

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

NOMINAL CHRISTIANS—REAL INFIDELS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 1ST, 1863, BY THE

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?”—John viii. 46.

AS we meet this evening to commune at the table of the Lord, it will then be necessary for me to seek the edification of God’s people. I therefore think it best to occupy our time this morning with an exhortation to those that are out of the way. May the Holy Spirit make our words like arrows from the bow of a mighty man; may he graciously direct them to the chosen hearts which he has ordained to bless, and may this hallowed hour be a time of salvation to many among you. Whatever may be lacking in the human instrument, I trust there will be no absence of true affection and solemn earnestness, and O may the Holy Ghost use those infirmities under which I labour this morning to magnify his own strength.

You know, dear friends, there has been a great deal of talk lately about the infidelity which like a whirlwind shakes the Establishment. We felt a very stiff breeze caused by certain “Essays and Reviews,” and ere that could blow over, a perfect hurricane from the African shore astonished many and alarmed a few. Everybody agrees to censure the inconsistency of a man who wears a mitre and quarrels with Moses; professes to be a minister of the Church and undermines her foundations. Too much importance has been attached to the poor attempts of the Arithmetical Unbeliever, and what was in reality nothing more than a storm in a teacup has been exaggerated until all the sea of Christendom is tossed with tempest. To my mind, there is a terrible foeman abroad far more worthy of our steel than the recreant prelate and his Zulu teachers. Spare your voices, O watchmen of Zion, for a mightier enemy, and reserve your swords for a sterner adversary of our Israel. Secret unbelief, as the mother and foster-parent of all open infidelity, requires to be watched and wept over. Let us mourn over the professed unbelief of the age; but there is an unbelief more gross than this, more dishonest, more inconsistent, more widely-spread, and more de-

ceptive in its character, an infidelity so impalpable that we cannot readily arrest it and drag it into the court of conscience; so unreasonable that argument is out of place in contending with it. This “pestilence which walketh in darkness,” broods frightfully over our congregations, and smothers beneath its death-bearing wings not a few of you whose souls I would win for Christ. Into the lists with this destroyer of souls I enter this day. Oh, may my Lord and Master give me power to strike home. Solemnly I protest against that dishonest, inconsistent infidelity of which some of you are the victims. You tell me that you believe the Bible to be inspired of God; no suspicions as to its divine authority linger in your mind; you have faith in the gospel which we preach, that it is genuine, true, and sound, but here lies your inconsistency or dishonesty,—you say it is true, but you do not believe it; you admit that it came from God, but practically you reject it; you will not deny that it is worthy of all acceptance—it must be so if it came from God, since it deals with all-important matters—and yet you practically say it is not worthy of your attention, since many of you are still in disobedience to the voice of love, neglecting the great salvation.

Before charging home upon your consciences, my hearers, I feel constrained to remark that many professors of religion deserve the rebuke of the text, for they say they believe the Bible, but they do not act in accordance with it. We have been boasting, in the language of Chillingworth, that the Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants, but the boast requires a little examination. Do we not tolerate many things among Protestants which, can never be vindicated from Scripture. Tell me that the Bible is your religion and yet bring your infants for baptism, sprinkle their brows or sign their foreheads with a cross, and where find you your warrant for thus profaning an ordinance which sets forth the burial of believers with their Lord? Tradition may lend a forced and lame support to baby sprinkling, but to the Bible it is a novelty unknown. Moreover I ask you whence comes confirmation; will any one be bold enough to assert that there is anything in God's Word like it? Ay, and more—where find you a State Establishment? Verily, not in the New Testament, since our Lord hath said, “My kingdom is not of this world,” and his unworldly gospel is a standing protest against the spiritual fornication which State religion involves. Everywhere, in all sects, I see inventions of men arrogating the place of the commandments of God. Let us sweep our temples, and return unto the Word of the Lord. Say not that ye believe the Book, when ye act as though it were not true—when ye advocate practices and set up rites and ceremonies unknown to apostolic times and scriptural records. Brethren, again I say it, our Churches require to be brought face to face with the infallible Word. By this test try them all; they say the thing is true—will they believe it? Will they practice it? Will they abide by the standard? High professors,

the love of this world is enmity against God. You profess to love God, you are as worldly, as fond of fashion and its frivolities, as pleased with pomp and its fooleries, as hungry for honour and its fripperies as you can well be; and yet you say this Book is true! Verily, by your acts you prove that you believe it not. I might draw up today a bill of dreadful indictment against the visible Church of this age; I might prove to a demonstration that it is not delivered from this present evil world, according to the will of God, even the Father; and that it teaches for doctrines the commandments of men: so that it deserves to be met with the unanswerable question and faithful rebuke of our Lord Jesus—"If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?"

