

MESSAGES TO THE MULTITUDE

BEING

TEN REPRESENTATIVE SERMONS SELECTED AT
MENTONE, AND TWO UNPUBLISHED
ADDRESSES DELIVERED ON
MEMORABLE OCCASIONS

BY

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

*“Take my life, and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee ”*

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

JUST twelve months ago, Mr. Spurgeon kindly consented to contribute a group of sermons to the present series, but almost immediately afterwards he was seized with critical illness, and it seemed in the early autumn as if he never would be able to carry out his purpose. At the request of the publishers, his brother and colleague, the Rev. J. A. Spurgeon, undertook to make the selection, but towards the end of the year Mr. Spurgeon recovered sufficiently, amid the sunshine of Mentone, to feel a revived interest in the task. He accordingly took the matter once more into his own hands, and in December last selected the majority of these sermons as typical of his pulpit teaching during the entire period of his ministry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. He showed keen interest in the preparation of the volume for the press, and was busily engaged in the revision of the printed slips, when the sudden return of his illness in an aggravated form compelled him to lay down finally his busy pen. In a letter to the publishers, dated January 12, 1892, he said, "Call the volume 'Messages to the Multitude,'" and he added, "I will write three or four pages of preface." That letter was hardly despatched, when his illness assumed an alarming character, and it is needless to add that the words of greeting which the great preacher had intended to address through these pages to his absent friends remain unwritten. The two concluding addresses were both delivered on special occasions, and neither of them have hitherto been published; they were selected from Mr. Spurgeon's papers preserved in the library at Westwood. The publishers desire to thank the Rev. J. A. Spurgeon for writing a preface to the book, and they are not less indebted to the Rev. J. W. Harrald—Mr. Spurgeon's private secretary and companion at Mentone—for the painstaking and loving care with which he has seen the volume through the press.

PREFACE.

THIS volume has passed—as to the chief part of it—under the author's own revision. He took much interest in it during the closing weeks of his life, and it is amongst the last of his literary productions. Other hands have put some final touches, but it may be accepted as substantially his own, alike as to authorship and as to the choice of the sermons to represent him amongst the preachers of his age. It is a sad task to compose an introduction to a book which the departed one should himself have penned, but perhaps a brother can fitly say what must have been under those circumstances left unsaid.

The preacher will ever be remembered as the teacher of the people. One who spoke forcefully the thoughts of the great heart of Christendom on the eternal verities of the gospel. As unchangeable in his system of theology as the shape of a circle, and as fixed in principles as the multiplication table; and for the same reasons, that he was resting on fundamental truths which have no variation. Some have deemed this a weakness, and called it a limited range of thought; but in this holy trafficking of truth we are glad he has not had divers weights and measures in his bag. The standard has ever been the shekel of the sanctuary, and therefore fixedly the same. Through the nearly forty years represented in this selection from his ministerial preaching, there are no old terms applied with new and contradictory meaning. The progress—and such there is—has always been in and not out of the truth as it is in Jesus, and this ever along the lines of thought sanctified by the experience and witness of the Church's leaders ever since apostolic times.

With this unity of creed, the reader will discover a deepening and mellowing of thought and utterance, such as might well be expected from the ripening powers of a great worker and a greater sufferer. The style of the speaker has been advisedly modified in the preparation for the press, to meet the eye rather than the ear of the student of truth. It were a great advantage for some public speakers to be compelled to peruse their own productions after delivery. Here the preacher was continually re-perusing his own treatises with the desire to produce the same impression under altered circumstances. This has affected them somewhat as orations, and has occasionally reduced an oratorical effect, and tamed down the thrilling utterance to a calmer mood more suited to the quiet thought of the closet. But what has been lost to emotion has been richly repaid in unction and spiritual power. This fact must, therefore, be remembered in any comparison with other public speakers of his age. With an unaltered theme, the great preacher has found ample scope for the display of his undoubted talents, both of mind and utterance.

The style of the author is as clear as the day, because illumed all through with accurate acquaintance with his subject and his own views upon it. In his depths there is no darkness, and in his heights he has not entered the clouds, and yet in both height and depth of thought he has few equals. The range of illustration, metaphor, and information exhibited in the sermons, of which these are a small specimen, is immense; and every art, trade, science, and realm has been laid under tribute to enrich the discourses and enforce the truths. This is the result of no mere accidental possession of natural powers. On the contrary, the accurate scholar of tenacious memory and facile mind has studied carefully, noted down copiously, and by persistent efforts has given the perfected product of much conscientious toil for the benefit of those listening to him. In

the earlier years of his preaching, the preparation extended even to the wording of the sermon in almost its entirety, gradually lessening in detail as years ripened the speaker's pulpit powers, but always including a careful and written division of matter, with due arrangement of illustration, argument, and appeal. The freshness of the sermons has thus been maintained by dint of hard work, which is perhaps the main characteristic of what is called genius in every department of human life.

