

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE CHOICE OF A LEADER.

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

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“And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.”—Luke vi. 39, 40.

MAN can hardly be retained in the place of wisdom, even if brought thither. Truth lies between two extremes, and man, like a pendulum, swings either too much this way or that. He abides not long in one stay, but tosses from side to side; never, except by divine grace, finding rest in the middle point of wisdom at all. Two extremes exist in reference to the pilgrimage and scholarship of life. Some assert that man needs no guide whatever. Is he not a noble creature, gifted with high intelligence? Can he not reason and judge, and understand and discern? He can surely find his own way without direction from without. As a learner, why needs he a teacher? He can instruct himself. Is he not possessed of science? Has he not already found out many inventions? Such self-sufficient boasters will not, therefore, condescend to sit at the feet of a master, or follow the track of a guide, and consequently they frequently become erratic, singular, lawless, and unreasonable in their modes of thought, and even of act. Into the mazes of infidelity and atheism such pilgrims wander; into foolishness and strong delusion such teachers of themselves conduct their own minds. This scheme is dangerous, but its opposite pole is not less so. Deliver a man from rationalism, and he often swings into superstition, and says, “I see that I need a guide, I will take the one nearest to hand.” Finding a guide constituted by this authority or that, the man who has ceased to use his judgment surrenders himself at

once to his leadership and reckons that to question is to be guilty of wicked unbelief. Without considering whether the guide be a seeing man or blind, or the teacher an instructed and qualified instructor, the credulous yield themselves up to priests or leaders, and are misled. Weary of thinking, they beg others to think for them, and there leave the matter. This is the religion of a great many, and they find much peace in it; the peace of slumbering stupidity. They meet with a church which claims to be venerable for antiquity, and then they believe whatever that church chooses to teach: they consider that they have no right any longer to judge or to use their understandings. They hang conscience and reason in a sling, as if they were broken arms, no longer usable, and give themselves up to be wheeled about like invalids in the chairs of tradition and dogmatism; they do not dare to question;—that would spoil the whole thing;—they shut their eyes and let other people see for them, nay, they shut their eyes to be guided by blind men; they give up thinking, to be directed by those who have also given up thinking, who have long ago shut their eyes and opened their mouths to take in whatever a supreme council or a pope may please to put into them. Between these two extremes there is a narrow path of right, and happy is he who finds it, namely, the honestly and sincerely judging who the leader and teacher should be, the discovery that a leader has been appointed in the person of the Lord Jesus, and a teacher in the divine Spirit, and then a complete, willing and believing submission of the whole man to this infallible guidance. Happy is that man who neither in the pride of intellect determines to be a guide to himself, and so to be guide to a fool; nor in the indolence of superstition surrenders himself up to be guided by his fellow man, call him priest, or pope, or minister, or what you will; but who, having found that God has sent his Son into this world of ours to be the Captain of salvation, who shall bring many sons into glory, follows where his commander leads the way, and having seen this same Jesus appointed to be the prophet of his people, delights to sit at his feet and receive of his words; reason, affection, contemplation, and will, all finding perfect rest in him. He with his eyes open follows the All-seeing One, and with his mind illuminated, becomes a disciple of the Eternal Light.

It is clear that the most important thing, if we are agreed that we need a guide, is to examine the claims of those who aspire to the office. Some take a guide because, as I have said before, he is appointed

by authority; he happens to be the parson of the parish, or the family minister, and he is at once accepted without consideration. He would be a very foolish person who would in climbing the mountains of Switzerland take a guide merely because he professed to be one, and carried the usual certificates, if upon looking at him it was clear that the man was stone blind. Would you say that does not matter, he says he is appointed by authority? Would you go to the top of Mont Blanc with him? If so, he would soon conduct you into a crevasse, and there would be an end to your folly. Yet multitudes resolve upon taking their religion by prescription, feeling confident that what is patronised by the great, and established and endowed by the nation, must of course be right. Whether the guide can see or not seems to be a trifle, but he must have been properly ordained, and duly inducted; if that be settled, the unthinking many ask no more. For my part, I like to look at my guide's eyes; I like to know whether he has ever traversed the country, and whether he has had experience of the way; and if he cannot satisfy me on those points I look elsewhere, to one who is all sight, and has had all experience, even the Lord Jesus. His authority I cannot question; I take for granted all that he teaches me. I am glad to be a seeing man following a seeing leader, and I endeavour to be an intelligent scholar learning of a wise and sympathetic teacher.

