

A SECOND WORD TO SEEKERS

NO. 1313

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 10, 1876,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And you shall seek Me, and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart.
Jeremiah 29:13.*

LAST Sabbath morning [See Sermon No. 1312, “*Good News for Seekers.*”] we gave forth words of good cheer to those who seek the Lord, dwelling upon those encouraging words of the Savior upon the Cross, “They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.” We aimed only at the one point of encouraging seekers, for a single objective is always enough for one discourse and the impression made is more likely to be permanent. We had neither time nor desire to qualify our language with discriminating remarks which would help to show who are true seekers and who are not. One cannot reap and winnow with the same machine. I think it is right, therefore, that we should follow up that discourse by another in which we shall discern between those who truly seek and those who only nominally seek the Lord.

Such discrimination will be useful in many ways. Perhaps, dear Friend, after last Lord's-Day you said, “I do not understand this promise that seekers shall praise God, for I have been seeking for many months but I have not been able to praise Him. Surely the promise cannot be true for me.” Rest assured, dear Friend, that the promise *is* true for you if you are true to it. The Word of the Lord is sure. There can be no question upon that point—the questions to be raised must deal with yourself and your searching—either you do not seek or else you seek amiss. Always conclude that if a general promise does not turn out to be true in your particular instance, there is something in *you* that hinders it. You must have fallen short of the character to which the promise is made—the promise, itself, cannot be suspect. “Let God be true and every man a liar.”

You may account for your not obtaining the blessing which you have asked upon any theory which *humbles* yourself, but you must never suppose that the Lord will break His promise, for that were to dishonor His holy name, deny His faithfulness and pour contempt upon His Truth! If His good Word appears to fail towards you, is there not a cause? Does not *sin* lie at the door? Is there not some idol in the inner chamber which must be searched for and taken away? “Are the consolations of God small with you? Is there any secret thing with you?” It is a general truth that proper food will build up the human frame, but if food is eaten and yet no nourishment whatever is obtained from it, we conclude that the system is thrown out of order by some inward disease. The meat is good—it must, therefore, be the stomach or some other organ that ails and turns that which is good into evil.

If a fire is kindled and a person is placed close to it, and yet he declares that he is not warmed by the heat, we do not, because of this, entertain any doubt of the power of *fire* to warm the human body! We conclude that the man has a chill or some other malady which prevents his feeling the natural warmth of the fire. The failure of warmth cannot lie in the *fire*—it must be in the man—for fire must warm any healthy limbs which are held near to it. If a medicine which has been known to produce a cure in hundreds of cases is taken by an individual and it is found to have no result, or to work in a manner contrary to its natural and ordinary effect, we conclude that either the state of the case has been badly judged, or that there is present some other potent drug which neutralizes its effect.

The man, himself, may not be aware that he is eating or imbibing that which acts in an opposite direction to the prescription of his physician and yet it may be so and, therefore, the medicine is not to be distrusted, but the interposing substance must bear all the blame. For this reason we will try, this morning, to discriminate a little, with no wish whatever to grieve any seeking soul, but with a strong desire to indicate any weak point in the seeking, any counteracting habit which may be, at this time, preventing the soul from entering at once into the peace and joy for which it is seeking.

“He that seeks finds” is an indisputable fact. But, as all is not gold that glitters, so all is not *seeking* which bears the name! We come at once to our point by noticing *the quality required in every true seeker*. The verse tells us—“You shall seek Me, and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart.” Whole-heartedness is the quality required. Sec-

only, we shall show *the reasons why wholeheartedness is required*. And, thirdly, *indicate one or two of the main hindrances to it*, which we pray the Lord to remove.

I. THE QUALITY REQUIRED IN THE SEEKER is whole-heartedness—he must search for the Lord with all his heart. This means, I take it, three things. First, in order to find the Lord there must be *an undivided Object in the seeker's mind*. See how the text runs—“You shall seek *Me*, and find *Me*, when you shall search for *Me* with all your heart.” The Object is one and only one. The sinner is at a distance from God and guilt divides him from his God. He longs to draw near to the heavenly Father and to be reconciled—he therefore seeks after God and God, alone. “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” “O that I knew where I might find HIM!”