Although fidelity to my Lord required these few remarks, which are not meant as an angry discovery of a brother's faults, but as the faithful wounds of a friend, I turn to the matter which has most to do with you, the people of my charge. Having shown you the many giants' heads which might be smitten by this smooth stone, taken out of the brook, I shall now take aim at *your* hearts, O ye who believe not on my Lord.

I. Unbelievers in Christ, MY TEXT SETS FORTH VERY PITHILY AND PERTINENTLY YOUR INCONSISTENCY.

"If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" If you boldly meet me by saying "am not converted, for I do not believe in the mission of Christ," your position is a consistent though a terrible one; if you tell me you have suspicions about the inspiration of Scripture, and therefore you do not believe in Christ, your position is certainly dangerous, it is not despicable; but when you tell me that you believe Jesus Christ was sent from heaven, and that his gospel is the revelation of God to man, if you are still at this day unconverted, your position, besides its tremendous responsibility and danger, is extraordinarily inconsistent, so inconsistent that an honest man should blush to remain in it for an hour. Were you rightly to weigh the matter you would say, "I will not, I will not be thus a liar unto my soul any longer; I will not contradict myself, but I will be consistent, and since the thing is true I will believe it."

Remember, first of all, that *Jesus Christ has revealed to you your need* He has told you in express words that you need *regeneration*. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Enlarging upon the doctrine, he adds—"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." He has laid the new birth before you as an imperative necessity. You admit that this is true; your admission that this Book came from God is clearly an assent to this teaching. Why, then, is it that you who have never passed from death unto life, remain contented without that divine change, and are satisfied with moral reformation or outward respectability, while the Book assures you that these will never

avail? The Great Master assures you that *you must be converted*. Hear his express words—“Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.” This you allow to be correct, for it is in the Book which you agree to reverence. Oh, sinner, how then canst thou be at ease in an unconverted state? How is it that thou canst remain so careless when heaven is barred against thee because thou art not converted. Thou canst not delude thyself with the thought that mayhap all will be well with thee, when Christ assures thee it cannot be well with thee except thou experience his converting grace. Has he not told thee, too, in many a passage of prophetic and apostolic Scripture, that *thou must return unto the God from whom thou hast wandered*, and leave thy sins and give thy heart to him? What meant that gracious parable concerning the prodigal? Did it not set *thee* forth, thou who hast spent thy living with harlots, and art brought to the degradations of sin? Did he not teach thee that thine only hope lies in quick return to thy offended but loving Father in heaven. “I will arise and go to my Father,”—is not this fit language for thee?

The citizens of this country—what can they do for thee? They send thee into their fields to feed swine, but thou canst not fill thy belly with the husks which the swine do eat. Doth not Jesus in that loving parable say affectionately to thee, “Return unto thy God.” Oh! if this be true, and thou sayest it is, then believe it, and sure I am thy bowels will yearn towards thy Father’s house, and thou wilt run towards thy home at once. Is it not true that we must abhor that which is evil, and turn with full purpose of heart unto the Lord? “True,” you answer, “certainly it is.” Why then, I reply, do ye not believe it and act upon the belief? Dear friends, if any physician, well-known and honoured, should meet you today on your way home, and should most affectionately and solemnly inform you that you bear about in your person a dreadful disease, methinks if you should profess to believe his warning, and yet you should seek no remedy for it, but remain totally unaffected by the dreadful assurance, it might well be asked of you, “How can you say it is true, for you evidently do not believe it?” O my hearers, as though Christ spoke to you by me, so I ask you this question—How can you, as candid persons, how can you as honest men admit this Book to be true, when it tells you that your whole head is sick and your whole heart faint, when it warns you that, dying as you now are, without a work of grace in you, you are lost to all eternity—how can you, I say, admit these things to be true, and yet prove by your apathy and carelessness that you do not believe them? May God press that enquiry home upon you!