Our text has much wisdom about it as to this matter; for, first, *it announces to us a great general principle*, as a warning, namely, that a disciple does not get above his Master, but becomes like him: secondly, *it gives a special application* of the great general principle to Christ, that as we are perfected we shall become like him, even as in the case of all other disciples who grow like their masters. After these points, I shall try to use the text for the encouragement of those who desire Christ as their Master, by saying that *we may put the fact mentioned in the text to a practical test*.

I. Let us take THE GREAT GENERAL PRINCIPLE as a warning.

Several truths are involved in the text, and these all illustrate the main point. It is evident that *the disciple is generally drawn to the master who is most like himself*;—the blind man is led by the blind. It is not merely that birds of a feather flock together, and hence men of kindred minds form association with each other, but there is about us all a natural tendency to admire our own image, and to be willing to submit to any who are superior to us, and yet are of our type. A teacher who does not shock our prejudices, but shows a sympathy

with our tastes, we are at home with at once. The priest is like the people because the people are pleased to have him so. It is true of teachers as of idols, "they that make them are like unto them." If the blind man only could see he would not choose a blind man to be his guide, but as he cannot see he meets with one who talks as blind men talk, who judges things as they are in the dark, and who does not know what sighted men know, and therefore never reminds the blind man of his infirmity, and at once he says, "This is my ideal of a man, he is exactly the leader I require, and I will commit myself to him." So the blind man takes the blind man to be his guide, and this is the reason why error has been so popular. No error would live if it did not chime in with some evil propensity of human nature, if it did not gratify some error in man to which it is congruous. Idolatry is a prevailing sin because man is alienated from God who is a Spirit, and in his carnal folly demands a god whom his senses can apprehend. When you hear of crowds going over to Popery do not wonder at it. Popery is the religion of depraved human nature put into shape by the devil, and therefore it is no marvel that the nations are fascinated by it, for what they love and what the god of this world sweetens to their tooth must go down with them. Popery and other forms of sacramentarianism are a soft bed for idle limbs; and as surely as a lazy man lies down, so surely does a superstitious man take to these systems. Give a superstitious man the information contained in the Bible, and a pair of scissors to cut his coat according to his shape, and Popery in some shape or other will be the religion which he will cut out for himself; consequently it is popular. You cannot at first understand how the blind man who sets up for a guide could expect to find clients; neither would he, only there are so many other blind people about who know nothing about his blindness, and are sure to come to him. Mind you are not so blind yourself as to follow their example. Young man, mind who it is you choose for a guide. Your tendencies will be to select a wrong one, because your tendencies themselves are wrong. Pray that you may begin aright the journey of life having grace infused into your hearts, that you may choose the Christ of God who is "the way, the truth, and the life." O Lord let no soul here be so blind as to choose blind atheism, blind scepticism, or blind superstition to be his leader, but do thou take the blind by the hand and lead them by a way that they know not and by paths which they have not seen. Do thou these things unto them, and do not forsake them.

Having chosen his tutor, the student gradually becomes more and more like his Master, or, having taken his guide, the tendency is to tread more closely in his footsteps, and obey his rules more fully every day. We must be all conscious that we imitate those whom we admire. Love has a strange influence over our nature, to mould it into the form beloved. A true disciple is like clay on the wheel, and his Master fashions him after his own image. We may be scarcely conscious of it, but we are most surely being conformed to the likeness of those to whose influence we submit ourselves. Whoever then your Master may be, dear friend, you are changing into his image: if you choose to be led by the votary of pleasure, you will become more and more frivolous; if you admire the slave of avarice, you will become avaricious; if you feel the sway of the minion of vice, you will grow vicious yourself. If a man who despises the word of God becomes your hero, you will ere long despise it too: while you are gazing upon him with admiration, a kind of photography is going on, and you, like a sensitive plate, receive his image. I charge you, therefore, to be careful who becomes your guide.

