

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SOUL'S CRISIS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.”—Luke xviii. 37.

SUCH was the news of that day. As an exclamation, doubtless it was often repeated when our Lord made his journeys through the land of Palestine and its outskirts—“Jesus of Nazareth passeth by!” How quickly would the inhabitants of their cities and their villages be astir when the rumour reached them! What a curiosity there would be to see him, knowing that his fame was noised abroad everywhere! What an eagerness among the multitudes to get close enough to hear him! What an intense anxiety on the part of some to go themselves, and of others to take their sick and diseased friends that they might obtain health and cure! Oh, methinks there was enough in those words to make men forego awhile their farms and their merchandise, their labours and their pleasures, that they might feast their eyes and ears with the sight of his face and the sound of his voice—or much more, that they might obtain some grateful relief and get some substantial benefit from him who went about doing good. But, my dear brethren, I want you to catch the spiritual significance of these thrilling words. Did you understand them aright, you would rise up and shake off your lethargy. You would be eager to greet his presence, and anxious to learn his doctrine. That, however, which I am sure would stir you to the heart's core, and excite all your passions is the vehement desire to have salvation, present salvation, from him. Surely you would be ready to receive him into your house, to welcome him to your heart, and to sit at his feet dissolved in wonder, love, and praise. And yet full many of you who join the throng and mingle with the families that come up to seek the Lord are as unconcerned for yourselves as though your sins were of no moment, and your souls in no immediate peril.

Oh, it is high time that some here present were saved. In a short time you must be in another world. Hard by that column, on my right in yonder gallery, in that next pew, there have usually sat two attentive hearers, husband and wife, who early this morning were suffocated by the smoke of their own burning house, just under these eaves. I little thought that they would be preachers to us to-night—but they are so.

The calamity, sudden and mysterious, which has removed them from our midst, sets "the uncertainty of life," and the "preparation for departure," so vividly before us, that we cannot refrain our emotions or restrain our sympathies. Their absence should speak loudly to those who occupy the seat they have vacated, asking them whether they are ready to depart. Not less loudly should it speak to all sitting here, raising the question in the hearts of some of you who are careless about your souls, how you could bear to pass out of this world if the arrow of death should overtake you unawares. A trifling accident may prove fatal, a slight illness may be the precursor of speedy dissolution. Can you imagine your own remorse as you glance backwards at the gospel you have listened to but never embraced—the blood of sprinkling you have heard of, but has never been applied to your conscience—the Saviour whom you passed by with indifference when he passed by you, ready to be gracious, and you would not be his disciple? Ah! ye may turn from such questions with a faint smile now—ere long you will turn to them with a pale shudder.

Are there any here present anxious to be saved? Let me have their solemn, earnest, and devout attention. I pray God that what I speak simply may just strike their consciences and touch their hearts. If they want their judgments informed, may the word come with light to their spirits, and in that light may they behold Christ and find salvation.

Our text is taken from a little narrative of a blind man who sat by the highway side begging—not an inapt picture of you, my friends, who are solicitous of mercy, and anxiously desirous of salvation. Are you not as blind and poor spiritually as he was literally? I am sure that you will at once confess that you are blind. The eyes of your understanding are dim; your heart is wrapped in darkness. You cannot see what you want to see. You do not even see your sin, so as to repent of it with contrition. You have not yet seen the power of the precious blood of Jesus so as to believe in it as worshippers once purged and abundantly conscious that it has procured their remission. While you are as blind, I am quite sure that you will not be grieved or vexed with me if I say, too, that you are as poor as Bartimeus. His was poverty of pence, but yours is poverty of soul. You have no merit; you have no strength; you have no possibility of ever getting the means of spiritual livelihood for yourselves. You are as poor as the poorest beggar that ever asked a charity for God's sake from the wayfarers. But you are sitting to-night in somewhat the same position as that blind man was, for he sat in the place of Jesus' passing by, and you have come to the place where God's mercy has often been revealed, where saints and sinners have passed by in crowds, and where—blessed be his name!—Jesus himself sometimes has also passed by. What if to-night you should be apprised and aware of his presence here, and should cry out to him, and he should stop and open those blind eyes of yours, and give you the light of life and the joy of eternal salvation? What if you should have to go home and say to your friends and kinsfolk, "I have had an experience to-night the like of which I never felt before; I have found a Saviour; I have received the forgiveness of my sins; I am a new creature in Christ Jesus"? Why you would make angels sing fresh hallelujahs in heaven, while on earth God would be glorified, and yourselves and your friends

would be blessed by so lively an exercise of faith and so wonderful a participation of grace.

