

Help for Seekers of the Light

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon passionately urges seekers to abandon false hopes and rituals and to find true peace and light only through humble faith in Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Isaiah 59:9, John 3:16, John 5:39-40, Ephesians 2:8-9

Topics: "Salvation", "Faith"

Description

In 'Help for Seekers of the Light,' C.H. Spurgeon addresses those yearning for spiritual illumination but struggling in darkness. He warns against false hopes placed in rituals and creeds and emphasizes the necessity of humble, heartfelt faith in Jesus Christ. Spurgeon encourages persistent prayer and a sincere confession of need as the path to true peace and salvation. This sermon offers both a compassionate diagnosis of spiritual despair and a powerful call to embrace the light of Christ.

Transcript

"We look for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness."- Isaiah 59:9.

ISRAEL had greatly revolted from her God and in consequence she had brought upon herself great sorrow. Still, instead of repenting of their faults and returning to their allegiance to Jehovah, the nation continued to be duped by false prophets and presumptuous pride into the expectation of better days. The better days came not. They looked for the sunshine, but they wandered in the mists. They waited for brightness, but walked in gloom. Unhappy Israel! She turned aside from Jehovah to worship Baal—she went after the gods of the heathen which were not gods—and from that hour her land was afflicted with pestilence and famine.

The spoiler came up against her. He stopped her wells, cut down her vines and barked her fig trees. And in the end he carried her away captive, made the sons and daughters of Zion to sit down by the waters of Babylon and weep at the remembrance of the beloved city. Sin is evermore a bitter thing and they who follow it expecting to arrive at the light of joy are duped and deceived. They shall be plunged into denser and denser darkness until they arrive at an unending midnight unbroken by a solitary star.

This historical example might be used by way of warning to any seekers after happiness who foolishly expect to find it in the pleasures of sin and the neglect of God. You will certainly be disappointed, for, "joy is a plant that does not grow on nature's barren soil"—only a renewed nature can be blessed. The more intensely you pursue happiness in the bewitching way of sin, the further will it fly from you. Like the

will-o-the-wisp, the glare of pleasure will entice you into the quagmire and there will leave you to find that your chase has gained you nothing but danger and weariness. The pearl of happiness lies not in the depths of dissipation. The broad road always ends in destruction, never in peace.

Hoist the sails of desire to the breeze, let go the helm of reason and let your soul be borne wherever the blasts of temptation or the currents of custom may direct and one thing you may be sure of—your unhappy boat will never be drifted by such means into the haven of peace! To such a voyage shipwreck is the certain end! To other modes of living disappointment is in like manner attached. Vain is it to pile up gold. Vain is it to awaken the clarion trumpet of fame. Vain is it to gather learning or to master eloquence, eminence, rank, wealth, power—all these things are too little to satisfy the insatiable craving of an immortal soul.

You must have God or you shall never have enough! You must be reconciled to Him or you can never be at peace with yourself. Man must enter into a covenant of peace with his God or all the creatures of God shall conspire against him! Pilgrim of earth, your way must be towards holiness and God, or in vain shall you expect the dawning—to the sinner there is reserved the blackness of darkness forever and even now his way is hard and his path is darkened with fear and disquietude.

I thought, however, this morning, of addressing myself through the words of the text, to another class of individuals. To persons who are sincerely seeking better things. Those desirous of obtaining the true and heavenly light, who have waited, hoping to receive it—but instead of obtaining it are in a worse, or at least in a sadder state than they were. They are almost driven, today, into the dark thoughts that for them no light will ever come—that they shall be prisoners chained forever in the valley of the shadow of death.

If God shall bless a few words of awakening and encouraging to such prisoners, so that some shall see the heavenly light today, thrice happy shall our heart be!

I. We will commence by depicting the character we wish to speak to. Our first head, therefore, may be remembered as DESCRIPTIVE. These persons are in some degree aware of their natural darkness. According to the text they are looking for light. They are not content with their obscurity—they are waiting for brightness. In this audience there are a few

who are not content to be what their first birth has made them. They discover in their nature much of evil. They would gladly be rid of it! They find in their understanding much ignorance and they would gladly be illuminated. They do not understand the Scripture when they read it and though they hear Gospel terms, yet they fail to grasp Gospel thought.

