

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE UNRIVALLED ELOQUENCE OF JESUS.

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

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“The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.”—John vii. 46.

THE chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to lay hold upon the Saviour, lest his preaching should altogether overthrow their power. While the constables who had mingled with the throng were waiting for an opportunity of arresting the Lord Jesus, they themselves were arrested by his earnest eloquence; they could not take him, for he had fairly taken them, and when they came back without a prisoner, they gave their reason for not having captured him in these memorable words, “Never man spake like this man.”

Two or three remarks as a preface to our discourse. It is a sure sign of a falling church when its leaders call in the aid of the secular arm. The rule of the Scribes and Pharisees must have been weakness itself when it needed to wield the truncheon of the civil magistrate as its only sufficient argument against its antagonist. That church which has been supported by bayonets is in all probability not far off its end; another church which long collected its tithes and its offerings by the hand of the police, and by legal process and distraint, is also, depend upon it, none too strong. The church which is unable to maintain itself by spiritual power is dying, if not dead. Whenever we think of calling in an arm of flesh to defend the faith, we may very seriously question whether we have not made a mistake, and whether that which can be supported by the sword must not greatly differ from the Saviour's kingdom, of which he said, “My kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants fight.” The more a man leans on his staff the more sure are you that he is feeble; in proportion as churches rely on Acts of Parliament, human prestige, and legal authority, in that very degree they show their weakness: Call in the sheriff's officer, and you have virtually called in the gravedigger! In this respect it is peculiarly true, “All they that take the sword shall

perish with the sword.” A church is buried by the state, and not supported, when it draws its sustenance from forced tithes and legalised exactions.

Observe, next, that in the end the spiritual power will always baffle the temporal. The officers are fully armed, and quite able to complete the arrest of the preacher; he has no weapons with which to oppose them; he stands unarmed amid the throng; probably none of his disciples would lift a finger to defend him, or if they did, he would bid them put up their sword into its sheath; and yet the officers cannot seize the non-resistant preacher. What stays their hands? It has come to a combat between body and mind, and mind prevails. The eloquent tongue is matched against the two-edged sword, and it has won the day. No fears or qualms of conscience hampered the constables, and yet they could not lay their hands on him; they were chained to the spot whereon they stood, spellbound by the mystic power of his speech. His very tones fascinated them, and the discourse which he poured forth so fluently held them fast as his willing captives. It has always been so, the spiritual has conquered the physical. Though at first it seemed an unequal conflict, yet in the long run the elder has served the younger. The club of Cain may lay Abel level with the dust, but it does not silence him; from the ground the blood of Abel continues still to cry. Martyrs may be consigned to the prison, and dragged from the prison to the stake, so that to all appearance a full end is made of the good men, but “even in their ashes live their wonted fires.” At the stake they find a platform with a boundless auditory, and from the grave their teaching cries with louder voice than from the pulpit. Like seeds sown in the earth they spring up and multiply themselves. Others arise to bear the same witness, and if need be to seal it in the same fashion. As Pharaoh’s mighty hosts could not combat with the hail and the lightnings which plagued the fields of Zoan, and as all their chivalry could not put to flight the darkness that might be felt, even so when God sends his truth with power upon a land, battleaxe and buckler are vain in the opposers’ hands. Our appointed weapons of attack are not carnal, neither can they be withstood by shield or armour; our bowstrings cannot be broken, or the edge of our sword blunted. Let but the Lord furnish his ministers, as he did at Pentecost, with wondrous words instead of shields, and spears, and swords, and these weapons of the holy war will prove themselves to be irresistible. Fight on, O preacher; tell forth the story of the cross; defy opposition and laugh persecution to scorn, for, like thy Master, thou shalt, as his servant, ascend above all thine enemies, lead thy captivity captive, and scatter good gifts among the sons of men.

