten thousand good points about thee, but if thou miss this one, thou must be a castaway. My soul is grieved and vexed within me that I have such a message to deliver,

but I must speak plainly. Wilt thou have Christ or no? If not, then, whatever thou mayst glory in, Christ will not know thee in the day of his coming, but thou shalt hear him say, "Depart from me, I never knew you." Unless Jesus Christ be your shield and help, you are undone. But you may have him, you may have him now. His spirit speaks through my voice to you at this hour. I know he does. You are feeling even now the gentle motions of his mighty power.

"Yield to his love who round you now
The bands of a man would cast,
The cords of his love, who was given for you,
To his altar binding you fast."

This is your only opportunity. Once let life be over, and there is no Christ to be preached in Gehenna, no gospel to be proclaimed amid the flames of Tophet. Perhaps to some of you even this day is your only day of grace. Now is conscience yet tender; to-morrow, touched by that hot iron which Satan ever has at hand, it may be a seared conscience never to feel again. Now does the gospel trumpet ring sweet and clear, "Come and welcome, come and welcome; come and welcome, sinners, come." Your guilt shall vanish quite away, though black as hell before; all things that separate between you and God shall be removed; only trust in Jesus and you shall live. I wish to put it to you more powerfully, but cannot. There is the gospel. You have heard it this morning, perhaps you will never hear it again; or, hearing it again, perhaps it shall never have a power to woo you as it hath at this hour. By the wounds of Christ, I pray you turn not from him. By the second coming of Christ, I pray you regard him! Since he shall shortly descend in the clouds of heaven to call the nations to account, I pray you bow to him! By that pierced hand which shall sway the sceptre, by those weeping eyes which shall flash like flames of fire, by those lips of mercy which shall pronounce sentences of thunder, to be accompanied with an execution of lightning, I pray you "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little!" I preach to you Christ with the thorn-crown, Christ with the wounded hands, Christ with the opened side, full of tenderness and mercy to sinners, though they forget him and neglect him; but if you will not have this Christ, then I must tell you of the Christ who shall come—

"With the rainbow wreath and robes of storm,
On cherub wings and wings of wind,
Appointed Judge of all mankind."

You may reject him to-day, but you shall not escape him then; you may turn your backs upon him on this Sabbath-day, but the mountains shall refuse to give you shelter in that tremendous hour. Come, bow

at his feet; look ye up now to his dear face, and say, "I trust thee, Jesus, I trust thee now; save me now, for I am vile."

IV. The last word is that of ENCOURAGEMENT.

Dear friends, that there are many, many around you, some of whom you know, who have trusted Jesus and they have found light. They once suffered your disappointments, but they have now found rest to their souls. They came to Jesus just as they were, and at this moment they can tell you that they are satisfied in him. If others have found such peace, why not you? Jesus is still the same. It is not to Christ's advantage to reject a sinner, it is not for God's glory to destroy a seeker; rather, it is for his honour and glory to receive such as humbly repose in the sacrifice of his dear Son. What doth hold thee back? Thou art called, come. Thou art pressed to come, come. In the courts of law I have sometimes heard a man called as a witness, and no sooner is he called, though he may be at the end of the court, than he begins to press his way up to the witness box. Nobody says, "Who is this man pushing here?" or, if they should say, "Who are you?" it would be a sufficient answer to say, "My name was called." "But you are not rich, you have no gold ring upon your finger!" "No, but that is not it, I was called." "But you are not a man of repute, or rank, or character!" "It matters not, I was called. Make way." So make way, ye doubts and fears, make way, ye devils of the infernal lake, Christ calls the sinner. Sinner, come. Though thou hast nought to recommend thee, yet, since it is written, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," come thou, and the Lord bless thee, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Matthew xi. 12—30.
