

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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A CATECHISM FOR THE PROUD.

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## A Sermon

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“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”—1 Corinthians iv. 7.

THE Corinthian church was exceedingly gifted. Perhaps no other church of the period had in it so many persons of education and talent. The apostle says of them, “In everything ye are enriched, in all utterance and in all knowledge, so that ye come behind in no gift.” Alas, its grace was not in proportion to its gifts, and consequently a proud spirit was developed in the church, which manifested itself in divisions and contentions. Parties were formed. One said, “I am of Paul,” and probably prided himself on the depth of his thought. “I am of Apollos,” said another, and probably gloried in the brilliant eloquence of his language. “I am of Cephas,” cried a third, and boasted in the plain, unvarnished practicalness of Peter’s teaching. “You are all wrong,” exclaimed a fourth, “and I will have nothing to do with you. I am of no sect and no system, for I am of Christ, and exclude you all, because I wish to promote love and unity.” Party leaders are sure to be found where there is a party spirit; and party spirit is a fungus which grows upon the dunghill of conceit. The apostle grieved greatly to see that the brethren had no discipline, could not keep rank, and were not content to work under anybody or with one another. He lamented that each man wanted to be foremost, and he was so ashamed of them that he thanked God that he had baptized none of them. Probably the adherents of the various parties had only used their leaders’ names to make a sect in order that they themselves might be made the more prominent. They gloried in men that other men might glory in them. From all this may we as a church be preserved. May God grant that,

whatever gifts and talents we may have, we may always be filled by his good Spirit so abundantly that we may walk in all lowliness of spirit and abide in hearty, loving union with each other.

Our apostle displayed great wisdom in his rebuke of the Corinthians. He did not cry down their talents; he did not say that it was altogether a thing of no value to be able to argue, to be able to preach, to be able to discern spirits, or to be able to speak with tongues. This is a mode of procedure which suggests itself very readily, but it is not a good one. You very seldom lower a man's opinion of himself by undervaluing his gifts. He knows that you are treating him unfairly, and he naturally resents the injustice, and becomes more proud than ever. He remembers the fable of the fox and the sour grapes, and is fully persuaded that you only decry his abilities because you do not possess them yourself. Pride is not to be cured by injustice: one devil will not drive out another. Pride often finds fuel for itself in that which was intended to damp its flame; the man who is undervalued feels that if his gifts are despised by others, he knows their value himself, if nobody else does, and he has another reason for considering himself to be a person of superior abilities. The apostle follows a far more sensible course; he does not deny the talent, but asks where it comes from; he does not irritate, but cuts deep while he asks one or two questions, which strike at the very root of self-esteem. In effect these questions were as follows: "If you are a superior person, and a man fit to be a teacher of others, whence did you obtain this superiority? If you are different from the common people, who makes you to differ? If you are a person of remarkable gifts, how came you to possess them? If all your distinguishing abilities are gifts from God, why do you boast? Why do you exalt yourself? What have you which you have not received? Now, if you received everything as the gift of divine charity, why do you glory as if you had not received it?"

These questions may well hide pride from man, and I pray that such may be the result upon our minds while at this time we pursue the train of thought suggested by the text. To this end we shall need the assistance of the Holy Ghost, for nothing is more difficult than to overcome our self-conceit. Pride takes a thousand forms and hides itself under numberless disguises. Many talk of lowliness, but humility still remains among the rarest of jewels. Many take a pride in what they call having no pride about them. It is very easy to be proud of not being proud, and perhaps some brethren here are in that condition. Perhaps we have ourselves said, "No, we are not such fools as to boast." That is not boasting, I suppose! "I could not be vainglorious," says one; "I know too much of my unworthiness to give myself airs, and ride the high horse." Quite so, my friend, and yet at the bottom of such a speech there may lie a world of self-

confidence; in fact, your humble confession may be only another form of blowing your own trumpet. It is easy to be proud while sneering at pride, and to glorify self while denouncing all self-exaltation. There was great truth in Plato's observation when Diogenes trampled on his valuable carpets and said, "I trample upon the pride of Plato?" "Yes," said Plato, "and with greater pride." There be some who are never more ostentatious than when they cry down all display, and never more insolent than when opposing insolence. Pride is a subtle serpent-like vice, it will insinuate itself into the most secret chamber and hide in the most unlikely places. It will speak like an angel of light, and cringe and fawn and display a meek modesty which might almost deceive the very elect. It will blush and be diffident and hesitating, while all the while Lucifer himself is not more puffed up. To deal blows at this vice of vanity we shall meditate upon our text and pray God to bless it to us. First, we shall note that the verse contains *a great and comprehensive truth*; and, secondly, we shall observe, as God shall help us, *the teaching which may be derived from it*,