They pant to escape from this ignorance. They desire to know the Truth of God which saves the soul, and their desire is not only to know it in theory, but to know it by its practical power upon their inner man. They are really and anxiously desirous to be delivered from the state of nature which they feel to be a dangerous one, and to be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God! Oh, but these are the best of hearers—these in whom right desires have begun to be awakened! Men who are dissatisfied with the darkness are evidently not altogether dead, for the dead shall slumber in the catacombs, heedless whether it is noon or night. Such men are evidently not altogether asleep, for they that slumber shall sleep the better for the darkness—they ask no sunbeams to molest their dreams.

Such people are evidently not altogether blind, for to the blind little does it matter whether the sun floods the landscape with glory or night conceals it with her sable veil. Those to whom our thoughts are directly

turned are evidently somewhat awakened, aroused and bestirred, and this is no small blessing, for, alas, the most of men are a stolid mass as regards spiritual things and the preacher might almost as hopefully strive to create a soul within the ribs of death, or extort warm tears of pity from Sicilian marble, as to evoke spiritual emotions from the men of this generation!

So far, the persons whom I seek this morning are hopeful in their condition—as the trees twist their branches towards the sunlight, so do these long after Jesus, the Light and Life of men! Moreover, these persons have a high idea of what the light is. In the text they call it, "brightness." They wait for it and are grieved because it comes not. If you greatly value spiritual light, my dear Friend, you are under no mistake! If you count it to be a priceless thing to obtain an interest in Christ, the forgiveness of your sins and peace with God, you judge according to solemnness. You shall never exaggerate in your valuation of the one thing necessary.

It is true that those who trust in God are a happy people. It is true that to be brought into sonship and adopted into the family of the great God is a blessing for which kings might well exchange their diadems! You cannot think too highly of the blessings of Divine Grace! I would rather incite in you a sacred covetousness after them than in the remotest degree lower your estimate of their preciousness. Salvation is such a blessing that Heaven hangs upon it! If you win Grace you have the germ of Heaven within you—the security, the pledge and earnest of everlasting bliss!

So far, again, there is much that is hopeful in you. It is well that you loathe the darkness and prize the light. Furthermore, the persons I would gladly speak with have some hope that they may yet obtain this light. In fact, they are waiting for it—hopefully waiting and are somewhat disappointed that after waiting for the light, behold, obscurity has come. They are evidently astonished at the failure of their hopes. They are amazed to find themselves walking in darkness when they had fondly hoped that the candle of the Lord would shine round about them. My dear Friends, I would encourage in you that spark of hope, for despair is one of the most terrible hindrances to the reception of the Gospel.

So long as awakened sinners cherish a hope of mercy, we have hope for them. We hope, O Seeker, that before long you will be able to sing of pardon bought with blood—and when this scene is closed—shall enter through the gates into the pearly city among the blessed who forever see the face of the Well-Beloved! Though it may seem too good to be true, yet even you, in your calmer moments, think one day you will rejoice that Christ is yours, and take your seat among His people, though you are the meanest of them all in your own estimation.

Then you imagine in your heart how fervently you will love your Redeemer! How rapturously you will kiss the very dust of His feet! How gratefully you will bless Him who has lifted the poor from the dunghill and made him to sit among princes. How I long to see this hope of yours transformed into joyful reality! May the chosen hour strike this morning! May you no longer look through the window wistfully at the banquet, but come in to sit at the table and feed upon Christ, rejoicing with His chosen!

The persons I am describing are such as have learned to plead their case with God, for our text is a complaint addressed to the Lord Himself. "We look for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness." It is a declaration of inward feelings, a laying bare of the heart's agonies to the Most High. Ah, dear Friends, although you have not yet found the peace you seek, it is well that you have begun to pray. Perhaps you think it poor praying—indeed, you hardly dare call it prayer at all—but God judges not as you do. A groan is heard in Heaven! A deep-fetched sigh and a falling tear are prevalent

weapons at the Throne of God. Yes, your soul cries to God and you cannot help it.

