

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE MESSAGE FROM THE LORD'S MOUTH.

A Sermon

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“Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.”—Ezekiel iii. 17.

IN most places the seasons in the church are the reverse of those of nature. Our wintry season generally comes when our hearers are busy in the fields, or resting in their summer retreats, and our harvest time for the ingathering of souls comes to us in the winter, when during the long evenings the people can come together, and special meetings for prayer and exhortation can be held. Just now, as the damps of autumn begin to fall and the days are sensibly shortening, we ought to take note of the signs of the times, and begin sharpening our sickles for a plenteous harvest. The time when kings go forth to battle is coming on, and we must muster the host. The season when we can with special ease gather the people, and hopefully labour for their conversion, is now at our doors, and it is well that we gird up our loins for it. I feel deeply anxious, dear friends, that every time these seasons come round all Christians should be fully prepared for them, that we should make the best of every opportunity, and use with thorough-heartedness every hopeful occasion, if by any means we may save some. Now is our time to use all our powers that we may be the means of bringing glory to our Lord Jesus Christ, and of setting him on high in hearts conquered by his love.

We would all desire to take some part in this gracious work. Of course there are, and always will be, in the Christian church, special watchmen: chosen men are set apart by God for the warning of the people, whose one business it is to cry aloud and spare not, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. Let us be thankful that the Lord gives us such men, and let us beseech him to multiply their number. We prayerfully expect still to have our Ezekiels, to whom the Lord shall say, “Son of man, I have made thee a watchman”; but still, beloved, when the camp is in imminent danger every man should turn watchman; and though the special sentinels must keep their posts, and walk their

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beats, and must with double vigilance act as if everything depended upon them, yet all the rest of the host must mount guard also, and aid in keeping the watches both by day and night. It seems to me, brother, that if the Lord has opened thine eyes thou hast become a seer, and when thou hast become a seer, and canst see, thou shouldst also become a watchman, and watch for the good of the church of God, and for the salvation of souls. If this country were invaded, which may God grant it never may be, we could not confine the defence to our professional soldiers. No, every man would grasp such weapon as he could reach, and use it vigorously to drive the intruder over our white cliffs; I might even venture to say every woman would do the same, and matrons would become Amazons. Dear are our hearths and homes, and none of us would ask to be excused the defence of our beloved isle. Even so in the work of the salvation of souls, every saved one longs to have a share. Can we let sinners perish? Can we permit our own kinsmen to go down into the pit? No, not if our prayers, and tears, and earnest teachings can rescue them. Jesus Christ in mighty love has died to save sinners, and he must be honoured for his glorious deed of grace,—can we suffer his name to be trailed in the mire? Shall he still be despised and rejected by human hearts? Shall even the members of our own family refuse his gentle sway? No, not if our testimony may help to honour him; nor if our earnest pleadings may gain him a throne in some one human heart.

We feel glad to think that Christ's battles are not such as require strength of muscle and bone, nor do they need great mental capacity. Even the appointed watchman is set only to *warn* the people: he has not to charm them with eloquence, nor to electrify them with novelties of oratory: he is simply to warn them, and the plainest language may suffice for that. Surely it is a grave mistake of the present period that men think their preachers are bound to be oratorical and poetical. Why is such startling ability to be flaunted if the object is to warn a sinner to flee from the wrath to come? I fear that my brethren are forgetting their real errand, and are labouring to dazzle those whom the Lord sent them to warn. If a man is asleep, and I have to wake him, I need not cultivate a fine tenor voice with which to sing him out of his slumbers; I have but to call with sufficient loudness and distinctness until he is startled. I am glad that you Christian people can all take a share in the service of your Master, since that service is the warning of those around you. You will never deliver sensational discourses, and I am sure you need not regret the inability; but you can give men warning from God. You can warn children, your own children to begin with; you can warn your neighbours, you can warn those of your own rank and age; you can warn all who come in your way, for that is simply to tell of danger, and to recommend the way of escape. Brethren, with but slender knowledge and stammering utterance, we can warn and we will.

