

The New Park Street Pulpit.

PAUL'S SERMON BEFORE FELIX.

A Sermon

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“And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” Acts xxiv. 26.

THE power of the gospel appears in marvellous grandeur when we see its hold upon hearts devoted to it, when subjected to trouble, persecution, and sorrow. How mighty must that gospel be, which, when it gained an entrance into the heart of Paul, could never be driven out of it! For it he suffered the loss of all things, and as for them, he counted them but dung, that he might win Christ. To spread the truth, he encountered hardships, shipwrecks, perils on the land, and perils by sea; but none of these things moved him, neither did he count his life dear unto him, that he might win Christ and be found in him. Persecution followed persecution, of the Jews was he beaten with rods; he was dragged from one tribunal to another; scarce in any city did he find anything but bonds and imprisonment awaiting him. Attacked in his own country—he is accused at Jerusalem, and arraigned at Cesarea; he is taken from one tribunal to another to be tried for his life. But mark how he always maintains the prominent passion of his soul. Put him where you may, he seems to be like John Bunyan, who says, If you let me out of prison today, I will preach the gospel again tomorrow, by the grace of God.” Nay, more than that, he preached it in prison, before his judges he proclaimed it. Standing up before the Sanhedrim, he cries, “As touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question.” When brought to stand before Agrippa, he tells out his conversion, and so sweetly speaks of the grace of God, that the king himself cries, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian;” and here in our text, when he stands before the Roman Procurator, to be tried for life or death, instead of entering into a defence of himself, he reasons “of righteousness, continence, and judgment to come,” until his judge trembles, and he that sits upon the throne takes the prisoner’s place, while the prisoner judges him, in anticipation of that time when the saints shall judge the angels, as assessors

with Christ Jesus. Why, once let a man believe the gospel, and determine to spread it, and it makes him a grand man. If he be a man destitute of power, intellect, and talent, it makes him grandly earnest in his arduous desire to serve Christ, in the little measure in which he can do it; but if he be a gifted man, it sets his whole soul on fire, brings out all his powers, develops everything that lies hidden, digs up every talent that had been buried in its napkin, and spreads out all the gold and silver of man's intellectual wealth, displaying it all to the honour of that Christ who has bought it all with his blood.

We might stay a little while and dilate on this thought, and show you how, in all ages, this has been the truth, that the power of the gospel has been eminently proved in its influence over men's hearts, proving the truth of that utterance of Paul, when he said, that neither tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, shall separate them from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ their lord. But instead of so doing, I invite you to contemplate the text more closely. We have before us a picture containing three characters: Felix and Drusilla, sitting side by side upon the judgment seat; Paul, the prisoner, brought in bound in chains, to explain to Drusilla and Felix the doctrines of the Christian religion, in order that he might either be acquitted or condemned to die. You have a judge extremely willing to put the prisoner to death, because he desired to please the Jews; you have, on the other hand, a prisoner unabashed, who comes before the judge, and without any debate, begins to unfold the gospel, selecting a certain part of it, described in our text as reasoning concerning "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." The judge trembles, dismisses the prisoner in haste, and promises to attend to him at a convenient season.

Note, first then, *the appropriate sermon*; note, secondly, *the affected audience*—for the audience was certainly moved—"Felix trembled!" Note, then, thirdly, the *lamentable disappointment*. Instead of attending to the message, "Go thy way" was all that Paul had.

I. First, then, we have an APPROPRIATE SERMON. Just hear for a moment or two the history of Felix. Felix was originally a slave; he was freed by Claudius, and became one of the infamous favourites of the emperor. Of course in that capacity he pandered to his master's vices, and was at all times prepared to indulge the Emperor in every lustful wish of his abominable heart. Through this he became promoted, and ran through the stages of Roman preferment, until he obtained the Governorship of Judea. Whilst he was Governor there, he committed every act of extortion which it was possible for him to commit, and went so far at last, that the Emperor Nero was obliged to recall him, and he would have been severely punished for his crimes, had it not been for the influence of his brother Pallas, another freed man, with the Emperor, through whom he obtained a release, after a sharp rebuke. The Roman historian, Tacitus, says, "He exercised, in Judea, the imperial functions

