

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE TRUE POSITION OF THE WITNESS WITHIN.

A Sermon

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“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.”—1 John v. 10.

SOME time ago I tried to set forth the manner of the witness and sealing of the Spirit, and I have no doubt that the subject will still remain upon the memory of many of you; but I am led to refer to it again, and to go over the same ground again, because I meet with so many instances in which mistakes are made in reference to it,—mistakes which cause great sorrow and much sin. The letter which I will now read I received yesterday, and it is one of many of the same import. “Dear Mr. Spurgeon,—May I ask your prayers, and the prayers of your congregation, to God, that he will, by the Holy Spirit, reveal himself unto me. I have for a long time past, I may say years, been trying to serve him, and have a strong desire openly to join with his people; but I have not the witness in myself that I am saved, and until then I dare not take the step.” Now, this letter breathes an anxious desire to be right and sincere in all things, and this is to be highly commended. We ought to be jealous over our spirit, fearful of hypocrisy, and resolved to do all things in truth and sincerity. We ought to abhor the idea of making a profession of that which is not true, and so far this letter shows a spirit worthy of imitation. Everyone should be anxious that he should in nothing be a hypocrite, and should not allow the profession of his lips to go one single inch beyond the feeling of his heart. It is, again, a most proper thing that every man should desire to have the very best possible evidence as to his soul's salvation, and if there be an evidence to be had of a very special, decisive, and certain kind it is but right that every man should cry to God for it, and should feel unsatisfied until he obtains it.

Yet, when all this has been said, we are bound in honesty to add that it is very possible for this anxiety to become an obstacle to faith, and for the desire after special evidence to become a hindrance to

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our receiving the evidence which the Lord has given us in his word. In our ignorance we may be overlooking the true source of peace and assurance; while straining our eye-balls by looking for that which God will never reveal to us, we may be missing rare consolations which lie near at hand. While craving for something unusual we may be neglecting that which infinite wisdom has put within our reach, like the foolish child which utters hungry cries for the moon, but forgets to eat the bread upon its own plate. There be many who in their sincerely earnest desires to gain some token for good are forgetting that earnest of the Spirit which is already within their own bosoms, and thus, through darkness of spirit, they miss present comforts, and are too feeble for present duties. They sit in fetters forged by their own fancy, when they might as well arise and walk at large. May the Holy Spirit, therefore, instruct us so to handle this matter that many who are seeking for this inner witness may know that they have it already, or may at least obtain it this day through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Here, then, is our text—"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."

I. Our first observation is that BELIEVING ON THE SON OF GOD COMES BEFORE THE INNER WITNESS. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself"; he believes before he has that witness, and it is only as a believer that he obtains it. This is self-evident in the text. No one can read these words without seeing that a man must be a believer before he has the witness in himself. It does not say, "he who has the witness in himself becomes a believer," but the order is reversed—"He that believeth hath the witness in himself." He believes first, and then he obtains the inner witness.

The basis of faith is the testimony of God concerning his Son—the testimony of God as we find it in holy Scripture. I do not believe Christ Jesus to be the Son of God because of anything I feel within myself, but because God himself declares him to be such; neither do I trust my soul with Jesus because of certain emotions felt within, but because God, in the book which I accept as his testimony, declares that he has set forth Jesus to be the propitiation for sin. In the Bible I see that God himself witnesses that whosoever trusts Jesus is thereby forgiven, accepted, and saved, and therefore I trust him. We have no other foundation for our faith to rest upon than the witness of God. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." The testimony of God is surely enough for us. Dare we ask more? We must not go about to buttress the solid pillar of divine testimony. "Thus saith the Lord" is proof enough, and it is blasphemous impertinence for us to demand further evidence. Dare we look around for something which we have observed or something which we have felt to be a support to the solemn declaration of the Most High? If so, we are not believing in God at all, but are waiting for a surer witness than God, who cannot lie. In such a case we are still lost, for we cannot be saved while we are giving God the lie by refusing to believe him till he can bring corroborative evidence. If we were to obtain that additional evidence it is clear that our faith would not then stand in God, but in the additional testimony, and so we should remain as to God unbelievers still. The only basis for saving faith is the testimony of God himself

concerning his Son Jesus Christ. "and this is the testimony that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