I. Now, looking stedfastly that this may be the case, I wish to speak very pointedly to you about two or three things. First, when Jesus passed by the blind man it was to that man A DAY OF HOPE.

He had given up all thought of ever being able to see, so long had his eyes been closed to the light. When Jesus passed by the case was different. He could perform any miracle, there was no limit to his healing power; therefore, why should not he open a blind man's eyes? And you, my anxious friend, you have felt that you could not be saved. Of course, if it depended upon yourself you could not by any duties you discharged, or any services you performed, acquire merit enough to enter heaven, or even to procure the forgiveness of your sins on earth. But, if Jesus Christ has come into the world to save that which was lost, it is a totally different matter. He can certainly pardon the greatest offenders, and he can deliver from going down into the pit the most undeserving of rebels. It was an hour of hope to that blind man, and if Jesus passes by now this is an hour of hope to you.

But, does he pass by? I answer—Yes. There are different respects in which this may be interpreted of our Lord's conduct. In a certain sense he has been passing by some of you *ever since you* began to discern right from wrong. You have, some of you, been nurtured and bred up under the hearing of the gospel, and you cannot recollect the time when you did not know something, at any rate, of the facts and truths that pertain to Christianity. Well, all this while Jesus Christ has been slowly passing by you—halting, pausing, giving you space if perhaps you would call to him for mercy. O take heed, that passing by may soon be over; the candle of life may be blown out. Yet while the gospel rings in your ears, it is a day of hope to you: let not Satan or your own despairing heart persuade you to the contrary.

More especially is it a time of Christ's passing by *when the gospel is preached with power*. If this evening the gospel should so come to you as to win your attention and melt your heart, if you should feel a divine control exerted over you by it, the evidence will not be wanting that Jesus is passing by. Or, if the gospel, though it affect not you, should convey such an influence, and bring forth such fruits in others who are sitting in the same pew with you, that they should be saved, depend upon it the kingdom of God will have come nigh unto you. It will then have passed by and you will have received no blessing because you sought it not in faith. Yet responsibilities will have come upon you from which you will not be able to escape. Jesus will have passed by other blind men; and they will have asked for sight, and had it, while you will remain blind, not because Jesus cannot heal you, but because you have not asked his healing, but have continued still in your unbelief of him.

I feel conscious within myself that this very night Jesus is, in an especial manner, present in this assembly. Sometimes the preacher hath yearnings within himself for the people as if he travailed in birth until Christ be formed in them; he wrestles with such an earnest longing after souls as if their peril and the conflict for their rescue were all his own; that is no slight omen of the coming blessing. He perceives, also,

the same desire in many of his converted hearers. As he knows that they are praying God with much vehemence of spirit to bring in the sinner, the atmosphere of prayer becomes to him an indication of the time and the place where Jesus manifests himself, for where his people pray Christ is surely present. I encourage you then, dear hearers, with hopeful signs of heavenly grace. This is a hopeful hour. If you have lived up till now unsaved, I indulge the fervent hope that the hour has now come when you shall find salvation. Though you may hitherto have sought, and sought, and sought in vain, yet now surely the set time to favour you has come. Lord, grant it may be so, that it may be so to many, and we will bless thy name.

II. Secondly, as it was a time of hope to that poor blind man, so was it especially A TIME OF ACTIVITY.

You that anxiously desire salvation, regard attentively these words. A man cannot be saved by what he does; salvation is in Christ, yet no man is saved except as he seeks earnestly after Christ. This blind man did not open his eyes himself. What he did, did not help or contribute in any degree to his attaining sight. Nevertheless, he had to seek Jesus to have his eyes opened. There was enough in this to kindle all his passions, summon all his faculties and engage all his energies; but most certainly there was nothing in it to exercise his skill in discovering or applying a remedy, nothing to win him any honour, nothing to entitle him to any reward.

Yet this man is a picture of what we should be if we desire to be saved. *He listened attentively.* He could not see, but he had ears. He could catch the sound of footsteps. The silence that was broken by crowds coming along the road to Jericho was peculiar, the tramp was of an unusual sort, and the tone of voices far different from those of wrangling or of revelry, or the songs of common travellers. He listened, yea, he listened with all his ears. So, dear hearers, whenever the gospel is preached, do not give it merely such a hearing as you might give to an ordinary story that is told you; but oh, hear it as God's word, hear it with bated breath and profound reverence; drink it in as the parched earth drinks in the shower; hear it fearing to miss a single word, lest that should be the word that might have blessed you. I believe attentive hearers are the most likely people to get the blessing. Let none of us, therefore, when we go to the courts of the Lord's house and hear a gospel sermon, suffer our thoughts to be wandering here and there, but let us give scrupulous heed, if so be we may detect the footsteps of the Lord by the converse of his disciples.

