

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FAITH, AND THE WITNESS UPON WHICH IT IS
FOUNDED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED [JANUARY 1875AD] BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath witnessed of his Son. He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the witness that God witnessed of his Son.”—1 John v. 9, 10.

You observe that I have somewhat corrected the translation. The same word is employed in every case in the original, but for the sake of variety of expression the translators have used four different words in our version; and so, instead of improving the sense, which, indeed, never can be in the case of the Holy Spirit’s writing, they have rather darkened the meaning. Put the word “witness” or “testimony” in each case, and you get the true meaning.

Last Thursday night* I tried to show the great importance of faith, and that while it was a most simple thing it was also most sublime; while it appeared to be weak, it was really the strongest of all motive principles, and produced the most amazing results. If on this occasion I shall run in the same strain, for me, indeed, it will not be grievous, and for you it will be safe, for we cannot too often review the truths which are the vitals of our holy religion. Faith stands, under the covenant of grace, in a leading position amongst the works of the regenerate man and the gifts of the Spirit of God. Righteousness is no longer to him that worketh, but to the man that believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly. The promise no longer stands to the man who doeth these things that he shall live in them, else we were shut out of it, but “The just shall live by faith.” God now biddeth us live by believing in him. Seeing that we were not willing to yield to him obedience, but remained rebellious, and perceiving with a glance that the root of that rebellion lay in want of love to him, and in want of confidence in him, he now begins at the very foundation of the whole matter, and by a wondrous act

* [See previous sermon no. 172, “Faith and its Attendant Privileges.”]

of grace claims our confidence, gives us proof that he deserves it, and then comes to us, and says, "Trust me; trust my Son, who has died for you, and you are reconciled to me by his blood. Begin, then, the new life, with confidence in me as the mainspring of all your actions, and thus shall you be saved. If I threaten you, you will only revolt more and more. If I smite you, you will sooner die under the rod than repent. Nothing remains with which to influence you but love; and now, in the person of my Son, I commend my love to you, and show you what good intents I have towards you. Come and trust me. Let us be friends again. Rely upon what I have wrought in the person of my Son, that you might be forgiven. Trust him, and you are saved." Men are willing enough to accept a gospel which requires them to do something. They admire the impossible way of salvation by works. Man is afraid when Sinai is altogether on a smoke, and begs that the terrible words of the law may not be spoken to him again; and yet he loves to wander around the foot of Sinai still, and is unwilling to come unto Mount Zion. The old spirit of Hagar is upon us, and until the Lord causes us to be born again we remain children of the bondwoman, and will not rejoice in the promise. To accept the gift of free grace is contrary to our proud nature, and the power of God is needed to induce us to throw down the tools with which we work for salvation, and take with joyful hands the full, free, and finished salvation which Jesus bestows on all who trust him.

This plan of trusting in Jesus for salvation one would have thought would be joyfully accepted by all, but, instead of that, no man receiveth the witness of God, though it be infallible truth. I wish to speak this evening a little upon the grounds of testimony—the *reasons of faith*: and may God grant, while we speak about them, believers may be refreshed and unbelievers may be led to Jesus.

First, in our text, we have *the external evidence*, or the witness of God to us "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath witnessed of his Son." Then, secondly, we shall consider *the internal evidence*, or the witness of God in us. "He that believeth on the Son hath the witness in himself;" and then, thirdly, we shall *inquire how we are treating the witness of God*, especially dealing with those of whom we find it said, "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the witness that God witnessed of his Son."

I. First, then, dear friends, since our great business is that we believe God, let us see what reason we have for believing him. THE EXTERNAL EVIDENCE given is stated in the first verse of the text, as the evidence of God to us, and it is prefaced by the remark that "*we receive the witness of men.*"

We are accustomed to receive the witness of men. David said, "All men are liars," but he spoke in haste: there would be no history if we did not receive the witness of men. If we neglected human evidence there could be no courts

of law, no trading between man and man, except for ready money, confidence would cease, and the bands which unite the social fabric would be snapped. We do and must believe the testimony of men as a general rule; and it is only right that we should account witnesses honest till they have proved themselves false. The principle may be pushed too far very readily, and we may take the witness of men and find ourselves deceived. Still, for all that, the evidence of honest men is weighty, and “in the mouth of two or three witnesses the whole shall be established.”