I am going to address you this morning upon the supposition that all of you who are believers in Christ are panting to take a share in the necessary and earnest work of warning men, lest they come to destruction. May I not hope that this is the case? To me it seems as if there is nothing else worth living for. It cannot be worth while to linger in this land of sorrow and of toil unless God is to be glorified by us; nothing but the

accomplishment of his gracious purposes can compensate us for our exile from heaven. No merely earthly object is worthy of an immortal spirit. If we could win the Indies? What is wealth? If we could compel the trumpet of fame to engross itself with our exploits? What is honour? There is nothing beneath the moon worth a man's lifting his hand for, except the glory of God; and God is best glorified by the conversion of men. You believe *that*, my brethren, and therefore you mean to have a share in it, if it be but the bringing of one poor child to Christ; therefore to you I speak with confidence, hoping that God may bless my words, so that we may begin a new campaign right well prepared for it, and so may achieve a greater success than any we have hitherto gained.

What are the qualifications for serving God by warning men? Ezekiel had them. What can we learn from the Lord's words to Ezekiel by which we may the better serve our Lord and act as watchmen to those around us?

Three things I shall speak of this morning: first, *the ear to be disciplined*: secondly, *the tongue to be educated*: thirdly, *a lesson in the text to be practised*. May the Holy Spirit bless the whole subject to us.

I. If we would be found really useful and serviceable for our Lord and Master, **THE EAR IS TO BE DISCIPLINED**. Read the text. "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore *hear the word at my mouth*." To train the tongue you must begin with the ear. It is well known that no man is fit to command who has not first learned to obey, and assuredly no man is qualified to teach who has not first of all found pleasure in learning. Thou must be a disciple and sit at the Master's feet ere thou canst become an apostle and go forth to speak in the Master's name. To acquire eloquence we must train the ear, and especially to warn our fellow men we must ourselves hear the voice of warning. The text says, "Hear the word at my mouth." What does this mean? I take it, first, that if we wish to be useful our ear must be disciplined *to hear only God's word*. We must receive the gospel as God's own word, and go forth to proclaim it as such. I have lately met pretty frequently with the following sentiment; it is one of the fungi of this enlightened age of advanced thought—"The call is every day more loud for teaching which shall not appeal to the authority of the Bible, but to the decision of the hearts and consciences of men. Our religious teachers should fall back upon the truth which men have gathered from their inner consciousness, and should support their instructions by arguments fetched from the experience of the thoughtful and philosophical. It is too late in the day to be always referring to a book and attempting to prove certain statements by the stereotyped utterances of an antiquated volume." That is the favourite notion, and those who believe in it may go on and dote and dream as much as they please, and those who think their excogitations worth listening to may listen to them: they will, no doubt, greatly please themselves, and they will for awhile amuse the little coteries who look up to them as little popes of a little party. They may even worship them as little gods, for surely the creator and maker of truth within himself falls not very short of deity. Brethren, we can afford to let this plague of flies pass away; the nuisance is great, but it will not long endure. There will come an end of all

this trifling. Man's imaginings and reasonings are wood, hay, stubble, and the day cometh which will consume them. Vainglorious mortals would supplant the eternal testimony with their maunderings, but this their way is their folly. Our assurance is that the teaching which is wanted for this age must come more and more distinctly from the Book, and must court daily testing by the Book. Teachers if they are to have power must sustain everything with "thus saith the Lord." Ours it is to stand or fall by revelation, and to declare "We do not care one single farthing about your imaginary consciousness and the manufacturings of your dreams, your fancies, and your whims; we declare to you that God hath spoken, and that what he has said you are bound to receive, because the Lord hath said it." This stands instead of all arguments, "the Lord hath said it." Believe him, for he cannot lie. We come to tell you of what we ourselves have received upon divine authority, and we claim that you do receive our testimony, not because it is ours, but because it is supported by divine authority, and is in fact the echo of the divine word. Only by this mode of utterance can we hope to succeed. On any other footing we court failure and deserve it. Brother, dost thou say, "I desire to spread my religion, because it is my own opinion"? Thou wilt never win anyone on such terms; how canst thou expect it? Thy warning of another man, apart from God's truth, will be of no use to him, for thy opinion is as good as his, and his opinion is as good as thine, and neither is worth much. Brother, dost thou say, "I regard my religion as my own views of things"? Ah, then, your views of things, and my views of things, and everybody else's views of things are worth little enough, and there is no use in making a stir about them. Any opinion which bears your name at the bottom, or mine, might just as well not be written. What are our names? What are our views? No, brother, if thou wouldst speak so as to affect the heart and conscience and destiny of men, thou must repeat what thou hast received from God's own mouth, as God's own word: there is a value about that, a fixedness, a certainty about that, and it goes forth with a supreme majesty, involving woe upon any who dare reject it: hence its power. If it be indeed the word of God, woe unto you if you do not speak it faithfully, and woe unto your hearers if they receive it not reverently. The very first thing, then, for us to remember, if we would be useful in warning men and saving souls, is, that we feel the full conviction and impression that what we try to teach is God's own word. "Thou shalt hear the word from my mouth." We must feel it to be clothed with the imperial robe of divine authority. We are not going to speak it because it is the doctrine authorized by the creed, nor because it is the doctrine of the community to which we belong, but because it is the sure word of the living God. Here is power,—power which hard hearts are forced to feel, power before which even devils tremble. I warrant thee if thou put God's word down among fifty thousand words of men it shall be like a lion among a flock of sheep, tearing them in pieces, and it will prove by its own natural force whence it cometh and whither it goeth.