And mark, *the pupil does not go beyond the tutor*, nor does the man who submits to be led go beyond his guide. Such a case is very rarely found; indeed, I may say never; for when the one who is led goes beyond his leader, he is not in truth led any longer: rarely enough does it ever come to that. Men, if they outstrip their leaders, generally do so in the wrong direction. They seldom exaggerate their virtues, those they frequently omit, but they usually exaggerate peculiarities, follies failings, and faults. It is said that in the court of Richard III., because the king was round-shouldered, the courtiers gradually became humpbacked, and we have seen a whole country idiotic enough, not in the last century, but in this century, to have almost all its women limping because a popular princess was afflicted with a temporary lameness. It is the way of mankind; they imitate each other as if by instinct, and this is the only excuse I know of for Darwin's theory of our having descended from the ape. Imitativeness is well developed in us, but if left to itself it works with a bias the wrong way, and the imitation is most forcible in the direction of deformity and defect. In music, and painting, and poetry, and literature, men of a school seldom excel their master, or, if they do, they leave him; but the habit is to perpetuate the master's mannerisms and weaknesses. It is even more so in the art of living. Young men, in the task of choos-

ing a master for your faith, I beseech you be careful to have none but the best, for you will not excel, but rather fall behind the master you follow. If you are choosing a leader, choose one who knows the road, for if he has made some blunders you will make ten times as many, and in all probability you will exaggerate each one of his mistakes.

The most solemn truth remains to be noted. *When a man chooses a bad leader for his soul, at the end of all bad leadership there is a ditch.* A man teaches error which he declares he has drawn from Scripture, and he backs it up with texts perverted and abused. If you follow that error, and take its teacher for a leader, you may for a time be very pleased with yourself for knowing more than the poor plain people who keep to the good old way; but, mark my word, there is a ditch at the end of the error. You do not see it yet, but there it is, and into it you will fall if you continue to follow your leader. At the end of error there is often a moral ditch, and men go down, down, down, they scarce know why, till presently, having imbibed doctrinal error, their moral principles are poisoned, and like drunken men they find themselves rolling in the mire of sin. At other times the ditch beyond a lesser error may be an altogether damnable doctrine. The first mistake was comparatively trifling, but, as it placed the mind on an inclined plane, the man descended almost as a matter of course, and almost before he knew it, found himself given over to a strong delusion to believe a lie. The blind man and his guide, whatever else they miss, will be sure to find the ditch, they need no sight to obtain an abundant entrance into that. Alas! to fall into the ditch is easy, but how shall they be recovered? I would earnestly entreat especially professing Christians, when novelties of doctrine come up, to be very cautious how they give heed to them. I bid you remember the ditch. A small turn of the switch on the railway is the means of taking the train to the far east or to the far west: the first turn is very little indeed, but the points arrived at are remote. There are new errors which have lately come up which your fathers knew not, with which some are mightily busy, and I have noticed when men have fallen into them their usefulness ceased. I have seen ministers go only a little way in speculative theories, and gradually glide from latitudinarianism into Socinianism or Atheism. Into these ditches thousands fall. Others are precipitated into an equally horrible pit, namely, the holding nominally of all the doctrines in theory and none of them in fact. Men hold truths nowadays with the bowels taken out of them, and the very life

and meaning torn away. There are members and ministers of evangelical denominations who do not believe evangelical doctrine, or if they do believe it they attach but little importance to it; their sermons are essays on philosophy, tinged with the gospel. They put a quarter of a grain of gospel into an Atlantic of talk, and poor souls are drenched with words to no profit. God save us from ever leaving the old gospel, or losing its spirit, and the solid comfort which it brings; yet into the ditch of lifeless profession and philosophic dreaming we may soon fall if we commit ourselves to wrong leaderships. All this should prevent us, as I think, from taking any man whatever as our leader, for if we trust to any mere man, though he may be right in ninety-nine of the hundred, he is wrong somewhere, and our tendency will be to be more influenced by his one wrong point than by any one of his right ones. Depend upon it in matters of religion that ancient malediction is abundantly verified, "Cursed is he that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm." There is one whom you may follow implicitly, and one only. There is one whom you may trust without reserve, and only one,—the man Christ Jesus, the Son of God: but if you do not wish to be led into errors of heart and practice, beware of men, and follow none but Jesus, and no footsteps but the footsteps of that flock which follows at his heel. You will do best not even to follow the sheep, but to follow the Shepherd only, and to do that even if you walk alone. May the Holy Spirit be given you to lead you into all truth. Thus much upon the great principle; let it act as a warning.