Our Lord Jesus Christ came not only to reveal your need, but also to *set forth his claims*. The claims of Jesus of Nazareth are briefly stated by Peter, “Repent and be converted every one of you, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

He demands *repentance*; that is, a change of mind—the changing of your mind with reference to sin, caring no more for its pleasures, despising it and turning away from it; a change of mind with regard to holiness; seeking your happiness in it; a change of mind with regard to Christ himself, so that you shall no longer look upon him as without form or comeliness, but as a most precious Saviour, such as you need. Sinner, Christ demands of thee that thou shouldst take thine ornaments of self-righteousness from thee, and wrap thyself in the sackcloth of humiliation, and cast the ashes of penitence upon thy head, and cry, “Unclean! unclean! unclean!” Moreover, he requires *faith* of thee. “Repent ye and believe the gospel.” “This is the commandment that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom God hath sent.” The Jews said, “What shall we do that we may do the work of God?” Christ said, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.” He demands that faith which will accept him to be the sole cleanser from sin, and to be sole possessor, as he is sole redeemer, of the heart. Friend, you believe that no less a person than the Son of God thus bids you look unto him and be saved; you believe that the Son of God was nailed to the cross, and that out of love to you he demands that you forsake the sin which will destroy you, and believe in his blood which will cleanse you. Does Jesus thus speak? Are these demands the hard inventions of a tyrannical priesthood, or the mild and tender claims of love. Is it a mere man who bids you believe and live, or is it the Redeemer, “in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,” who commands you to believe and be baptized? If the claim to faith be true and just, why do you not accede to it? Wherefore harden ye your hearts? Wherefore stand ye out against incarnate love, pleading and persuading you? Oh, strange inconsistency, to know the Saviour’s truth, but not to believe him! Oh, shameful dishonesty, to grant the validity of his claim, but to be careless concerning the discharge thereof! To grant the justness of the requirement, and refuse to accede to it with your hearts, is to write yourselves down as deceitful and unrighteous. “If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?”

Further, *Christ came to provide the remedy for your soul*. Christ did not preach an impossible gospel—one out of the reach of sinners—he provided a real, ready, and available salvation. No, beloved, he came to preach glad tidings of great joy to men, a gospel worthy of all acceptance, in which even the vilest have a share, and this is it—that God willeth not the death of the sinner, but had rather that he should turn unto him and live; that, in order that mercy and justice might both meet, Christ, God’s own dear Son, was sacrificed on Calvary for the ungodly, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, and that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This is the gospel—a gospel to be preached to every creature, from the cold snows of Lapland to the palmy plains of the

torrid zone—a gospel to be published among every people wherever sinners are found—that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief, and that an act of faith in him saves the soul; a simple trusting in him, and the soul is delivered from all sin. My friends, you profess that this is true. O my hearers, very few among you doubt that this gospel is divine; the most of you who sit in these seats Sunday after Sunday, never raise any difficulties of that sort. You say, “Our minister has preached the gospel to us,” but oh, if this be true, why do you not believe it? If there be a remedy, a sure one, a God-appointed one, why do you not receive it? O sirs, this damnable inconsistency of yours will ruin your soul irretrievably, unless you repent of it. Deny it altogether, and I can understand your position though I weep over it; but say that it is true and yet reject it, and your folly is so glaring that it shall be a theme for laughter in the pit, when fiends shall be your companions and the eternal burnings your perpetual abode. How can it be? You are hanging over the jaws of hell, the flames flash into your face, a strong hand that can save you is stretched out, you refuse its grasp, and will refuse it still unless it lay hold on you by force. Perishing! The very medicine offered you which will cure you, and you will not receive it although you know its healing virtue! You do not believe it; there is infidelity in your heart, and ere you condemn open unbelievers, search your own hearts, for what are you better than they? May not your sins be less excusable and your state less hopeful than theirs?

Dear friends; our blessed Lord came *also to reveal the freeness of his grace*. Oh! what freeness was there in the Gospel when Christ preached it! No cold theology froze his lips; words did not hang like icicles there, but out of his mouth there flowed rivers of living water. What can be freer than this—“Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest?” Or what more wide than this—“If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink?” Or what more gracious than this, by the lip of his servant John—“Whosoever will let him come and take of the water of life freely?” Oh! I need not repeat these invitations; I shall rather remind you that you admit them to be true, hearty, divine invitations; why then, oh! why do you not believe them? You say, “Yes, it is freely presented; I have not a doubt about that.” Then wherefore standest thou shivering, and refusing to lay hold on eternal life? Soul, if this gospel were hedged with thorns or guarded with bayonets I would recommend thee to fling thyself upon their very points to reach it, but when the door is opened, and when Christ himself, dressed in bleeding love, woos thee to come, how shall I make an excuse for thee when thou canst say it is true, and yet thou dost not believe it. May God give thee wisdom, and teach thy reason right reason.