Note that the words which follow our text assure us very solemnly that *the rejection of this basis, namely, God's own testimony, involves the utmost possible guilt.* "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record which God gave of his Son." Now, it is quite clear that this does not refer to any inward witness, because the man who does not believe Christ has no inward witness, and cannot have any. He cannot be guilty of rejecting what he never had; but God has given an outward witness to all mankind, a witness contained in Holy Scripture, clear and express, and therein he declareth that Jesus Christ is his Son and the appointed Saviour of men, and he bids men trust in him, promising that they shall thus be saved. It is the rejection of the revelation of God which involves the unbeliever in transcendent guilt, because his unbelief is tantamount to saying that God speaketh lies, that he hath deliberately given us a book which is a fiction, that he hath set before us hopes which will end in disappointment, that he has threatened us with a doom which is a mere bugbear, that he has sent us a Saviour who cannot save, who has presented a sacrifice in which there is no real efficacy. The rejection of Christ as our Saviour is the most pointed way of giving to the Lord the lie direct. Surely we ought to start back from such guilt as this, for it stabs at God's honour, and inasmuch as it impugns his truthfulness it robs him of one of the brightest jewels of his crown. O beloved hearers, be not guilty of this, I pray you, but believe your God. What if all men contradict him—be it yours to believe him: "let God be true and every man a liar." Believe God, though every feeling of your nature should seem to controvert his testimony, for feelings deceive, and consciousness may be a dream, but God cannot lie—his word is truth itself. This, then, is the basis of faith, and the basis of faith which cannot be rejected without the utmost sin.

Let me put it in another shape. I hear and I read that God has sent his Son Jesus Christ to save sinners: and thus I learn that I must trust Christ, and I shall then obtain the benefit of his salvation. I believe this; I trust Christ, and I am saved. This salvation gives me peace and rest, and I become confirmed in my belief. Now there are many who want this peace and rest before they will believe. They expect harvest before sowing, and will not sow unless their preposterous desire can be granted. My dear friend, you cannot expect to have the natural order reversed in this fashion. Why should you want it? Hath not God spoken the truth, and if it be the truth why do you not believe it? The essence of faith lies in believing that God speaketh the truth, and in acting upon his word because it is the truth. Is this more than God has a right to expect of you? Why should there be any refusal to render what is so manifestly his due? Why should we ask for further evidence whether it be in ourselves or in others? Should we not at once say, "God has said it: it is true: I will act upon it: and since he saith Christ died for sinners, and saveth all that trust in him, I will trust him, and I shall be saved"?

Now, *this basis of faith is abundantly sufficient.* I feel half ashamed to have to insist upon this most evident truth, for, if we were not desperately set on mischief and alienated from God, we should feel this at

once. Hath God said it? Then to ask any confirmation of it is a direct insult to him, a gratuitous impertinence against the majesty of heaven. Hath God said it? Then we are more bound to believe than if all the scientific men in the world for centuries had witnessed to it. Hath God said it? We are more sure of it than if all the traditions of all nations had handed it down to us. Hath God said it? Then we are surer of it than if our reason proved it by mathematical demonstration. Hath God said it? Then we are more certain of it than if we saw it with our eyes, for they might be deceived, or than if we heard it with our ears, for they might be imposed upon. Our senses are deceivable, but God is not deceivable; he must be true: and we may wisely cast the weight of our souls upon his faithfulness, and take all the consequences, fully assured that what the Lord hath promised he is able also to perform.

Now, though this basis is sufficient, the Lord, knowing our unbelief, has been pleased not to add to it, but to *set it before us in a graciously amplified manner*. He says, "There are three which bear witness in earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one." That Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he can and does save sinners, and that he will save all who believe in him, is proved first by the giving of *the Holy Spirit*. He descended first at Pentecost, visibly and perceptibly, in rushing wind and cloven tongues of fire, and he manifested his power by the marvellous gift of speaking in languages which the disciples had never learned. The Holy Spirit was mightily with the apostles, bearing witness that Jesus was the Son of God, and that the gospel which they preached was divine. The Holy Ghost has not returned to heaven, and though his miraculous power is no longer seen among us in the physical world, he is still working spiritual miracles in the church; he still regenerates, he still enlightens, he still consoles, he is still the help of our infirmity in prayer, he is still our comforter and guide. In many blessed and useful ways, for which he is to be adored, the Holy Spirit is still in the midst of the church to witness to the truth of the gospel. Instead of miracles we have the presence of the Holy Ghost: men quickened from death in sin, hearts renewed, eyes enlightened, souls regenerated—these are the standing witnesses of God in the church to the truth of the gospel.

