

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A WORD WITH THOSE WHO WAIT FOR SIGNS
AND WONDERS.

A Sermon

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“This is an evil generation: they seek a sign.”—Luke xi. 29.

READING the Old Testament, we observe that the Lord in the olden time condescendingly gave signs to his servants, when he saw that it would be for their good. Moses, when he was called to undertake the great work of bringing the chosen people up out of Egypt, and conducting them into the promised land, had a sign given him by which to assure him that he was truly called of God. He put his hand into his bosom, and when he took it out it was leprous, white as snow; he thrust it into his bosom again, and again removed it, and, lo! it was whole as the other. He cast his rod upon the earth, and the rod became a serpent, and when he took it by the tail, it stiffened into a rod again. So also in the case of Gideon, when he was commanded to go against the Midianitish oppressors of Israel. You remember how his fleece was wet when all around was dry; and how the sign was reversed, and when all around was saturated with moisture, the fleece was dry. In the cases of holy men favoured with signs, there was faith, there was a real desire for more faith, and a willing obedience to God; but the work to which the men were called was peculiar, difficult, and even superhuman, and the flesh being but weak, God in infinite tenderness to the weakness of his servants, gave them signs and wonders that they might be strengthened thereby. Doubtless if again there should come a necessity for signs to any of God's servants, such tokens would be given them. If there should ever be a time when it was not possible for Christians to walk by faith alone, or when it would be more to the honour of God that their confidence should be somewhat assisted by marvels and tokens, then would God go out of the ordinary way once again, and his people should receive miraculous seals. If it were utterly impossible for the anxious and truly penitent spirit to find rest without a sign, I believe the sign would be given;

though I also believe, that in no case is such a thing at all necessary under the gospel dispensation, but which is so enriched with plainest evidence, that to add more would be to hold a candle to the sun, or pour water into the ocean.

In addition to this first remark, let us add that signs have been given, and yet have not wrought faith in those who have seen them; and there is no necessary connection between seeing signs and believing that which the signs attest. Israel in the wilderness saw great marvels wrought by the Lord their God, and yet perished in unbelief. Pharaoh is a still more notable instance—what signs and wonders God wrought in the fields of Zoan! how was the Nile crimsoned into blood, and all Egypt filled with lamentation! The Lord turned the dust of the land into lice, and the ashes therefore into plagues. He brought up frogs into their chambers, and locusts devoured their fields. He darkened the heavens at midday, and deluged them with hail and rain such as the land had never seen before: a grievous murrain fell upon their cattle, and death upon their firstborn; yet all the wonder which God wrought did not soften Pharaoh's heart, and though for awhile he trembled, yet again he steeled himself against the God of Israel, and said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" My hearers, if ye do not believe Moses and the prophets, if ye do not believe in Jesus Christ with the testimonies which are already before you, neither would you believe though one rose from the dead, or though all the plagues of Egypt should be repeated upon you with tenfold fury. There is no necessary connection between the seeing of wonders and the believing in God, for we learn clearly from Pharaoh's case, and from many others, that all the displays of wonderful power either of judgment or of mercy, do not beget faith in unbelieving hearts.

I come, this morning, to deal with a class of persons very common still among us, exceedingly common in all congregations where the gospel is faithfully preached, whom I shall attempt to describe in the first place, and then go on to deal with them as God shall help me.

I. First, then, I shall ask your attention while I DESCRIBE THE PERSONS who are an evil generation that seek after a sign.