I. Our text contains within itself A GREAT AND COMPREHENSIVE TRUTH, namely, that whatever advantages we any of us possess over our fellow men we have received from God. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." "The Saving God giveth us richly all things to enjoy." "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." Everything that we are which is not sinful, and everything that we have which is worth having, we owe to the bounty of our God.

And this is true, first, as to all sorts of *temporal advantages*. Begin at the very lowest: we owe our physical strength and personal comeliness to the Lord alone. Some persons are born with a fine frame, well knit, healthy, vigorous, strong, fitly proportioned; and others exhibit a beauty of person and countenance which gives them great influence and wins much admiration. One of the commonest vices in the world, and one of the most silly, is the propensity to boast in mere animal force or physical beauty, whereas the man had no hand in making one single bone or muscle or sinew of his frame; nor has the fairest daughter of Eve been the creator of her own loveliness. No credit is due to the strong man for his strength nor to the beautiful for their beauty. Strength and beauty are gifts, not virtues. There are some who consider the strongest man to be the best, and measure themselves by their capacity to lift weights, or to inflict blows, forgetting that horses and elephants can bear greater loads, and lions and tigers can be fiercer in fight. Mere force belongs to beasts and to steam-engines even more than to men and a man of gigantic strength is outdone at every step by the commonest machinery. As for beauty, one of its most potent charms lies in its modest unconsciousness; it is greatly marred when accompanied by vanity.

It may seem natural that a peacock should expand its tail in self-admiration, for the bird knows no better, but for a man or woman possessed of reason to gaze in the glass and admire their own bright eyes, and glossy hair, and delicate features, is contemptible vanity. Lovely is the modesty which does not even think of itself, but like the sweetly perfumed violet hides itself among the leaves, to be sought out by those who have pleasure in lowly worth. O fine lady, why so haughty? Didst thou make thyself? Then be proud of thyself. O strong athletic man, why so arrogant? Art thou thine own creator? Didst thou, O man, or woman, give thyself strength or comeliness? Those legs of a man so swift for running, has the runner fashioned them himself? Those eyes of woman, so bright for fascination, did she kindle their wondrous light herself? No, these personal advantages are evidently gifts distributed at the divine pleasure. The Lord has made one athletic while another is born a cripple, one is uncomely and another fair as beauty's self. We meet with persons who are born blind, or deaf and dumb, or deformed in limb, or weak in spine, and therefore we see that our vigour of physical frame is the gift of Providence. To each favoured one we may say "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"

Position, too, in this world is a thing very commonly boasted of. This man is born with a silver spoon in his mouth: another man comes into the world, with nothing silvery about him. The first man boasts because he is a gentleman, and has come of a wealthy family: but what had he to do with that? What determined the place of his birth? What but a providential arrangement altogether apart from himself? And after all in the matter of birth we are all pretty much upon a level if we trace our pedigrees to their common meeting-place in the father of all living. Among the numerous kinds of pride this is one of the most ridiculous,—the boast of blood and vaunting of ancestry. What can there be of all inherited position and rank for which we can claim merit? However great the privilege no credit is certainly due to those who have it, for we may say to each one, "What hast thou which thou hast not received?"