Then, there is the witness of *the water*. By the water I understand to be meant that living water whereof if a man drink he shall live for ever, and it indicates the spiritual life which abides in the church,—the life and the cleansing which God gives to believers. Now, there are thousands of us who can bear witness that we possess a life to which we once were strangers; but by believing in Jesus Christ that life has been given to us, as it shall also be given to all who hear me this day, upon their believing in Jesus. That water of life abiding in the church, and ever flowing out of the very midst of her living members, is another form of the witness of God, a part of the one solid basis upon which true faith must rest.

Then there is *the blood*—a third witness—that blood of atonement which speaks better things than that of Abel, which brings peace to the guilty conscience, and ends the strife within. There is no voice like it to believing ears. This is another and most powerful form of the witness

of God. He does pardon sin and give peace to the conscience—the fact is known to thousands, and is the abiding witness of God to his dear Son. The abiding power of the Spirit, the water, and the blood are God's continuance of his one testimony that Jesus Christ is the appointed Saviour, and that whosoever trusteth in him shall be saved. Beyond this evidence the hearer of the gospel may expect nothing. What more can he need? What more can he desire? If you refuse Christ upon the witness of God, you must refuse him outright, for other witness shall never be given unto those who believe not upon the solemn testimony of God.

And, beloved, let me say that this basis which has been so graciously amplified in the triple witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood, has this to commend it, that *it is everlasting and immutable*. Did you believe in Jesus Christ fifty years ago? Did you then trust him because God declared him to be worthy of your confidence? That witness of God remains in all its potency to-day. A thousand years ago a poor sinner came to Jesus because God had assured him in the Scriptures that there he should find mercy, and to-day another sinner may come with just the same confidence, for the warrant of faith is unaltered. What a blessing is this! Our feelings change; sometimes the inward witness burns brightly, and sometimes it becomes very dim; sometimes we feel tender in heart, and at another time we are hard as a mill-stone; at one moment we are zealous, and at another moment indifferent. It would never do to have such a shifting basis of our faith. Such a moving, shivering quicksand as this would never satisfy us long together. But what a rock we have in God's word. He hath said it and it must be true, "He that hath the Son hath life." When I look within I cannot always tell by my feelings whether I have obtained spiritual life or not; but since I know that I believe in Jesus I know that I have eternal life, because God has said so. I, trusting his Son Jesus Christ, know myself to be saved over the head of all my feelings, let them be what they may, for God hath said, "He that believeth hath everlasting life." And you, poor soul, are not invited to come to Christ this morning because there is something in you that is a warrant for your coming, some inward witness bearing testimony to your fitness; but you are to come because there is witness enough in this book, witness enough in the fact that the Spirit of God is in the church, that the living water is still imparted unto men, and that the blood of Jesus hath not lost its power, but cleanseth from all sin. If you will not believe upon this all-sufficient witness you cannot expect to receive any other, for this is the witness of God upon which men savingly believe in Christ Jesus.

Now, dear friends, *the faith which will not and cannot rest on this basis is evidently no faith in God at all*, but a proud resolve to demand other evidence than his word. "Well," saith one, "but suppose I were to see a vision, I should then believe." That is to say, you would believe your vision, but that vision would, in all probability, be the result of a fevered brain, and you would be deceived. "Oh, but if I could hear a voice, then I could believe." That is to say, you refuse the sure word of testimony in the Bible, and will only believe God if he will condescend to indulge your whims. Voices which you might think you heard are not to be depended upon, for imagination easily creates them. When day-dreaming I have heard many voices, or thought I did, but