Now, the Lord is to be found by the guilty only in Christ Jesus, who is the Mercy Seat where God meets sinners and hears their prayers. It is there that the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily and there the fullness of Divine Grace and the Truth of God are stored up so that we may receive of them. We must turn our eyes, then, to God in Christ Jesus, and keep our eyes fixed there. “My Soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.” If the eyes are not only on Christ and in desire of salvation through Him, it will be no wonder if we seek for mercy but seek in vain! How can a man run in two ways at the same time? Brothers and Sisters, you must shake off from you all trust in *self*, for God will have none of it! You must not seek God by the works of the Law, or by any supposed merit that is or ever can be in yourself, for this He utterly refuses.

If you attempt to mix Law with Gospel, self with Christ and merit with mercy, you will certainly miss your aim—your whole soul must concentrate itself upon this—to find God as He is revealed in Christ, a God of Grace and love, the God who justifies the ungodly when He looks upon the merit of His Son and sees the sinner's confidence in Him. You must so seek the Lord as to make no provision for the lusts of the flesh and the desires of the mind. If it cost you the giving up of every pleasure that you have, yet in searching after the Lord you must seek Him so entirely that you would cut off right arms and pluck out right eyes sooner than you should miss Him and so miss eternal life! However sweet the sin may have been to your palate, you must cast it out of your mouth, for it is as poisonous as it is pleasant and, therefore, it is to be put away far from you.

“Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof,” for if you do, you have not sought the Lord with all your heart. There must be one Object and that must be neither self nor sin, but you must feel and say, “in God is my salvation, and my glory. The rock of my strength and my refuge is in God. Therefore with strong desire do I follow after the Lord, even the Lord, alone.” Moreover, there must be no reservations made in this search to gratify pride in any of its shapes. If you say within your heart, “I will only accept mercy if it come to me in a certain way”—you put yourself out of all hope of Grace, for God is a Sovereign, and will do as He wills with His own. Some will not have Christ without signs and wonders—they demand singular experiences, horrible depressions, or delirious excitements—and they will not believe unless some marvelous thing is worked in them or before them.

You must make no conditions with God, either of this or of any other kind. You shall find Him if you will seek Him without bargains and terms and demands—for what are you that you should demand anything of your Maker—and lay down rules and regulations for the dispensing of a mercy to which you have no claim? Come as you are, poor Sinner, and without any reservation submit yourself to the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, only desiring this one thing—that you may find God and His love in Christ Jesus—

*“Lord, deny me what You will,
Only ease me of my guilt.
Suppliant at Your feet I lie,
Give me Christ, or else I die.”*

You shall find the Lord to be your help and your salvation if you seek Him as the one sole Object of your desire. “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after.”

The phrase, “with all your heart” means, next, *with the entire faculties of our being*. A man must seek after God in Christ Jesus with his entire nature. David said, “My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You.” If one part of the man refuses to seek the Lord and remains reserved for Satan, then the Evil One has a lien upon the whole man! Here is a little bird and it tries to fly into the open air, but it is not free. And why not? Its wings are loose, see how it flutters! Its head is not bound, hear how it sings! And this foot is free, too—why is it not at liberty? Do you not perceive that the other leg

is bound by a thin twine? True, it is only held by that single thread, but it is not free. The whole bird is bound, because that *one foot* is held by that single thread!

And so long as a man of free choice gives up any part of himself to the power of sin and keeps back any part of his nature from seeking after God, he is not really seeking the Lord at all, but remains a slave of sin. O man, if you would find God, set your faculties upon the search! Marshal your powers, muster your forces and let your entire nature, body, soul and spirit search after Jesus Christ as the merchantman seeks goodly pearls! Set your thoughts at work and let them search the Scriptures! Awake your understanding and endeavor to comprehend your danger and to know your remedy. Set your wits to work—let your ingenuity and your research be brought to bear on heavenly things, for perhaps when you *do* understand the Gospel you will believe and have peace.