We have among us many individuals who are aware that they are sinners, and are conscious of their guiltiness to such an extent as to be very uneasy as to their condition. They clearly perceive that sin will be punished by the Great Judge, and they are much afraid of the wrath to come. They anxiously desire, moreover, to find salvation; and, having long listened to the gospel, they are not ignorant of the way in which salvation is obtained. They understand the gospel in the letter of it to the highest degree. They are not unbelievers in any of the doctrines of the gospel. They accept the deity of Christ. They believe him to be verily the Son of God. They believe that

he died upon the cross, and offered atonement for iniquity. They, moreover, know that this atonement is effectual for the putting away of transgressions, and they are persuaded that if they had an interest in it, it would wash away their sins, and would give them peace of mind. You will say to me, "Knowing all this, of course they are believers in Christ." No, they are not. We are very hopeful of them, we are at the same time much alarmed about them. They are not believers, for they wilfully persist in demanding some sign or wonder within themselves, or around themselves, before they will personally put their trust in the Lord Jesus. Having been taught all they have been taught, and accepting for truth all that they do accept, the logical inference would be that they are trusters in Christ, and are saved; but illogical as their state is, they still remain unbelievers, with all this belief about them, and justify their remaining in unbelief by telling you that if they felt this, or if they saw that, or if this happened, or if the other thing occurred, then they would believe in Jesus, but not until then.

They make different demands. There are some, and these are generally the most uneducated, who expect to experience remarkable dreams or to behold singular visions. I am sometimes astonished that there should linger amongst our population still a notion that a certain kind of dream, especially if it be repeated a number of times, and if it be so vivid as to remain upon the imagination for a long period, is an index of the divine favour. Nothing can be more grossly untrue, nothing can be more baseless and without the shadow of evidence to back it up; and yet many imagine that if they, I was about to say, suffered so grievously from indigestion that their sleep was spoiled by vivid dreams, then they could put their trust in Jesus Christ. The notion is so absurd, that if it be but mentioned to rational men they must ridicule it, and yet I have known many who have been, and still are, slaves to this delusion. Not very long ago, after preaching in a remote country village, I was earnestly sought for as a spiritual adviser by an importunate letter from a woman who ascribed to me much greater wisdom than I ever claimed to possess. I wondered what her spiritual difficulty was, and when I went to her house and found her very sick, I was saddened to find her the victim of a superstition, in which I fear her minister had comforted and so confirmed her. She solemnly informed me that she had seen something standing at night at the bottom of her bed. She was in hopes that it was our blessed Lord, but she could not see his head; as I knew so much of spiritual things, could I tell her who it was? I said I thought she must have hung up her dress on a peg on the wall at the bottom of her bed, and in the dark had mistaken it for an apparition. Of course, that did not satisfy her. I fell at once in her estimation to the dead level of a very carnal-minded man, if not a scoffer, but I could not help it, I could not dally with such ridiculous superstition. I was obliged to tell her it was all nonsense for

her to hope for salvation because she was silly enough to fancy that she saw Jesus with her bodily eyes, for the saving sight was a spiritual one. As to the question of the supposed apparition having a head or not, I told her if she would but use her own head and heart in meditating upon the word of God, she would be in a far more hopeful condition. There may have been, I will not deny it—for stranger things have been— there may have been dreams, and even apparitions, which have aroused the conscience, and so led to the commencement of spiritual life, in some rare cases where God has chosen specially to interfere, but that these are to be looked for, and to be expected, is a thing as far from truth as the east is from the west. What if you did see anything, or dream anything, what would that prove? Why, prove nothing whatever except that you were in an ill state of health, and that your imagination was morbidly active. Put such things away, they are superstitions fit for Bushmen and Hottentots, but they are not fit for Christians of the nineteenth century. I do but mention them, not because I think any of you may have fallen into them, but that you may deal with them always very rigidly wherever you meet with them. They are superstitions not to be tolerated by Christian men; yet there are some who actually will not believe Christ's simple gospel unless some such absurdity as this can be joined into it. God deliver you from such unbelief.

Others we have met with who suppose that in order to being saved they must feel some very peculiar physical sensation. Now, that joy and peace of mind, and the discovery of the gospel when it for the first time flashes on the mind, may produce extraordinary sensations in the body through the force of mental emotion I do not doubt; but do, I pray you, remember that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ has nothing to do with nerve, and muscle, and sinew, and things to be seen, and to be felt in the flesh; the operations of grace are a mental, spiritual, work. My dear hearers, you must never imagine when we talk about the heart, that we mean that central organ within us, from which the blood circulates, we mean nothing which has to do with this fleshly organisation. The work of the Holy Ghost concerns itself with the mind, the affections, the soul, the spirit, and his work is altogether spiritual. God forbid that you should look for any physical work, or strange affection of nerve and sinew, as some have talked of, and others have looked for. You must not put physical contortions or sensations as a test before the Lord, and say you will not believe in him otherwise.