they may have been echoes, or birds far up in the air, or mere fancies. There is nothing to be depended upon in hearing a voice in the air. Will you put that in competition with the revealed will of God? "Oh, but if I had a special revelation." Such a special revelation you have no right to look for. I speak most plainly here, no additional revelation is to be expected, because the book of God is ended, the revelation of God is finished, and he that adds to the sacred book is cursed. If you, therefore, say that God has made a new revelation to you, you run a dreadful risk of the curses which are written in this book. God, by his Spirit, brings old truth home to the heart, gives new light to our eyes, and causes the word to exercise new power over us, but he reveals no new facts, and he utters no words in any man's ears concerning his condition and state. We must be content with the old revelation and with the life and power and force with which the Holy Spirit brings it to the heart. Neither must any of us seek to have any additional revelation, for that would imply that the Scriptures are incomplete. What, has God spoken all this volume that you may believe on his Son, and is not that enough for you? Must he go out of his way to make some private communication to you? Is all that which he has already spoken to be treated as a lie, unless he at your dictation condescends to say somewhat for your personal behoof? Are you too good or too great to be saved like other sinners? That is what it practically comes to. "Oh," say you, "but if I felt so and so, I would believe." Suppose you did, then your confidence would be in your feelings, and not in God, and what would that be but presumption, seeing that there cannot be anything in your feelings which can make God true. God is true, feel whatever you may. Believe him, then, for it is to that faith in his Son that he gives salvation, and not to faith in your own feelings. Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness; but if Abraham had stood higgling and haggling till he had seen this and that he would not have believed, nor found righteousness by faith.

Let me tell those of you who will not believe in God till you get a certain experience, or sign, or wonder to be added to God's word, that *those of his people who have been longest walking by faith have to come back full often to the first foundation of faith in the outer witness of God in his Word.* It has been the privilege of some of us to possess the inner witness for years, and yet at certain times it departs, and we have to fall back on the first basement, truth. When the winds are out, and the storms are loosed, and temptation howls through the soul, we always fly to the Word of God and not to our own experience: we get away from what we feel to what the Lord has said. One ounce, of "it is written," gives more confidence than a ton of what we have felt. We are apt in troublous times to judge that our happy feeling was a delusion, and our confidence a mistake. "True, I did think that I stood and looked within the pearly gates, and was full of heavenly joy; but, alas, it may have been all a dream." This is, however, no dream—that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners—there is no mistake about that fact. That God has set forth his Son to be a propitiation for sin—there is no imagination about that. There it stands in black and white in the Scriptures of truth, and to that witness we fly again. Whether I am saint or sinner, whether I am an heir of heaven or an heir of wrath, there

standeth the word, "He that believeth in him is not condemned." I do believe in him, and I am not condemned, nor shall all the devils in hell make me think I am, since God has said I am not. On that rock my faith shall stand unshaken, come what may.

Let this suffice upon our first head, that believing on the Son comes before the inner witness.

II. Secondly, THE INNER WITNESS NATURALLY FOLLOWS UPON FAITH. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." *It is quite impossible that the inner witness should precede faith*, and this you will clearly see if you think a minute. Here is a medicine well known to be exceedingly efficacious in a certain disease. A sick man says that he will not believe in its power until he has some inner witness of it. It is clear to you that he cannot possibly have any evidence of its power upon him till he has at least enough faith to take the medicine, and give it a chance of operating upon him. So is it with this blessed *catholicon* of the precious blood of Jesus: you cannot have any *inner* witness to its power till first of all you receive it by faith. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name"; but the reception must come first. And you cannot have this witness apart from faith, because the Holy Ghost never sets his seal to a blank sheet of paper. There must first of all be the writing of faith upon the heart, and then the Spirit of God puts his attesting seal thereto. Would you have God the Holy Ghost witness to a falsehood? And yet it would be witnessing to a lie if he gave an inner witness of salvation to a man who is still an unbeliever, and who consequently is condemned already. If you refuse to believe God's word how can you think that the Spirit will bear witness of anything in you except it be to your condemnation? There must be faith going before, and then the witness will follow after.