But two other reasons are manifestly to be noted. The preacher was a great Bible student, and honoured his text by expounding it, illustrating it, enforcing it in perfect loyalty to the mind of the Spirit as therein revealed. This textual style ensured a fresh sermon with each portion of the sacred record taken from time to time for review and exposition. But last of all, and chief of all other reasons of his perennial variety—he was a live man, full of the Holy Ghost and power, and spake as the Spirit gave him utterance. On that he relied, and to it he never failed to give all the praise. The same influence which of old gave the revelation of the truth to the first utterers of it, was with him to aid in the exposition of the themes thus first of all penned by an inspiration Divine. The Spirit of all truth was in him, and under a power distinctly given from above he brought forth these many manner of fruits in due season, and thus these leaves in ceaseless verdure have been for the healing of the nations. In this no claim is made beyond that which all truly God-sent and God-helped men will share, but on this we lay the greatest stress of all, as we indicate the reasons for a power which has made this preacher's sermons, both as spoken and perused, a spiritual phenomenon of the age.

May the same Almighty Lord, whom His now departed servant sought to honour, enforce the publication of these truths in their present form as richly as when they were first proclaimed, and make this new issue of them one more memento of the preacher's faithfulness, and of the Master's power to solace, sanctify, and save!

JAMES A. SPURGEON.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE,
NEWINGTON BUTTS, S.E.,
April 4, 1892.

THE DYING THIEF IN A NEW LIGHT.

Preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, August 23, 1885.

“But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.”—LUKE xxiii. 40-42.

A GREAT many persons, whenever they hear of the conversion of the dying thief, remember that he was saved in the very article of death, and they dwell upon that fact, and that alone. He has always been quoted as a case of salvation at the eleventh hour; and so, indeed, he is. In his case it is proven that, as long as a man can repent, he can obtain forgiveness. The cross of Christ avails even for a man hanging on a gibbet, and drawing near to his last hour. He who is “mighty to save” was mighty, even during His own death, to pluck others from the grasp of the destroyer, though they were in the act of expiring.

But that is not everything which the story teaches us; and it is always a pity to look exclusively upon one point, and thus to miss everything else—perhaps miss that which is more important. So often has this been the case, that it has produced a sort of revulsion of feeling in certain minds, so that they have been driven in a wrong direction by their wish to protest against what they think to be a common error. I read, the other day, that this story of the dying thief ought not to be taken as an encouragement to deathbed repentance. Brethren, if the author meant—and I do think he did mean—that this ought never to be so used as to lead people to postpone repentance to a dying bed, he spoke correctly. No Christian man could or would use it so injuriously: he must be hopelessly bad who would draw from God’s long-suffering an argument for continuing in sin. I trust, however, that the narrative is not often so used, even by the worst of men; and I feel sure that it will not be so used by any one of you. It cannot be properly turned to such a purpose: it might be used as an encouragement to thieving just as much as to the delay of repentance. I might say, “I may be a thief because this thief was saved,” just as rationally as I might say, “I may put off repentance because this thief was saved when he was about to die.” The fact is, there is nothing so good but men can pervert it into evil, if they have evil hearts: the justice of God is made a motive for despair, and His mercy an argument for sin. Wicked men will drown themselves in the rivers of truth as readily as in the pools of error. He that has a mind to destroy himself can choke his soul with the Bread of Life, or dash himself in pieces against the Rock of Ages. There is no doctrine of the grace of God so gracious that graceless men may not turn it into licentiousness.

I venture, however, to say that, if I stood by the bedside of a dying man to-

night, and I found him anxious about his soul, but fearful that Christ could not save him because repentance had been put off so late, I should certainly quote the dying thief to him, and I should do it with a good conscience, and without hesitation. I should tell him that, though he was as near to dying as the thief upon the cross was, yet, if he repented of his sin, and turned his face to Christ believingly, he would find eternal life. I should do this with all my heart, rejoicing that I had such a story to tell to one at the gates of eternity. I do not think that I should be censured by the Holy Spirit for thus using a narrative which He has Himself recorded,—recorded with the foresight that it would be so used. I should feel, at any rate, in my own heart, a sweet conviction that I had treated the subject as I ought to have treated it, and as it was intended to be used for men *in extremis*, when their hearts are turning towards the living God. Oh, yes, poor soul, whatever your age, or whatever the period of life to which you have come, you may now find eternal life by the exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! Altering Cowper’s hymn a very little, we may truly say—

“The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there may you, though vile as he,
Wash all your sins away.”