Secondly, if we would have our ear educated, it must be not only to receive the word as of divine authority, but *to know what God's word is*. Beloved, there be many who are willing to begin winning souls who had better first commence learning Christ. "Go ye into all the world and

preach the gospel to every creature" was spoken to men who had been for some time with Jesus, and had learned of him. For others who were to be called it was provided that after baptism they should be taught, that in due season they also might go forth to instruct the nations. I like not that a man should become so much a learner that he never wishes to speak and to teach others, but I like as little that a man should be so anxious to be a teacher that he runs before he is sent, and tries to bring others to a Saviour of whom he knows next to nothing. Fill thyself, brother, before thou askest to be poured out, else there will not much come of thine outpouring. Receive the bread and the fish from the Master, else thou wilt have very little to distribute among the crowd. First of all get thou to know what it is thou hast to say, or else how canst thou speak for God? If a messenger run swiftly and cometh out of breath to the end of his journey, and then saith, I have somewhat to say for my master, but I know not what it is, he will be laughed at for his pains. His swift running is of little consequence, seeing he had nothing to carry. He should have waited till he knew the tidings which he had to bring. Brother, hear the word from God's mouth, and then deliver it in God's name.

What, then, shall we do? Let us study the Bible with diligence. Go to that fountain of truth, I pray you, and never be satisfied with a second-hand version of it. Go you to the fountain head and drink there or ever the streams have been mudded by human blundering. We desire to keep the word pure, but we are conscious of infirmity; go you to the undefiled well, where there is no admixture of human error. Search the inspired book and desire to know everything which it teaches, for a little error may do much mischief to good teaching, like the fly in the pot of ointment. Even the omission of a truth may injure a man's usefulness to a very great extent. The Lord does not bless some churches as we would expect them to be blessed, because they are in grievous error upon certain points; and, though he will bless that part of the testimony which is true, yet the other portion hinders. Probably one reason why Christianity does not spread so rapidly just now as it once did is this—that it is so mixed up in most denominations with human tradition and opinion, and because, also, there is so little willingness to examine doubtful points to see whether or no they are according to the mind of God. The church would be one with itself if it were one with the truth. It would be impossible that there should be so many divisions if we all held to the one Lord, one faith, one baptism; but there are sad admixtures which are allowed to go on from year to year unchallenged, and if any man be honest enough to speak out he is straightway charged with bigotry and uncharitableness. While these things are so the blessing will be restrained.

My dear brother, if you would be eminently useful, let your mind bow before the doctrine of the Scriptures. Seek to know all that the Bible teaches, especially upon the main points of salvation, and yield yourself to the mind of Christ in all things. Desire to tell your fellow-men just what the Lord tells you, no more and no less; and endeavour throughout your whole life to follow after revealed truth in its purity, rather than the dogmas of the fathers or the decrees of the sects. The truth as it is in Jesus, pure and simple as we find it in the word, should be our rule and guide. This will greatly help us towards success. It does not look

a very practical remark, but it is so. The Holy Spirit first gives the truth to our understandings, and then gives us grace to impart it to others. Get thine ear cleansed, thoroughly cleansed, to hear God's word as God's word, and be determined to know thoroughly what God's word hath really taught; thus shalt thou be instructed to speak as God's mouth to men.