These I hope are rare cases, but in very frequent instances I have met with people who will not believe in Jesus Christ to the salvation of their souls because they have not felt wretched enough. They have read in certain books of holy men who, when they were seeking a Saviour, were broken in pieces under the ponderous hammer of the law. They turn to such biographies, and they find the subjects of them uttering language similar to

the book of Job, or to the words of Jeremy in the Lamentations. Now these were good and holy men, and the way by which they were led to Christ was a way trodden by many feet, but these persons say, "Unless I can feel just this, unless I can be led into despair, unless I can be tempted to destroy myself, unless I become so desponding that I am fitter for a lunatic asylum than to be in my own family, I cannot believe in Jesus Christ." Ah! poor demented one, to desire misery, and to make your own wretchedness, and even your own unbelieving and wicked thoughts of God to be a kind of preparation, for faith in Jesus Christ! It is a most insanelly wicked thing, and yet many, many, many persist in unbelief because they think they are not yet wretched enough.

Running to the other extreme, I have met with others who would not simply trust Christ because they were not happy enough. They have heard of the Christian's joys, and the peace, like a river, that evermore abideth, and they have said, "If I could get this peace, if this deep calm ruled in my spirit, then I could believe." As much as to say, "If I saw the wheat full grown in the fields of my soul, then I would begin to sow;" whereas the sowing must precede the reaping. "If I had within me the flower in all its beauty and bloom, then I would begin to plant the root; whereas the root must always precede the flower. Peace of mind is the result of faith, but they demand that they shall have the result of faith before they exercise faith. In fine, they come to God and ask for the wages before the work is begun, demanding peace before they will believe. Believe me, if any of you thus act wilfully and strangely, you must not suppose that God will turn aside from his wise proceedings to gratify your whims. Ah" no, you may tempt the Lord, but he is not tempted of any man. What folly it is, and yet folly as it is, how common is it on all sides!

I have met with some who would not believe in Christ because they could not pray eloquently. "Oh," they have said, "if I could pray like So-and-So, to whom we have listened with the greatest pleasure at the prayer-meeting, then I could put my trust in Christ, and there would be some hope for me!" Now, praying fluently is sometimes only the result of oratorical gifts, and if you will never believe in Christ till you get oratorical gifts, then how foolish you are to shut yourself out from heaven because you cannot play the orator, and because you cannot be a preacher, refuse to be a saint! True, fluency in prayer may also be the result of great depth of piety, but you expect to have great depth of piety before you even have the beginning of grace in your soul. Before you will put your trust in Christ, and become a babe in his family, you claim to be a man six feet high. Before you will learn the "A B C" of the language of Canaan, you declare that you must be able to sound its very hardest syllables, and pronounce its most difficult sentences. That which is frequently the result of years of training, and long

habit of deep, solitary contemplation, you expect to leap into at once, or else you refuse to be saved! O madness, to what height wilt thou not mount!