with a mercenary soul.” You may easily see, then, how appropriate was the discourse, when the apostle Paul reasoned concerning righteousness. Felix had been an unjust extortioner, and the apostle purposely selected righteousness to be a topic of his discourse. By the side of Felix sat Drusilla; in the verse preceding our text she is called his wife. It is said she was a Jewess. This Drusilla, was a daughter of Herod Agrippa, the great—a woman noted in that age for her superlative charms, and for her unbridled voluptuousness. She had been once affianced to Antiochus, who, upon the death of Herod refused to marry her. She was afterwards married to Azizus, the king of the Amesenes, who, although a heathen, was so fond of her that he submitted to the most rigorous rites of the Jewish religion in order to obtain her in marriage. His love was but ill-requited, for in a little time she deserted him at the instigation of Felix, and was, at the time of Paul’s address, living as the wife of the lascivious Felix. We may easily understand then, why the apostle Paul, fixing his stern eye on Drusilla, reasoned concerning continence, and publicly rebuked both Felix and Drusilla for the shameless lust in which they were publicly living. And then you may imagine since there was now a court sitting, and Felix himself was the judge, and Paul the prisoner, how strikingly appropriate was the last theme—“judgment to come.”

I think, my brethren, it would not be very hard for us to imagine how well the apostle handled this subject. I can conceive that Felix expected to have a grand disquisition upon some recondite themes of the gospel. Possibly he expected that the apostle Paul would reason concerning the resurrection of the dead. He thought perhaps that predestination, election, and free will would be the topics of the apostle’s discourse. “Surely,” thought he, “he will tell me those deep and hidden matters in which the gospel of Jesus differs from Judaism.” Not so. In another place, on Mars’ Hill, the apostle would speak of resurrection; in another place he could speak of election, and declare that God was the potter, and man was but the clay. This was not the place for that; and this was not the time for such subjects; this was the time for preaching the plain precepts of the gospel, and for dealing sternly with a wicked man who sat in eminent power. Conceive then, the pointed manner of his opening discourse—How he would address Felix concerning righteousness. I can imagine how he would bring before the mind of Felix, the widow who had been defrauded of inheritance, the fatherless children who, cast from affluence, were led to beg their bread. I can suppose how he brought before the mind of that base man the many bribes that he had taken, when he sat upon his judgment-seat. He would recall to him the false decisions that he had given; he would remind him how the Jews as a nation had been oppressed—how by taxation they had been ground to the earth; he would bring before him one scene after another, where avarice had overridden equity, boldly and sternly depicting the exact character of the man; and then at the end declaring

that such men could have no inheritance in the kingdom of God—bidding him repent of this his wickedness, that his sins might be forgiven him. Then gently and delicately turning to the other subject, I can imagine how he would fix his eyes upon Drusilla, and remind her that she had lost everything for which a woman ought to live, and solemnly bring the most powerful motives to bear upon her lascivious heart; and then turning to Felix, would remind him that adulterers, fornicators, and unclean persons, have no inheritance in the kingdom of God—reminding him how the vices of a ruler would tend to pollute a nation, and how the iniquities of the nation of the Jews, must in a great measure be laid to his charge. I can conceive how for a moment Felix would bite his lips. Paul gave him no time for anger and passion; for in a moment, in a fury of impassioned eloquence he introduced the “judgment to come.” He made Felix think he saw the great white throne, the books opened, and himself arraigned before his judge: he made him hear the voices of the trumpet—the “Come ye blessed”—the “Depart ye cursed.” He petrified him, nailed him to his seat, opened his ears, and made them listen, while with stern and impassioned earnestness, though his hands were bound with chains, he used the liberty of the gospel in upbraiding him. Well do I conceive that then Felix began to tremble. He that had been base, and mean, and perfidious, trembled like a coward slave, as he really was; and though sitting on a throne he pictured himself already damned. What he next would have done we cannot tell, if the devil had not then suggested to him that it was time to rise; for in hot haste he and Drusilla left the throne. “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”

Hear me, then, brethren! What the apostle Paul did, every minister ought to do. He selected a topic appropriate to his audience. It is ours ever to do the same. But are there not to be found many ministers who, if they addressed kings and princes, would pour out before them the vilest adulation and flattery that ever came from mortal lips? Are there not many who, when they are aware that great and mighty ones are listening to them, trim their doctrine, cut the edges of their speech, and endeavour in some way or other to make themselves pleasing to their audience? Can there not be found many ministers who, if addressing an Antinomian audience, would confine themselves strictly to predestination and reprobation? and ministers who, if they addressed an audience of philosophers, would just talk about morality, but never mention such words as the covenant of grace and salvation by blood? Are there not some to be found, who think the highest object of the minister is to attract the multitude and then to please them? O my God! how solemnly ought each of us to bewail our sin, if we feel that we have been guilty in this matter. What is it to have pleased men? Is there aught in it that can make our head lie easy on the pillow of our death? Is there aught in it that can give us boldness in the day of judgment, or cause us happiness when we face thy