When you are about your daily work you find yourself sighing, "O that my load of guilt were gone! O that I could but call the Lord, my Father, with an unfaltering tongue!"

Night after night and day after day this desire rises from you like the morning mist from the valleys. You would, this morning, tear off your right arm and pluck out your right eye if you might but gain the unspeakable blessing! You are sincerely anxious for reconciliation with God and your anxiety reveals itself in prayer and supplication. I hope these prayers will continue. I trust you will never cease your crying. May the Holy Spirit constrain you to sigh and groan still. Like the importunate woman, may you press your suit until the gracious answer shall be granted through the merits of Jesus.

So far, dear Friends, things are hopeful with you. But when I say hopeful, I wish I could say much more, for mere hopefulness is not enough. It is not enough to desire. It is not enough to seek. It is not enough to pray. You must actually obtain—you must in very deed lay hold on eternal life. You will never enjoy comfort and peace till you have passed out of the merely hopeful stage into a better and a brighter one by making sure your interest in the Lord Jesus by a living, appropriating faith. In the exalted Savior all the gifts and Graces which you need are stored up, in readiness to supply your needs. O may you come to His fullness and out of it receive Grace for Grace!

The person I am desirous of comforting this morning may be described by one other touch of the pencil. He is one who is quite willing to lay bare his heart before God—to confess his desires whether right or wrong and to expose his condition whether unhealthy or sound. While we try to cloak anything from God, we are both wicked and foolish. It argues a rebellious spirit when we have a desire to hide anything from our Maker. But when a man uncovers his wound, invites inspection of its sore, bids the surgeon cut away the leprous film which covered its corruption and says to him, "Here, probe into its depths, see what evil there is in it. Spare not, but make a sure cure of the wound," then he is in a fair way to be recovered.

When a man is willing to make God his Confessor and does freely and without hypocrisy pour out his heart like water before the Lord, there is good hope for him! I believe I have some such here this morning. You have told the Lord your case. You have spread your petitions before Him—I trust you will continue to do so until you find relief. But I have yet a higher hope, namely, that you may soon obtain peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

II. So I shall pass on to the second point, which is that of ASSISTANCE. It shall now be my happy task to endeavor to assist into the light these who would gladly flee from the darkness. We will do so by trying to answer the query, "How is it that I, being desirous of light, have not found it? Why am I left to grope like a blind man for the wall and stumble at noonday as in the night? Why has not the Lord revealed Himself to me?"

The first answer, my dear Friends, is that you may have been seeking the light in the wrong place. Many, like Mary, seek the living among the dead. You, it is possible, may have been the victim of the false doctrine that peace with God can be found in the use of ceremonies. It may be you have been brought in connection with that Church which vainly rests its faith upon the figment of Apostolic succession and the empty parade of Episcopal ordination. You have been taught to believe on aquatic regeneration and confirmation by palmistry—you are the dupe of the dogma of sacramental efficacy and priestly potency!

If so, it is little marvel that you have not found peace, for, believe me, there is no peace to be found in the whole round of ceremonies—even if they were such as God Himself prescribed! There is no peace to be found in them, except it is that deadly peace which rocks souls in the cradle of superstition into that deep sleep from which only the judgment trumpet shall awaken them. These are they that receive strong delusions to believe a lie that they all may be damned. May you, my Hearers, escape from so terrible a doom! God has never promised salvation by the use of ceremonies! The Gospel which He sent His servants to preach was never a Gospel of postures, genuflections, symbols and rituals.

The Gospel is revealed in these words, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved"—a mental thing, a spiritual thing, an inner thing—not at all an outward display, a matter of the senses and the flesh. Our Gospel is altogether a matter for heart and soul and spirit. And such must be your salvation, or saved you can never be! It is possible too, dear Friends, that you have been looking for salvation in the mere belief of a certain creed. You have thought that if you could discover pure orthodoxy and could then consign your soul into its mold you would be a saved man. And you have consequently believed unreservedly, as far as you have been able to do so, the set of truths which have been handed to you by the tradition of your ancestors.