The great thing, I believe, with a successful winner of souls is *to hear God's truth from God's own mouth*. What mean I by this? I mean that a second-hand message is sure to be weakly delivered. A brother repeats a story which somebody else has told to him! how cold it gets in passing from hand to hand: he who first saw the fact told it with far more life and energy. What thou needest to do, brother, is to tell the message as God himself has told it to thee by his Holy Spirit. See how Ezekiel was prepared to prophesy. He says, "The hand of the Lord was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee." Yes, we must get alone with God and hear what he will speak, for only so can we fitly be his mouth to others. Do you want to know Christ's way of making men useful? Turn to Mark iii. 13—15, and read, "He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would; and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils." Do you see the order? He calls them to him,—you must not dream of winning souls till you first come to Christ yourself. Next we read, "That they might be with him,"—you cannot go and teach Christ, or bring others to him, unless you have first been with him. Communion with Jesus is training for service. To abide with your Lord must be your college, and your preparation class for teaching others. After the fellowship comes the work—"That he might send them forth to preach, and to have power." The process requires that the man who is to have power for Christ must first be with Christ. He cannot work miracles till he has dwelt with the great miracle-worker.

"Thou shalt hear the word *at my mouth*." There lies the word in the book. What infinite majesty is there! As I read each letter in that Book of God I worship the eternal mind which dictated it; but oh, when the passage of Scripture leaps out of the book and enters into my soul, by the divine flame of the Holy Spirit, how much more mighty it appears. When my inner ear hears God speak the text, what energy there is about it. Sitting down with the Bible on my knee, I say to myself, "This is no common book which lies before me: there is an inspiration here, not the inspiration of Milton or of Shakspeare, but divine inspiration; this is the language of the Eternal, as truly so as though I now saw Sinai on a blaze, and heard out of the thick darkness these accents ringing with trumpet tones, and with the deep thunder of 'Thus saith the Lord.'" When we thus consider we are in a right mood to hear the Lord's word, and to speak it to others. We must own and feel the majesty of the gospel, and be conscious of its power, or we shall not rightly warn men. Brethren, since this book is God's word to your own souls, take care that you deliver it in deep reverence and holy awe to those whom you aim to instruct. Is it not the voice of God to you? When it speaks home to your heart, does it not move you as nothing

else can do. I confess that the words of Scripture thrill my soul as nothing else ever can; they bear me aloft or dash me down, they tear me in pieces or they build me up after an unrivalled fashion. The words of God have more power over me than ever David's fingers had over his harp strings. Is it not so with you? Well, you will speak to others with power in proportion as you continually feel the power of the word over your own heart and conscience.

This is very wonderful this hearing the truth newly spoken from the Lord's mouth. Some will not know what I mean, but others of you will. The Holy Ghost has a way of showing unto us the old texts in a new light, and applying them with new force, and this is what we greatly need.

"Thou shalt hear the word at my mouth." I would like you teachers this afternoon, before you go to your classes, to go up stairs and say, "Good Master, let us hear what we have to tell the children; let us hear it in our souls as from thyself. We are going to warn and instruct and invite them; be pleased to show us how. Master, say the words to us. Make us to hear thy voice, and when we have heard thy message from thine own lips we shall talk to the children in quite another style from that which is usual to us." Brethren, in spirit maintain your fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, and so will you warn souls with warm, loving admonitions which God will bless. Let us have done with second-hand messages; speak as the oracles of God.

Once more, to have our ear well tutored *we must feel the force of the truth that we deliver*. Ezekiel had to eat the roll; it must enter into himself before he could reveal its contents to the people. So we must feel the force and power of the gospel before we can effectually declare it. Sin,—are you going to talk about the evil of it? Do you know the evil of it for yourself? Get back to the place of repentance where you once wet the earth with your tears, and talk to children or grown-up people about sin in that spirit. Pardon,—are you going to speak about that? Do you know the sweetness of it. Go to the place where first you saw the flowing of the ever precious blood, and feel again your load of guilt removed, and you will speak of it most sweetly. The power of the Holy Spirit,—are you going to speak about that? Have *you* felt his quickening, enlightening, comforting, and sanctifying influence? Then according as you have felt you will be able to speak with effect. It is poor work to preach a Christ you never knew. It is terrible to talk of bread you have never tasted, of living water you never drank, and of joys you never felt. The husbandman that laboreth must first be a partaker of the fruits. Go home, and ask the Lord to teach thee, but go not thou on his errands till first thou hast sat at his feet, for unto those whom he has not taught, God saith, "What hast thou to do that thou shouldst declare my statutes? First come and hear the word at my mouth, and then give the people warning from me." I think I have said enough to show how the ear is to be disciplined.