II. ITS SPECIAL APPLICATION TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST is our encouragement. If we have the Lord Jesus Christ as our leader we certainly cannot go beyond our leader, but we shall be privileged to grow more and more like him, and we shall be perfected according to our text, as our leader is.

First, *this is what we might have expected*. We see ordinarily, as we have said, that the disciple grows like his Master, but with such a Master the process becomes more sure. With such a Master, of whom these lips cannot speak well enough, a Master the latches of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose, it may well come to pass that we are melted down with love and poured out into the mould of obedience. He is the Creator, can he not create in us his image? From such a one as he is we confidently expect it.

For, observe, the teaching itself is such that it must have power over hearts that yield to it. His doctrine is almighty love; all his teach-

ing is divine, and yet so broken down to human capacity that it exactly suits the man who has taken the yoke of Christ upon him, and determined to learn of him. Other masters teach us crooked and doubtful lessons, and when learned too often the best wisdom is to unlearn them; but with our Lord the teaching is most sure, most heavenly, most potent, and we feel within ourselves that it is so true, so noble, so grand, that it comes to us with authority, and not as the word of man.

If I knew only what Jesus teaches I should conclude that a teacher who gives forth such doctrines and such precepts must influence his disciples; but it is not in his teaching alone that his influence lies; the most potent charm is *himself*. When he spake here below they said, "Never man spake like this man," and the reason was because "never man lived like this man." His word was with power, but then he himself was THE WORD. If you view the precepts of Christ as embodied in his life they glow with beauty and flash with power. You can bear from such a teacher what you could not have endured from anybody else, for his character gives him a right to speak. Many of his precepts would have seemed perfectly preposterous had they first fallen from the lips of fallible men, for their hearers would have cried out, "Physician, heal thyself." Coming from him they come naturally as good fruit from a good tree; they are the necessary outgushings of such a nature and such a life. Who can help being persuaded when the arguments live before our eyes? We are overpowered by the grandeur of the Redeemer's goodness, by the splendour of his love, the infinity of his self-sacrifice. Jesus commands our faith by the revelation of himself, and by that same manifestation he conforms us to himself. Was ever such a life as his? Was ever such a death? Was ever such an altogether lovely person as his? Was ever such perfection as his? In life he was so outspoken and yet so gentle, so courageous and yet so kind, so unflinching and yet so tender, wearing his heart upon his sleeve in the transparency of truth, but prudent and guarding himself with infallible wisdom; a match for all, however they might assail him, and yet apparently never on his guard at all, but as a child among them, the holy child Jesus. Oh, if you sit at Jesus' feet you will not only learn of him and his teaching will have power over you, but you will learn *him*, for he himself is his own best lesson. Never did eyes look up into those dear eyes of Jesus, which are "as the eyes of doves by the rivers of water, washed with milk and fitly set," but

they were themselves cleansed and purified till they became “like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Beth-rabbim.” Who could bear the Lord Jesus on his heart, like a cluster of myrrh, and not be perfumed by his presence? Who could be with him and not be like him?

We feel quite sure that the disciples will grow like their Master in the case of Jesus, because he inspires them with an intense love to himself, which flames forth in enthusiasm for him. Get a teacher whom all the scholars love and admire, and they will soon learn. Make them enthusiastic for him, and no lesson will be too hard. This our dear and blessed Lord, of whom these lips cannot speak as they should, has done. We admire, we love, nay, we adore him: he is our God, our all in all, and hence we pant to be moulded at his will. Live for him? Yes, we find it to be our joy, for the love of Christ constraineth us. Die for him? Ay, his saints in all ages have rejoiced to lay down their lives for him. Full of fervour, and fired with enthusiasm, they have suffered losses and reproaches for his name’s sake. If the teacher inspires such enthusiasm, doubtless he will fashion the disciples in his likeness.