I have known others who must feel precisely like certain eminent saints have felt many years after their conversion, or else they cannot believe that they are saved. They will reach down the life of some holy man who had mastered his passions by long years of mortification, who had come to live near to God, and whose life was the heavenly life on earth, and they will mentally vow, "I must be just like this man," say they, "or else I cannot believe in Jesus." They say, in fact, to the Heavenly Physician, "I am sick and ready to die, but, Good Physician, thou must make me as strong as Samson at once and on the spot, or else I will not receive thy medicine," just as if the perfect spiritual cure of the soul were not a lifelong work of grace. They expect to be made perfect in an instant, or they will not trust the ever faithful Saviour. They look for the mature fruits of autumn in the early spring, and or ever they bear even so much as a bud or blossom, they must have the full ripe fruit, or else they will not believe. Well, this is marvellous, and truly, if there be anything wonderful on earth beside the mercy of God, it is the perversity of man, and the strange way in which unbelief will dare impudently to set up one demand after another as an excuse for rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have met this mischief at other times in a somewhat indescribable shape. "Sir," says the young convert, "you tell me that if I simply put my trust in Jesus I shall be saved; but is not salvation a great mystery?" Our reply must honestly be, "No doubt it is." Well, then, they determine to wait until they are the subjects of some singular feeling, some mysterious phenomenon within themselves. It is not to be denied that the work of grace by the Holy Ghost in the soul is the highest of all mysteries, but it is never also to be forgotten that it is one of the grandest of all simplicities. The mysteries of the church of Rome are mock mysteries rendered dark by the veil which she casts over truth. By her incantations, her paraphernalia, her performances, and her use of a strange tongue, that which is simple is darkened into a mimic mystery; for what is really in it is a plain lie for thoughtful men to laugh at. This is a kind of mystery of which the gospel knows nothing. The mysteries of regeneration are not artificial, but natural. Now all natural mysteries in the world are from another point of view, clear simplicities. Light, we know what it is, we see it every day; it is the greatest of all mysteries, yet practically it is the commonest of all simplicities. When the sun scatters the darkness, there is no mystery about it; or when we light a candle, there is no need of wonder. Light is a wondrous mystery, yet to obtain it the least educated need not go to school. The electric telegraph is practically, as a matter of every day use, so simplified that a lad may offici-

ate at the instrument, and yet it remains and ever will remain a mystery. Understand that such is the mystery of regeneration. It is so mysterious that no one can explain it, but it is so simple that everyone that believeth in Christ has experienced it already. It is so mysterious that if the most learned tomes were composed to define it, all the writers in the world might fail in the definition. But it is such a simplicity that whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ is born of God. There is nothing mysterious about it, I was about to say, in the artificial meaning of that word "mystery." The only mystery lies in the operation of the Holy Ghost whose coming and going we cannot comprehend. If thou believest, thou hast felt the mystery. If thou trustest Jesus, thou possessest mystery. All that is meant in regeneration, all that is wrapt up in the work of the Holy Ghost actually belongs to every soul that hath believed in Jesus Christ and in him only. But I know what it is, you will go to Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, but ye will not come to the blood of Christ and wash and be clean. Ye will say, "I thought he would surely come and strike his hand over the place, and call upon the name of the Lord his God, and recover the leper," but you cannot accept the simple word, "Believe and live," so grand in its simplicity. The most of men reject the gospel for that very reason of its simplicity. Signs and wonders they will still demand, something artificially mysterious their soul still craveth after, but the naked grandeur of the sublime mystery of faith they cannot perceive. Their folly is clear enough to all men that have eyes.

I have just described the character, and if any have felt themselves portrayed this morning, I hope they will prepare their hearts for what will follow, and be willing to receive my Master's word.

II. I shall now, secondly, SHOW THE FOLLY OF SUCH CONDUCT.

My dear friend, I get you by the hand and look you in the face, anxiously desiring, as I do, that you may be saved this very morning. You are seeking a sign, one of these which I have described, or some other. You seek what is quite *unnecessary*. What do you want a sign for? You want, you say, a token of God's love. What token of God's love to you can ever be wanted, now that he has given his only-begotten Son, first to live on earth, and then to die in pains extreme, the just for the unjust, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"? I blush for you, that you should ask any token of God's love while Jesus Christ is before you, for herein is such love as nothing else can ever equal. What do you want a sign for? Why, to show, you say, that there is mercy for you. How do you need that? The very fact that you are alive shows how merciful God is! Had he been unmerciful, he would long ago have cut you down, for what are you but a cumberer of the ground, with your heart full of evil devices at this very moment, at enmity against him? I know you are so, or otherwise you would not be so hard to lead to faith, yet are you spared by