Note again, that God can get testimonies to the majesty of his Son from the most unlikely places. I do not know who these constables may have been, or from what class of men they were drawn, but generally the civil authorities do not employ the most refined and intellectual persons to act as officers; they do not require much tenderness of spirit for such work—a rough hand, a keen eye, and a bold spirit, are the principal requisites for a constable. The priests and Pharisees would naturally select for the seizing of the great Teacher those who were least likely to be affected by his teaching; and yet these men—doubtless men of brutal habits, men ready enough to do their masters’ bidding, showed within themselves sufficient mental capacity to feel the power of the matchless oratory of Jesus Christ. Those who were sent as enemies came back to rehearse his praises, and so

to vex his adversaries. Truly the Lord can make the stone to cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber to answer it if he wills; he can transform the ready instruments of opposition into the willing advocates of his righteous cause. Not only as in the case of Saul of Tarsus can he direct a high character into the right path, but he can uplift the grovelling and put a testimony into their mouths. He makes the wrath of men to praise him. He compels his adversaries to do him homage; keep good heart, then, O ye soldiers of the cross; let no thought of discouragement ever flit across your spirits; greater is he that is for us than all they that be against us. He can and will glorify his Son Jesus. Even the devils shall own his almighty power. His word hath gone forth and his oath hath confirmed it: "Surely as I live, saith the Lord, all flesh shall see the salvation of God." God will glorify himself even by the tongues of his enemies. In this hope let us set up our banners.

The text introduces to our notice the eloquence of our Lord Jesus Christ, and upon that topic we shall try to speak. May the Holy Spirit enable us. We shall note first, the peculiar qualities of it, which amply justified the encomium of the constables; secondly, personal recollections of it, treasured up by ourselves; and, thirdly, prophetic anticipations of the time when our souls shall hear his voice yet more distinctly, and shall say again, "Never man spake like this man."

I. Let us note the PECULIAR QUALITIES of our Lord's eloquence. As among kings he is the King of kings, as among priests he is the great High Priest, as among prophets he is the Messiah, so is he the Prince of preachers, the Apostle of our profession. They who are most excellent as preachers are those who are most like him; but even those who by being most like him have become eminent, are still far short of his excellence. "His lips," says the spouse, "are like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh." He is a prophet mighty in word and deed.

To form a right conception of our Lord's ministry it is necessary to note the whole of it, and we may do so without departing from the text; for though the officers did not hear all that Jesus said, I have no doubt that the qualities which shone in his entire ministry were many of them apparent in the discourse which he delivered on that particular occasion. Follow me, therefore, as I note the leading qualities of his unrivalled eloquence.

The most casual reader of Christ's discourses would observe that their style is singularly clear and perspicuous, and yet their matter is by no means trivial or superficial. Did ever man speak like this man Christ Jesus, for simplicity? Little children gathered around him, for much of what he said was interesting even to them. If there be ever a difficult word in any of Christ's discourses, it is because it must be there owing to the faultiness of human language, but there is never a hard word inserted, for its own sake, where an easier word could have been employed. You never find him, for the sake of display, careering upon the wings of rhetoric; he never gives forth dark sayings that his hearers may discover that his learning is vast and his thinking profound. He is profound, and in that respect, "never man spake like this man;" he unveils the mysteries of God, he brings to light the treasures of darkness of the ages past which prophets and kings desired to see, but into which they could not pry; there is in his teaching a depth so vast that the greatest human intellect cannot fathom it, but all the while he speaks like the

“holy child Jesus,” in short sentences, with plain words, in parables with multitudinous illustrations of the most homely kind—about eggs, and fish, and candles, and bushels, and sweeping houses, and losing pieces of money, and finding sheep. He never parades the stale and mildewed metaphors of your mere rhetoricians—“rippling rills, verdant meads, star-bespangled heavens,” and I know not what besides—the hackneyed properties of theatrical orations are not for him; his speech abounds in the truest and most natural of images, and is ever constructed not to display himself, but to make clear the truth which he was sent to reveal, “Never man spake like this man!” The common people with their common sense heard him gladly, for even if they could not always grasp the full compass of his teaching, yet upon the surface of his plain speech there glittered lumps of golden ore well worthy to be treasured up. For this quality our Saviour, then, remains unrivalled, perspicuous yet profound.