But this man, after he had heard with discrimination, *enquired with eagerness what it meant.* Oh! how I wish our hearers would begin to ask, "What does it mean?" I can say that I put my words as plainly as I can. Oftentimes when there is a bunch of gaudy flowers of rhetoric that I fain would use, and could use, I have thrown them all on the dunghill, because they might have stood in some poor sinner's way, and he might not have understood the plain truth so well. Ah! but still, for all that, talk as we may, the carnal mind understandeth not the things that be of God. It is a blessed sign when men begin to say, "What is it all about? What is the drift of this gospel? What does the man mean by sin and its heinousness? What does he mean

by Christ and his precious blood? What is it all about?" O dear hearers, some of you only skim your Bibles when you read them. I wish you would stop and ponder, and ask of Christian people who have experienced these things, "What do these texts mean?" So, too, if there be anything in a sermon that baffles you, I wish you would seek out some godly and instructed Christian, and say, "Explain to me, father, what this thing signifieth?" I should have great hopes of you if you were thus enquiring after the plan of salvation. Is it not worth your while to ask the question, sirs? When a man has lost his way, he will ask twenty people sooner than he will continue to pursue a wrong course, and will you lose your way to heaven through not asking old travellers to direct you? Do, I pray you, be in earnest to learn, and it shall not be long before God shall teach you, for whenever he makes a man conscious of his ignorance, and anxious to be taught, God the Holy Ghost is quite sure to instruct him ere long.

When this man had asked the question, and had been told in reply that Jesus of Nazareth passed by, notice what he did next, *he began to pray*. We are told that he cried. His cry was a prayer, and his prayer was a cry. It took the form of a piteous and emphatic outburst of desire: "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." It was a short prayer. He did not want a book. Being a blind man he could not have used one if he had had it. Blessed be God, we want no book of prayers. We want such prayers as blind men can use quite as readily as those who can see. And what a comprehensive prayer it was—"Have mercy on me! Have mercy on me!" It was not the words of the prayer, it was the true desire and the believing confidence of the prayer that did the work. "Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me!" Now, my dear hearer, you tell me that you wish to be saved, that you are anxious, nay, enquiring, but do you pray? How can you expect mercy if it is not thought by you to be worth the asking for? What, will you have God give you it without your seeking it? He has done so sometimes, but the usual rule of grace, and the most proper rule, is that you should humbly sue for mercy at his feet. Will you not do it? What! Is hell so paltry a doom that you will not pray to escape from it? What, is heaven so trifling a destination that you will not pray that you may gain it? O sirs, when heavenly mercy is to be had for the asking, will you not invoke the Almighty, and do obeisance to the Redeemer to obtain it? Then how richly you deserve to die! Being placed on pleading terms, you will not plead, and being bidden to seek the Lord while he may be found, you wilfully refuse to seek him! Yes, richly do you deserve to perish in your sin! But it must not be so with you. I cannot look you in the face, and think you will do such despite to God's claims and your own interests. No, you will pray, I trust you will; you will cry with your whole heart to God. Be assured that never did a man really cry for mercy, and continue to do so with his whole heart, but sooner or later mercy came. There are no praying souls in hell. God never damns those who are suppliants for mercy. If you do but lay hold on the cross of Christ, and say, "I will not let this go except I get the blessing; I will not cease until I win my soul's desire," you shall soon have the mercy that you seek. O that God would stir you up thus to pray!