Best of all, our Great Teacher has a spirit with him, a mighty Spirit, God himself, the Holy Ghost, and when he teaches, he teaches not with words alone, but with a power which goes beyond the ear into the heart itself. Other teachers, except as they follow Christ, must depend upon the charms of eloquence, or the force of argument, but our Lord, though most eloquent of all, for his lips are like lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, though full of arguments, for his is the wisdom of God, relies upon the energy which he felt when he said, “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for the Lord hath anointed me.” The divine Spirit casts a light into the soul, of such a brilliance that things not seen stand out in clearest evidence, and things hoped for are grasped in their very substance. With that light there comes also life to feel, power to realise, and discernment to judge, and so the soul is led into all truth, and the scholar receives the lessons of his lord in their life and energy. Who else can give this Spirit? By what other teacher can the Holy Ghost be breathed into us? Who would not sit at the feet of a Master so transcendently above all others in possessing such an infinite gift? I would to God while I am speaking thus, that some here present would say, “Fain would I commit myself to that great teacher.” Remember, beloved, if you want him to be your Master, he equally longs for you to be his disciple.

I think I have now shown that it was to be expected that with such a Master the disciple should become like him. Now let me observe that *this was virtually promised*. It is promised to us in effect in the great decree of predestination, “for whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.” This is the great purpose of God, that Christ may be the first-born among many brethren, and that the brethren may be a company in whose faces the Lord shall discern the image of the Only Begotten. What God predestinates we may confidently expect.

It is promised to us in the very name of Jesus Christ, for that name is Jesus, “for he shall save his people from their sins.” But saving men from their sins is the bringing of them back into a condition of purity and holiness. This, indeed, is the salvation which we preach, not the mere forgiveness of sin, as some think, but the conquering of sin, the driving out of sin, the making of men like to the Lord Jesus by the Spirit of God. The very name of Jesus tells us that he means to make his disciples free from sin as he is.

We know also that this was our Lord’s object, for the design of Christ’s life is clearly seen in his last prayer when he prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” You can see that his one object is to make his people holy, as he is holy, to keep them from evil even as he was kept, and to make them conquerors over sin even as he conquered. All his life long he laboured at this with the twelve and with others who followed with him, and his last prayer breathes this, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” Everywhere this is seen to be true. The relationships which he assumes suppose it, for brethren are like their brother, and friends are like their friend. The metaphors which he uses imply the same thing, for the ingrafted branch drinks in the nature of the stem, the spouse grows like her husband, and the members of the body are of the same nature as the head. The mystical Christ is not like the image of the Babylonian monarch’s dream with head of gold and feet of clay, but Christ is one throughout, the grace which dwells in the head, transforming the whole body. It is our delightful expectation that “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is,” and then shall we be satisfied, for we shall wake up in his likeness.

Well, brethren, what we might have expected, and what God has

thus virtually promised, *has been actually seen*, for the disciples have been like their Lord, and this is where I want to lay the most stress. Have not the disciples been like their Lord in points of character? It would be very absurd for me to say that the Old Testament saints were disciples of Christ in a literal sense, and yet in spirit they all were so, for the gospel is the same in all ages, and it is the same light which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world. The inner teaching of the Spirit was the same to Abel and to Noah as it was to John and Paul, and while apostles looked back to Jesus and were enlightened, patriarchs looked forward and had light too. Now each of the saints in the olden time had some likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of a few of them, and you will see some of his beauties. Abel reveals his righteousness, and Enoch his walking with God. Job shows his patience, and Abraham his faith; Moses his meekness, and Samuel his power of intercession. Daniel is like him in his integrity, and Jeremiah in his weeping. Like drops of morning dew, all these reflected the light of the Sun of Righteousness. In the New Testament we see the transforming power of his teaching in many instances. Peter and John were like their Master, for we read that when their enemies “saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.” The likeness was so striking that they were obliged to confess it. Take John alone, for a minute, and who can read his epistles without saying, “Even thus his Master spake?” John was far behind his Lord, but yet how marvellously like him! You have smiled at your children sometimes when you have seen your own ways repeated in them. You have beheld your own peculiarities as in a looking-glass. Almost unconsciously they have been yourself in miniature. So was it evidently with John. If it be true, as tradition saith, that he was carried into the assembly when he was too old to walk, and was wont to say to them, “Little children, love one another: little children, love one another,” it was so like our Lord Jesus Christ, you might have thought the Master had returned to earth. As for Paul, in many aspects he is the counterpart of his Lord, and as I read that strange passage in Romans which staggers some, where he says, “I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, according to the flesh,” I am led to say, “Herein he resembles that Blessed One who was actually made a curse for us, as it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” Now, all the saints of