his mercy. Is not that proof enough? And, moreover, the gospel is preached to you. You are told that “he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.” He must be a good God who lets you hear such a gospel, and who bids me plead with you, as though Christ pleaded with you, that you would lay hold of him. Why, the gospel itself is the greatest of signs and wonder. What want you more than that? “Oh,” you say, “can the gospel save me?” My dear friend, you do not want any sign to prove that, you have your own relatives, your own sons and daughters who have been saved. You are a witness to what grace has done for them. What more evidence can you require? Remember the dying bed of your sainted mother, recollect the joyous departure of your brother, or your converted child. Evidently grace did wonders for them. What more do you want to convince you? Mark you, if you did not believe that Jesus is the Son of God, if you did not believe that his blood could cleanse from sin, I might talk somewhat differently to you; but you do believe all this, and I say, in the name of all that is reasonable, what makes you ask for any greater sign than the signs which God has already given you? You are seeking for altogether unnecessary things.

You are also asking for *useless* signs. What evidence could there be now, for instance, in mere dejection of spirit? You want to feel miserable you say, what evidence would that be of your salvation? It seems to me that you are like a man who should say that he would catch hold of a rope, if he could sink so many fathoms deeper in the ocean, or that he would avail himself of a dispensary if his disease were so much worse. How strange that a rational man should talk thus! Despair is no help to faith. Sinful doubts cannot assist you to Christ. They may most effectually keep you from him.

“Why those fears, poor trembling sinner;
Why those anxious, gloomy fears?
Doubts and fears can never save thee,
Life is never won by tears;
'Tis believing,
Which the soul to Christ endears.

Tears, though flowing like a river,
Never can one sin efface;
Jesus' tears would not avail thee—
Blood alone can meet thy case;
Fly to Jesus!
Life is found in his embrace.”

“Oh,” but you say, “I have desired to feel ecstatic joy;” but if you did, how could that help you to believe in Christ? Thy joy might be no more than worldlings feel when their wealth increases, it might spring of mere

excitement, it might all be based upon a lie, and thy joy might be thy damnation. O man, Christ is worthy of confidence, but thy joys and thy sorrows are not worthy of confidence. They may be good or they may be bad, they may be hopeful or they may be delusive. Wherefore lookest thou at them, or seekest thou another foundation than God has laid? Thy feelings are fickle things. Believe thou and live.

Are you not also seeking most *unreasonable* things? To ask a sign from God when he pledges his word seems to me to be out of all reason. You are a beggar, remember, and we have an old proverb that beggars must not be choosers. Above all, how dare a beggar demand a sign before he will receive an alms? I am walking in the street, and am accosted by a hungry man, and if I offer him a loaf of bread, is he to refuse to take it unless I will fly in the air or help him to turn a stone into bread? “Let the man starve, sir,” you will say, “if he be so unreasonable as to demand a sign.” And yet that is just like you, you will not take the mercy which the gospel freely offers you, which God even commands you to accept—you will not take it unless some astonishing sign or wonder shall be wrought in you.

Let your folly appear still further when I remind you that you are asking for *unpromised* signs. God has promised that everyone that believeth in Jesus Christ shall live. He has promised to hear prayer, but he has never promised to give any one of you a sign or a wonder. And yet you will ask him to give you a sign which he has never promised, and dare not ask him to give you eternal life which he has promised. Folly indeed!

Some of you are seeking for *injurious* signs. That depression of spirit which some think would be such an encouragement to them, why it is even sinful. And how should I ask a sinful thing of God? To be distracted in my mind, to be so depressed and melancholy as to make myself and all my household miserable—is that a good thing? It is a great sin against God. And am I to ask God to give me this sign in order to help me to believe? Thoughts of suicide! Why, my brethren, they are awful, they are not to be allowed. There is murder in them. He that even thinks of them hath committed murder already in his heart. And are these terrible, these devilish things, to be helps to you to believe? Why, they would just drive you into hell. How can they help you to heaven? You are asking for that which would be your ruin. You ask a scorpion, you ask a stone, you ask a serpent, and then you think that after having all these evil things you would be more fit to receive the bread of the divine blessing. God will deny you, I trust, what you so foolishly ask for. Oh, be content to be led in a gentler way. Be willing to be blown to Christ by the soft south wind—ask not for tempests. Be satisfied to be drawn by the cords of love, and by the bands of a man—demand not whips and chains. Enquire not for the thunders and lightnings of Sinai. Be satisfied with the turtle-notes of Calvary.