It may be that your creed is Calvinistic. It is possible that it is Arminian. It may be Protestant. It may be Romish. It may be truth—it may be a lie. But, believe me, solid peace with God is not to be found through the mere reception of any creed, however true or Scriptural. Mere head-notion is not the road to Heaven. "You must be born again," means a great deal more than that you must believe certain dogmas. It is of the utmost possible importance, I grant you, that you should search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life. But remember how our Lord upbraided the Pharisees. As the passage may be read, He told them that they searched the Scriptures, but He added, "You will not come unto Me that you might have life."

You stop short at the Scriptures and therefore short of eternal life. The study of these, good as it is, cannot save you! You must press beyond this—you must come to the living, personal Christ, once crucified, but now living to plead at the right hand of God—or else your acceptance of the most sound creed cannot avail for the salvation of your soul! You may be misled in some other manner which I have not time to mention—some other mistaken way of seeking peace may have beguiled you and if so I pray God you may see the mistake and understand that there is but one door to salvation and that is Christ! There is one way and that is Christ! One Truth, and that is Christ! One life and that is Christ!

Salvation is in Jesus only! It lies not in you—in your doings, or your feelings, or your knowledge, or your resolves. In Him all life and light for the sons of men are stored up by the mercy of God the Father. It may be one reason why you have not found the light is because you have sought it in the wrong place.

Again, it is possible that you may have sought it in the wrong spirit. My dear Friends, when we ask for pardon, reconciliation, salvation—we must remember to whom we speak and who we are who ask the favor. Some appear to deal with God as if He were bound to give salvation—as if salvation, indeed, were the inevitable result of a round of performances, or the deserved reward of a certain amount of virtue. They refuse to see that salvation is a pure gift of God—not of works, not the result of merit—but of free favor only. Not of man, neither by man, but of the Lord alone! Though the Lord has placed it on record in His Word, in the plainest language, that, "it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy," yet the most of men in their hearts imagine that everlasting life is tied to duties and earned by service.

Dear Friends, you must come down from such vainglorious notions! You must sue out your pardon, as our law courts put it, in forma pauperis. You must come before God as a humble petitioner pleading the promises of mercy—abhorring all idea of merit, confessing that if the Lord condemns you He has a right to do it and that if He saves you, it will be an act of pure, gratuitous mercy—a deed of Sovereign Grace. Oh, but too many of you seekers hold your heads too high—to enter the lowly gate of light you must stoop! On the bended knee is the penitent's true place. "God be merciful to me, a sinner," is the penitent's true prayer.

Why, Man, if God should damn you, you could never complain of injustice, for you have deserved it a thousand times! And if those prayers of yours were never answered. If no mercy ever came, you could not accuse the Lord, for you have no right to be heard! He could righteously withhold an answer of peace if He so willed to do. Confess that you are an undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sinner and begin to pray as you have never before prayed! Cry out of the depths of self-abasement if you would be heard! Come as a beggar, not as a creditor! Come to crave, not to demand! Use only this argument, "Lord, hear me, for You are gracious and Jesus died. I cry to You as a condemned criminal who seeks pardon. Deliver me from going down into the Pit that I may praise Your name."

This, I fear, may have been a great source of mischief with many of you—this harboring of a proud spirit. And, if it has been so, amend it, I beseech you. And go, now, to your Father whom you have offended—go with humble and contrite hearts, in lowliness and brokenness of spirit—for He will surely accept you as His children. Others have not obtained peace, I fear, because they have not yet any idea of the true way of finding it. This, though it is preached to us so often, is still but little understood. The way of peace with God is seen through a haze by most men—so that if you put it ever so plainly, they will, if it is possible—misunderstand you!

Dear Hearer, your salvation does not depend upon what you do, but upon what Christ did, almost 2,000 years ago, when He offered Himself sacrifice for sin. All your salvation takes root in the death-throes of Calvary. The great Substitute did, then, in very deed bear your sin and suffer its penalty. Your sin shall never destroy you if upon that bloody tree the Lord's chosen High Priest made a full expiation for your sins! They shall not be laid against you any more forever. What you have to do is but to accept what Jesus has finished. I know your notion is that you are to bring