Now, God has been pleased to give us a measure of the witness of men with regard to his Son, Jesus Christ. We have the witness of such men as the four evangelists and the twelve apostles. These men saw Jesus Christ. Some of them were familiar with him for years. They saw evidence of his deity, for they saw him walk the waters, and heard him say to the winds and the waves, “Peace, be still,” and there was a great calm. These witnesses say that they saw him heal lepers with a touch, and open blind men’s eyes, and even raise the dead. Three of them tell us that they were on the mountain of transfiguration with him, and saw his glory, and heard a voice out of heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son: hear ye him.” These persons were very unsophisticated individuals. They mostly belonged to a class of men who are rather celebrated for their bluff honesty, namely, fishermen. They certainly had nothing to gain by saying that they saw all these things: they had everything to lose. Their names are famous now, but they could little have reckoned upon such fame; and they do not appear to have been men who cared about fame at all. They lost their all; they were despised and maltreated, and most of them met with a cruel death on account of having borne witness to what they saw. Their witness is by no means of a doubtful character. They are very positive that they saw the things of which they are witnesses. One of them has said, “he that saw it bare record, and he knoweth that his witness is true, and he knoweth that he saith true.” No part of history has come down to us so well attested as the life of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Now, a man takes Tacitus, and he believes what Tacitus tells him, although, very likely, Tacitus did not see the things, and only got them at second hand; but as a reputable historian, his witness is received. Surely the witness of Matthew and Mark, and Luke and John, and Peter and James and Paul, is as good as the witness of Julius Cæsar or Tacitus, and it is rendered the more trustworthy from the fact that they died for adhering to it, which neither Cæsar nor Tacitus were made to do. Besides, for the gospel narrative we have many witnesses,—the number of names was about one hundred and twenty, and they all agreed and stood fast; and even the one who did for a time seem to forsake his testimony, bad as he was, returned to it, and threw down the money for which he had sold his Master, and said, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.” We have the witness of men as to the facts that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived and died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven.

Further, we have the testimony of men as to the present power of that same Jesus to forgive men their trespasses, and to save them from the power of sin. From the first day when our Lord was taken up till now men and women have come forward, and have said, "We were once lovers of sin; whatever our neighbours are, such were we, but we are washed, but we are sanctified; and all this by faith in Jesus." Those who knew these people have confessed the change, although they have often been at the same time angry with them for it. They have confessed their virtues, and have persecuted them on that account. Now these converted people have stood to it that they obtained a new heart and a right spirit through believing in Jesus. They have been put in prison for saying this, and for declaring that faith in the crucified Saviour had delivered them from the dominion of sin, and from despondency and despair, and had made them love God, and had given them hope and joy and peace, and had taught them to love their neighbours, and to do justice, and to expect a home in heaven. These people have been among the best in the world all along, even as we read in history of the Albigenses and the Waldenses, or the Vaudois or the Lollards. They are described as detestable fanatics, and enthusiasts, but they are admitted to have been sober, honest, chaste, quiet citizens and industrious parents, so that the very kings who put them to death regretted that they were under the necessity of sacrificing such subjects. Now, it is a very singular thing that these people should so constantly and continuously come forward and say, "The witness of God is true: he has sent his Son into the world, and those that believe on him are saved. We are saved, and we will burn at Smithfield, rot in the Lollards' tower, or lie in a dungeon till the moss grows on our eyelids; but we will never deny or cease to assert this gospel." All ages have supplied the witness of men. Some of you, beloved friends, have had this witness in a very pointed and practical manner. Probably I may be addressing one who is irreligious, but he never can forget his mother, or his sister, or some other beloved relative, now gone to heaven. You are never able to laugh at religion, though you do not believe in it, because these sainted ones rise up before your mind. You are persuaded that they were under a delusion, but for all that they were so happy, that you half wish you were deluded too. You would sooner put your children to school to godly people than to sceptics like yourself; you know you would. There is a something about a Christian which is a witness to you. To me, I must confess, the witness of the lives of some Christians has been wonderfully confirmatory, when I have seen how they suffer without repining, and even bless the Lord in the midst of agony. If this be the fruit of the Christian religion it must be true. And so, on dying beds, when we have seen the remarkable peace, and sometimes the extraordinary joy of persons departing, we have felt quite sure that faith in Jesus is no fiction. I have heard dying children speak like doctors of divinity about the things of God. I have heard dying women, who were quite