His speech had this also about it, that he spake with *unusual authority*. He was a master dogmatist. It was not “it may be so,” or “it can be proven,” and “it is highly probable;” but “Verily, verily, I say unto you.” And yet side by side with this was an extraordinary degree of *self-sinking*. The Master spake dogmatically, but never with proud self-sufficiency, after the manner of the children of conceit; he never pestered you with assumptions of superiority, and claims to official dignity. He borrowed no assistance from a priestly robe, or from an imposing title. Meek he was as Moses, but like Moses he spake the word of the Lord with absolute authority. Lowly and gentle of heart, never extolling himself, nor bearing witness of himself, for then, as he says, his witness would not be true; he was nevertheless the unhesitating minister of righteousness, speaking with power, because the Lord’s Spirit had anointed him. Coming out of the ivory palaces, fresh from the bosom of the Father, having looked into the unseen, and heard the infallible oracle, he spake not with bated breath, with hesitancy and debate as the scribes and lawyers, not with arguments and reasonings as the priests and Pharisees, creating perplexity and pouring darkness upon human minds. “Verily, verily, I say unto you,” was his favourite word. He spake that he did know, and testified what he had seen, and demanded to be accepted as sent forth from the Father. He did not debate, but declare. His sermons were not guesses, but testimonies. Yet he never magnifies himself, he lets his works and his Father bear witness of him. He asserts truth from his own positive knowledge, and because he has a commission from the Father to do so, but never as mere dogmatists do with an extolling of their own selves, as though they were to be glorified and not the God who sent the truth and the Spirit by whom it is applied.

Further, in our Lord’s preaching there was a wonderful combination of faithfulness with tenderness. He was indeed the prince of faithful preachers. Not even Nathan when he stood before King David, and said, “Thou art the man,” could be more true to human conscience than Christ was. How those cutting words of his must have told like rifle-bullets when they were first hurled against the respectability of the age, “Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” “Woe unto you, lawyers,” and so forth. There was no mincing matters, no winking at wickedness because it happened to be associated with greatness, no excusing sin because it put on the sanctimoniousness of religion; he neither

fawned on the great, nor pandered to the populace. Jesus reproved all classes to their faces concerning their sins. It never occurred to him to seek to please men. He looked to the doing of his Father's business, and since that business often involved the laying of righteousness to the line, of judgment to the plummet, he spared not to do it. Perhaps no preacher ever used more terrible words with regard to the fate of the ungodly than our Lord has done; ye shall ransack even mediaeval records to find more fearfully suggestive descriptions of the torments of hell. Those awful sentences which fell from the lips of the Friend of Sinners prove that he was too much their friend to flatter them, too much their friend to let them perish without a full warning of their doom. And yet though he thundered like his own chosen Boanerges, what a Barnabas the Saviour was! what a Son of Consolation! How gentle were his words! He did not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. For the woman taken in adultery he had no word of curse, for the mothers of Jerusalem bringing their babes he had not a syllable of reprehension. Kind, gentle, tender, loving, the speech which at one time sounded as the voice of Jehovah which breaketh the cedars of Lebanon, and maketh the hinds to calve, was at other seasons modulated to music, softened to a whisper, and used to cheer the disconsolate, and bind up broken hearts. "Never man spake like this man," so faithful and yet so tenderly affectionate, so mindful of the least good which he could see in man, and yet so determined to smite hypocrisy wherever his holy eye could discover it.

You will observe in the Saviour's preaching a remarkable mingling of *zeal with prudence*. He is full of ardour, the zeal of God's house hath eaten him up. He never preached a cold, dull sermon in all his life. He was a pillar of light and fire. When he spake his words burned their way into men's minds by reason of the sacred enthusiasm with which he delivered them, but yet his fervour never degenerated into wild fire like the zeal of ignorant and over-balanced minds. We know some whose zeal if tempered with knowledge might be of use to the church, but being altogether without knowledge it is dangerous both to themselves and to their cause. Fanaticism may spring out of a real desire for God's glory; there is, however, no need that earnestness should degenerate into rant. It never did so in the Saviour's case. His zeal was red hot, but his prudence was calm and cool. He was not afraid of the Herodians, but yet how quietly did he answer them in that trap concerning tribute-money! They would never forget the penny and the question, "Whose image and superscription is this?" He was ready to meet the Sadducees at any time, but he was on his guard, so that they could not entangle him in his speech. He was quite sure to escape their nets, and take them in their own craftiness. If a question be asked, which for the moment he does not care to answer, he knows how to ask them another question, which they also cannot answer; and to send them about their business covered with shame. It is a grand thing when a man can be warm and wise, when he can carry about him an unexcitable temperament, and yet the force which excites others: unmoved himself, the man of prudence becomes the power by which others are moved. Such was the Saviour. But I must not let that sentence of mine pass unchallenged—in the higher sense he was always more moved than the people—but I mean as to temper and spirit he was not readily disturbed. He was self-

possessed, prudent, wise, and yet when he spake he flashed, and burned, and blazed with a sacred vehemence which showed that his whole soul was on fire with love to the souls of men. Zeal and prudence in remarkable proportions, met in Jesus, and “Never man spake like this man.”