II. Secondly, **THE TONGUE IS TO BE EDUCATED**. That is indeed the aim of the discipline of the ear. And to what end is the tongue educated? I answer, first, to be able *to deliver an unpleasant message*. Any man's tongue is swift in telling good things; at least it ought to be,

or else where is humanity? We are glad enough to tell you glad tidings of good things, but he that is to be useful must be willing to speak unpleasant things. Brothers and sisters, are you ready when you meet with careless people to tell them truths that will be unpalatable to them; and when they are awakened are you willing in God's name to try and beat to pieces their refuges of lies, to tell them plainly of the mistakes that they are so fond of, and point them to the only way of salvation? You and I cannot be useful if we want to be sweet as honey in the mouths of men. God will never bless us if we wish to please men, that they may think well of us. Are you willing to tell them what will break your own heart in the telling and break theirs in the hearing? If not, you are not fit to serve the Lord. You must be willing to go and speak for God, though you will be rejected. See the seventh verse, where God says, "They will not hearken unto thee, for they will not hearken unto me." If they reject the Master, will they receive the servant? They took up stones to stone your own dear Lord and Master, and at last took nails to fasten him to the cross. Do you think they will listen to you? If God is to bless you, dear friend, you must be willing to bear witness for him even if none should ever believe a word you say, because in so doing you will deliver your soul. Take good heed, all of you, to this danger of being guilty of the blood of others. Have not some of you quite forgotten it? There is blood on your skirts! Do you see the spots? Some of you who never said a word for Christ to your own children, I say there are big drops of soul-blood on your garments. Soul-blood is worse than the blood of the body, and you are besmeared with it. See you not the spots? Wash them out, I pray you. Oh, you say, it is of no use warning them, they would laugh at you: but you would lose the blood-stains if you did. Their blood would not be required at your hands, therefore if you want to be useful be willing to do unpleasant duties in order to feel, "I have warned them and cleared my soul."

Next, you want your tongue tutored *to speak the truth as having yourself heard it*. You know there are several ways of speaking. I was trying to illustrate differences of speaking when addressing my students the other day. I said, "Suppose you saw by the look of my face, while I was sitting here, that I was in a terrible state of indignation when I rose to address you, you would say, 'Now we shall have it; we can see by the look of him that he will drive at us.'" Just so when a man preaches, or warns others, it ought to be in a living style which indicates that something is coming. The man should be full of emotion, not moved by anger, but by a sacred passion which arouses him and makes the people feel that he is in awful earnest, carried out of himself, not delivering set phrases and words from his mouth outwards, but speaking from his inmost heart. Now, if we were to meet with our Lord Jesus himself, and were then to speak of him in the state of mind in which his presence left us, what a style of speech that would be. I think I hear a mother, who has been with Jesus, talking to her girl. She says, "Dear child, there is such joy in loving Jesus that I pant for you to know it. He is so great and good that my dear little daughter must not forget him." I can imagine that a father has met with the Lord Jesus, and felt God's truth sent into his own soul by the Holy Ghost, and I am sure that when he gets his boy alone he pleads with him

in deep and tender earnestness, which commands the boy's ear and heart. He does not know what has happened to his father; he is so earnest, and pleads so seriously, but the secret reason is that the father has listened to the Lord himself, and is himself the echo of that voice. Facts vividly brought before the mind greatly influence a speaker. A sinner seen as lost touches the heart. Jesus seen as crucified affects the speech. If I were to stand up in the council of a certain town to urge them to look to their fire escapes, I should do it with tremendous vehemence if I had just come out of the midst of that shuddering crowd which saw a poor woman hanging out of the window in the midst of the flames for lack of proper apparatus to reach her. Any man fresh from such a sight would plead with energy, his whole soul would burn as he thought of the poor perishing fellow-creature in the midst of the fire. Would not yours? It is just so when you come fresh from talking with God; the truth is vividly realized, an awe is upon you, holy zeal and sacred ardour inflame your breast. If you dwell away from God you do not feel the value of the gospel message, nor the weight of men's souls. The grandest of all truths lose force when they cease to be realized facts, but their power returns when we come again under their actual influence. When the voice of Jesus' love is still ringing in your ears, then with a deep awe-struck solemnity your whole soul is poured forth at your mouth, and you speak as pleading with men that they would yield to God and accept his great salvation. The tongue *must* speak when the ear is tingling with the message of the Lord.