Some men are vainglorious because they claim to have made their own position: we have even heard them say that they made themselves. I observe that persons who boast of being self-made usually worship their supposed maker with great fervency, and endeavour to lead others to pay the same homage. But I would ask such, "Who gave you the opportunity to become what you have become? Whence came that natural talent and force of character which have brought you to the front?" The "self-made man" can only be so called in a very restricted sense, or else the speech is false and blasphemous. If a man hath prospered, his prosperity has come of God's kind permission—"The Lord maketh

poor and maketh rich”; and if he hath fought his way up from penury and obscurity to dignity and position among the sons of men, he owes it to the gentleness of God, who “raiseth up the poor out of the dust.” Education, the gift of prudent parents, and opportunity, the boon of providence, have united to make the man prosperous: what has he that he has not received?

Some also glory in their talent and knowledge; but here again, if a man addicts himself to the nobler pursuits of science and learning, and renounces the more grovelling ambitions of mere wealth and station, endeavouring to search out the secrets of nature so as to become useful to his fellow-men, if he shall succeed and shall rise to be numbered with great master minds, has he not received it all? From the first, were there not natural predilections and propensities and talents and capacities bestowed upon him which have been denied to others who have been equally industrious, but could not in the nature of things become equally eminent? Whence also has come the health which has enabled the student to persevere in laborious research? Many have been slain by their devotion to their books. The brain is very sensitive, and many in burning the midnight oil have consumed the oil of life at the selfsame time; to whom, then, does the successful student owe his continued mental vigour? The greatest philosopher may wisely thank God that he is not a lunatic. Many a time, it may be, in the pursuit of knowledge he has in the straining of his faculties come very near to the overstraining of them. “Great wits to madness often are allied,” and frequently only the merciful interposition of heaven has spared the deep student from the madman’s fate. What has he that he has not received?

As to wealth, whereof some are apt to indulge a vulgar vanity, what is there in it, after all? Certainly it is to a man’s credit that he did not in the commencement of his life squander his money in wanton waste and self-indulgence; it is to a man’s credit that he put his shoulder to the wheel and toiled on, and did not consume his days in idleness, or fall into habits of drunkenness and dissipation, which are the roots of nine-tenths of the poverty in the land; it is to his credit that he has been economical, and so has kept the wolf from the door, and risen to a competence: but still, what has he that he did not receive? These very habits and discretions may be traced to training, or to force of mind, or to happy example, and they are, therefore, things received. As for the man’s success, it is not alone due to industry, for sickness or accident might have made him unable to earn his bread, or dearth of employment might have hampered him. An ill turn in trade would have swept away his little capital, or, trusting in others, he might have found himself robbed of all. Are there not many who are industrious and prudent and all that, and yet nothing seems to prosper with them, or if they do have a little season of prosperity it is soon over? They have not,

perhaps, all the wit of some, and therefore become the prey of sharpers, nor have they all the vigour of mind which is needful in these days of competition. Alas, some have grown rich by wickedness and have heaped up curses for themselves, but, as far as wealth is a blessing, no man possesses it apart from God's goodness. What saith the Scripture? "Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth." If any man will sit down and trace up his progress in life, he will say of each of his mercies, "This also cometh to me of the goodness of the Lord; it is he who has prospered me. I might have exerted myself as I have done, but except the Lord had built the house they who built it would have laboured in vain; except the Lord had kept the city, the watchmen had wakened in vain. Even if I have laboured as in the very fire, and risen early and sat up late, yet all would have come to nought unless his own good hand had been with me." Let us remember this, and never indulge the pride which robs God of his praise. It would be a sad thing if we were to become as besotted as ungrateful Israel, of whom the Lord said, "She did not know that I gave her corn and wine and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold."

Nor is it alone that for the power to get we are indebted to the Lord, for the retaining of our substance is equally of his favour. Riches take to themselves wings and fly away, and the rich man may be on a sudden stripped of all his treasure. Houses are soon plucked down unless the Lord do keep them. For the continued supplies of our need let us thank the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits.

O man of learning, it is the Lord that giveth thee power to acquire knowledge, else had thine efforts all been fruitless, and thy mind would have proved to be a barren waste. All faculty, capacity, attainment and influence come of him. It is he that giveth thee power, if thou art a member of the Christian church, to take a high position in it and to become a leader of others. If thou hast any experience by which thou canst comfort the afflicted, if thou hast any knowledge of his word by which thou canst instruct the ignorant, if thou hast the Spirit of God resting upon thy utterance to convince and arouse, to confirm and to edify, if in anything thou art favoured to bless the church and the world, thou owest this also to the great Giver of all good. Bless him therefore and boast not.