So, too, everyone who has read our Lord’s discourses and marked his character, will have perceived that love was among the leading characteristics of his style as a preacher. He was full of tenderness, brimming with sympathy, overflowing with affection. That weeping over Jerusalem, whose children he would have gathered, was but one instance of what happened many a time in his life; his heart sympathised with sorrow whenever his eye beheld it; he could not bear that the people should be like sheep without a shepherd, and he wrought many deeds of kindness, and said many words of instruction, because he loved them. But our Saviour’s speech was never affected and canting. He used no stale honey, there was nothing of that—I do not know the word to use—that fulsome sugariness, which in some people is disgustingly perceptible. He was far removed from the effeminacy which, in too many cases, passes for Christian love. I loathe in my very soul the talk of those who call everybody “dear” “this” or “dear” that, endearing those whom, perhaps, they never knew, and to whom they would not give a sixpence if they wanted it. I hate this sugar of lead. This spiritual billing and cooing. Where there is the least of the meat of true charity, we find most of the parsley or the fennel which are used for garnishing. The bottle is empty, and so they label it to make it pass for full. No, give me a man, give me a man! Let me hear out-spoken speech, not effeminate canting, whining, clearing, and pretended ecstasies of affection. In nine cases out of ten the biggest bigot in the world is the man who preaches up liberality, and the man who can hate you worst is he who addresses you in softest phrases. Nay, let a man love me, but let it be with the love of a man; let no man cast aside that which is masculine, forcible, and dignified, under the notion that he is making himself better by becoming molluscuous and babyish. It was never so with the Saviour. He condemned this or that evil in no measured terms; there was in him no apologising, no guarding of expressions, no fawning, no using of soft words. They who are shaken with the wind, and affect flattering phrases, stand in kings’ palaces; but he, the people’s preacher, one chosen out of the people, dwelt among the many, a man among men. He was manly all through; love in him abounded, love unsurpassed, but also manliness of the noblest sort. Far above the petty arts of professional orators, and the shallow arguments of sophisters, his teaching dealt out truth with courageous fidelity, and generous affection. He held his own position, but trampled on none. He committed himself to no man, but he was willing to bless every man. His love was no imitation and filagree, but a solid ingot of the gold of Ophir. No one else in this matter has so exactly struck the balance, and therefore, “Never man spake like this man.”

One memorable characteristic of our Lord’s preaching was his remarkable commingling of the excellences which are found separately in his servants. You know, perhaps, a preacher who is admirable when he addresses the head, who can explain and expound very logically and clearly, and you feel that you have been instructed whenever you have sat under him; but the light though clear, is cold

like moonlight, and when you retire you feel that you know more, and yet are none the better for what you know. It were well if those who can enlighten the head so well would remember that man has also a heart. On the other hand, we know others whose whole ministry is addressed to the passions, and the emotions; during a sermon you shed any quantity of tears, you pass through a furnace of sensation, but as to what is left which is calculated permanently to benefit you, it were difficult to discover; when the sermon is over, the shower and the sunshine have both departed, the fair rainbow has disappeared from sight, and what remains? It were well if those who always talk to the heart, recollected that men have heads as well. Now the Saviour was a preacher whose head was in his heart, and whose heart was in his head. He never addressed the emotions except by motives which commended themselves to the reason, nor did he instruct the mind without at the same time influencing the heart and conscience. Our Saviour's power as a speaker was comprehensive. He aroused the conscience, who more than he? With but a single sentence he convicted those who came to tempt him, so that beginning with the eldest, and ending with the youngest, they all went out ashamed. But he was not a mere render open of wounds, a cutter and a killer, he was equally great in the arts of holy consolation. With intonations of matchless music he could say, "Go thy way; thy sins, which are many, be forgiven thee." He knew how to console a weeping friend as well as to confront a boisterous enemy; his superiority was felt by all sorts of men; his artillery struck at all ranges; his mind was equal to all emergencies; it was for good like the sword of the cherubim at the gates of Eden for evil, it turned every way to keep the gates of life open for those who would fain enter there.

My brethren, I have entered upon a theme which is boundless; I merely touch some of the outer skirts of my Master's robes; as for himself, if you would know how he spake you must hear him. One of the ancients was wont to say that he could have wished to have seen Rome in all its splendour, to have been with Paul in all his labours, and to have heard Christ when preaching. Surely it were worth worlds but once to have caught the sound of that serene, soul-stirring voice, to have beheld for once the glance of those matchless eyes as they looked through the heart, and that heavenly countenance as it glowed with love.