something to Him—but that vainglorious idea has ruined many and will ruin many more! When you shall be brought to come empty-handed, made willing to accept a free and full salvation from the hand of the Crucified—then and then only, shall you be saved—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One." But men will not look to the Cross. No, they conspire to raise another cross—or they aspire to adorn that cross with jewels, or they labor to wreath it with sweet flowers—but they will not give a simple look to the Savior and rely alone on Him. Yet, dear Hearer, no soul can ever obtain peace with God by any other means! And this means is so effectual that it never did fail and never shall! The waters of Abana and Pharpar are preferred by proud human nature, but the waters of Jordan alone can take away the leprosy. Our repenting, our doings, our resolves—these are but broken cisterns! The only life-draught is to be found in the fountain of Living Water opened up by our Immanuel's death! Do you understand that a simple trust, a sincere dependence, a hearty reliance upon Christ is the way of salvation?

If you do, may the God who taught you to understand the way give you Divine Grace to run in it and then your light has come! Arise and shine! Your peace has come, for Christ has bought it with His blood. For as many as trust in Him He has been punished. Their sins are gone—

"Lost as in a shoreless flood,

Drowned in the Redeemer's blood.

Pardoned soul, how blessed you are,

Justified from all things now!"

My dear Friends, if none of these things have touched your case, let me further suggest that perhaps you have not found light because you have sought it in a half-hearted manner. None enter Heaven who are but half-inclined to go there. Cold prayers ask God to refuse them. When a man manifestly does not value the mercy which he asks and would be perfectly content not to receive it, it is small wonder if he is denied!

Many a seeker lies, by the year together, freezing outside the door of God's mercy because he has never thoroughly bestirred himself to take the kingdom of Heaven by violence. If you can by any means be made willing to be unsaved, you shall be left to perish! But if you are inwardly set and resolved that you will give God no rest until you win a pardon from Him, He will give you your heart's desire! The man who must be saved shall be. The man whose heart is set to find the way to Sion's hill shall find that way. I believe that usually a sense of our pardon comes to us when, Samson-like, we grasp the posts of mercy's door with desperate vehemence as though we would pluck them up, post and bar and all, sooner than remain any longer shut out from peace and safety. Strong cries and tears, groaning of spirit, vehement longing and ceaseless pleading—these are the weapons which, through the blood of Jesus, win us the victory in our warfare of seeking the Lord. Perhaps, then, my dear Friends, you have not bestirred yourself as you should. May the Lord help you to be a mighty wrestler and then a prevailing prince!

To come closer home to your conscience, is it not possible—is it not rather fearfully probable—that there may be some sin within you which you are harboring to your soul's peril? When a soldier's foot has refused to heal, the surgeon has been known to examine it very minutely and manipulate every part. Each bone is there and in its place—there is no apparent cause for the inflammation, but yet the wound refuses to heal. The surgeon probes and probes again, until his lancet comes into contact with a hard foreign substance. "Here it is," he says, "a bullet is lodged here. This must come out or the wound will never close."

So my probe, dear Hearer, may this morning discover a secret in you and if so, it must come out or you must die. You cannot expect to have peace with God and still indulge in that drunkard's glass! What? A drunkard reconciled to God? You cannot hope to enjoy peace with God and yet refuse to speak with that relative who offended you years ago. What? Look to be forgiven, when you will not, yourself, forgive? There are doubtful practices in your trade behind the counter—do you dare hope that God will accept a thief?—for that is what you are, a thief and a liar! You brand your goods dishonestly—call them 20 when they are fifteen—do you expect God to be your friend while you remain a rogue? Do you think He will smile on you in your knavery and walk with you when you choose dirty ways? Perhaps you indulge a haughty spirit, or it may be an idle disposition—it little signifies which kind of devil is in you—it must come out, or else the peace of God cannot come in!

Now, are you willing to give sin up? If not, it is all lost time for me to preach Christ to you, for He is not meant to be a Savior of those who persevere in sin. He came to save His people from their sins, not in them! And if you still must cling

to a darling sin, be not deceived—within the gates of Heaven you can never enter! Have I yet to seek a reason why some of you have not found the light? It may be that you have only sought peace with God occasionally. After an earnest sermon you have been awakened. But when the sermon has been concluded you have gone back to your slumber like the sluggard who turns again upon his bed. After a sickness, or when there has been a death in the family—you have then zealously bestirred yourself! But soon you have declined into the same carelessness as before.