As this man prayed, there were some standing by who said, "Hush, hold your tongue! You disturb the preaching; we cannot hear the silvery tones of the orator; be still. It is not meet for a beggar-man like you, crawling in the street, to disturb respectable people by your harsh, croaking voice—be quiet!" But his heart being thus moved, there was no silence for his tongue. So much the more, a great deal, with increasing vehemence and force, he iterated and reiterated the prayer, "Thou Son of David, thou Son of David, have mercy on me! Have mercy upon me!" Now, if you desire salvation, and have begun to pray, Satan will say, "Ah, it is of no use; be quiet!" The flesh will say, "Why this ado? There is time enough yet." Procrastination will come in and say, "When you grow old it will be time enough then to begin to seek the Lord." A thousand difficulties will be suggested, but, O soul, if thou art indeed set upon salvation, and God has made thee in earnest, thou wilt say to all these: "Stand back! I cannot and will not be silenced by you; I must have mercy; it is mercy I want, and it is mercy I must have, or I perish for ever, and that I cannot afford; therefore I will cry the more." I wish—but ah! it is not in my power—still I do wish that I could persuade you to importunate prayer. May the Holy Ghost lead you to pray. Well do I recollect my own prayers when I was seeking Christ. I prayed even for months, and sometimes in the chamber where I sought the Lord I felt as if I could not come away from the mercy-seat till I had an answer of peace, but I waited long before I got it. Still, it came at last, and oh! it is worth waiting for! If one had to plead for mercy by the twenty years at a time, yet if at last the silver sceptre were stretched out, it would well repay all the groanings and the tears of the most anxious spirits. Get to your chambers, then, or if you cannot get to your chambers, get to a saw-pit, a hay-loft, it matters not where, and pour out your heart before him, and do not rise from your knees until the Lord has said, "Thy sins which are many are forgiven thee."

After this man had thus pleaded, it is noteworthy that Jesus stood still and called him. I must call your attention to this matter. As soon as Jesus had called the blind man, the effect produced on him is startling. I think I see him sitting there by the wayside helpless. Jesus bids him come. He gets up, and in a moment he throws off that outer garment which had been so precious to him, in which he had so often wrapped himself up in cold nights, when he had to sleep beneath the open sky. That much prized, though all patched and filthy garment, he threw right away; it might have made him a minute or two slower, so off he threw it, and away he flung it. Ah! and it is a great mercy when a poor soul feels that it can throw away anything and everything to get to Christ. "Oh!" saith the sinner who really

seeks a Saviour, "if there is any sin that I have indulged that prevents my finding mercy, only let me know it, and I will away with it; is there any habit I have which I do not even know to be sin, or a thing I do that gives me pleasure, but is objectionable in the sight of God, I will away with it: O Lord, if I must be poor, or if I must be sick, I will away with my health, and away with my wealth, if I may but find mercy.

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be;
Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only thee."

I charge you, seekers of Jesus, let nothing stand between you and Christ. You must have salvation, man. You cannot afford to do without it. O fling away, then, everything that might impede you. Cast off the garment that might trip you up in the heavenly race. Lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth most easily beset you, and press to Jesus at once. To-night, I pray you, press to Jesus, with vehement speed, and be not content till you get the blessing!

Once more. When this man had come to Jesus, and Jesus said to him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" *the man returned a straightforward and intelligent answer*, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." Now, when you are at prayer to-night, any of you, do not merely pray a general prayer, but put it before the Lord in the plainest language. I could suppose, for example, the tenor of your confession and petition might be something like this—"Lord, here I am; I have lived all this time without regard to thee; I have been a hearer at the Tabernacle; sometimes I have been so deeply impressed, that I have shed many tears; but Lord, it has all come to nothing; sermons upon sermons have I heard, yet sermon after sermon has been lost upon me; I am afraid I am a gospel-hardened sinner; I think, Lord, that sitting as I do right opposite the preacher, he speaking so pointedly as he does to me, witnessing, as I do, how others have been saved, while I have been left unsaved, my heart must be like the nether millstone; yet, Lord, thou canst save. O have mercy on me yet! O melt this heart of stone; break this adamant; thaw this rock of ice! Lord, I know what it is that hinders me; there is that cherished sin; there is that vile companion; there is that lust of the flesh. O God, enable me to give it up! Now help me to pluck off the right arm, and tear out the right eye, for oh! I cannot perish; I cannot perish; I cannot bear thy wrath in the world to come; I am afraid because of it; therefore would I flee from it, and find refuge in Jesus!" Or perhaps your case may be quite a different one, and in pleading with God you may have to say, "Lord, I never was a keeper of thy Sabbath; I have been on all those holy days spending the time in sinful pleasure, and I do

not know that I have any regard for thee, but I fell into the crowd at the Tabernacle gates just now, and got into the aisle, and, Lord, thy Word has found me out, and I feel as I never felt before; I do desire to be reconciled to thee." Oh! you do not know how glad your heavenly Father will be to hear that, for, just as in the parable, the father ran and fell upon the prodigal's neck and kissed him, so will our Father who is in heaven run and fall upon your guilty neck, and give you the kiss of pardon and of acceptance, and you, even you, shall be saved. Glory be to God, there is none that press, and seek, and knock, and strive thus, but the mercy shall come unto them.