Furthermore, Jesus Christ in his preaching gave a very clear description of *the danger of unregenerate souls*. Hear how he puts it— “Where their

worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.” Mark how he speaks of the unprofitable servant—“Cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Observe how he describes the goats on the left hand, these are the thundering accents of the Judge of all—“Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” No preacher was ever so awfully explicit upon future punishment as Jesus of Nazareth. No human ministry ever gave such graphic and harrowing descriptions of hell as Christ has given. You say you believe the words of Jesus; you do not suspect a loving Saviour of exaggeration. Oh, my hearers, I ask you now in the name of God, if it be true, why do ye not believe it? You do not believe it; that is clear enough. Would you sit quietly in your seat this morning, young man, if you really believed that within one instant you may be in hell? Old man, old in years and old in sin, would you be as quiet in your soul today as you are if you knew and believed that there is but a step between you and the flames? Oh! all of you who can make merry while yet you have no hope in Jesus, could it be so with you if you really believed in the wrath of God, which abideth on you? So near the lake of fire and yet so full of levity! Death and damnation at your doors, and yet jesting and unconcerned! My soul is full of horror at your madness. My heart is ready to burst with anguish at the ruin which will so soon overtake you. What shall I say unto you? How shall I reason with you?—Surely if the thunders of an angry God do not arouse you, you will sleep yourselves into the lowest *hell*.

Brethren, let me add, *Christ has brought to light the hope of immortality, eternal life, and heaven*. What glowing pictures does the Word of God give of the state of the blessed in the land of the hereafter! What music streams from angels’ harps! What joy irradiates every celestial brow! What, hallowed blessedness floats along the river of the water of life in the midst of every street of the new Jerusalem! You admire the poetry of the Book of God, and marvel at its matchless painting of scenes beyond the flood; you believe that Jesus has revealed that which eye had not seen and ear had not heard; then why do you not believe it? If you believed it you would seek after it, you would strive to enter in at the strait gate; you would labour for the meat which perisheth not; the Spirit of God would lead you to prize the world to come; you would tread this present fleeting world beneath your feet, and be looking for and hasting unto the glories which are yet to be revealed in those who love the Lord. The sum of all this is the weighty enquiry of our Lord Jesus. “If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?” If Christ be no liar, if his word be no fiction, how can you remain as you now are, ungodly, unthinking, unconverted men and women? May the Holy Ghost constrain you to give heed to this searching question.

II. You OFFER SOME EXCUSE, SOME DEFENCE OF YOUR INCONSISTENCY,

BUT I ANSWER THAT YOUR APOLOGIES DO NOT MEET THE CASE.

I hear one say, "Sir, I do not feel myself entitled to come to Christ, the revelation of God is true, *but I do not believe in Christ because I do not feel my need as I should.*" I answer that this is no excuse; this is rather a proof of guilt. You do not believe that which Christ has told you concerning yourself. The Word of God informs you in many places that your case is an awful and a lamentable one; if you believed this you would never have to complain that you did not feel it. In matters relating to the body, we feel first and then believe; my hand smarts, and therefore I believe that it has been wounded. But in things relating to the soul, you believe first and feel afterwards. A woman cannot feel grief on account of the loss of her child till she believes she has lost it; a young man cannot feel joy at the inheritance of a large estate till he believes he has inherited it; but it is impossible for a loving mother to believe that her child is lost and not to weep, or for an ambitious young man to believe himself suddenly made rich and not to rejoice. Now, if you really believed your heart to be as deceitful as the Bible says it is, if you really believed sin to be as dreadful a thing as God regards it to be, you would feel repentance and conviction necessarily. Alas! it is only when the Spirit of God gives you a real belief in these things that you do repent in earnest. The real root of your hardness of heart lies in your not believing what you admit to be true. You say the Bible is true, but you say what you do not mean. Oh! I would that this inconsistency would strike you! You say it is true, but you cannot believe it, or you would be at once aroused to anxious conviction.