Many good people think that they ought to guard the gospel; but it is never so safe as when it stands out in its own naked majesty. It wants no covering from us. When we protect it with provisos, and guard it with exceptions, and qualify it with observations, it is like David in Saul’s armour: it is hampered and hindered, and you may even hear it cry, “I cannot go with these.” Preach the gospel just as it is, and it will prove itself to be “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” Qualify it, and the salt has lost its savour. I will venture to put the matter to you thus. I have heard it said that few are ever converted in old age; and this is thought to be a statement which will prove exceedingly arousing and impressive to the young. It certainly wears that appearance; but, on the other hand, it is very discouraging to the aged. I demur to the frequent repetition of such statements, for I do not find their counterpart in the teaching of Christ and His apostles. Assuredly, our Lord spoke of some who entered the vineyard at the eleventh hour of the day; and His miracles included, not only healing for those who were dying, but even resurrection for the dead. Nothing can be concluded from the words of the Lord Jesus against the salvation of men at any hour or any age. I tell you that, in the business of your acceptance with God, through faith in Christ Jesus, it does not matter what age you have now reached. The command, for the present moment, to every one of you is, “Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts;” and whether you are in the earliest stage of life, or are within a few hours of eternity, if now you fly for

refuge to the hope set before you in the gospel, you shall be saved. The gospel that I preach excludes none on the ground of either age or character. Whoever you may be, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," is the message we have to deliver to you. If we address to you the longer form of the gospel, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," this is true of every living man, be his age whatever it may. I am not afraid that this story of the dying and repenting thief, who went straight from the cross to the crown, will be used by you amiss; but if you are wicked enough to misuse it, I cannot help it. Such conduct will only fulfil that solemn Scripture which saith that preachers of the gospel are the "savour of death unto death" to some, while they are the "savour of life unto life" to others.

But I do not think, dear friends, that the only speciality about the thief is the lateness of his repentance. So far from that being the only point of interest, it is not even the chief point. To some minds, at any rate, other points will be even more remarkable. I want to show you, very briefly, first, that there was a speciality in his case as to *the means of his conversion*; secondly, a speciality in *faith*; thirdly, a speciality in *the result of his faith while he was here below*; and, fourthly, a speciality in *the promise won by his faith*— the promise fulfilled to him in Paradise.

I. First, then, I think you ought to notice very carefully THE SINGULARITY AND SPECIALITY OF THE MEANS BY WHICH THE THIEF WAS CONVERTED.

How do you think it was? Well, we do not know. We cannot tell. It seems to me that the man was an unconverted, impenitent thief when they nailed him to the cross, because Matthew says, that when the chief priests, scribes, and elders mocked the suffering Saviour, saying, "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God. *The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth.*" I know that this may have been a general statement, and that it is reconcilable with its having been done by one thief only, according to the methods commonly used by critics; but I am not enamoured of critics even when they are friendly. I have such respect for revelation that I never in my own mind permit the idea of discrepancies and mistakes; and when the Evangelist says "they", I believe he means thieves, and that both these malefactors did at first rail at the Christ with whom they were crucified. It would appear that, by some means or other, this thief must have been converted while he was on the cross. Assuredly, nobody preached a sermon to him, no evangelistic address was delivered at the foot of his cross, and no meeting, of which we have any record, was held for special prayer on his account. He does not even seem to have had an instruction, or an invitation, or an exhortation addressed to him; and yet he became a sincere and accepted believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dwell upon this fact, if you please, and note its practical bearing upon the cases of many around us. There are many among my hearers who have been

instructed from their childhood, who have been admonished, and warned, and entreated, and invited, and yet they have not come to Christ; while this man, without any of these advantages, nevertheless believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and found eternal life. O you who have lived under the sound of the gospel from your childhood, the dying thief does not comfort you, but he accuses you! Why do you abide so long in unbelief? Will you never believe the testimony of divine love?