uneducated, speak of the world unseen in a style of inspiration which has struck me with awe. I do not believe that a faith which enables a man to die triumphantly, rejoicing in his God, or to die calmly in the midst of pain, looking for a world to come, can be after all a myth. Oh, if it were so, and the wise man could prove it was all a mistake, I would almost ask him to forego his work; for this has charmed away our fears, and turned our desert life into a garden of the Lord. The gospel has smoothed the pillow of the dying, and wiped the tears of the desponding. Alas! for thee, O earth, if this could be proved a dream; then were thy sun quenched for ever, and it had been better for us all that we never had been born. But it is not so; the witness of men about the things of God is very clear. Some years ago there went into a Methodist class meeting a lawyer who was a doubter, but at the same time a man of candid spirit. Sitting down on one of the benches, he listened to a certain number of poor people, his neighbours, whom he knew to be honest people. He heard some thirteen or fourteen of these persons speak about the power of divine grace, in their souls, and about their conversion, and so on. He jotted down the particulars, and went home, and sat down, and said to himself, "Now, these people all bear witness, I will weigh their evidence." It struck him that if he could get those twelve or thirteen people into the witness box, to testify on his side in any question before a court, he could carry anything. They were persons of different degrees of intellect and education, but they were all of the sort of persons whom he would like to have for witnesses, persons who could bear cross-examination, and by their very tone and manner would win the confidence of the jury. "Very well," he said to himself, "I am as much bound to believe these people about their religious experience as about anything else." He did so, and that led to his believing on the Lord Jesus Christ with all his heart. Thus, you see, the testimony of God to us does in a measure come through men, and we are bound to receive it.

But now comes the text: "If we receive the witness of men, *the witness of God is greater.*" God is to be believed if all men contradict him. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." One word of God ought to sweep away ten thousand words of men, whether they be philosophers of today or sages of antiquity. God's word against them all, for he knows infallibly. Of his own Son he knows as none else can; of our condition before him he knows; of the way to pardon us he knows. There is nothing in God that could lead him to err or make mistake, and it were blasphemy to suppose that he would mislead us. It were an insult to him, such as we may not venture to perpetrate for a moment, to suppose that he would wilfully mislead his poor creatures by a proclamation of mercy which meant nothing, or by presenting to them a Christ who could not redeem them. The gospel with God for its witness cannot be false. Whatever may be the witness against it, the witness of God is greater! We must believe the

witness of God.

Now, what is the witness of God with regard to Christ? How does he prove to me that Jesus Christ did really come into the world to save us? He proves it in three ways according to the context of this passage. God's witnesses are three: *the Spirit*, the water, and the blood. God says, "My Son did come into the world: he is my gift to sinful men; he has redeemed you, and he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto me by him: and in proof that it is so the Holy Spirit has been given. He descended at Pentecost: he abides with us for ever, he has not gone back again. He is in the word: he is with the word. He is in the church: he is with the church." Whenever God the Holy Ghost is pleased to work, whether in revivals, or by individual conversions, the wonderful phenomena which are wrought by him, which are miracles in the world of mind, as astonishing as the miracles of Christ in the world of matter, God is saying thereby," declare Christ to be my Son and your Saviour, for I have sent the Holy Ghost to prove it. I have converted yonder sinner, I have comforted yonder saint, by the Holy Ghost. I have instructed the ignorant, I have sanctified the impure, I have guided my people safely by the Holy Ghost. He is my witness. If you need any evidence that Jesus is really my own Son, behold my Spirit going forth amongst the sons of men, converting whom he wills by the truth concerning Jesus."

Then *the water*, that is to say, the purifying power of the gospel is also God's witness to the truth of the gospel. If it does not change men's characters when they receive it, it is not true. If it does not purify and produce virtue and holiness, do not believe it. But as God everywhere, among the most savage tribes, or amongst the most refined of mankind, makes the gospel to be a sacred bath of cleansing to the hearts and lives of men, he gives another witness that his Son **is** really divine, and that his gospel is true.