If any man be prepared to deny our doctrine we may leave him to his own ungrateful pride, but let him tremble lest, like Nebuchadnezzar, he should be stripped of all power to glory, and made in his fall to acknowledge the hand of the Lord. You shall always find that men upon their knees, if they are sincere, bless God for all they have; and the better a man grows, and I will venture to add, the more common sense he gains, the more ready is he to trace all that he has, and is, to the good hand of his God. Certainly, the more grace he has, and

the more he becomes like his God, the more earnestly does he disclaim any credit for himself, and the more sweetly does he sing the psalm, "*Non nobis domine*"—"Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name give glory." Like Paul he cries, "By the grace of God I am what I am." We have thus set forth the great general truth, which holds good as to all temporal advantages.

I believe it to be an equally sure truth as *to all gracious privileges*. The apostle says, "Who maketh thee to differ?" Now, my brethren, those of us who have been saved by divine grace do differ from others. We differ greatly from what we used to be, we differ sensibly from ourselves in our former state; and we differ also greatly from others who are still unregenerate, for if the grace of God did not make our character to be different from that of the ungodly, where would be its value? The Lord has taught us what others do not know, he has quickened us with a life which others do not feel, he has given us a sorrow which the world has never felt, and, blessed be his name, he has endowed us with a joy with which worldlings cannot intermeddle. There is a very great difference between him that feareth God and him that feareth him not. "Now, who maketh thee to differ?" is the question to be thought of this morning by every saved one.

I believe that the doctrines of grace would never be doubted if men would follow this question to its legitimate conclusions. How came I to be different from other men if I be so? It has been by the hearing of the gospel as the means, but I must ascribe it to divine grace, and not to chance, that I was born where the gospel was preached, and not left under the influence of Popery or heathenism. There is distinguishing sovereignty in the birth of one man in London and the birth of another in Timbuctoo. Neither individual had anything to do with that most important item in his career. You might have been born in the kraal of the Hottentot instead of in the midst of a family of believers in Christ. The very privilege of hearing the word you must thankfully acknowledge to be a gift from the hand of God. Others even in your own country may not have been equally favoured, for they may not have had such earnest parents, nor have heard so earnest a minister. You were placed where many have been converted; it may be in the country or in London you were early carried to listen to a man whose way of putting the gospel was warm-hearted and affectionate, and likely to be owned of God. There, again, is the sovereignty of God to be seen, that one should be found under a cold, dead ministry, and another should hear a soul-saving preacher. Yet further, there were some who heard the same sermons as you did and were not converted, and you were. How came that about? Will you take the glory of it? Were you better disposed? Was there something in your nature superior to that of others. It is true you did pay more earnest attention, but why? What led you to do so? Was there some natural bettemess about you? No, dear

friend, you will not dare to say so: at any rate, if you said so in the heat of controversy, you would not repeat it on your knees. No Christian will say, "Lord, I was better than other people, and therefore I am saved and they are not." No, in prayer we are all Calvinists, and all agree to ascribe the whole of the praise to the grace of God. "Who maketh thee to differ?" has but one answer from Christian people. It is the grace of God that has done it.

The apostle next owns that we possess many blessings, but declares that we have received all of them from God. Is that true? Let us enlarge upon the question. I speak only to professed believers in Christ. You had at first conviction of sin: did that arise spontaneously or did the Spirit convince you of sin? Repentance towards God,—was that wrought in you by the Holy Spirit, or was it the outgrowth of your own free will? You have faith: I venture to ask you if that faith is the gift of God? If it be not, I advise you to get rid of it, for it will never save you, for the faith which saves the soul is always spoken of in Scripture as the gift of God. Since your conversion you have exhibited some measure of holiness, but was that wrought in you by the Spirit or is it the fruit of your natural excellence? Who is to have the praise of it? You have grown in knowledge,—have you been taught of God, or did you teach yourself? If you were your own teacher, I know what kind of scholar you had. They say that when a man is his own lawyer he has a fool for his client, and it is very much the same when a man is his own teacher in divine things. You have also gained experience, you have felt love to Christ, you have burned with zeal; were these good things the gifts of God to you, or do you claim credit for them as having sprung up in your heart, as weeds grow in a garden without sowing or watering? Ah, dear brother, I know there is no exception to this rule among the children of God, they all confess that their graces have been received of the Lord. Whatever their doctrinal view's and sentiments let them but speak with God in prayer or praise, and they will all say, "It was all thy work as far as it was good, and unto thee be all the honour of it from the first to the last. Thou hast wrought all our works in us." Friend, if your grace did not come from God it is worthless: but if it did come from the Lord let him have the glory of it, and do not boast as though you had not received it.