What do you think must have converted this poor thief? It strikes me that it may have been—it must have been—the *sight of our great Lord and Saviour*. There was, to begin with, our Saviour's wonderful behaviour on the way to the cross. Perhaps the robber had mixed in all sorts of society; but he had never seen a man like this Man. Never had a cross been carried by a Cross-Bearer of His form and fashion. The robber might well marvel who this meek and majestic Personage could be. He heard the women weep, and he may have wondered within himself whether anybody would ever weep for him. He thought that this must be some very singular Person that the people should crowd around Him with tears in their eyes. When he heard that mysterious Sufferer say so solemnly, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children," he must have been struck with wonder. When he came to think, in his death-pangs, of the singular look of pity which Jesus cast on the women, and of the self-forgetfulness which gleamed from His eyes, he must have been smitten with a strange relenting: it was as if an angel had crossed his path, and opened his eyes to a new world, and to a new form of manhood, the like of which he had never seen before. He and his companion were coarse, rough fellows: but their fellow-Sufferer was a delicately-fashioned Being, of a superior order to them; yes, and of a superior order to any other of the sons of men. Who could He be? What must He be? Though the thief could see that Jesus suffered and fainted as He went along, he marked that there was no word of complaining, no note of execration, in return for the revilings cast upon Him. His eyes looked love even on those who glared upon Him with hate. Surely that march along the Via Dolorosa was the first part of the sermon which God preached to that bad man's heart. It was preached to many others who did not regard its teaching; but upon this man, by God's special grace, it had a softening effect when he came to think over it, and consider it. Was it not a likely and convincing means of grace?

When he saw the Saviour surrounded by the Roman soldiery—saw the executioners bring forth the hammers and the nails, and lay him down upon His back, and drive the nails into His hands and feet—this crucified criminal was startled and astonished as he heard Him say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." He himself, probably, had met his executioners with a curse; but he heard this Man breathe a prayer to the great Father; and, as a Jew, as he probably was, he understood what was meant by such a prayer. But it did

astound him to hear Jesus pray for His murderers. That was a petition the like of which he had never heard, nor even dreamed of. From whose lips could it come but from the lips of a divine Being? Such a loving, forgiving, God-like prayer, proved Him to be the Messiah. Who else had ever prayed so? Certainly not David and the kings of Israel, who, on the contrary, in all honesty and heartiness, imprecated the wrath of God upon their enemies. Elias himself would not have prayed in that fashion; rather would he have called fire from heaven on the centurion and his company. It was a new, strange sound to the malefactor. I do not suppose that he appreciated it to the full; but I can well believe that it deeply impressed him, and made him feel that his fellow-Sufferer was a Being about whom there was an exceeding mystery of goodness.

And when the central cross was lifted up, that thief, hanging on his own cross, looked around, and I suppose he could see Pilate's inscription written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin,—“Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” If so, that writing was his little Bible, his New Testament, and he interpreted it by what he knew of the Old Testament. Putting this and that together—that strange Person, incarnate loveliness, all patience and all majesty, that strange prayer, and now this singular inscription, surely he who knew the Old Testament, as I have no doubt he did, would say to himself, “Is this HE? Is this truly the King of the Jews? This is He who wrought miracles, and raised the dead, and said that He was the Son of God; is it all true, and is He really our Messiah?” Then he would remember the words of the prophet Isaiah, “He is despised and rejected of men: a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” “Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.” “The chastisement of our peace was upon Him.” “Why,” he would say to himself, “I never understood that passage in the prophet Esaias before, but it must point to Him! Can this be He who cried in the Psalms, ‘They pierced My hands and My feet’?” As he looked at Him again, he felt in his soul, “It must be He? Could there be another so God-like, so divine?” He felt conviction creeping over his spirit. Then he looked again, and he marked how all men down below rejected, and despised, and hissed at Him, and hooted Him; and all this would make the case the more clear. “All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him.”

Peradventure, *the dying thief learned the gospel from the lips of Christ's enemies*. They said, “He saved others.” “Ah!” thought he, “did He save others? Why should he not save *me*?” What a grand bit of gospel that was for the dying thief—“He saved others ”! I think I could swim to heaven on that plank—“He saved others;” because, if He saved others, He can of a surety save me. Thus, the very things that Christ's enemies disdainfully threw at Him would be gospel to this poor dying man. When I have been obliged to read any of the wretched prints that are sent us out of scorn, in which our Lord is held up to ridicule, I

have thought, "Why, perhaps those who read these loathsome blasphemies may, nevertheless, learn the gospel from them!" You may pick a diamond from a dunghill, and find its brilliance undiminished; and you may hear the gospel from a blasphemous mouth, and it shall be none the less the gospel of salvation. Per-adventure, this man learned the gospel from those who jested at our dying Lord; and so the servants of Satan were unconsciously made to be the servants of the Saviour.