God, more or less, according as they have fully been disciples of Jesus, display his characteristics. I cannot stop this morning to tell you what characteristics I see in you which are like my Lord; I rejoice that I do know brothers and sisters here of whom I have often said to myself, "I can see their Master in them." I wish I could say so of all of you, but still I am glad to see in so many the points of true likeness to Jesus, the family characteristics which mark all the children of God. There are little touches of their Father in all the heirs of salvation which make us feel that they belong to the same family as Jesus, they could not have learned those ways, they must have been imparted by a birth from above.

It is a very noteworthy thing that those who are disciples of Christ even become like him as to their life-story. Going back to the old saints as being really disciples of the doctrine of the Redeemer, there is Melchizedek bringing forth bread and wine to refresh Abraham—would you not have thought it was Christ himself? There is Isaac gently submitting to his father while he draws the knife to slay him—could you not have said that it was Jesus? There is Joseph making himself known to his brethren, and ruling all Egypt for their good—might we not have thought that it was our Lord come on earth before his time to bless his chosen ones? Yonder is David coming back with Goliath's head, while all the maidens of Israel rejoice around him—could you not have thought it was our Lord returning from Edom with dyed garments from Bosra? The saints are types of him because they are of the same type as he is. As for the disciples after Christ came you will often find them in positions which set forth Jesus Christ most evidently. See Stephen boldly declaring the gospel until his enemies stone him. Have you not read of his Master many times, "They would have stoned him, but he conveyed himself out of their sight"? Look at Paul at Lystra. They are about to sacrifice to him: it makes you think of days when the crowd cried "Hosanna, Hosanna." Lo, the apostle rebukes the throng, and now they are stoning him, and it recalls to your memory the time when the crowd shouted, "Crucify him, crucify him; away with such a fellow from the earth." Read the story of Paul in the shipwreck, when he says to the captain of the ship, and to the officer of the troops, "Be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you." You might almost have thought it was the Saviour himself saying to the winds and waves, "Peace, be still," there was so much of his Master in him. In-

deed Christ is in all his members; his life is written out again in their lives. Beloved, I could mention many saints of modern times in whose lives we may see Jesus. That poor woman who dropped into the treasury her two mites, which were all her living; is she not very like to him who gave up all for us, and became poor that we through his poverty might be rich. Others are like to the woman who brake the alabaster box of precious ointment, to give their best things to her Lord. Do they not remind you of the lover of our souls, who brake the precious alabaster box of his body and filled all earth and heaven with the perfume? Everyone who gives up self for God's glory is Jesus in miniature. Look at John Howard going about among the dungeons of Europe, spying out poor prisoners to do them good. Is not that Christ over again, with glad tidings for the captives? Or John Williams landing at Erromanga, with his life in his hand, to convert cannibals; was not that laying down his life for the sheep? Now, dear friend, do you think if we had your life before us we could make out anything like Jesus Christ in it? If you are his disciple it will be so. There will be in your biography as your children will read it—for they will read it better than anybody else—as your wife will read it, as those you work with will read it, something which looks as if it were extracted from the life of Jesus. Students in Christ's college must be like their Tutor, and they are. I dare say the brother is present here of whom I am about to speak, and if so he will be sorry to hear me tell the story, and would stop my mouth if he could; I will, however, make bold to go on. I know a house painter who was working with other men over the top of the Great Northern Railway, at a great height. One of his fellow workmen had been drinking very heavily, and was unsteady on the lofty scaffold. He said to himself, "That man will never get down alive," and rather than he should perish he actually offered to carry him down on his back. I believe it would have been death to them both if the attempt had been made, but he cheerfully offered. He said, "My soul is safe; I am a Christian; I am afraid you will be killed, and if you are your soul will be lost. I will carry you down if you will only keep quiet." The man rejected the kind offer, though persuaded again and again, and alas, in trying to descend he fell into the middle of the railway, from a dreadful height, and was taken up dead. When I heard of my good brother, a humble member of the church doing that, I thought, "There is our Master, revealed in his disciple." Our life is a painting, and if we are in Christ's studio there will be traces of his