I want to call your attention to the way in which the text is worded. It is not said, "Who made thee to differ?" but "Who maketh thee to differ?" Who distinguishes thee now? It was God who made thee to differ at the first: that we all admit: who makes thee to differ now? Suppose thou wert left to thyself, couldst thou continue in thy state of grace? Suppose the grace of God were gone, what would become of thee? Is there one man among us who could keep his own soul alive so long as it takes for the eye to twinkle, if God's upholding Spirit



were withdrawn? Is there any folly, is there any fault, is there any crime into which the best saint here would not soon plunge, if it were not for the restraining grace of God? Who dare trust himself? What is it that makes us continue to differ from the very worst but the grace of God? And who shall make us to differ in days to come? To whom do you look for your future preservation? Are you your own keepers? Do you hope that you yourselves unaided shall persevere in the road to heaven? Ye are not, I trust, so presumptuous. Between this spot and yonder golden gates there will be battles in which we shall surely be slain unless Jehovah shall cover our heads: there are wilderness places into which we shall be sure to wander and lose ourselves for ever unless the Shepherd of Israel shall lead us like a flock. We know that it is so from past experience and present consciousness. The longer I live—and I think it is so with most Christians—the more I feel that everything must be of grace from first to last if I am to be saved. Grace chose us and grace redeemed us, grace calls us, grace renews us, grace preserves us, and grace must perfect us, or else nothing will come of all our hopes and desires: our religion will all be a flash in the pan, a disappointment at the last, and a failure for ever.

Today I stand here to say that, if I have served the Lord from my youth up, he led me into his ways. If I have preached his gospel faithfully to the utmost of my knowledge, it has been because his grace has urged me thereto. If any souls have been won to Christ, if a church has been built up, if young preachers have been encouraged, if the savour of the gospel has been spread abroad, for these things, and all else that has been done, I disclaim even the shadow of credit. I loathe the bare thought. Unto God alone be the honour. He hath worked in me to will to do of his own good pleasure. When I bear this personal testimony I feel quite sure that every brother and sister here according to his position and condition will agree with it in his own case. If there be any virtue, if there be any praise, if there be anything that is honest or of good repute, unto the Lord, and unto the Lord alone, be the praise. If we be without these things the fault is our own: if we have no grace, if we have not obtained mercy, if we are still unbelievers and disobedient, on our own heads must rest the responsibility and the sin: but this by no means contradicts the present truth that if there be aught of goodness in us it is the workmanship of him who began to save us and will not cease from his work till he has finished it. Thus then have I spoken of the great general truth.

II. Now we come to ITS TEACHINGS. The first teaching of this great truth is that which we have already enlarged upon. It is useful as a *rebuke to pride*. If any brother be filled with vanity let him answer the question, “Who maketh thee to differ?” True, thou art no more a drunkard, but why shouldst thou boast of thy