tribunal, O Judge of quick and dead? No, my brethren, we must always take our texts so that we may bear upon our hearers with all our might. I hope I may never preach *before* a congregation—I desire always to preach *to* you; nor do I wish to exhibit powers of eloquence, nor would I even pretend to exhibit any depth of learning. I would simply say, “Hear me, my fellow men, for God doth send me unto you. There are some things that concern you; I will tell you of them. You are dying; many of you when you die must perish for ever; it is not for me to be amusing you with some deep things that may instruct your intellect, but do not enter your hearts; it is for me to fit the arrow to the string and send it home—to unsheathe the sword—be the scabbard never so glittering, to cast it aside, and let the majesty of naked truth smite at your hearts; for in the day of judgment, aught beside personal home-speaking will be consumed as wood, and hay, and stubble; but these shall abide, like the gold and silver and precious stones that cannot be consumed.”

But some men will say, “Sir, ministers ought not to be personal.” Ministers ought to be personal, and they will never be true to their Master till they are. I admire John Knox for going, Bible in hand, to Queen Mary, and sternly upbraiding her. I admit I do not exactly love the way in which he did it; but the thing itself I love. The woman had been a sinner, and he told her so flat to her face. But now we poor craven sons of nobodies have to stand and talk about generalities; we are afraid to point you out and tell you of your sins personally. But, blessed be God, from that fear I have been delivered long ago. There walketh not a man on the surface of this earth whom I dare not reprove. There are none of you, however connected with me by ties of profession or in any other respect, that I would blush to speak personally to, as to the things of the kingdom of God; and it is only by being bold, courageous, and sending home the truth, that we shall at last be free from the blood of our hearers. May God grant us the power of Paul, that we may reason on appropriate subjects, and not select generalities, when we ought to be pushing home truths to the consciences of our hearers. After all, the apostle Paul needs no eulogy. The best eulogy that could be passed on the apostle was the fact that “Felix trembled.” And that brings us to the second part of our subject.

II. “FELIX TREMBLED.” Yes, the poor prisoner, having nought wherewith to assist him in the delivery of the truth, but having everything to his disadvantage—the chain, the prison dress, the character of one that had stirred up sedition in a nation—this poor prisoner with believing hand, laid hold on the sword of truth, and with this he did divide in sunder the joints and marrow. He did beard the lion in his den. Even now I see him look the governor sternly in the face, attack him in his heart, drive him from his excuses, push the word home at the point of the bayonet of truth, drive him from every refuge of lies, and make him tremble! O marvellous power of a preached gospel! O mighty

truth that God is with the ministry, when the kings of the earth that take counsel together are yet dismayed by it. Who is he that doth not see here something more than human eloquence, when a prisoner becomes the judge and the prince upon the throne becomes the criminal? “Felix trembled.” Have I not some here who have experienced the same feelings as Felix? Some plain spoken minister has told you something that was rather too plain for you. At first you were angry; on second thoughts, and as the man moved on in his discourse, you became chagrined that you had given him the opportunity of thus exposing you, as you imagined. A better thought struck you, and you saw at once that the man could have no intention personally to insult you; and then your feelings changed. Thunderbolt after thunderbolt fell from his lips; he seemed a very Jupiter Tonans sitting upon his throne, casting lightnings from his lips. Ye began to tremble. “Verily here is a man that has told me all things that ever I did; is not this man sent from Christ?” Ah! and thus you have borne your witness to the truth of the gospel. Though you have not felt its power to your salvation, yet you have been an unwilling witness that the gospel has been true; for you have felt its power when it has made your knees knock together, and your eyes run down with tears.