But you make a second apology. "*But, sir, I do not see how faith can save me.*" Here, again, there is no excuse, because the basis of your doubt, after all, is this: you do not believe what Scripture reveals. If you speak honestly you really mean to say, "The testimony of the Bible concerning salvation through faith is not true." Let me affectionately remove this stumbling-block, if it be ignorance and not wilful unbelief. You say you cannot see how faith can save you. Do you not know that faith in itself does not save? Faith saves by reason of that which it lays hold of. Christ stood in the room, place, and stead of every man living that ever did or will believe on him; he took the sins of those persons, and was punished for them; and those who trust him receive the effect of what he suffered. To say that faith could save would be an unreasonable thing; but that the object of faith, the Divine suffering Saviour can save, is no unreasonable doctrine. Now, if you do really believe what Scripture tells you concerning this, you cannot again raise this objection, that you do not see how faith can save. But you say you prefer works. But then Scripture tells you, times without number, that by the works of the law there shall no flesh living be justified; and it adds, that all your righteousnesses are but as filthy rags. So that all hope in that quar-

ter is destroyed. You admit that Scripture is true, and yet you want to be saved by your own works! This is to say that black is white; this is to make God a liar, and yet to make your bow and compliment him as the God of truth at the same time. Sinner, if thou believest the Bible it is as clear as noon-day that he that believeth on him is not condemned, and that he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God.

Perhaps you meet me by saying, *that you have long thought that the good things promised in the Gospel, simply and only to faith, are too good to be true*; that, conscious of being a lost sinner and a very wretched offender, you have not the presumption to believe that if you were to trust Christ this very morning, all your sins would be forgiven. Well, friend, come now, you talk like a humble man, but it is very likely you are very proud; let me get a-hold of you by the button. What does all this mean, my dear friend, but just this—that you think very meanly of *God*. I do not believe you think so meanly of *yourself* as you think you do. You think meanly of *God*; you think that he has but little mercy, at least not so much mercy as you need, and so you limit the Holy One of Israel. But I shall meet you on the ground of my text. You allow that this Book is true; very well; has not the Lord declared, both by instances and by express words of promise, that though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool, and though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow? However aggravated guilt may be, it can damn no man that believes in Christ. I pray you read the gospel aright. You cannot then make the greatness of its grace a ground of doubt. The thing is great, but it is not too great for God. As high as the heavens are above the earth so high are his ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts.

But do I hear you answer *that you are not quite sure that the promise is made to you*. Sinner, I must not lose patience with you, but I would you would lose patience with yourself, for this is trifling. You say the Bible is true. Sir, if you say it is true, you know that the very object for which it was sent *to you* was, that it might save *you*. What is said in the twentieth chapter of the Gospel by John?—“These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing ye might have life through his name.” God did not send this book to you, I am sure, to play with you; he sent it that you might be saved. But how can you say the invitations do not include you? “Whosoever will.” Does that shut you out? The Gospel not sent to you? Why, does it not say, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel *to every creature*?” Are you not a creature? Can you escape there? Soul, you know that, inasmuch as the Gospel is to be preached to every creature, and inasmuch as you are condemned already for not believing on the Son of God, therefore the Gospel must have been sent to *you*. You say you do not

feel your need, and you are not prepared. No preparation was ever asked. "This he gives you—'tis his Spirit's rising beam." You say you do not feel this, and you do not feel that; he never asked you to feel anything as a preparation for him. All this is the gift of his grace. You know we preach here every Sabbath-day to you a gospel which meets you as you are, not as quickened sinners, but as sinners, not as convinced sinners, but as sinners, naked, poor, and helpless. You know we speak the truth; wherefore do you not believe us when we tell you that to you, even to you is the word of this Gospel sent, for him that cometh to Christ he will in no wise cast out?

Ah! *you will think of this, but the time has not yet come.* I answer, again, that you do not believe the Bible to be true. If you believed, as the Bible describes, that life is short, and death is certain, and eternity is near, and there is a dreadful hell into which you will be plunged, and a bright and glorious heaven which you will lose, you would cry out, "Lord, save or I perish." As when the hand of the angel hastened Lot from the burning city, so would a full conviction of these things hasten you to the cross for shelter.