The blood also witnesses. Does believing in Jesus Christ do what the blood was said to do, namely, give peace with God through the pardon of sin? Does it or not? Hundreds and thousands all over the world affirm that they had no peace of conscience till they looked to the streaming veins of Jesus, and then they saw how God can be just and yet forgive sin. Wherever God gives peace through the blood, that blood witnesses with the Spirit and the water on God's behalf. He says to us sinners, "I have spoken to you a word of love, and that word is my Son. What I have said to you is Jesus. He is my communication to men. I have delivered him as my message to your souls; and in proof that he is my message to you—a message of love and mercy and pardon—behold, I send the Holy Ghost forth among the sons of men, behold, I work a purifying work among the sons of men, and I give peace in the heart through the blood

of the atonement. These three agreeing in one, are my witness concerning my Son.”

Now, dear brethren, remember that the evidence of faith to every soul hangs here. I shall soon speak to you of the witness in you, but the faith demanded of men rests not upon the ground of any witness *in* them, but of the witness *to* them. I am to believe God because he cannot lie. I am to believe Christ because God gives me the witness concerning Christ; and if I will not do so I shall have no other witness. The inward evidence only comes to those who first of all accept the evidence of God. Witness *in* us is not given first, but witness *to* us; and if the evidence to us be rejected we shall be cast away and lost for ever.

II. I come now TO THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE, or the witness in us. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” When a man is led by the Spirit of God to believe that God cannot lie, he enquires what it is that God says; he hears that atonement has been made, and that whosoever believeth in Jesus shall have eternal life. He sees the witness to be good, and he believes it. That man is saved. What happens next? Why, this man becomes a new creature. Old things have passed away. He loves what he hated, and hates what he loved. He believes what he denied, and disbelieves what he formerly accepted. He is radically changed. “Now,” says he to himself, “I am sure of the truth of the gospel, for this change, this wonderful change in me, in my heart, my speech, and my life, must be of divine origin. I was told that if I believed I should be saved from my former self, and I am. Now, I know, not only by the external witness, nor even because of the witness of God, but I have an inner consciousness of a most marvellous birth, and this is a witness in myself.” The man then goes on to enjoy great peace. Looking alone to Jesus Christ for pardon, he finds his sins taken from him, and his heart is unburdened of a load of fear, and this rest of heart becomes to him another inward witness. To be forgiven makes his very soul dance for joy, and he cries, “Now I know that Christ’s blood can wash away sin, because mine has gone.” Oh, believe me, if you were ever reduced to despair under a sense of sin, if you were ever dragged through a thorn hedge, laid by the feet in the stocks of conviction, bastinadoed, and beaten with the great ten-thonged whip of the law till there was not a sound place in you, and you were ready utterly to die,—if Jesus then came to you and said, “Be of good comfort: thy sins are forgiven thee,” you knew that it was so, and doubted his existence no more. From that moment you learned to say, “I wanted the testimony of Matthew and Mark, and Luke, and John, and Paul once, but I do not now, I believe and am sure, for I have felt it myself, and know it in my soul.” Perhaps a sceptical neighbour will sneeringly say, “It is fanaticism.” Yes, but you will feel just like a man who went to the Ophthalmic Hospital as blind as a bat, and came out able to see clearly, and somebody said it was fanaticism, and he said, “Well, I

do not know what that hard word means, but one thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see.” It is a wonderfully hard thing to drive a man out of his consciousness. “Prove that you are alive,” said somebody, and the man who was asked for the proof walked across the room. Instead of a syllogism he gave a fact. So does the joy and peace which the Lord gives to his people from himself become to them the very best evidence of the power of the precious blood and of the divine mission of Jesus.