But what is it that makes men tremble under the sound of the Gospel? Some say it is their conscience. Yes, and doubtless it is in some sense. The poet said, “Conscience makes cowards of us all;” and certainly, when the minister’s exposition is faithful and pertinent to our own case, conscience, if it be not thoroughly seared and dead, will make the blush mantle on our cheeks. But I take it that conscience of itself is so thoroughly corrupt, together with all the other powers of manhood, that it would never even make a man go so far as trembling, if there were not something at work upon the conscience, besides its being left to its own natural force. My brethren, I believe that what some people call natural conviction is, after all, the work of the Spirit. Some very profound divines are so fond of the doctrine that the Holy Spirit always works efficaciously, that they think that the Spirit never can work a transitory emotion in a man’s soul: they impute such things to conscience. And if they see a man like Felix trembling, they say ’tis all natural conscience! Now, do they not see that they are in this touching on another doctrine equally dear to them—the doctrine of total depravity?—for if men be totally depraved by nature, then, as trembling is a good thing, they are not capable even of that without some influence of the Holy Spirit. The fact is, my hearer, the Holy Spirit works in two ways. In some men’s hearts he works with restraining Grace only, and the restraining Grace, though it will not save them, is enough to keep them from breaking out into the open and corrupt vices in which some men indulge who are totally left by the restraints of the Spirit. Now, there was in Felix some little portion of this re-

restraining Grace; and when the Apostle laid the Gospel open to him, this restraining Grace quickened the conscience, and compelled Felix to tremble. Mark you, this Grace man may resist and does resist; for albeit that the Holy Spirit is Omnipotent and never can be resisted when he works Omnipotently, yet as a strong man may sometimes not put out all his strength, but work with his finger, for instance, so that he may permit even a gnat or an ant to overcome him, even so the Holy Spirit sometimes works but temporarily and but for good and excellent purposes, which he always accomplishes; but he allows men to quench and resist his influences, so that salvation is not so much as approached thereby. God the Holy Spirit may work in men some good desires and feelings, and yet have no design of saving them. But mark, none of these feelings are things that accompany sure salvation, for if so, they would be continued. But he does not work Omnipotently to save, except in the persons of his own elect, whom he assuredly bringeth to himself. I believe, then, that the trembling of Felix is to be accounted for by the restraining grace of the Spirit quickening his conscience and making him tremble.

But what shall be said of some of you who never tremble? Thou hast come hither this morning with thy brazen face, and with thine impudent and arrogant heart. Thou hast been mouthing high heaven with thy blasphemies; and now thou standest all unmoved and unabashed in the house of God. Though a Baxter should rise from the dead, and with moving sighs and tears should preach the Gospel, you would laugh and scoff, though Boanerges with a tongue of thunder should come and preach to you, you would turn up your lip and find some fault with his oratory, and his words would never reach your heart. O ungodly generation! how hath God given you up, and how hath hell bewitched you? O race of evil doers! children that are corrupters! how are ye seared. My soul reads with prophetic glance the handwriting on the wall! You are condemned already; you are past hope, "trees plucked up by the roots, twice dead." For in the fact that ye tremble not, there is proof not only of your death but of your positive corruption. Ye shall die as ye are, without hope, without trust or refuge; for he that hath lost feeling hath lost hope; he that is past conscience God the Holy Spirit hath given up, and he will no more strive with him for ever.

III. And now, passing rapidly over this point of the trembling audience, we come in the next place to the LAMENTABLE DISAPPOINTMENT which Paul experienced, when he saw Felix rise in haste, and dismiss him from his presence. "It is wonderful," said a good man once to a minister, "it is wonderful to see a whole congregation moved to tears by the preaching of the Word." "Yes," said that minister, "it is wonderful; but I know a wonder ten times greater than that: the wonder is, that those people should so soon wipe away their tears and forget what they have heard." 'Tis wonderful that Felix trembled before Paul; 'tis more wonderful that Felix should say, "Go thy way."