Ah! I repeat what I commenced with, I would care but little for open infidelity if this secret unbelief could be killed. You know why men are infidels openly. It is because they want to find an excuse for their inward infidelity. When men with some few grains of honesty, and a little pride mingled with it, begin to reason with themselves, they argue thus—"Now I love my sins too well to give them up; the Bible is true, but it demands of me repentance, faith, and other things not at all palatable. If I say the old Book is true, and do not heed it, I shall be inconsistent; I will at least get one virtue; I will be consistent; I will deny the authority of the Scriptures, and then, though conscience may prick me, yet before men I shall earn a reputation for daring consistency, my actions and my words agreeing." Well, sir, I like you not for this, but I must say this, that we have seen some of the greatest unbelievers converted to God in this house of prayer, while others remain unblest. We have seen many baptized into Christ who once did not believe his Deity, and who doubted the inspiration of Scripture; but all the while there are some of you who say the Word is true, but do not believe it, and I am almost ready to give you up. You are like some persons we visit on their sick beds. They say, "Yes, sir," "Yes, sir," to all we say, and they die, and are damned with "Yes, sir," on their tongue, but with "No, sir" in their heart! This is what you are doing. You say, "Yes, sir," "Yes, sir," "Yes, sir," but you do not repent, you do not believe; you *live*, and I fear some of you will *die*, without God.

III. Again, I would aim at your consciences from another quarter.

Friend, friend, be not thou offended with me while I tell thee now a piece of solemn truth. In the forty-fifth verse Jesus gives the reason why

some did not believe on him. It is a most unreasonable reason. It is this—“Because I tell you the truth ye believe me not.” Why, that should be the very reason why they should believe him. Now, I fear some of you do not believe the truth, *simply because it is the truth*. Some of you, my hearers, hate the truth. You say, “That is too severe; it is not true.” I would not be untrue even with a good design, for I do not think we should tell a lie even to save a soul. But it is true, solemnly true. Now I will tell one part of the truth as it is taught in Scripture—“Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.” Well now, that teaches that if you continue to sow sin you will have to reap the result of it, and that, unless through divine grace you are led to give up your right-eye sins, and to cut off your right-arm lusts, you will perish. Now this is a truth which you hate. That man who comes here on Sabbath-days, and often has pangs of conscience, but is a drunkard still, a secret drunkard still—*he* hates this truth. Where shall I find that other man who listens to the Word, ay, and often with tears, but he has his midnight crime when he thinks no man sees him, and even now, when I press hardly upon his vice, he likes it not. You that are here this morning listening to me, and this afternoon will be busy with your shops on God’s own day, and you, too, that so trade in business that you no more dare to show your books than you dare to look at the flames of hell—you hate the truth. I am sure you do. You abhor the doctrine that all this must be given up; you prove you do not like it, because you do not practise it. Some of you will even say—“Ah! the preacher is puritanical; he is too severe; he cuts too close.” No; here it is, you believe it not *because it is the truth*.

The pharisees, my friends, hated God’s truth *deliberately*. I think I hear one of you say, “I do not do that; I may hate the truth in the sense you have explained, in rejecting it and going on in my sins, but I do not do it deliberately.” Ah, but how long does it take to make an action deliberate? I have preached to some of you nine years now—nine years!—and you are still what you were! Is not that deliberate? Some of you have heard the gospel forty years, and you are unregenerate still, and hate the truth, and prove you do by living in sin! Is not that deliberate? And you, young man, the other Sabbath-day you were so impressed that you felt as if you *must* yield to God that very day; you stood on those steps under those pillars, and you said to your soul—“To be or not to be, that is the question.” A companion met you, and asked you—asked you before the impression had died away, to go with him to the haunt of sin, and you stood and poised it in the balance thus—which shall it be? and you did deliberately choose your own damnation when you chose sin. Take care, lest God shall say, “Thou hast chosen thine own delusions, and I will give thee up unto them, and that for ever.” I lay this charge with all the boldness of a Nathan at the door of some of you, that you have chosen deliberately to despise the truth of God.