But, after all, surely that which won him most must have been to *look at Jesus again*, as He was hanging upon the cruel tree. Possibly nothing about the physical person of Christ would be attractive to him, for His visage was more marred than that of any man, and His form more than the sons of men; but yet there must have been in that blessed face a singular charm. Was it not the very image of perfection? As I conceive the face of Christ, it was very different from anything that any painter has yet been able to place upon his canvas. It was all goodness, and kindness, and unselfishness; and yet it was a royal face. It was a face of superlative justice and unrivalled tenderness. Righteousness and uprightness sat upon His brow; but infinite pity and good-will to men had also there taken up their abode. It was a face that would have struck you at once as one by itself, never to be forgotten, never to be fully understood. It was all sorrow, yet all love; all meekness, yet all resolution; all wisdom, yet all simplicity; the face of a child, or an angel, and yet peculiarly the face of a man. Majesty and misery, suffering and sacredness, were therein strangely combined. He was evidently the Lamb of God, and the Son of man. As the robber looked, he believed. Is it not singular that the sight of the Saviour won him? The sight of the Lord in agony, and shame, and death! Scarcely a word; certainly no sermon; no attending worship on the Sabbath; no reading of gracious books; no appeal from mother, or teacher, or friend; but the sight of Jesus won him. I put it down as a very singular thing, a thing for you and for me to recollect, and dwell upon, with quite as much vividness as we do upon the lateness of this robber's conversion.

Oh, that God of His mercy might convert everybody in this Tabernacle! Oh, that I might have a share in it by the preaching of the Word! Yet I will be equally happy if you get to heaven anyhow; ay, if the Lord should take you there without any outward ministry, leading you to Jesus by some simple method such as He adopted with this thief. If you do but get there, He shall have the glory of it, and His poor servant will be overjoyed. Oh, that you would now look to Jesus, and live! Before your eyes He is set forth, evidently crucified among you. Look to Him, and be saved, even this very hour.

II. But now I want you to think with me a little upon THE SPECIALITY OF THIS MAN'S FAITH, for I think it was a very singular faith that this thief exerted towards our Lord Jesus Christ. I greatly question whether the equal and the parallel of the dying thief's faith will be readily found outside the Scriptures, or even in the Scriptures.

Observe, that this man believed in Christ *when he literally saw Him dying the death of a felon*, under circumstances of the greatest personal shame. You have never realized what it was to be crucified. None of you could do that, for the sight has never been seen in England in our day. There is not a man or woman here who has ever fully realized what the actual death of Christ was. It stands beyond us. This man saw it with his own eyes, and for him to call *Him* “Lord” who was hanging on a gibbet, was no small triumph of faith. For him to ask Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom, though he saw that Jesus bleeding His life away, and hounded to the death, was a notable act of reliance. For him to commit his everlasting destiny into the hands of One who was, to all appearance, unable even to preserve His own life, was a noble achievement of faith. I say that this dying thief leads the van in the matter of faith, for what he saw of the circumstances of the Saviour was calculated to contradict rather than help his confidence, for he saw our Lord in the very extremity of agony and death, and yet he believed in Him as the King shortly to come into His kingdom.

Recollect, too, that at that time, when the thief believed in Christ, *all the disciples had forsaken Him, and fled*. John might have been lingering at a little distance, and holy women may have stood farther off; but no one was present bravely to champion the dying Christ. Judas had sold him, Peter had denied Him, and the rest had forsaken Him; and it was then that the dying thief called Him “Lord”, and said, “Remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.” I call that glorious faith. Why, some of you do not believe, though you are surrounded by Christian friends—though you are urged on by the testimony of those whom you regard with love; but this man, all alone, comes out, and calls Jesus his Lord! No one else was confessing Christ at that moment: no revival was taking place amid enthusiastic crowds: he was all by himself as a confessor of his Lord. After our Lord was nailed to the tree, the first to bear witness for Him was this thief. The centurion bore witness afterwards, when Jesus expired; but this thief was a lone confessor, holding on to the Saviour when nobody would say “Amen” to what he said. Even his fellow-thief was mocking at the crucified Christ, so that this man shone as a lone star in the midnight darkness. Oh, sirs, dare you be Daniels? Dare you stand alone? Would you dare to stand out amidst a ribald crew, and say, “Jesus is my King. I only ask Him to remember me when He comes into His kingdom”? Would you be likely to avow such a faith when priests and scribes, princes and people, were all mocking at the Christ, and deriding Him? Brethren, the dying robber exhibited marvellous faith, and I beg you to think of this next time you speak of him.