But be it remembered especially that *a man may have the witness within him and sometimes he may not perceive it*. Say you, "That is strange"? Yet reflect; you might be the possessor of a large estate, and an adversary might contest your right to it, and you might not be able to find your title deeds; the estate might be yours clearly enough, but those deeds of yours might be mislaid and locked up in a forgotten drawer, and you might be sorely put to it, perhaps, until the day of trial settled the dispute as to whether it is yours or not. I believe that many a child of God has plenty of witness in his own soul, but he has not the wisdom to perceive it; plenty of witness, but through ignorance or carelessness he does not collect it and refresh himself with it. If he believes he has the witness within himself, and he will be comforted if he has but light enough to know what the witness is, but often through negligence in searching the word of God he has the witness, but cannot discover it. He wishes to read it, but his ignorance has mislaid it.

Now, what is this witness within? It may be seen as follows: take the verses that precede my text, and you get one form of it. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners—that is the main point to be witnessed. First *the Spirit*, after we have believed, bears witness in our soul that it is so, because we perceive that the Spirit has led us to believe in Jesus, and has given us repentance; the Spirit has

renewed us, the Spirit has made us different from what we were, the Spirit helps us in prayer, the Spirit lifts us up upon the wings of praise, the Spirit works upon us wondrously, and so we gather that this comes to us through believing in Jesus; he is indeed the Saviour of sinners, for we are saved. Then *the water* bears witness within us—that is to say, we feel a new life, we feel the living water in our hearts, and we are conscious of being alive to things to which we were once dead. We find that now there is within us a new nature, which we never possessed before. All this becomes comfortable evidence that what we have believed is true; we have proved it to be true, for we have the life which was promised to us upon our believing in Jesus. Thirdly, *the precious blood* within our souls bears further witness, for when it gives us peace we sing as sinners bought with blood, and rejoice before God as cleansed by the blood from all sin, and as having access into that which is within the veil by the sprinkled blood, and we feel deep peace within our souls through the voice of the blood. This is a witness sweet and clear within us, proving that what we received upon God's word without any other evidence is certainly true. Now we have confirmatory witness within our spirits, given not because we demanded it, but as a sweet reward and gracious privilege. We should never have received it if we had not believed first on the naked word of God, but after that the witness flows naturally into the heart.

Another part of the witness lies in this, that when we have believed *we receive life, and according to the 11th verse this is the record that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* We have believed, and we feel that we have obtained the life; and we are doubly assured that the witness of God is true. We believed it before, because God had said it, and now we are permitted to feel it; since the life is welling up within our souls like a fountain, we know now that Jesus Christ must be the Son of God, for to whom else is it given to bestow life? Who else could have bestowed upon us this high, this spiritual, this heavenly life?

In detail, the inward evidence lies very much this way. First, *a wondrous sense of change* comes over the believer. Having believed in Jesus Christ upon the simple evidence of God, there is a work of regeneration performed upon him, and he feels himself altogether transformed. A young girl once said, "Either the whole world is changed, or else I am." Everything seems so altered, for it is seen with new eyes. The man undergoes a radical change of feelings; all things are reversed to him, his sweets are now sour, and his sour is now sweet, and finding himself so thoroughly new-created he says, "This is the finger of God," and he infers that the power which has wrought all this comes from the Son of God.

Then, again, there is a *wondrous power which goes with the word of God*, not always, but yet often. Are you not conscious, my brethren, of often feeling when you are reading the Word, or hearing it, as you never did feel when listening to any other form of speech? Get to the foot of the cross, for instance, and look up, and view the flowing of your Saviour's precious blood; and do you not feel then as nothing else can make you feel? You are reading a religious book, and it has a holy effect upon you; but if you reflect you will see that it is only powerful

because it is borrowed from the word of God. The voice of God thrills your soul in a more than magical manner, as no other voice ever can. Why, I warrant you, a Christian blindfold would know which was a text of Scripture and which was not, by its effect upon his heart. The very words are so majestic that none can imitate their dignity; and when they are applied with power they lay us low or lift us up as only divine words could do. "Where the word of a king is there is power," and this becomes an inner witness to the sovereign truth of the gospel.