Still, I cannot withhold one other remark. That which really brought salvation to this blind man *was his faith*, for Christ says, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Now, here is the greatest point of all—faith! Faith; for work without faith is of little worth. Faith is the great saving grace; it is the real life-germ. "What is faith? sayest thou. Anxious enquirer, if thou wouldst know what faith is, understand that the other word for it is *trust*—belief. The faith that saves, is a belief that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, offered an atonement for sin, and then after a firm conviction, a simple trusting in that atonement for thy salvation. Canst thou this night—oh! I pray the Holy Ghost enable thee!—canst thou this night trust Jesus Christ? When I ask that question of an awakened sinner, it seems to me as if the answer should always be "Can I trust him? Ay, indeed! Such a Saviour, so divine, offering such a sacrifice as the death of his own self, surely I can trust him!" Here is a nail upon which you may well hang all the weight of the vessel. Here is a bridge over which tens of thousands of the weightiest sinners may cross safely. Come then, sinner, what sayest thou? Art thou resolved to trust Jesus? If so, thy faith hath saved thee already; go thou and wrestle in prayer till thou get thee an assurance of it.

III. Time flies, and I must not tarry; therefore let me have a solemn word upon another point. When Jesus passed by, it was, as we have said, to the blind man an hour of hope, and it was an hour for bestirring himself; now we notice, thirdly, it was AN HOUR OF CRISIS.

Did I not observe just now that while life lasts Jesus is passing by? That is true in one sense, but I do also believe that in many cases the hour in which they will ever be able to find mercy is past long before men die. There was a man who had listened to an earnest gospel exhortation, and as he listened he felt that the preacher was speaking out his inmost heart to him. He thought within himself, "That is an important matter." As he listened the importance of the matter seemed to strike him more and more. His tears began to flow, and he resolved that when he reached his home that night he would seek the Lord. As he went on his way, a companion met him, and said, "Come with me," and he invited

him to a certain ale-house." He was revolted at the thought for the moment. He stood still, and the deliberation seemed to go on in his soul. "Which shall it be? Shall it be my jovial companion, or shall it be that earnest prayer on which I have resolved?" He hesitated a moment, and his better self, or rather the Holy Spirit within him, conquered, and that night as he knelt, light divine shone into his soul, and he became a Christian. On that same occasion there was another man who passed through precisely the same experience, and to whom the same temptation came, but he yielded to it, and he was never after that troubled with such another difficulty. He listened again to sermons, but he never felt under them as he did under that. They lost all interest for him; after a time he left off attending the means of grace, and he is at this time a blasphemer, though before he seemed to stand upon the very borders of salvation. Probably to this last man there will never come a day of grace again. He has now put himself beyond the reach of it as to the means; for he attends no place of worship, and gives no heed to anything of the kind. Religion has become a thing for him to laugh at, and its preachers the objects of his scorn. Here were the turning-points of these two lives; grace decided the one, and the flesh decided the other; the one in all human probability is bound for heaven, and the other, alas! is bound for hell. Such a night as this may have come now. I do not know that young man, nor where he sits to-night, but he is here. He has, after this service is over, an engagement of a sort that if his sainted mother in the country could but know of it, it would make her very hair stand on end with horror, to think that her son should have come to *that*. I charge him by the living God to give up that sin, or else this night he may seal his own damnation. There sits here in this house a woman who will this evening, if the Lord shall make her fulfil the purpose of her heart, seek Christ and find him, but if the temptation that is now striving with her should overcome her, and the evening should be spent, after all, in idle chat, her conscience shall be seared as with a hot iron, and from this hour it shall not be possible for the shafts of the gospel to come at her. O that God may decide your case rightly for you, helping your will, your stubborn and wicked will, to yield and bow to the blessed instigation of his Holy Spirit in your hearts, for I am persuaded that this is an hour of crisis to many here.