As the Christian thus goes on from strength to strength he meets with answers to prayer. He goes to God in trouble, tells the Lord about it, and he gets out of his trouble, or he is enabled to bear it, and to see it all work for his good. In great perplexity, he hastens to the Lord, light comes, and he sees his way. He wants many favours, he asks for them, and they are bestowed. He does not need Elijah to come and say, “God hears prayer, for he answered my cries on Carmel, and sent rain.” He wants no Old Testament saint to declare to him that God answers his people’s requests. He is glad of their testimony, but he has the witness in himself. I sometimes hear of even professed ministers of Christ who have doubts about these things. I should like to ask them a question or two. I should not enquire as to what they believe or do not believe; I should begin thus:—“Do you know Jesus Christ in your own soul? Were you ever converted? Do you feel the power of the Holy Ghost resting upon you?” If I came to close questioning with some of these sceptical gentlemen, I warrant you they would soon take themselves off to some other company. I do not believe in this modern doubting; I have no faith in its honesty, and no belief in its depth. The most foolish coxcombs I know of take up with it just as small boys like to wear men’s clothes. When a man knows anything about God by fellowship, and has really experienced these things, doubts and fears may flit across his soul, just as the migratory birds in the end of autumn may be heard flying overhead in the air, but they will not alight on his soul to rest. Infidel theories find no dwelling place in a soul that is really born unto God, and has daily and continual dealings with him. A man does not doubt things that are an integral part of his daily existence. Very few scepticisms arise in a man’s mind about the facts of pain and pleasure, and the phenomena of hunger and thirst. So, when it comes to living and feeding upon Christ, practical experience soon puts an end to questions. “He that believeth hath the witness in himself.” Oh, brethren, the Lord gives to his people answers to prayer, and he gives them such a sense of nearness to himself, and sometimes such overpowering joys in his presence, or such an overwhelming sense of awe when he comes near to them, that they believe and are sure that it is even so. “He that believeth hath the witness in himself;” and there is no witness like it. Except the witness of God, which stands first, and which we are to receive, or perish, there is nothing equal to the witness within yourself. Somebody wants to prove to me that sugar is sweet. My dear sir, you may spare

yourself the trouble: I had some in my tea just now, and I am quite sure about it. He wants to prove to me that sea-water is salt. Sir, I do not question it, I have tasted it quite often enough to have no doubt about it. Things of religion must be tasted to be proved,—“Oh, *taste* and see that the Lord is good.” First believe the gospel to be true, because of the witness of God; and if, having so believed, you would be deepened and strengthened in faith, go on to enjoy the blessings of grace and you will grow in faith. Christian people, I ask you this question, and I know your answer,—If you ever doubt about the truthfulness of God, is it not when your piety is in a low condition? If you have neglected prayer, if you have lost fellowship with Jesus, if you have dropped out of accord with God, is it not then that you are plagued with questions? But if we walk in the light, as God is in the light, and abide in him whom we have received, is it not true that, though we may be quite unable to meet, in the way of logic, the objections that are raised, there is a something within, an inward indisputable assurance which is not shaken, and cannot be? It is said of a Roman Catholic priest that he took away the New Testament from a child on one occasion, but the child’s teacher had taught him twelve chapters of the gospel according to John, and so he said to the priest, “But you cannot take it all away, sir.” “Why not?” “Because I have learned twelve chapters by heart.” Now, if the critics begin tearing away at our precious book—though I would not let them have a verse of it—yet, if they could obliterate some of its promises they could not rend it all away, because we have it in our hearts. *We know* it is true. Many a poor man and woman could illuminate their Bibles after the fashion of the tried saint who placed a “T and P” in the margin. She was asked what it meant, and she replied, “That means ‘Tried and proved,’ sir.” Yes, we have tried and proved the word of God, and are sure of its truth.

III. I have shown you that the gospel is proclaimed to men, and they are expected to believe it, not upon the ground of any witness that is in them, but because of the witness of God to them; and I have also shown that the witness in them follows in due course as a reward of faith rather than a ground of faith. But here is the practical point—HOW ARE WE TREATING THE WITNESS OF GOD? For it is written in our text, “He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the witness that God witnessed of his Son.”

Now, are we believing the witness of God? I believe that the most of you here present entertain no doubt whatever that the Bible is the word of God. Do not, therefore, I pray you, think it superfluous for me to say to you, do you believe it? Do you believe it? You reply, “of course I do.” Well, I am not sure that it is “of course,” because there are persons who believe in a way, and that way a false one. I have heard of a poor curate who was upbraided for not believing the articles of his church, and replied that he believed at the rate of forty pounds a year. There are persons who