“Hark! the voice of Jesus calling,
‘Come, thou laden, come to me;
I have rest and peace to offer,
Rest, poor labouring one, for thee
Take salvation,
Take it *now*, and happy be.’

Life is found alone in Jesus,
Only there ’tis offered thee—
Offer’d without price or money,
’Tis the gift of God sent free;
Take salvation,
Take it *now*, and happy be.”

Remember, my dear hearers, that some of you who are not believing are seeking signs *which others have never had*. To give you an instance or two. There stood the prodigal son feeding the swine, so hungry that he would fain have filled his belly with the husks. The thought crossed his mind, “I will arise, and go unto my father.” What sign had he? He sets off to seek his father’s face. What sign had he, I say? There does not appear to have been even an invitation sent, but he sought his father and he found forgiveness. Take another case. Christ has likened seeking souls to the widow who sought help of the unjust judge. She cried to him, she continued to cry to him, until she gained her suit; but what sign had she? If any sign, it was all negative, all from the opposite quarter, yet on she went. Look at the Canaanitish woman. She desired that her daughter might be healed. What sign had she? Christ said, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to dogs.” Instead of a sign to help her it was a hard word to discourage her, but yet she won her suit. And why not you, my hearers, why not you? The poor woman who touched the hem of Christ’s garment in the press, what sign had she of his willingness to help her? It was her own earnest, intense desire, and her faith in Jesus that made her touch the hem out of which the virtue came. Wait not then for signs to be given to you when they have not been given to others, but do as others have done, and obtain the like blessing.

III. I shall now want a few minutes more, and your very serious attention, while I now LAY BARE YOUR SINS, your grievous sins.

My dear hearers, in the first place, *you make God a liar*. Is not this the testimony of the Holy Ghost, “He that believeth not hath made God a liar”? How do we treat liars? If they tell us a thing, we say, “I am doubtful of it. We want more evidence. Now, I feel persuaded that many of you respect even me so well that if I made a statement you would accept it without any further evidence. But here is the everlasting God, who declares that whoso-

ever trusts his Son shall be saved, and you practically give him the lie. For if you believed what he testifies, since you want to be saved, you would surely trust his Son. But you practically say, “We do not believe it, we do not believe it. We want more evidence, we want a sign and a wonder. You make God a liar.

In the next place, *you insult God’s sovereignty*. He has a right to give signs or not, as he wills, but you do, as it were, say, “Thou shalt give me a sign or else I will be damned. I will not have thy mercy if I cannot have it in my own way. Great God, I will not be saved unless I can feel as I want to feel. I have a whim in my mind as to how the work of grace shall be wrought, and if it begin not as I think best, I will sooner make my bed in hell than accept thy Son.” Is the preacher too hard with you? Ah, it is love that makes me hard! In truth, it is you who are hard with God, and hard with your own souls. O fling away this accursed pride of yours, and kiss his silver sceptre, and say, “Lord, save me as thou wilt. I believe, help thou my unbelief.”

I must tell you what is more, you are acting the part of an *idolater*. What does an idolater do? He says, “I cannot believe in an unseen God. I must have a golden calf or an image that I can see with my eyes and touch with my hand.” You say just the same. You cannot believe God’s naked word, you demand something you can feel, something you can see. Sheer idolatry. Do you not see it? You make your own feelings and emotions, or strange impressions, to be more worthy of trust than even God himself. You make them idols, and put them into God’s place. You, so far as you can, undeify the Deity. O tremble at such a crime as this!