His eloquence had, however, this for its main aspect, that it concerned the greatest truths that were ever made manifest to man. He brought light and immortality to light, he cleared up what had been doubtful, he resolved that which had been mysterious, he declared that which is gracious, that which saves the soul and glorifies God. No preacher was ever laden with so divine a message as Christ. We who bring the same glad tidings bring the news at second hand, and but in part; but he came forth from the Father's bosom with the whole truth, and, therefore, "Never man spake like this man."

II. Secondly, let us try to awaken in the saints some PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS of the Saviour's eloquence.

Lend me your memories, ye people of God. Do you remember when first ye heard him speak? We shall not talk of words which cleave the air, but of those spirit-words which thrill the heart and move the soul. Follow me, then, and recall to fondest memory his words of pity, of which I may truly say, "Never man spake

to me like this man.” It was in the dim dawning of my spiritual life, ere it was yet light, before the sun had fully risen, I felt my sin, I grieved beneath its weight, I despaired, I was ready to perish, and then he came to me. Well do I remember accents which then I scarce could understand, which nevertheless cheered my spirit. They sounded like these, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest:” “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Soft and sweet were the tones, and tremulous with fond anxiety. They came as from one who had bled and died. Do you remember when you also heard them? I do not mean when you heard them from the pulpit, from the minister, but in your heart, from Gethsemane, the cross, and the throne. It was sweet to know that Jesus pitied you. You were not saved, and you were afraid that you never might be, for the sea wrought and was tempestuous, but he said, “It is I, be not afraid.” You began to perceive that there was mercy if you could get it, that one tender heart felt for you, one strong arm was ready to help you. You could no longer lament, “No man careth for my soul,” for you perceived that there was a Saviour, and a great one. Those were sweet sounds that now and then were heard above the tumultuous deep which called unto deep at the noise of God’s water-spouts. None else ever spake as he did.

Do you remember how in those days you heard his voice with words of persuasion? You had often heard gospel invitations as the call of man, but then they came to you as the voice of God heard in the silence of your heart, saying, “Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel?” “Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Do you remember how they followed one another, each word suiting your particular condition, and having still accumulated power over your mind? Did not Jesus often seem to say to you, “Yield now, poor sinner, cast away thy weapons of rebellion. Destroy not thine own soul? Look unto me and be saved; for I have loved thee and made atonement for thy sin.” Those were marvellous pleadings which at last won your heart by force of love. You had much ado to resist those persuasions, but you did resist them for awhile, and like the spouse in the Canticle, you permitted the lover of your souls to wait outside your door, and say, “Open to me, my head is wet with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.” Yet you found it hard to resist him, for the persuasions of his love were mighty upon you, as he drew you with cords of love, with bands of a man, until you could hold out no longer.

Beloved, you surely call to mind when the words of persuasion were by-and-by followed with words of power! “Never man spake like this man,” when he said to my darkened soul, “let there be light.” Well do I remember that admonition, “Arise, shine, for thy light is come. Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” Dost thou remember when he passed by and saw thee in thy blood, and said to thee, “Live;” and cast the skirts of covenant love over thee, and washed thee, and made thee clean, and laid thee in his bosom, and made thee his for ever? “Never man spake like this man.” Dost thou remember when he made all thy darkness and sorrow to pass away as in a moment by saying to thee, “I am thy salvation”? Have you forgotten that word of pardon? I never can forget it, if I outlive Methuselah; it must still remain green in

my memory, for the word came with power, when I looked to the cross, and heard the absolving word, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." "Never man spake like this man." No priest can give an awakened conscience rest, nor any other, save the great High Priest, Jesus, Melchizedec, the sinner's pardoner. No words of hope, nor thoughts of consolation, can ever breed such peace within the spirit as the blood of Jesus brings when it speaks within the heart far better things than that of Abel. It reconciles us unto our God, and so gives perfect peace.

Since the time when first we heard his pardoning voice, we many a time have heard him speaking with right royal words, and we have said, "Never man spake like this man." How sweet it has been to sit in the assembly of the saints when the gospel has been indeed his word to our souls! Oh, the marrow and the fatness, the feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow which we have fed upon, when the King has sat at the table! When our Beloved speaks his word of promise, how has it revived our drooping spirit! It came as dew upon the tender herb. It touched our lip as a coal from off the altar. It gave us healing, consolation, joy. Beloved, cannot you look back to many instances when you had no food for your soul but the promise, when your soul knew no music but the word of his love? Blest Master, speak to me thus evermore.