hand, and men will exclaim that was no common painter; that stroke, that line, is just the line that the great Master used to make; I am sure he has put in those touches." O brethren, we need none of us wish to be originals; let us plagiarise Christ, and that will be the grandest originality. God help us in this.

Now I was going to say, but time has fled, that Christ's disciples grow like him in their struggles and in their temptations. They are met by Satan as Christ was, they are tried by the world as Christ was, they are assailed by Sadducean unbelief and Pharisaic superstition as Christ was, they have to go through the same fight, and, blessed be God, they win the same victories. Christ's disciples overcome sin; by their Master's help they rise above doubt, they vanquish the world, and they stand in purity and faith. By-and-by they shall be like him in their rewards. "To him that overcometh," saith he, "will I give to sit upon my throne, even as I have overcome and have sat down with my Father upon his throne."

It is a beautiful subject, if I had the power to work it out, the way in which the disciple of Jesus thus by sure steps becomes perfected into the image of Christ, till the likeness is so near and so close that even the blear eyes of this wicked world in the dim atmosphere of its ignorance cannot help seeing that the man is like the Master.

III. Now, lastly, we will dwell for two or three minutes upon this encouraging fact, that WE MAY PUT ALL THIS TO THE TEST this morning if we will. Brethren and sisters, if you are not disciples of Jesus Christ, remember he will receive you. He will receive you though you have been to other masters, and learned a great deal under them, all of which you will have to unlearn. It is a very easy thing to take a man and teach him if his mind is clear and clean, but you have learned a great deal that you will have to forget. O you of forty, fifty, or sixty, what a world of mischief there is in you that will have to come out. Well, my Master will take you for pupils, though you have been with other masters all this while; and, though you do not know even the rudiments of what he is going to teach, he will take you. My Lord Jesus keeps an A B C school; he begins with the infants. What a mercy it is that he takes such poor, stupid heads as ours, who know nothing except what we ought not to know. And I will add, if you have but very little capacity, or none at all, it does not matter.

"He takes the fool, and makes him know
The wonders of his dying love."

Not many great men, not many mighty are chosen; but God has chosen the poor of this world, and things that are not, and things that are despised, yea, and weak things and foolish things, has God chosen. Come to him, for if you are incapable, he is not, and his capacity will soon overcome your incapacity. You say, "I cannot learn." Ah, but you do not know how well he can teach, for he can teach so well that even those who think they cannot learn are soon instructed in his school. Stand not back, dear friend, because you cannot pay the fee, for my Master's is a free school; he takes nothing from us, but he gives everything to us. The only admission ticket that you want is simply to be willing to be taught, to be conscious that you need teaching and guiding, and to submit yourself to his guidance and instruction. Are you willing so to do? "Oh," say you, "I shall grieve him till he gives me up." Well, I have often thought so. I do not wonder that you are troubled with that thought; it has often come across me when I see what little progress I have made after being so many years in his school. If I had any human master he would have been out of patience with me long ago, but the Lord Jesus Christ never gives up a scholar; having once commenced to teach, he continues his divine lessons till they are fully learned, and the more difficult it is for him to teach the more honour it will be when he gets all his scholars educated for the skies. He will not brook a defeat in this matter; he will overcome ignorance, and sin, and hardness of heart, and infirmity, and incapacity, till he shall have instructed us in the lore of heaven, and made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Come, dear brethren and sisters, you that are scholars of Christ, let us sit at his feet, let us follow in his ways more closely than ever. And you, dear friends, who as yet are not in his school, he says to you, "Whoso is simple let him turn in hither; as for him that wanteth understanding let him eat of my bread and drink of the wine which I have mingled." May the good Lord incline your hearts to learn of him, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke vi. 20–40.

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