The like witness is borne by a sense of being put into our right place. You were all out of place before, but having believed in Jesus Christ you are put in your right position. You stand in harmony with the divine system, and this you feel could only be effected by the truth, for a lie works to disorder and not to right. If anybody had said to the prodigal son: "I doubt whether you have a father; I doubt your father's love; I doubt whether he has any house wherein there is bread enough and to spare," he might have been puzzled to answer those wretched doubts while he was standing at the swine trough, but you could not trouble him with it when he has reached his father's house, and was sitting down at the table of love listening to the sound of the music and dancing, and feasting upon the fatted calf. If any sceptic had then said to him, "There is no father's love," why, his cheeks still sweetly tingling with the kisses would have supplied him with his best reply. I do not suppose he would have deigned to answer the doubter except by a quiet smile, but would have gone on feasting upon the fatted calf; or, if he did answer, he would have said, "Go, take your doubts to one who will receive them; I am right again with my dear father, for he has forgiven me, and I feel his love, and know for myself that he abounds in tenderness."

That *deep feeling of peace* which comes to us through believing in Jesus makes us feel quite sure again that he can save, and that we are secure in him. We took God at his word when we had no feeling, but having believed in Jesus Christ we are now conscious of a wonderful rest—"The peace of God which passeth all understanding." We see that we are forgiven, justly forgiven, saved by mercy, but still not to the violation of the justice of God, and therefore we are perfectly at ease. Yea, and sometimes we rise beyond peace. I am not going to tell many of the high secrets of the inner life, this morning, but yet I will confess that at times

"Our joys divinely grow,
Unspeakable, like those above,
And heaven begins below."

This, again, is a part of the inner witness that the gospel is true.

And what if I were to speak of growing holiness of character, of increased conformity to Christ's image? Do not these form a good inner witness? What if I were to speak of growing strength, so that the things we dare not once attempt we now accomplish with ease, or of growing patience under tribulation. Either of these would be noble proofs. What if I spoke of fellowship with God, or of peace in the prospect of death, or of a thousand other blessings which make up Christian experience? Might I not claim that all these go to make up

a very powerful inner witness, which abundantly seals the truth which we at first accepted as matter of pure faith in the testimony of God.

III. As time hastens I will only pause for a moment to say that THIS INNER WITNESS IS EXCEEDINGLY EXCELLENT, first, because it is very *plain and easy to be understood*. Numbers of you have never read "Butler's Analogy," and if you were set to study it you would go to sleep over it. Never mind, you may have an unanswerable "analogy" in your own souls. You might not understand Butler or Paley, but you will understand the witness of your own spirit. You may talk to a rustic about mastication and digestion and assimilation, and he will open his eyes and wonder what you mean; but he will understand your practical meaning well enough if you give him a good dinner. So it is with the things of God: theological terms are difficult, but if you believe in Jesus Christ and he saves your soul, you will understand that he is the divine Saviour, and nobody will be able to gainsay the argument.

That is another point of its excellence,—that it is *unanswerable*. A man is told that a certain medicine is mere quackery, "See here," says he, "it healed me." What do you say to such an argument? You had better let the man alone. So when a Christian is told that the gospel is all nonsense he replies, "It saved me. I was a drunkard, and it made me sober, and more. I was a man of strong passions, and it tamed me, and more." What can you say to such facts? Why, nothing. It must be with you as with the rulers of old. "When they saw the man that was healed standing with Peter and John they could say nothing against them."

Such argument as this is *very abiding* in its results. A man who has been transformed, and feels himself daily renewed by the gospel, cannot be baffled, because every day his argument is renewed, and he finds fresh reasons within himself for knowing that what he believed is true. Such argument is *always ready to hand*. Sometimes if you are challenged to a controversy you have to reply, "Wait till I run upstairs and consult a few books," but when the evidence is personal—"I have felt it, I know it, I have tasted it, handled it"—why you have your argument at your fingers' ends at all times.

Such witness as this *gives a man great boldness*. He does not begin to conceal his opinions, or converse with his neighbour with an apologetical air, but he is positive and certain. I confess that when I have to argue about the truth of divine things it is a dreary task to me. I am so sure of these things myself, by living and actual test, that I wonder other people are not sure too; and while they are wanting me to argue about this point or that it seems to me like asking a man to prove that there is a sun in yonder sky. I bask in his beams, I swoon under his heat, I see by his light; and yet they ask me to prove his existence! Are the men mad? What do they want me to prove? That God hears prayer? I pray and receive answers every day. That God pardons sin? I was in my own esteem the blackest of sinners, and sunk in the depths of despair, yet I believed, and by that faith I leaped into a fulness of light and liberty at once. Why do they not try it themselves? You want me to prove that bread is fit for food. Why, men, I have been living upon it these years. I do not know how to begin my proof. Take a bit

of bread, man, and eat, and know for yourself. "Taste and see that the Lord is good." We believe, and are sure, and therefore we speak, but we do not wonder if men reject our witness, for they refuse the witness of God.