And it seems to me that another point adds splendour to that faith, namely, that *he himself was in extreme torture*. Remember, he was crucified. It was a crucified man trusting in a crucified Christ. Oh, when the whole frame is racked with pain, when the tenderest nerves are tortured, when the body is hung up to

die by we know not what length of torment, then to forget the present and live in the future is a grand achievement of faith! While dying, to turn one's eye to Another dying at your side, and trust your soul with Him, is very marvellous faith. Blessed thief, because they put thee down at the bottom, as one of the least of saints, I think that I must bid thee come up higher, and take one of the uppermost seats among those who by faith have glorified the Christ of God!

Why, see, dear friends, once more, the speciality of this man's faith was that *he saw so much*, though his eyes had been opened for so short a time! He saw the future world. He was not a believer in annihilation, or in the possibility of a man not being immortal. He evidently expected to be in another world, and to be in existence when the dying Lord should come into His kingdom. He believed all that, and it is more than some do nowadays. He also believed that Jesus would have a kingdom, a kingdom after He was dead, a kingdom though He was crucified. He believed that He was winning for Himself a kingdom by those nailed hands and pierced feet. This was intelligent faith, was it not? He believed that Jesus would have a kingdom in which others would share, and therefore he aspired to have his portion in it. But yet he had right views of himself, and therefore he did not say, "Lord, let me sit at Thy right hand;" or, "Let me share the dainties of Thy palace;" but he said only, "Remember me. Think of me. Cast an eye my way. Think of Thy poor dying comrade on the cross by Thy side. Lord, remember me! Lord, remember me!" I see deep humility in the prayer, and yet a sweet, joyous, confident exaltation of the Christ at the time when the Christ was in His deepest humiliation.

Oh, dear sirs, if any of you have thought of this dying thief only as one who put off repentance, I want you now to think of him as one who did greatly and grandly believe in Christ; and oh, that you would do the same! Oh, that you would put great confidence in my great Lord! Never did a poor sinner trust Christ too much. There was never a case of a guilty one, who believed that Jesus could forgive him, and afterwards found that He could not—who believed that Jesus could save him on the spot, and then woke up to find that it was a delusion. No; plunge into this river of confidence in Christ. Here you will find waters to swim in, not to drown in. Never did a soul perish that glorified Christ by a living, loving faith in Him. Come, then, with all your sin, whatever it may be, with all your deep depression of spirit, with all your agony of conscience, and trust in Christ. Come along with you, and grasp my Lord and Master with both the hands of your faith, and He shall be yours, and you shall be His.

"Turn to Christ your longing eyes,
View His bloody sacrifice:
See in Him your sins forgiven;
Pardon, holiness, and heaven;
Glorify the King of kings,
Take the peace the gospel brings."

I think that I have shown you something special in the means of the thief's conversion, and in his faith in our dying Lord.

III. But now, thirdly, as God shall help me, I wish to show you another speciality, namely, in THE RESULT OF HIS FAITH.

I have heard people say, "Well, you see, the dying thief was converted; but then he was not baptized. He never went to communion, and never joined the church." He could not do either; and that which God Himself renders impossible to us, He does not demand of us. The poor man was nailed to the cross; how could he be baptized? But he did a great deal more than that; for if he could not carry out the outward signs, he most manifestly exhibited the things which they signified, which, in his condition, was better still.

The dying thief first of all confessed the Lord Jesus Christ; and that is the very essence of baptism. He confessed Christ. Did he not acknowledge Him to his fellow-thief? It was as open a confession as he could make. Did he not acknowledge Christ before all that were gathered around the cross, within hearing of his voice? It was as public a confession as he could possibly cause it to be. Yet certain cowardly fellows claim to be Christians, though they have never confessed Christ to a single person, and then they quote this poor thief as an excuse! Are they nailed to a cross? Are they dying in agony? Oh, no; yet they talk as if they could claim the exemption which these circumstances would give them. What a dishonest piece of business!

The fact is, our Lord requires an open confession as well as a secret faith; and if you will not render it, there is no promise of salvation for you, but a threat of being denied at the last. The apostle puts it, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." It is stated in another place upon this wise,—*"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,"*—that is Christ's way for his disciples to confess Him. If there be a true faith, there must be a declaration of it. If you are candles, and God has lit you, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Soldiers of Christ must, like her Majesty's soldiers, wear their regimentals; and if they are ashamed of their uniform, they ought to be drummed out of the regiment. They are not true soldiers who refuse to march in rank with their comrades. The very least thing that the Lord Jesus Christ can expect of us is, that we do confess Him to the best of our power. If you are nailed up to a cross, I will not invite you to be baptized. If you are fastened up to a tree to die, I will not ask you to come into this pulpit, and declare your faith, for you cannot. But you are required to do what you can do, namely, to make as distinct and open an avowal of the Lord Jesus Christ as may be suitable to your present condition.