“’Tis strange, ’tis passing strange,” that when the word touches the conscience, even then sin hath such power over men, that the truth can be repulsed and driven out of the heart. Felix, unhappy Felix! why is it that thou dost rise from thy judgment-seat? Is it that thou hast much business to do? Stop, Felix; let Paul speak to thee a minute longer. Thou hast business: but hast thou no business for thy soul? Stop, unhappy man! Art thou about again to be extortionate, again to make thy personal riches greater! Oh! stop: canst thou not spare another minute for thy poor soul? It is to live for ever; hast thou nought laid up for it—no hope in heaven, no blood of Christ, no pardon of sin, no sanctifying Spirit, no imputed righteousness? Ah! man, there will be a time when the business that seems so important to thee will prove to have been but a day-dream, a poor substitute for the solid realities thou hast forgotten. Dost thou reply, “Nay, the king has sent me an urgent commission; I must attend to Caesar.” Ah! Felix, but thou hast a greater monarch than Caesar; there is one who is Emperor of heaven and Lord of earth; canst thou spare no time to attend to his commands? Before his presence Caesar is but a worm. Man! wilt thou obey the one, and wilt thou despise the other? Ah! no; I know what thou durst not say. Felix, thou art turning aside again to indulge in thy lascivious pleasures. Go, and Drusilla with thee! But stop! Darest thou do that, with that last word ringing in thy ears, “Judgment to come.” What! wilt thou repeat that wanton dalliance that hath damned thee already, and wilt thou go again to imbrue thy hands in lust, and doubly damn thy spirit, after warnings heard and felt? O man! I could weep o’er thee, to think that as the bullock goeth to the slaughter, and as the lamb licks the knife, so dost thou go back to the sin that destroys thee, and to the lust that ruins thee. You, too, many of you, have often been impressed under the ministry. I know what you have said on the Monday morning, after deep searchings of heart on the Sabbath: you have said, “I must attend to business, I must see after the things of this world.” Ah! you will say that one day, when hell shall laugh you in the face for your folly. Think of men that are dying every day saying, “We must live,” and forgetting that they must die! O poor soul! to be caring about that house, thy body, and neglecting the tenant within! Another replies, “I must have a little more pleasure.” Pleasure dost thou call it? What! can there be pleasure in turning suicide to thine own soul—pleasure in defying thy Maker, trampling on his laws, despising his grace? If this be pleasure, ’tis a pleasure over which angels might weep. What, man, wilt thou count this pleasure when thou comest to die? Above all, wilt thou count this pleasure when thou dost stand before thy Maker’s bar at last? It is a strange delusion that causes thee to believe a lie. There is no pleasure in that which brings wrath upon thy soul, even to the uttermost.

But the usual reply is, “There is time enough yet.” The young man says, “Let me alone till I grow old.” And you old men, what do you say? I can

suppose that the youth looks forward to life, and expects to find a future time more convenient. But there are some of you o'er whose heads seventy winters have blown. When do you hope to find a convenient season? You are within a few days' march of the tomb: if you do but open your poor dull eyes, you may see death but a slight distance in advance. The young *may* die; the old *must!* To sleep in youth is to sleep in a siege; to sleep in old age is to slumber during the attack. What! man, wilt thou that art so near thy Maker's bar still put him off with a "Go thy way?" What! procrastinate now, when the knife is at thy throat—when the worm is at the heart of the tree, and the branches have begun to wither—when the grinders fail even now, because they are few, and they that look out of the windows are darkened? The sere [dry] and yellow leaf has come upon thee, and thou art still unready for thy doom! O man! of all fools, a fool with a grey head is the worst fool anywhere. With one foot in the grave, and another foot on a sandy foundation, how shall I depict you, but by saying to you, as God said to the rich man, "Thou fool! a few more nights and thy soul shall be required of thee;" and then where art thou?

But still the common cry is, "There is time enough." Even the worldly moralist said, "Time enough is always little enough." Time enough, man! What for? Surely you have spent time enough in sin: the time past may "suffice you to have wrought the will of the Gentiles." What! time enough to serve a God that laid down his life for you? No! eternity will not be too long to utter his praise, and therefore it cannot be too long to love him here, and serve him the few remaining days that you are to live on earth. But stop! I will reason with you. Come, Felix! thou shalt not go away this morning till my whole soul hath poured itself out over thee, not until I have cast mine arms round thee, and tried to stop thee this time from turning from the face of him that bids thee live. Thou sayest, "Another time." How knowest thou that thou wilt ever feel again as thou feelest now? This morning, perhaps, a voice is saying in thy heart, "Prepare to meet thy God." Tomorrow that voice will be hushed. The gaieties of the ball-room and the theatre will put out that voice that warns thee now, and perhaps thou wilt never hear it again. Men all have their warnings, and all men who perish have had a *last warning*. Perhaps this is your last warning. You are told today, that except ye repent, ye must perish, except ye put your trust in Christ, ye must be cast away for ever. Perhaps no honest lip will again warn you; perhaps no tearful eye will ever look on you affectionately again. God today is pulling the reins tight, to check you from your lust; perhaps, if today you spurn the bit, and rush madly on, he will throw the reins upon your back, saying, "Let him alone;" and then it is a dark stepple-chase between earth and hell, and you will run it in mad confusion, never thinking of a hell till you find yourself past warning, past repentance, past faith, past hope.