The tongue needs to be trained in the case of each one of us *to deliver the message as from God*. I do believe that God hath given commission to every Christian who knows the truth to tell it, and that there is authority given to every man who hath the living water within himself to let it flow out, for it is written, "Out of the midst of him shall flow rivers of living water." You see your calling, brethren. You may not all be called to the work of prophesying as ministers are, but you are all called by some means to warn men of the wrath to come and lead them to Christ, and I want you to feel that God is at the back of you when you warn sinners. You never pray for a soul, you never weep over a soul, you never drop one kernel of divine truth into a human ear, you never utter one word of warning or exhortation, but what God is with you in so doing. God will own his truth, therefore never be ashamed of it. Make your face like adamant if their hearts are like adamant; if they are not ashamed to sin do not you be ashamed to warn them; if they are not ashamed of their unbelief, be not you ashamed of your faith in the divine testimony. The hosts of heaven are on your side, therefore be not dismayed. Your faith may hear the noise of the wings of the living creatures, and the noise of the wheels, and the noise of a great rushing, for all heaven is astir when the watchman moves to warn the people (Ezekiel iii. 13). If God be at the back of you speak boldly, and do not let your testimony be silenced.

The Lord tells Ezekiel that the people would be a restraint to him, and how often they are so. Non-success often ties the preacher up so that he can scarcely speak. "Thou, O Son of Man, behold they shall put bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them." But what a grand verse is the twenty-seventh: "But

when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house." None can silence a mouth which God has opened.

May we henceforth feel that now, between here and heaven, we have souls committed to our charge, and that we will be clear of their blood. Each one of you has his little plot of ground to sow, you must resolve that it shall not lie waste. You will be called home very soon, my dear fellow-workers, therefore work while it is day. I who have to lead you in this husbandry may soon be called away. I feel it, and I feel that the same is true of each one of us; therefore, since these poor souls are dying as well as we are, and they are sinking into hell for ever, do let us be in earnest, and may God help us to save them. Let us begin to weep, for weeping, perhaps, may be the fittest beginning of a higher life, as it was the beginning of our natural life. Let us cry unto God; let us watch for opportunities, and as they come let us avail ourselves of them, if by any means we may save some. We dare no longer fritter away life. Dare we? We dare not furnish a continuation of man's foolish history, if, indeed, it be true that 'all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players.' We do not believe that statement, and if it be true we will alter it. Let us upset the stage, tear off the masks, and truly live. "Life is real, life is earnest," as we shall know at the judgment seat of God. How real will it look by the light of the last great day. Come, let us ask to have ear and tongue trained, and let us begin now to serve our Lord by warning our fellow men.

III. I finish my sermon this morning by, in the third place, endeavouring to practise THE LESSON OF THE TEXT. I desire to speak to those of you who are unconverted, and to speak as if I had just come from an interview with my Lord and Master, as I trust I have. I want to speak as if I had just heard him say what I am going to repeat to you. Try and help me with your imagination; and may God give you faith.

I have to say to you, dear friends now present, that whatever may be your natural excellence of character, and whatever the religiousness of your training, yet you must all of you be born again. You heard me say, "Ye must be born again;" but I want to say it as Jesus said it when one evening he was visited by a ruler of the Jews, a man of spotless character, of admirable reputation and of deep learning. Sitting alone with him, our Lord treated him with great kindness, but yet with solemn emphasis he said, "Ye must be born again." Yes, young friend, there is much about you that is very admirable, and you know a great deal of divine truth, but "Ye must be born again." The Master would lay a strong tender emphasis upon the "must." "Ye must be born again." Jesus would not demand of us more than is absolutely necessary, nor say a syllable that would tend to shut a soul out of heaven. If he says, "Ye must," why then we must. I want you to own that necessity.