sobriety? Is it not thy duty? True, thou art no more the companion of evil doers, but who was it that took thee out of their company and gave thee a new heart and a right spirit? What is it that keeps thee out of the ways of the wicked at this moment? It is true thou knowest something of the things of God, whereas others are blinded, and the world lieth in the wicked one; but who opened thine eyes? What sayest thou? Thou wast born blind as they were; who opened thine eyes? Didst thou bring light to thine own soul? Think of what you used to be. Let any one of us look back to our first estate, and we shall surely be compelled to lay our finger on our mouth and silence every boast for ever. Think of what we should be if grace left us; how a hasty temper would soon ruin some of us, how natural levity would carry others of us off our feet; how depression of spirit would lead some to despair, and carelessness would draw others to presume; how in many ways our besetting sin would overthrow us, if it were not for the preserving grace of God. Brethren, if we say concerning anything in us that is good, "This is mine, and I congratulate myself upon having produced it," we are robbers and liars. Acknowledge that what you have is received from God; own that it belongs to the great Giver, and that you yourself belong to Christ, and you may take the comfort of every good gift you have; but once say, "This is no gift: it is my own,"—you are uttering falsehood, and you are acting a knavish part in defrauding the great King of his lawful revenue of praise. Yes, and you are also acting the part of an idolater, making yourself into an idol and lavishing incense to please your own foolish vanity. God grant that from a sense of being beggars, and nothing but beggars, daily receiving alms at the gate of mercy, we may be led to behave ourselves in his presence and amongst our fellow men with all lowliness of spirit. "Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"

Secondly, this great truth becomes *an excitement to gratitude*. If all I possess I have received, and if all I am is due to the distinguishing grace of God, then let me bless the Lord in the depths of my soul. Silence is often the noblest form of worship. I delight to sit before the Lord and feel that unspeakable mercy can only be acknowledged by unspeakable thankfulness. O God, if thou hadst left me where I was, if thou hadst left me to go on in sin, what might I have been by now? What a servant of the devil, what a well-tutored tempter of others should I have grown to be! Into what shame and disgrace might I have fallen! By what frightful habits might I have been enthralled! Some of you, my dear hearers, would have been dead long ago if it had not been for the grace of God, for you were killing yourselves by sin; some of you would have been damned long ago if grace had not stopped you, for you were riding steeplechase to hell, and did not go at a common prudent pace, as many do, along the broad road. Oh, I say

again, what might not some of us have been by now if the Lord had not stepped in with his preventing and converting mercy! Let us, therefore, while we bless him quietly in the deeps of our own soul, yet oftentimes overflow with praise, such as men may hear. Let our hearts flow over, for surely they are full. It is a good thing to spill a bowl of gratitude on an ungrateful man's floor, to make him feel that if he does not bless God others will do so, and will not be ashamed to do it to his face.

This gratitude should take the shape of continual obedience. Nothing which Jesus bids us do should be hard to us; and nothing that he has bidden should lie forgotten. When we were in bondage under sin we thought if the Lord did but forgive us we should become the most warm-hearted and loving servants in his employ. When I had the irons on my wrists, and when I sat in sackcloth and ashes in the thick darkness of despair, if anyone had said to me, "The Lord will have mercy upon you and make a minister of you," I should have replied, "Then I will preach with all my heart and soul." I should have hoped to preach a hundred times better than I have ever done. If it had been put to any one of you, do you not think you would have said, "I will serve him with my whole being. Redeemed by his blood, pressed to his bosom as a dear, returning child, clothed in the best robe, with a ring on my finger and shoes on my feet, I will live to my Father's praise, ay, live with such intensity that even apostles and martyrs shall not excel me." You have not done so, my friend, but the text calls you and me to do it, and suggests to us a gratitude which shall manifest itself in effort, and glow in every action of our daily life.

Again, my text has another teaching. It is *a reminder of responsibilities*. God has made a great difference between you and others in many respects, and given you a great many blessings; and forget not that where much is given much will be required. If you have ten talents, have you brought in the tenfold interest? If you possess five talents, have you brought in the fivefold return? It is to be deeply regretted that some of those who have the most ability to do good are doing the least. There are men with large wealth who do not give half as much as many with straitened means. I know persons of great attainments in spiritual knowledge who do not teach one half so much as newly converted lads and girls, who occupy their posts in the school right earnestly, and teach what little they know. I regret to say it, that those who could fight best are often the last to go to battle, and those who could plough best most often leave the ploughshare to rust, while feebler hands are worn to the bone. Brother, I will not deny that you have much knowledge, nor question that you have much experience, nor debate with you your right to be our superior; but if you be so, be so good as to excel us in consecration, in self-denial, in earnestness, and in holiness. In estimating our