IV. Lastly, remember that this hour of Jesus passing by is AN HOUR THAT WILL SOON BE GONE.

Did you notice that word, "Jesus of Nazareth *passeth by*"? He is not stopping, he is passing by, for he is going on towards the walls of Jericho to pass through its gates. Blind man! it is now or never, for he is passing by. He has come up to where you are; cry to him now! He has passed you, but cry to him. Now, man, he is long past, but he

can yet hear you; cry to him now! Ah! but he is passed and is gone, and the man has not cried, and now there is no other who can open his eyes, neither will this Son of David, for he has passed by and been unasked, unsought to bless. You had Christ passing by when you were young. I would to God you had said to him then, "Have mercy on me!" but you waited till he came up to you in middle life, and yet you did not seek him. Alas, alas, for that! And now the grey hairs are stealing over you, and half-a-century of unbelief has hardened your heart. You are getting to sixty years of ungodliness, but he is not out of ear-shot yet. He will hear you now. O cry to him, I pray you cry, and may God's Holy Spirit, who is the author of all true supplication, breathe in you now a cry that never shall be stopped until you get the answer, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

Now, it may be that some here to whom I am speaking think that this preaching is all child's-play, and that our talking about these solemn things is very easy. I protest before God this night, that I feel it to be stern hard work. Not but what it is easy and delightful to preach the gospel, but I yearn over the souls of some of you. I cannot understand why you crowd here, and when I know that there are perhaps half as many outside as inside, clamouring for entrance, I know not why it is. I do nothing to attract you here, but speak right out my Master's gospel. The truth is, if the Lord inclines your hearts and brings you within the sound of the gospel which I am eager to proclaim, I feel a responsibility about you which it were not possible for you to estimate. What if you should in the day of judgment be able to say, "We crowded to that house, and we listened to that man, but he did not tell us the truth, or he told it to us so coldly, that we thought it did not signify, and we put it off!" Oh! if you are lost, yet bear me witness that I would fain have you saved, and if persuasions could bring you to Christ, you should not perish for lack of them. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." This is the message, but, if you reject it, a weight falls on my spirit—it seems to crush me like a millstone now—the thought that you should be lost! For what is it to be lost? To be cast away from the presence of God, to be cast into hell, to have to suffer, and that for ever, all that the justice of God can demand, all that the omnipotence of God can inflict. Why, sirs, if I have but a headache, or a toothache for one brief hour, my patience can scarcely endure the torture; what must it be to suffer such pains for a century? Man, I cannot guess what it must be! What must it be to have ten thousand times worse pains than these for ever and ever? Why, to be dejected in mind, to be despairing, to be disconsolate—how bewildered it makes men! They take the knife or the poison in a fit of insanity, it may be they cannot bear their lives because of their anguish and desperation. But all the pangs,

and racks, and abandonment from which men suffer here are nothing to be compared with the woes and mental anguish of the world to come. Oh, the agony of a spirit doomed, forlorn, accursed, upon which God shall put his foot in awful wrath and lift it up no more for ever ! And there, as you lie, tormented to the quick, you will have this to be your miserable portion—I heard the gospel, but I would not heed it; Christ was put before me, but I would not acknowledge him; I was entreated to believe in his name and fly to him for salvation, but I hesitated, hung in suspense, demurred, and at length denied him. And all for what? For a little drink, a little dance, a little sin that yielded me but slight pleasure, or for worldly gain, or for low and grovelling vices, or for sheer carelessness and gaiety ! Lost, lost, lost ! and for nothing ! A sinner damned ! He lost his soul, but he did not gain the world. He gained only a little frivolous pleasure, even that poor pittance he spent in an hour, and then he was for ever cast away ! May it not be so with you—not with one of you, old or young, but the Lord have mercy upon the whole assembly, for his dear name's sake. Amen.

“There is a time, we know not when,
 A point we know not where,
 That marks the destiny of men,
 To glory or despair.
 There is a line, by us unseen,
 That crosses every path ;
 The hidden boundary between
 God's patience and his wrath.
 To pass that limit is to die,
 To die, as if by stealth :
 It does not quench the beaming eye,
 Or pale the glow of health.
 The conscience may be still at ease,
 The spirits light and gay ;
 That which is pleasing still may please,
 And care be thrust away.
 But on that forehead God has set
 Indelibly a mark,
 Unseen by man—for man as yet
 Is blind and in the dark.
 And yet the doomed man's path below,
 Like Eden, may have bloomed ;
 He did not, does not, will not know,
 Or feel that he is doomed.
 He knows, he feels, that all is well,
 And every fear is calm'd
 He lives, he dies, he wakes in hell,
 Not only doomed but damned.

O where is thy mysterious bourn,
By which our path is crossed,
Beyond which God himself hath sworn,
That he who goes is lost ?
How far may we go on in sin ?
How long will God forbear ?
Where does hope end ? and where begin
The confines of despair ?
An answer from the skies is sent—
' Ye that from God depart,
While it is called to-day, Repent !
And harden not your heart.' "

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xviii.