believe at a very cheap rate. They believe in the Westminster Assembly's catechism: it is true they never read it, but they believe it. The church has a creed: they do not know what it is, but still they say they believe it. They believe what the church believes. "But what does the church believe?" "It believes what I believe." "And what do you and the church believe?" "We both believe the same thing." That is what it comes to. Such a faith will not save the soul; there must be an intelligent reception of the testimony which God has given. There are many in whom this faith does not exist, because if it did they could not act as they do. Do you unconverted people believe that the wrath of God abideth on you? Then, you must be insane if you do not seek to escape from that wrath. If you believe that at this moment there is a viper in your pew, I will warrant you, you will soon rush out into the aisle. I should not need to argue with you about it: I might try to persuade you to sit still, but you would not be persuaded. If you really believed that your sins had destroyed you, you could not be careless any longer. Do you believe that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners, and that he is able to save you? Yes, you are sure you do. I am not so sure, because if it were certain that there was outside yonder door a purse of gold worth fifty thousand pounds, and that whosoever chose to take it should have it, *you would be glad to hear me pronounce the benediction*, the most devout of you, so that you might get the treasure; you would not want any exhorting to go, for natural instincts would lead you to make haste and seize the golden opportunity. If you believe that Jesus Christ saves from sin, and gives to the soul a treasure far beyond all price, you will make all speed to obtain the precious boon. Is it not so? He who believes in the value of a gift will hasten to accept it, unless he be out of his mind.

Many of you, who think you believe, and say you believe, do not believe at all; and, I put it to you, do you know what you are doing? You are making God a liar, so the text says. "No, I would not do that," says one. Friend, I hope that your case is well described in that prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

But after tonight you will know what you do. If you do not believe what God says you make him a liar. "I do not see that," says one. You cannot help seeing it if you will but look at it, for if any person bears witness to you concerning some important matter, and you say, "I do not believe you," you make that person a liar. When God bears witness in any way he ought to be believed, but when he adopts the most solemn manner, to disbelieve him is atrocious. To deny the truth of God is a fearful insult to him. To every man, and to every good man especially, his truthfulness is a jewel. He cannot endure to have truth impugned, and do you think that God can? The more pure a man is the more indignant he is when his truthfulness is assailed; and to doubt God is to assail a truthfulness which is unimpeachable, and ought

never to be questioned. Besides, look at the whole case. You have quarrelled with God; you have broken his law; you have sinned; you deserve to be cast into hell; and yet in his mercy he says, “Sinner, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but would rather that he should turn unto me and live, and in order that I may be able to forgive you, and yet be judge of all the earth, I have given my own Son to bleed and die on Calvary, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. “Come,” he says, “sinner, trust in my Son, and I will forgive you.” And your answer is, “I do not believe thee.” Now that is, in addition to the insult of unbelief, exceedingly provoking to the loving heart of God. I have met with persons who have been generous to the poor until the murmuring words of some whom they have tried to benefit have quite wearied them from their benevolent course. Most persons who are doing generous actions are very sorely hurt if their conduct is misrepresented and their kindness treated with ingratitude. Now, when so splendid an act of generosity, so unparalleled a deed of grace, as the gift of his own Son is made a subject of undeserved unbelief, it touches God in a very tender place. I am not using too strong language when I remind you that he whom he gave to us was his own Son, very dear to him, and yet he put him to grief on our account. The bloody sweat of Gethsemane, and the wounds of Calvary, show how greatly God pressed and bruised that matchless cluster—his own Son. And, after that, to say “No, I do not believe in Jesus, I will not have his atonement, and I will not trust in him,” it is cruel of you, sinner! It is cruel of you to the last degree. To stand at Calvary’s cross, and see him bleed whose unspeakable beauties might put the very sun to blush for the dimness of his light,—to see him die for his enemies, and to hear him say, “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” and then to turn your back on him,—is the direst proof of the depravity of human nature that ever was presented under heaven. All the iniquities, and transgressions that are committed by men, all the crimes that have ever stained humanity do not equal in extent of enmity to God the hatred that lurks in the resolve sooner to be damned than owe salvation to the free grace of God. He hates God, indeed, who hates him so much that he will even dwell for ever in hell fire sooner than be forgiven by him and saved through the blood of his Son. Man shows his deadly enmity against God to the tallest extent when he will destroy himself to indulge it.