personal character, let us not so much calculate what we could be, as what we are. Let us not so much consider what we might be if we would, but what we really are doing for the Lord, for that is the matter of most importance. You may be a well of water, but you will get no credit for it at the last; the reward comes for the cup of cold water that was given to a disciple in the name of a disciple. You may be a great bale of cloth, but you will get no honourable mention for it at the last great day; the commendation will be to those of whom the Lord shall say, "I was naked, and ye clothed me." You may have a fat larder and a fine buttery, but the honour shall only come to you at the last if it can be said, "I was an hungered and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, sick and in prison, and ye visited me." God grant we all may think of our responsibilities, so that you who could take long strides may not be satisfied to walk like little children; that you who could do a giant's work may not be satisfied with attempting that which might be creditable enough in a dwarf, but is not at all worthy of your greater powers.

Learn another lesson. The truth before us is a *suggestion of great tenderness in dealing with others!* Allow me for a minute to press that consideration upon you. "Who maketh thee to differ?" Who but a gracious God has renewed your heart? Yet you met the other day with a man fast bound with bad habits, and you said, "Nothing can be done with such a wreck of man. I will not waste words upon him." Another day you heard of an effort made in the back slums among the lowest of the low, and you said, "I do not think much can come of it." Now, my dear friend, "Who maketh thee to differ? What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" It would be better to drink into the spirit of holy John Bradford, whose window looked upon the road to the gallows at Tyburn, and as from day to day he saw poor condemned prisoners carried in the cart to die, he was wont to say, "There goes John Bradford but for the grace of God." If you feel so, let me ask you why cannot the grace of God cause others to fear God as well as yourself? Cannot the grace of God make other sinners to believe in Jesus as you do? I have never despaired of the salvation of any man since the Lord saved me. I know no heart that God cannot win if he could conquer mine. If you believe in your heart the precious doctrines of grace, you cannot be hopeless of any, but you must be ready to hope for those in whom there is nothing to encourage expectation. We ought never to look for desert in others, since the Lord did not look for desert in us. If Jesus loved us when there was no reason in us for that love, we ought just as freely to love our fellow men.

The last lesson is not for the Christian. It is for any of you here who wish you were saved. The text is *an encouragement for seekers*. You have begun another year, and you are yet unsaved? But still you do desire, if it be possible,

to become children of God. Now, do you know an eminent Christian? “Yes,” say you, “I do.” Perhaps it is your revered grandmother, or it may be some earnest Christian minister. You greatly admire those people, do you not? Now remember that there is nothing good in them but what they have received from God. The Lord can give the like grace to you, and you can receive even as they have received. Do you believe that? It is true whether you believe it or not. The Lord in his abundant mercy can give to you what he has given to the best of his saints, whoever you may be. “Then what have I to do?” says one. What you have to do is, according to the text, to be a receiver. That is all—and that is the easiest thing in the world. Anybody here can be a receiver. When you go past the offering box for the College, perhaps some of you cannot be givers, however much you may wish to be; but if I were to put a man at the door with a shilling or a guinea for each one, anybody could receive it if he chose. Reception is a faculty which belongs to us however low we may sink. When a person is covered with rags, covered with filth, covered with disease, he can still become a receiver; and even if he cannot stretch out his hand, he can find ways and means for receiving. Receiving implies neither strength, nor merit, nor wisdom. It requires no power, no faculty, no virtue, no anything; the power to be a receiver dwells with the weakest of the weak and the worst of the worst. The emptier you are, the more room there is for reception; the blacker you are, the more room to receive washing; the fouler you are, the more reason to receive cleansing; the more sick and near to death, the more room to receive healing. Wilt thou have the blessing which God in Christ Jesus is ready to give? If thou wilt be saved hearken to the voice of God and live! If you are willing to accept his Son Jesus Christ as thy Saviour, and from this time forth put thine whole trust in him, thou shalt be saved. May he of his grace lead thee now to become a receiver, for it is written, “As many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name.” Amen.

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PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans iii. 9–27.  
Ephesians ii. 1–13.

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