IV. I close by saying that excellent as this inner witness is, IT MUST NEVER BE PUT IN THE PLACE OF THE DIVINE WITNESS IN THE WORD. Why not? Because it would insult the Lord, and be contrary to his rule of salvation by faith. Because, moreover, it is not always with us in equal clearness, or rather, we cannot equally discern it. If the brightest Christian begins to base his faith upon his experience and his attainments, he will be in bondage before long. Beloved, build on what God hath said, and not upon your inward joys. Accept these precious things not as foundation stones, but as pinnacles of your spiritual temple. Let the main thing be—"I believe because God hath spoken." If any other evidence comes to your net, accept it, but go you on fishing by faith; faith in God, in God's naked word. Then, if the Lord's hand should turn, and you in providence should be stripped bare like Job, so that you sit on a dung-hill covered with sore boils, you will be able to say, "I did believe that God loved me when he gave me children; I did believe God loved me when I had sheep and oxen, I did believe that God loved me when I had camels and asses, but still these were not the grand reasons of my faith, but God himself, and therefore I still believe that he loves me, now that every child is dead, and all my property is swept away, and I myself am sick; yea, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." That is faith. God grant you to have that faith which can sing, "Though the fig tree shall not blossom, and there shall be no herd in the stall, yet will I rejoice in the Lord." Though there be no evidences of grace in me, though there be no joys, though there be a broken peace, though there be sin to mourn over, though there be hardness of heart to stagger me; yet still I took the Lord Jesus as a sinners' Saviour at the first, and I take him as a sinners' Saviour still. I did not trust him at the first because I was a saint, and now I will not doubt him because I find out more and more that I am a sinner, but I will go still to him just as I am, and rest on the great salvation which God has provided for me.

Sinner, I charge you do not wish to put your notion of an inner witness into the place of God's own witness, which he bears to you and to every creature under heaven in his sacred word. You may not say, "I will trust Jesus, when I have the inner witness;" because you never can have the inner witness till you have first trusted in the redeeming Lord. Until you are willing to believe God's bare word, and come to Christ in all your guilt, and accept his cleansing blood and perfect righteousness, you never can have any evidence within, except it be evidence of your own folly and sinfulness. Therefore what is the use of your looking for it? Why seek the living among the dead? You cannot have this inner witness before believing, and you ought not to desire it, for the desire is unreasonable. I have shown you that it would be irrational to expect the Spirit of God to set his seal to a blank: how can he do so? If you will not believe God why should you expect to be saved, and if not saved, how can you have the inner witness? If a king were about to pardon men simply upon

this condition, that they would trust his mercy, and they were to answer, "We will not believe in your clemency except you indulge our whims," would you wonder if he did not pardon them? Moreover, let me ask you, how can you ever be right with God if you will not believe him? Certainly I could not count you to be my friend if you refused to believe my solemn statements. If you counted me a liar how could I call you my friend? What peace can there be till confidence is restored? Are not those God's enemies who refuse to believe his witness about his own Son? Now, my hearer, will you believe God or not? Dear soul, will you believe God or not? "Oh," say you, "but—" Now that is not the question. What "but" can there be about this matter? either the Lord is true or false. I know you can make a hundred "buts," but will you believe God, or will you make him a liar? O Spirit of the living God, show men the sin of unbelief, and bring them now to see how just and right a thing it is simply to trust God, and believe his witness concerning Jesus Christ. Now, I put you to this—If God be not worthy to be trusted, say so, and go your way; but if he be, if he has spoken the truth, why do you not believe him? If, after this, you refuse to believe in Jesus, your doom will be upon your own heads; but if you will trust Christ, you may rejoice, for you are saved. This is the gospel that we are bidden to preach to every creature,—“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.” God give his own blessing for Christ's sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —John iii. 14—21;

I. John v.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—728, 523, 468.