Methinks I hear one say, “I would believe if I felt something in my heart.” You will never feel that something. You are required to believe on the witness of God, and will you dare to say that his evidence is not sufficient? If you will believe on the divine testimony you shall have the witness within by-and-by, but you cannot have that first. The demand of the gospel is, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe upon God’s testimony.” What testimony do you want more? God has given it you in many forms. By holy men who have

gone before, as I have told you; by his inspired book; by the various works of his Spirit, and by the water and the blood in the church all around you. Above all, Jesus himself is the best of witnesses. Believe *him*. “But I wish I could have a very striking dream, perhaps that would convert me.” Would you put more confidence in a dream than in God’s word? “Oh, but I hear of persons who have received revelations from the Spirit of God.” Do not tell me about the Spirit of God speaking to anybody more than is in the Bible. What is in the Scriptures the Spirit of God will apply to the heart, but if you want the Spirit of God to speak to you over and above that, you will never have it. You have Moses and the prophets, hear them; and if you do not, neither would you be converted though one rose from the dead. But nobody will rise from the dead. You have upon the strength of the divine testimony to trust your soul in the hands of Jesus; and if you do so you shall be saved. May the Holy Spirit lead you to do so at this very moment. “That is an easy matter,” says one. I know it is, and that is why it is so hard. If it were a hard thing you would do it, or try to do so; but because it is so easy your pride will not come down to it, unless my Master moves you to consent thereto. It is simply, wash and be clean, believe and live, trust and find it true. Ah, may the Lord grant that this simple matter may be clear to you,—that you may accept it eagerly, lay hold upon it earnestly; and then, having believed, you shall have the witness in yourself which will prove it to be true. “Doctor,” say you, “will your medicine heal me?” “Yes,” says he. “But doctor,” say you, “I cannot believe till I have the witness in myself, that it will make me well.” “But,” says he, “you won’t be able to take my medicine on those terms, because you cannot have that witness till you have taken it. Will you have it on my witness that I have prescribed this draught in many similar eases, and I know, from what I understand of the anatomy of the body, that the drugs suit your disease and will remove it.” “No, doctor,” says the man, “I must feel better before I can have confidence in you.” “What, feel the power of the medicine before you take it?” “Yes.” “Then your demand is preposterous; you must surely be weak in your intellect.” Moved by this reproof, you take the draught. He comes the next day, and you feel relieved from the pain, and a new tone is given to your system, and you cheerfully exclaim, “Now, doctor, I have the witness in myself.” Now, if you had been foolish enough to stand out, and not take the medicine till you had proved it, and yet you could not prove it till you took it, you would have behaved like an idiot; and the man who will not take God at his word, but wants something else besides the Lord’s witness, not only insults God, but plays the part of an insane suicide and deserves to perish. God give you grace to accept the gospel, then you shall have the witness in yourself, and he shall have the praise, and you shall have the comfort.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John v.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON,

Read at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, on Lord's-Day, January 17, 1875.

DEARLY BELOVED FREINDS,—I am right glad that those who filled my place last Sabbath were so graciously enabled to feed your souls. It matters little who distributes the bread, so that it comes fresh from Jesu's hand. I join you in earnest prayer that the brethren who have so generously come to my relief this day may have equally adequate assistance from our Lord and his Spirit. I thank them, but I also envy them, and would gladly pay a king's ransom, if I had it, for the privilege of preaching this day. My envy condenses into a prayer that all my Lord's ambassadors may have good speed this day, that so his kingdom of peace may mightily grow in the land.

After enduring much intense pain, I am now recovering, and, like a little child, am learning to stand, and to totter from chair to chair. The trial is hot, but does not last long, and there is herein much cause for gratitude. My last two attacks have been of this character. It may be the will of God that I should have many more of these singular seizures, and if so I hope you will have patience with me. I have done all as to diet, abstinence from stimulants, and so on, which could be done, and as the evil still continues, the cause must be elsewhere. We call the evil "gout" for want of a better word, but it differs widely from the disorder which goes under that name. On the two last occasions I had an unusual pressure of work upon me, and I broke down. My position among you is such that I can just keep on at a medium pace if I have nothing extra, but the extra labour overthrows me. If I were an iron man you should have my whole strength till the last particle had been worn away, but as I am only dust, you must take from me what I can render, and look for no more. May that service which I can render be accepted of the Lord.

I now commend you, dear friends, to the Lord's keeping. Nothing will cheer me so much as to hear that God is among you, and this I shall judge of by importunate *prayer-meetings*, good works of the church systematically and liberally sustained, and converts coming forward to confess their faith in Christ. This last I look for and long for every week. *Who is on the Lord's side? Who?* Wounded on the battle-field, I raise myself on my arm and cry to those around me, and urge them to espouse my Master's cause, for if we were wounded or dead for his sake all would be gain. By the splendour of redeeming love, I charge each believer to confess his Lord, and live wholly to him.

Yours for Christ's sake,

C. H. SPURGEON.