Next I desire to introduce you to Jesus sitting at the well with the woman of Samaria. You can see the smile upon his countenance as he instructs her. I want you now to hear him say these words: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." I should like to say to you, dear friend, that all the outward forms of religion in the world will be of no value to you unless you are

spiritual. You must have a spiritual mind and a spiritual nature through being born again : and then you must worship God in a spiritual way, for mere outward religion is nothing in his sight. I desire to warn you as to that fact, but I would rather you should hear my Master say, "the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him." You believe it, do you not? Oh, ask that the Spirit of God would teach you how to worship in spirit and in truth.

Now listen to my Master again. He is addressing the Jews, and he uses these words. I give them accurately translated—"Ye search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." I am glad that you read your Bibles, but how is it that you feel so easy when you have read your chapter every day? Do you think you will get salvation by Bible reading? Alas, you are in error. You must go further than that; you must go to Christ Jesus himself. Oh, that you would by an act of faith come to him this morning. Do you think this truth hard? I hope you do not, for it is the teaching of Jesus, and I have heard him say it to my own soul. You must come to Jesus himself, or the Scriptures will do you no good. The Scriptures are a hand-post pointing to Christ; it will never do to sit down by the hand-post, but we must hasten on to find the Lord himself.

Listen to my Master once again. He says to the Jews "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." I know you will say that I speak hard things. Perhaps I do, but not with a hard heart. Now, my Lord is always tender, never man spake like this man, and never man wept as he did when he had a hard thing to say; hear ye then his declaration, "Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." "*Die in your sins.*" Do you know what that means? To die in irons, to die in a ditch, to die on the gallows—these are nothing compared with dying in your sins!

I must tell you some other things which my Master says, because nowadays the fine new theologians do not like to have them spoken. I have heard him speak them in my very soul, and I must therefore warn you of them. He says there are tares growing among the wheat, and that the day will come when the angels will "gather the tares in bundles to burn them." That is how he puts the destiny of the ungodly. Hear how the modern divines hiss between their teeth, "Dreadful language. These horrible expressions are borrowed from Dante and Milton, and the old writers." No: Dante, Milton, and the old writers had not existed then, but Jesus himself says, "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Such will be the lot of some of you, except you repent. Though growing up among Christian people, and hearing the gospel, and looking very like Christians, you will be separated from amongst the wheat to be cast into the fire.

Some of you are rich, and enjoy yourselves a great deal. I must tell you what Jesus said of one who fared sumptuously every day, but cared not for his soul. He said, "The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham

afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." My Lord, my sweet Lord, my dying, my bleeding Lord, the man who receives sinners, it was thus *he* spake. I would not speak less tenderly than he if I were able, but I want to assure you rich people who have your comforts in this life, and yet are out of Christ, that this is what will happen to you. Nor will this be for a time, but for ever. You will never be able to escape from torment according to my Master's teaching, for he says there is a great gulf fixed, so that they who would come from thence cannot. I pray you, therefore, take warning, as I would give you warning from his mouth.

The last thing that was ever seen of my Lord and Master upon earth was this. He stood on tiptoe on this world which had treated him so ill, and around him were gathered a few disciples. Just before he rose out of their sight he addressed them in loving tones, and said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." They stood with their ears and eyes open to know how he would have them put the gospel, and he said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." Did *he* say *that*? Yes, just before the cloud received him out of their sight, he said, "*He that believeth not shall be damned.*" It was *he* that said it. I should have liked to have seen how he looked when he thus spake—the evident pain which crossed his mind and showed itself in his eyes as he said in effect, "There will be some who will not believe, but you must tell them plainly, he that believeth not shall be damned." I do warn you of this, men and women, every one of you: if I am not a believer in Christ I shall be damned, and if you are not believers you will be damned. I do beseech you run not so dreadful a risk. Trust yourselves with Jesus now and you shall be saved, for it is he that says it and not I,—“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”; and again, “He that believeth in him hath everlasting life.” I do not think he meant me to try and put this in any pretty shape in order to amuse you with it, and I have not tried to do so. I have spoken to you right straight his own word as best I know it. May he be pleased to riddle out my frailties and throw them away, but may all that is his own live in your souls and mine unto eternal life. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ezekiel ii. 9, 10; iii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—63, 507, 972.