I believe that many Christian people get into a deal of trouble through not

being honest to their convictions. For instance, if a man goes into a workshop, or a soldier into a barrack-room, and if he does not fly his flag from the first, it will be very difficult for him to run it up afterwards. But if he immediately and boldly lets all know, "I am a Christian man, and there are certain things that I cannot do to please you, and certain other things that I cannot help doing though they displease you,"—when that is clearly understood, after a while the singularity of the thing will be gone, and the man will be let alone; but if he is a little sneaky, and thinks that he is going to please the world and please Christ too, he is in for a rough time, let him depend upon it. His life will be that of a toad under a harrow, or a fox in a dog-kennel, if he tries the way of compromise. That will never do. Come out boldly on the Lord's side. Show your colours. Let it be known who you are, and what you are; and although your course will not be smooth, it will certainly not be half so rough as if you tried to run with the bare and hunt with the hounds—a very difficult task that.

This man came out, then and there, and made as open an avowal of his faith in Christ as was possible.

The next thing he did was to rebuke his fellow-sinner. He spoke to him in answer to the ribaldry with which he had assailed our Lord. I do not know what the unconverted convict had been blasphemously saying, but his converted comrade spoke very honestly to him: "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss." It is more than ever needful in these days that believers in Christ should not allow sin to go unrebuked; and yet a great many of them do so. Do you not know that a person who is silent, when a wrong thing is said or done, may become a participator in the sin? If you do not rebuke sin—I mean, *of course*, on all fit occasions, and in a proper spirit—your silence will give consent to the sin, and you will be an aider and abettor in it. A man who saw a robbery, and who did not cry "Stop, thief!" would be thought to be in league with the thief; and the man who can hear swearing, or see impurity, and never utter a word of protest, may well question whether he is right himself. Our "other men's sins" make up a great item in our personal guilt unless we rebuke them as we have opportunity. This our Lord expects us to do. The dying thief did it, and did it with all his heart; and therein far exceeded large numbers of those who hold their heads high in the church.

Next, *the dying thief made a full confession of his guilt.* He said to him who was hanged with him, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? *And we indeed justly.*" Not many words, but what a world of meaning was in them—"we indeed justly." "You and I are dying for our crimes," said he, "and we deserve to die." When a man is willing to confess that he deserves the wrath of God—that he deserves the suffering which his sin has brought upon him—there is evidence of sincerity in him. In this man's case, his repentance glittered like a holy tear in the eye of his faith, so that his faith was jewelled

with the drops of his penitence. As I have often told you, I suspect the faith which is not born as a twin with repentance; but there is no room for suspicion in the case of this penitent confessor. I pray God that you and I may have such a thorough work as this in our own hearts as the result of our faith in Christ.

Then, see, *this dying thief defends his Lord right manfully*. He says, “We indeed justly, but this Man hath done nothing amiss.” Was not that beautifully said? He did not say, “This Man does not deserve to die,” but “This Man hath done nothing amiss.” He means that He is perfectly innocent. He does not even say, “He has done nothing wicked,” but he even asserts that He has not acted unwisely or indiscreetly: “This Man hath done nothing amiss.” This is a glorious testimony of a dying man to One who was numbered with the transgressors, and was being put to death because His enemies falsely accused Him. Beloved, I only pray that you and I may bear as good witness to our Lord as this thief did. He outruns us all. We need not think much of his conversion coming so late in life; we may far rather consider how blessed was the testimony which he bore for his Lord when it was most needed. When all other voices were silent, one suffering penitent spake out, and said, “This Man hath done nothing amiss.”

See, again, another mark of this man’s faith. He prays; and *his prayer is directed to Jesus*: “Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.” True faith is always praying faith. “Behold, he prayeth,” is one of the surest proofs of the new birth. Oh, friends, may we abound in prayer, for thus we shall prove that our faith in Jesus Christ is what it ought to be! This converted robber opened his mouth wide in prayer; he prayed with great confidence as to the coming kingdom, and he sought that kingdom first, even to the exclusion of all else. He might have asked for life, or for ease from pain; but he preferred the kingdom. This is a high mark of grace.