"Each moment draw from earth away
My heart, that lowly waits thy call;
Speak to my inmost soul, and say,
I am thy Love, thy God, thy All!
To feel thy power, to hear Thy voice,
To taste thy love, be all my choice."

And when you have enjoyed his presence in your solitude, have had communion with him, and he has revealed his ancient, his unchanging, his never-ending, his boundless love to you, have you not prized his words far above the choicest joys of earth? When you have confessed your sins with penitent sorrow, and he has given back the word of full remission; when you have revealed your sorrow, and received the assurance of his tender sympathy; when you have laid bare your weakness and received the word that strengthens, have you not been ready to challenge all heaven to compare with him, and exclaimed, "Never man spake like this man"? To those who are unbelievers, and to those professors who live at a distance from Christ, this will sound like mere fancy, but believe me it is not so. If there be anything real beneath the skies, it is the communion which Christ has with his people by his Spirit. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Christ." We hear his voice, though not with these ears, and we so hear it as to know it, as sheep discern their shepherd's voice, and a stranger will we not follow, for we know not the voice of strangers. Our ears being opened by the Spirit, we at this hour can say, "I sleep, but my heart waketh; it is the voice of my beloved, my soul melteth while he speaks."

Now, my dear friends, there are some words of our Saviour spoken long ago, which, since we have known him have been so quickened by his presence that we number them henceforth among personal recollections. That word, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; it is true it is written in the Bible, an old, old saying,

but I can say and so can many of you, that it has been a new saying to me. We have by faith been enabled to hear it as spoken to us, and the Spirit of the blessed God has so brought it home to our hearts that it is as if Christ had never said it before, but had spoken it to us personally. Yea, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." There are many here who have heard him say, "I have chosen thee and not cast thee away." The Spirit of God has made many an ancient saying a speech from the living Jesus to us. Those words of his when he said, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God"—our faith has stood at Bethlehem's manger and we have seen the body prepared for him, and himself putting on the form of a servant. His coming to seek and to save that which was lost has become a personal coming to us, and we have rejoiced in it exceedingly. Has not the voice which came of old from the sea when he said, "It is I, be not afraid," been a voice to you? And the voice from Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered thee," has it never bewailed the perishing ones around you? The voice from Bethany, "I am the resurrection and the life," has it never been heard at the burial of your brother? The voice from the table when he washed his disciples' feet, and bade them wash one another's feet, has it not excited you to humble service of the brethren? Have we not again and again heard the cry of Gethsemane, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt"? I cannot convince myself that I did not actually hear the Redeemer say that; at any rate, I have rejoiced when in the spirit of resignation the echo of it has been heard in my own spirit. Do I not this very day hear him saying, though long ago he spake it, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do"? His intercession for my guilty soul; what is it but the continuance of that gentle prayer? And for certain that last concluding sentence, "It is finished," "*Consummatum est*"—my ears may not have heard it, but my soul hears it now and rejoices to repeat the word. Who shall lay anything to my charge since Christ has consummated my deliverance from death, hell, and sin, and brought in a perfect righteousness for me? Yes, these old sayings of Christ heard years ago we have heard in spirit, and our witness is after hearing them all, "Never man spake like this man." None can be compared with him at their best, his ministers cannot rival him, they do but echo his speech.

III. I shall close by mentioning certain PROPHETIC ANTICIPATIONS which lodge in our souls with regard to that eloquence in the future.

Brethren, you have heard the voice of Jesus, and you are expecting to hear it? As long as ever you live you are to speak for Jesus, but your hope for his kingdom does not lie in your speech but in *his* voice. He can speak to the heart, he can make the truth which you only utter to the ear penetrate to the mind. We expect that our exalted Lord will speak ere long with louder voice than aforetime. The gospel chariot lags awhile, as yet he goes not forth conquering and to conquer, but he will yet gird his sword upon his thigh, and his voice shalt be heard marshalling his hosts for the battle. Let but Christ give the word, and the company of them that shall publish it shall be exceeding great; let him send forth the word of his might from Zion, and thousands shall be born in a day, yea, nations shall be born at once. The elect of God, today apparently but few, shall come out from their hiding-places, and Christ shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