Oh, fool that you are, remember he wins not the race who runs by spurts, but he who continues running to the end! He gets not Christ who does but think of Him now and then and in the meantime regards vanity and falsehood in his heart. He only shall have Christ who must have Him—who must have Him now and who gives his whole heart to Him and cries, "I will seek Him till I find Him! And when I find Him I will never let Him go." I shall not dwell upon this, but let me remind you that the great reason, after all—let us say what we will—why earnest souls do not get speedy rest, lies in this—they are disobedient to the one plain Gospel precept— "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

I would pin them to this point. It is not necessary at all to combat their doubts and fears. We may do it, but I do not know that we are called upon to do so. The plain matter of fact is, God lays down a way of peace and you will not have it. God says believing in Jesus you shall live—you will not believe in Christ—and yet hope to live! God reveals to you His dear Son and says, "Trust Him." And moreover says, "He that believes not has made God a liar," and yet you dare to make God a liar! Every minute that you live in a state of unbelief, you, so far as you can, make God to be a liar!

What an atrocity for any one of us to fall into! What an amazing presumption for a sinner to live in who professes to be seeking peace with God! O hear me, now, I pray you! My soul for your soul if you are not this day saved, if you confide in the work of Jesus Christ! If you find not eternal life in Jesus, then we also must perish with you, for this is our hope, our only hope! And if it fails you it shall also fail us! Therefore do we with confidence, knowing it can fail neither of us, declare to you this faithful saying which is worthy of all acceptance, that, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the chief. "Whoever believes in Him has everlasting life." "Believe, then, in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," for, "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not must be damned."

III. A few words by way of WARNING. My dear Friends, I will suppose that I have you by the hand and am gazing intently into your eyes. I fear for you lest you become frostbitten by your long sorrow and fall into a fatal slumber. You have been seeking rest, but you have not found it—what an unhappy state is yours! You are now unreconciled to God. Your sin clamors for punishment. You are among those with whom God is angry every day. Can you bear to be in such a condition? Does not something bid you arise and flee out of this city of destruction, lest you be consumed?

What happiness you are missing every day! If you would lay hold on Christ by faith you would possess a joy and peace passing all understanding. You are fretting in this low and miserable dungeon like that poor nun at Cracow! You have been in the dark year after year while the sun is shining, the sweet flowers are blooming and everything waiting to lead you forth with gladness. Oh, what joys you lose by being an unbeliever! Why do you abide so long in this evil state? Meanwhile, what good you might have done! Oh, if

you had been led to look to Jesus Christ these months ago, instead of sitting in darkness yourself, you would have been leading others to Christ and pointing other eyes to that dear Cross that brought peace to you!

What sin you are daily committing! You are daily an unbeliever—daily doing despite to the precious blood—daily denying the ability of Christ and so doing injury to His honor. Does not the Spirit of God within you make you say, this morning, "I will arise and go to my Father"? Oh, if there is such a thought trembling in your soul, quench it not! Obey it, arise and go and may your Father's arms be around your neck before this day's sun goes down! Meanwhile, dear Friend, as I press your hand again, permit me to say what a hardening process is insensibly going on within you! If you are not better, you are certainly worse than you were 12 months ago. Why, those promises that cheered you, then, now yield you no comfort! Those threats which once startled you now cause you no alarm! Will you tarry longer?

You have waited to be better and you are growing worse and worse. You have said, "I will come at a more convenient season," and every season is more inconvenient than that which came before it. You doubted then—you are the victim of deeper and more dastardly doubts today. O that you could believe in Him who must be true! O that you could trust in Him who ought to be trusted, for He never can deceive! I pray God the day may come, come now this very moment, that you may shake yourself from the dust and arise and put on your beautiful garments—for every hour you sit on the dunghill of your soul-destroying doubts you are being fastened by strong bands of iron to the seat of despair!

Your eyes are growing dimmer, your hands more palsied—and the poison in your veins is raging more furiously! Yonder is the Savior's Cross and there is efficacy in His blood for you. Trust Jesus, now, and this moment you enter into peace! The gate of Mercy swings readily on its hinge and opens wide to every soul that casts itself upon the bosom of the Savior. O why do you tarry? Mischief will befall you. The sun is going down. Hurry up, Traveler, lest you be overtaken with an everlasting night!