But the pharisees, you will tell me, *scoffed at it*. Yes, and I lay that, too, at the door of some of you. There may be here the regular scoffer, who mocks at everything sacred; with him I have little to do this morning; he shall measure out his iniquities, and receive vengeance for them. But you who sit here Sabbath after Sabbath, and hear appeals which you reject; have Christ preached to you, and will not look at him; have his sufferings set forth as we try to paint him, dipping the pencil in his own blood, and yet he is nothing to you—do you not despise him? I do not know any contempt that is more sorrowful to the man that is smitten by it than the contempt of utter silence. Do we not say, “We pass you by in silent contempt?” Thus you treat my Lord! We have another expression; we say of some people that they are beneath our contempt, and some of you have not enough esteem for my Master to treat him with open contempt. You think religion such a trifle, that it is not worth your sneering at it; you so despise it, that you think it is not worth your despising. Oh! is it so? is it so? Then are ye of your father the devil, and his works you do! May God bring you out of that black family, and translate you into the kingdom of his own dear Son.

IV. Having spoken feebly, but yet desiring the Master to make what I have said mighty, I close by asking these questions.

If these things be true, why do you not believe them? Is there anything to hinder you? Is the doctrine unreasonable? You say the Bible is true. Now the Bible contains many things which are harder to believe than that Jesus Christ died for the ungodly. If you can believe that Jonah was in the whale’s belly; if you can believe all the marvellous miracles of Scripture, you cannot say that the doctrine of the cross is unreasonable. To believe that Christ stood as a substitute, and that through his substitution God can pardon sin, is no tax upon faith. Nor can you tell me that the precept is intolerable. “His yoke is easy, and his burden is light.” It is your sin that is intolerable, not the precept; he only bids you give up that which will ruin you; he only asks you to do that which will make you happy.

But there is one answer you will give. You will tell me you *cannot believe*. *How do you know you cannot?* “Well,” says one, “I cannot believe without the Spirit of God.” That is true, but are you sure the Spirit of God is not with you? Let me ask you whether you can now trust Jesus Christ. This is what I am about to experiment upon. Jesus Christ, who took the sin of men, declares that whosoever will trust him to save them shall be saved. Now Christ is God; he is a mighty Saviour; he has suffered as man, therefore he has all that is necessary for the office; do you think you can now trust Christ to save you? I think I hear one say, “Yes, I could trust such a Saviour as that.” Then you can do it, you see, and inasmuch as you can do it the Spirit of God is with you. Do not expect to see the Spirit of God! He is a great mystery; you cannot know his operations except by their effects.

Faith is the effect of his secret operation; if you can now believe in Christ, then doubtless the Spirit of God is with you, and I doubt not the Spirit of God is often with you when you know it not. If you can now believe, he is with you. Do I hear one say, “Well, I have often thought I could trust Christ, but I thought if *I* could do it then it was not the work of the Spirit of God, but the work of the creature.” Nay, verily, beloved, there is no such thing as a simple trust in Christ that comes of the creature; it is always the work of the Spirit of God, and if you can trust in Christ you need not question about the Spirit; the Spirit of God must be in you, or else your trust in Christ would never have been there. Only if now the thing seemeth right and reasonable to thee, cast thyself on Jesus and thou art saved.

I might multiply words, but I might not, perhaps, increase the force of the text, and therefore let me entreat you who stand to the Scriptures as being true and yet deny their veracity by remaining unregenerate—let me conjure you to decide one way or the other. Do be consistent. “How long halt ye between two opinions?” Say the Book is false, and then we shall know what you are and where you stand, and you yourselves will, probably, begin to be alarmed at your position. Say the Book is false, and then you will be openly numbered with the disciples and slaves of hell, and it may be your conscience will then begin to work. But, oh! if you are not prepared to take that side, if Baal be not god and you will not serve him, then if God be God—and that is the only other conclusion—*serve him*. I bring you to that awful place where the two roads meet—the right, the left—to heaven, to hell—to righteousness, to sin—to God, to fiends! There stand you. I am glad to have made you stand there. If it is a thing that needs consideration, consider. Put your hand to your brow now, and turn this matter over, and I do trust that through the word which we have spoken to you the Spirit of God will work on your conscience and on your heart, and you will say, “For God; for Christ; for holiness; for everlasting life.” But mark you, I had sooner you would say, “For the devil; for sin; for hell;” than say nothing, for if you say nothing you will go on and be as careless and as indifferent as ever; but if you make this last choice deliberately, it may be that then God will alarm your conscience and stir your soul, so that you may see your danger and may fly to Jesus.

May he bless you now, and guide your heart into the way of truth, and to his name be glory for ever. Amen.