Despite the melancholy belief of some that the world will come to an end with a defeated God and with only a few saved, I nevertheless am certain that Scripture warrants brighter hopes. One day “the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.” “The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together,” this we know, for God has said it. In all things Christ shall have the pre-eminence, and therefore in the matter of souls saved he will have the pre-eminence over Satan and the souls who are lost. O for an hour of that voice of the Lord which is full of majesty, that voice which breaketh the cedars of Lebanon, and maketh them to skip like a calf, Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn! When shall the voice of the Lord shake the wilderness of Kadesh and discover the forests? It shall yet be heard, and in his temple shall every one speak of his glory. For the Lord sitteth upon the flood, yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever. Have hope, then. Let your anticipations be of brighter times, for he will speak—he that shakes both heaven and earth when he wills it—and when he speaks you will say, “Never man spake like this man.”

We expect personally for ourselves, if Jesus come not ere we depart, to hear him speak sweetly to us in the hour of death. Talk of it solemnly and softly, for put it in what light you may, it is dread work to die; but when we lie a dying, and the sounds of earth are shut out from the lone chamber, and the voice of affection is drowned in mournful sobs, then Jesus will come and make our bed, and speak as never man spake, saying “Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God; when thou passest through the rivers I will be with thee, the floods shall not overflow thee.” Dying Christians, by the songs which they have lifted up, and by the joy which has sparkled from their eyes, have proven that the voice of Jesus is such that “Never man spake like this man.”

O beloved, what will that voice be to our disembodied spirits when our souls shall leave this clay, and fly through tracks unknown to see the Saviour? I know not with what words of welcome he may address us then. He may reserve his choicest utterances for the day of his appearing, but he will not take us into his bosom without a love word, nor receive us into our quiet resting-places without a cordial commendation. What must it be to see his face, to hear his voice in heaven. Then shall we know that “Never man spake like this man.”

And then when the time ordained of old is fulfilled, when the day cometh that the dead shall hear the voice of God, when the Resurrection and the Life shall speak with trumpet tones, and the righteous shall be raised from their graves, oh! then it will be seen as they all obey the quickening word, that “Never man spake like this man.” He who speaks the resurrection-word is man as well as God. “As by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead.” And then when you and I shall be at his right hand, when the body and soul re-united shall receive the final award, and he shall say in inimitable tones, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world,” we shall not need to say, “Never man spake like this man.” When we with him shall enter into the everlasting rest, when he shall deliver up the mediatorial kingdom to God, even the Father, and God shall be all in all, we in the retrospect of all he said on earth and said in heaven, we in the constant hearing of his voice

who shall wear his priesthood perpetually, looking still like a lamb that has been slain, shall then bear fullest witness that “Never man spake like this man.”

Mark well, my hearers, that in such confession every soul of you will have to unite. You may live enemies to Christ, and you may die strangers to him, but that “Never man spake like this man,” ye shall be made to feel. If today you will not acknowledge that his mercy to you is unbounded, that his condescension in inviting you to come to him today is worthy of loving admiration, if you will not yield, but shut your ears to the invitation of his mercy when he says, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest,” yet at the last an unwilling assent to our text will be wrung from you. When he shall say, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels,” the thunder of that word shall so torment you, the terror of his speech shall so shake you, and utterly dissolve you, that you shall feel, wondering all the while that it was a man who could speak thus, that “Never man spake like this man.” You have sometimes upbraided the preacher for speaking too severely, you will then know that he was not severe enough; you have sometimes marvelled that the minister should give such fearful descriptions of the wrath to come, you thought he went too far, but when the pit opens wide her mouth and the devouring flames leap up to devour you at the word of the once crucified Saviour, then you will say, for terror and for wrath, for overwhelming horror, “Never man spake like this man.” The lips that said “Come, ye weary,” shall say, “Depart, ye cursed,” in tones which none but such lips could give forth. Love once made angry turns to wrath, intense and terrible. Oil is soft, but how fiercely it burns! Beware, lest his anger be kindled against you, for it will burn even to the lowest hell. The Lamb of God is as a lion to those who reject his love. Provoke him no longer. May the Holy Spirit bow you to repentance. God grant that in a far happier sense than this last, you may learn to say, “Never man spake like this man,” but one way or other every soul here, and every soul of woman born, shall own that “Never man spake like this man.”

To God I commend you. Farewell.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xlv.