In addition to thus praying, you will see that *he adores and worships Jesus*, for he says, “Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.” The petition is worded as if he felt, “Only let Christ think of me, and it is enough. Let Him but remember me, and the thought of His mind will be effectual for everything that I shall need in the world to come.” This is to impute Godhead to Christ. If a man can cast his all upon the mere memory of a person, he must have a very high esteem of that person. If to be remembered by the Lord Jesus is all that this man asks, or desires, he pays to the Lord great honour. I think that there was about his prayer a worship equal to the eternal hallelujahs of cherubim and seraphim. There was in it a glorification of his Lord which is not excelled even by the endless symphonies of angelic spirits who surround the throne. Thief, thou hast well done!

Oh, that some penitent spirit here might be helped thus to believe, thus to confess, thus to defend his Master, thus to adore, thus to worship; then the age of the convert would be a matter of the smallest imaginable consequence.

IV. Now, my last remark is this: There was something very special about

the dying thief as to OUR LORD'S PROMISE TO HIM CONCERNING THE FUTURE. Jesus said to him, "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." He only asked the Lord to remember him, but he obtained this surprising answer: "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." In some respects I envy this dying thief, for this reason, that, when the Lord pardoned me, and pardoned the most of you who are present, He did not give us a place in Paradise that same day. We are not yet come to the rest which is promised to us. No, we are waiting here. Some of us have been waiting very long. It is thirty years with many of us. It is forty years, it is fifty years, with many others, since the Lord blotted out your sins, and yet you are not with Him in Paradise. There is a dear member of this Church who, I suppose, has known the Lord for seventy-five years, and she is still with us, having long passed the ninetieth year of her age. The Lord did not admit her to Paradise on the day of her conversion. He did not take any one of us from nature to grace, and from grace to glory, in a single day.

We have had to wait a good while, and some of us may have to wait much longer. Why is this? There is something for us to do in the wilderness, so we are kept out of the Heavenly Garden. I remember that Mr. Richard Baxter said that he was not in a hurry to go to heaven; and a friend called upon Dr. John Owen, who had been writing about the glory of Christ, and asked him what he thought of going to heaven. That great divine replied, "I am longing to be there." "Why!" said the other, "I have just spoken to holy Mr. Baxter, and he says that he would prefer to be here, since he thinks that he can be more useful on earth." "Oh!" said Dr. Owen, "my brother Baxter is always full of practical godliness; but for all that, I cannot say that I am at all desirous to linger in this mortal state. I would rather be gone." Each of these men seems to me to have been the half of Paul. Paul was made up of the two, for he was desirous to depart, but he was willing to remain because it was needful for the people. We would put both together; and, like Paul, have a strong desire to depart, and to be with Christ, and yet be willing to wait if we can do service to our Lord and to His Church. Still, I think he had the best of it who was converted and entered heaven the same night. This robber breakfasted with the devil, but he dined with Christ on earth, and supped with Him in Paradise. This was short work, but blessed work. What a host of troubles he escaped! What a world of temptation he missed! What an evil world he quitted! He was just born, like a lamb dropped in the field, and then he was lifted into the Shepherd's bosom straight away. I do not remember the Lord ever saying this to anybody else. I dare say it may have happened that souls have been converted and have gone home at once; but I never heard of anybody who had, at the time of conversion, such an assurance from Christ as this man had, "Verily I say unto thee;"—such a personal assurance—"Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Dying thief, thou wert favoured above many, "to be with Christ, which is far better," and to be with Him so soon!

Why is it that our Lord does not thus emparadise all of us at once? It is because there is something for us to do on earth. My brethren, are you doing it? *Are you doing it?* Some good people are still on earth; but why? What is the use of them? I cannot make it out. If they are indeed the Lord's people, what are they here for? They get up in the morning, and eat their breakfast, and in due course they eat their dinner, and their supper, and go to bed and sleep; at a proper hour they get up the next morning, and do the same as on the previous day. Is this living for Jesus? Is this life? It does not come to much. Can this be the life of God in man? Oh, Christian people, do justify your Lord in keeping you waiting here! How can you justify Him but by Serving Him to the utmost of your power? The Lord help you to do so! Why, you owe as much to Him as the dying thief! I know I owe a great deal more. What a mercy it is to have been converted while you were yet a boy, to be brought to the Saviour while you were yet a girl! What a debt of obligation young Christians owe to the Lord! And if this poor thief crammed a lifetime of testimony into a few minutes, ought not you and I, who have been spared for years after our conversion, to perform good service for our Lord? Come, let us wake up if we have been asleep! Let us begin to live if we have been half dead. May the Spirit of God make something of us yet; so that we may go as industrious servants from the labours of the vineyard to the pleasures of Paradise! To our once-crucified but now glorified Lord be praise for ever and ever! Amen.