Do you not see, moreover, that you *crucify the Saviour*? Those who nailed his hands to the tree were not greater sinners, even if they were so great, as you are who say to him, “Bleeding Saviour, I believe that thou hast died on the cross. I believe that thy blood could cleanse sin, but I cannot trust thee to do it. I have no confidence in thee. I cannot, will not trust thee. I trust my husband, but I cannot trust my Saviour. I trust my child, but I cannot trust my God. I trust my minister, but I cannot trust the Son of God exalted in the highest heavens.” Why, this is crucifying him—this is treating him as a dog only should be treated. I know not what can be worse than this. Nails in his hands are not more cruel than this mistrust of his deep love and his divine power. “Ah,” saith one, “I do not mean that: but I want to see the work of the Holy Ghost in my soul.” Ah, then, I have another charge to bring against you—you are wanting to trust in the work of the Holy Spirit, instead of trusting in the work of Jesus Christ. Now, there is no text in all the Bible which tells you to make the work of the Holy Ghost the foundation of our confidence. Nowhere is it set forth as the ground for a sinner’s reliance. It occupies quite another place. If you try to put the work

of the Spirit where the work of Christ should be, you grieve the Holy Ghost. For the very last thing that ever the Holy Ghost would do would be to supplant the Lamb of God. It is his office and mission to glorify Christ. How, then, shall he supplant him? When you say, "I cannot trust the blood, I cannot trust the righteousness of Christ, I must have something from the Holy Ghost to trust to," you do, as it were, try to make a clash between the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of Christ, and this grieves the Spirit to the last degree.

IV. Ah, I have thought over this subject carefully, and I have tried to speak upon it earnestly, but I am conscious when I have done my best that you will go on in this folly, and continue still in this sin; yet I do pray the Holy Spirit that it may not so be, for now during the last few minutes I desire to SHOW YOU YOUR DANGER as I have shown you your folly and sin.

My dear friends, you are in danger of death. You admit that, and now suppose you die in the state you are in. Why, you are almost saved. You are awakened, you are aroused, you have many good desires, but a man who is only almost saved will be altogether damned. There was a householder who almost bolted his door at night, but the thief came in. A prisoner was condemned to be hanged, and was almost pardoned, but he hung on the gallows. A ship was almost saved from shipwreck, but she went to the bottom with all hands on board. A fire was almost extinguished, but it consumed a city. A man almost decided remains to perish in the flames of hell. So is it with you. Except you believe, all these things which you possess of good desire and emotion, shall be of no service to you at all, for "he that believeth not shall be damned." Remember, friend, thou mayst be damned before the sun goes down today. The flames of hell may enclose thee ere the sun shall gild another morning with his light. O seek the Saviour now while the gospel message comes with fresh power on this Lord's-day. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," for, "he that believeth, and is baptised shall be saved."

"Soon that voice will cease its calling,
Now it speaks, and speaks to thee;
Sinner, heed the gracious message,
To the blood for refuge flee;
Take salvation,
Take it *now*. and happy be."

There is one other thing of which you are in danger, namely, that if you are spared for years to come, yet, through long procrastination your conscience may become seared as with a hot iron. If thou dost this day believe, whatever thou mayst have been, thy sins are all forgiven thee in a moment;

if thou dost now look to Christ upon Calvary, and trust thy soul with him, thou shalt now live, for—

“There is life in a look at the crucified One,
There is life at this moment for thee.”

But if thou wilt look to thy good works, to thy preparations, to thy fears, to thy joys; if, indeed, thou dost look to anything but Christ, it may be the Holy Ghost will never strive with thee again. Thy conscience will become hardened, and thou being given up to thine idols, wilt perish, utterly perish, under the sound of the gospel, perish with the light of the gospel shining on thine eyeballs, perish of the serpent-bite, while the brazen serpent is lifted high, perish of thirst when the water of life runs rippling at thy foot, because thou art not content to stoop down and take it as God presents it to thee. O that thou wouldst this very day end these follies and these sins, believing in Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

“Jesus, th’ eternal Son of God,
Whom seraphim obey,
The bosom of the Father leaves
And enters human clay.”

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xi. 14–44.

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