What else can I say to warn you but this—every man and every woman in this house today who is unconverted, however hopeful you may be—is running the awful risk of sinking into the place where hope comes not! As the Lord my God lives, my Hearer, with all the hopefulness which is now about you, unless you believe in Jesus, you shall be damned! There may be 10,000 good points about you, but if you miss this one, you must be a castaway. My soul is grieved and vexed within me that I have such a message to deliver, but I must speak plainly. Will you have Christ or not? If not, then whatever you may glory in, Christ will not know you in the day of His coming, but you shall hear Him say, "Depart from Me, I never knew you."

Unless Jesus Christ is your shield and help, you are undone. But you may have Him—you may have Him now! His Spirit speaks through my voice to you at this hour. I know He does! You are feeling, even now, the gentle motions of His mighty power—

"Yield to His love who round you now
The bands of a man would cast,
The cords of His love, who was
given for you, To His altar binding you fast."

This is your only opportunity. Once let life be over and there is no Christ to be preached in Gehenna, no Gospel to be proclaimed amid the flames of Tophet! Perhaps to some of you even this day is your only day of Grace. Now is conscience yet tender. Tomorrow, touched by that hot iron which Satan ever has at hand, it may be a seared conscience never to feel again. Now does the Gospel trumpet ring sweet and clear, "Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome, Sinners, come!" Your guilt shall

vanish, though black as Hell before! All things that separate you and God shall be removed! Only trust in Jesus and you shall live!

I wish to put it to you more powerfully, but cannot. There is the Gospel. You have heard it this morning. Perhaps you will never hear it again. Or, hearing it again, perhaps it shall never have a power to woo you as it has at this hour. By the wounds of Christ, I pray you turn not from Him! By the second coming of Christ, I pray you regard Him! Since He shall shortly descend in the clouds of Heaven to call the nations to account, I pray you bow to Him! By that pierced hand which shall sway the scepter—by those weeping eyes which shall flash like flames of fire—by those lips of mercy which shall pronounce sentences of thunder, to be accompanied with an execution of lightning, I pray you, "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little!"

I preach to you Christ with the crown of thorns. Christ with the wounded hands. Christ with the opened side, full of tenderness and mercy to sinners though they forget Him and neglect Him. But if you will not have this Christ, then I must tell you of the Christ who shall come—

"With the rainbow wreath and robes of storm, On cherub wings and wings of wind, Appointed Judge of all mankind." You may reject Him today, but you shall not escape Him then! You may turn your backs upon Him on this Lord's-Day, but the mountains shall refuse to give you shelter in that tremendous hour! Come, bow at His feet! Look up, now, to His dear face and say, "I trust You, Jesus, I trust You now. Save me now, for I am vile."

IV. The last word is that of ENCOURAGEMENT. Dear Friends, there are many, many around you, some of whom you know, who have trusted Jesus and they have found light. They once suffered your disappointments, but they have now found rest to their souls. They came to Jesus just as they were and at this moment they can tell you that they are satisfied in Him. If others have found such peace, why not you? Jesus is still the same! It is not to Christ's advantage to reject a sinner! It is not for God's Glory to destroy a seeker! Rather, it is for His honor and Glory to receive such as humbly repose in the sacrifice of His dear Son.

What holds you back? You are called—come! You are pressed to come—come! In the courts of Law I have sometimes heard a man called as a witness and no sooner is he called, though he may be at the end of the court, than he

begins to press his way up to the witness box. Nobody says, "Who is this man pushing, here?" or, if they should say, "Who are you?" it would be a sufficient answer to say, "My name was called." "But you are not rich, you have no gold ring upon your finger!" "No, but that is not it, I was called." "But you are not a man of repute, or rank, or character!" "It matters not, I was called. Make way."

So make way, you doubts and fears! Make way, you devils of the infernal lake! Christ calls the sinner. Sinner, come! Though you have nothing to recommend you, yet, since it is written, "Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out," come, and the Lord bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 11:12-30.

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