But again: how knowest thou, if thou shouldst ever have these feelings again, God will accept thee then? “Today,” he says, “today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” This hour his love weepeth over you, and his bowels yearn for you. Today he says, “Come, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool; and though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow.” Do you today turn a deaf ear to him? Do you today forego his invitation and despise his warning? Take heed! You may one day need what now you despise, and you may then cry to him, but he will not hear you; you may then pray to him, but he will shut out your prayer, and his only answer will be, “*I called!*” ‘Remember the Surrey Music Hall that morning!’ “*I called, and you refused.* You stood against that pillar under the gallery; *I called and you refused! I stretched out my hands,* as if I would bring you to my bosom, *and no man regarded me.* You were there in the gallery, you listened, but it was as though you heard not; therefore”—and oh! the dreadful conclusion! “*I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh.*” Stay! those are not my words; they are God’s words. Turn ye to the book of Proverbs, and find them there. It were a harsh thing for me to say of God; but God says it of himself, and God is true, though every man be a liar; and if he be true, how know ye that he may not despise your prayer one day, shut out your cry, and banish you for ever?

But again, how do you know that you shall live to be warned again? Said a minister once, when I gently hinted to him that he had not preached the gospel that morning, “No, I did not mean to preach to sinners in the morning; but I will preach to them in the evening.” “Ah!” said I, “but what if some of your congregation of the morning should be in hell before the evening.” So may I say to you. You have promised to go to a friend’s house today, you think you cannot break that promise; you wish you could. You wish you could go home and fall on your knees and pray; but no, you cannot, because your promise binds you. You will have a convenient season one of these days! And so God Almighty is to wait man’s convenience! How do you know you will live till that convenience comes? A little too much heat or too much cold within the brain—a little too fast flowing of the blood, or a little too slow circulation thereof—some little turning of the fluids of the body in a wrong direction, and you are dead!

“Dangers stand thick through all the ground,
To bear you to the tomb,
And fierce diseases wait around,
To hurry mortals home.”

Oh! why will you then dare to procrastinate, and say, “Time enough yet?”

Will your soul ever be saved by your saying “Time enough yet”? Archbishop Tillotson well says, “A man might say I resolve to eat, but the resolve to eat would never feed his body. A man might say, I am resolved to drink, but the resolve to drink would never slake his thirst.” And you may say, “I am resolved by-and-bye to seek God;” but your resolve will not save you. It is not the forgetful hearer but the doer of the word that shall be blessed therein. Oh that ye might now say—Today, my God, today I confess my sin; today I ask thee to manifest thy grace; today receive my guilty soul, and show me a Saviour’s blood; today I renounce my follies, my vices, and my sins, constrained by sovereign Grace; today I cast away my good works as my ground of trust; today I cry,

“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling!”

Oh! happy minister who shall have such an audience!—happier than Paul, if he should know that his congregation had said this! Come O Holy Spirit, and draw unwilling hearts and make them bow before the sceptre of sovereign grace.

Preaching, you see, takes away my voice. Ah! it is not that. It is not the preaching, but the sighing over your souls that is the hard work. I could preach for ever. I could stand here day and night to tell my Master’s love, and warn poor souls; but ’tis the after-thought that will follow me when I descend these pulpit steps, that many of you, my hearers, will neglect this warning. You will go; you will walk into the street; you will joke; you will laugh. My master says, “Son of man, hast thou heard what the children of Israel say concerning thee? Behold, thou art as one that prayeth a tune upon an instrument; they make merry with thee, and they go their ways.” Yes, but that were little. To be laughed at is no great hardship to me. I can delight in scoffs and jeers; caricatures, lampoons, and slanders, are my glory; of these things I boast, yea, in these I will rejoice. But that you should turn from your own mercy, this is my sorrow. Spit on me, but oh! repent! Laugh at me: but oh! believe in my Master! Make my body as the dirt of the streets, if ye will: but damn not your own souls! Oh! do not despise your own mercies. Put not away from you the gospel of Christ. There are many other ways of playing fool beside that. Carry coals in your bosom; knock your head against a wall: but do not damn your souls for the mere sake of being a fool, for fools to laugh at. Oh! be in earnest upon an earnest subject. If there be no hereafter, live as you like; if there be no heaven, if there be no hell, laugh at me! But if these things be true, and you believe them, I charge you, as I shall face you at the judgment bar of the Lord Jesus in the day of judgment—I charge you, by your own immortal welfare, lay these things to heart. Prepare to meet your

God, O sons of Israel! And the Lord help you in this thing; for Jesus' sake.
Amen.