An enlightened judgment is a great help towards faith. Many a man remains without peace because his understanding has never been exercised upon the Gospel and Divine things. But if he would think them over, meditate upon them and ponder them in his heart, by the enlightening of the sacred Spirit, new light would flash into his soul and he would see and believe. “Do you understand what you read?” is an important question and suggests that in the search after salvation the understanding should be called into play. Do not expect to be saved as dumb driven cattle, but as a reasonable man and, therefore, use your reason and understanding upon Divine things, asking the Lord to teach your reason right reason—and to give your understanding a right understanding of His Word.

It will be well for a man, in seeking the Lord, to use his *memory* and his conscience. Let him go over the list of his past sins and recall the wanderings of his heart, the follies of his tongue, the iniquities of his hands. Perhaps memory will call up conscience and become the mother of repentance! The recollection of the sinful past will, by the Spirit’s Grace, create a penitent. Forget not, I pray you, to remember your former days, for God requires that which is past. Remember, too, what God has done by way of mercy to others. Think of friends and companions saved. Remember the grand old records of Inspiration—turn to the Bible and see how God has saved seeking souls—and your memory may thus beget faith in you by the work of the Spirit of God.

The text bids you search “with all your heart,” and your memory, as one of the faculties of your mind, should assist in the search. As for your *will*, how necessary that this, also, be captured and compelled to join heartily in the pursuit. It is a stubborn thing and will not readily bend, but how can you expect to find mercy if you are not willing to submit to God’s rebukes and accept His methods of salvation? Bring forth my Lord Will-Be-Will and let *Grace cause him* to submit himself! Though he was once Lord Mayor of Mansoul, he must bare his neck to the yoke of Christ and admit that the will of the Lord is higher than man’s will! Make him say, “Not as I will, but as You will.” As to every other faculty that you have, if you are, indeed, in earnest, let it be awakened! Leave not a single part of your nature behind you when you come to God, but seek Him with your whole heart, with intense eagerness and strong desire.

“My son, if you will receive My words, and hide My commandments with you; so that you incline your ear unto wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry after knowledge and lift up your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; then shall you understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.” I have now given you two meanings for the phrase, to seek the Lord with all our heart—it indicates an undivided Object and the entireness of our faculties in the search.

But, thirdly, it signifies, mainly, *awakened energy*. “When you shall search for Me with all your heart you shall find Me.” It includes the getting out of that dull, sluggish, indifferent spirit which seems so common. Indifference to eternal realities seems to impregnate the very air we breathe in this sleepy world—sleepy I mean as to things spiritual and Divine. We are busy about a thousand things, but sluggish about our souls! Yet be not deceived, if men are to be saved, it will not be accomplished while they slumber, nor will mercy be found by listless, careless, lackadaisical searching after it.

When the Spirit of God sets a man searching, he becomes earnest, intense, fervent, vehement and strives to enter in at the strait gate, “for the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.” He who would be saved must be resolved to escape from the wrath to come. It must come to this with you—that you will not rest till you find Christ and eternal life, for you can not endure to be damned and, therefore, you are determined that if there is on earth or in Heaven any remedy for your soul’s sickness, you will have it if seeking can obtain it! When the Lord has made you thus resolute, you will need to have perseverance to follow hard after Him till you have beheld His face in peace.

If you have once read the Scriptures to find Christ in them, you will read them again and again—and dig the field of the Word over 10 times till you find the hidden treasure! If you have once prayed for Grace and peace you will pray again and again, and again, and again till your knees are calloused rather than you will miss the blessing! If you have heard the Word preached many times and yet it has not brought peace to your soul, you will be early and late in your waiting at the posts of Jehovah's doors to hear those glad tidings of which it is written, "Hear, and your soul shall live." There will be in your spirit a determination that cannot be shaken, a desire which cannot be appeased!

We must be importunate, like the widow with the unjust judge, or the man at midnight with his friend, for importunity prevails. "Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out your heart like water before the Lord." If you cannot rest till you receive the kiss of pardon, you shall soon obtain it! If you cannot be easy until you are taken into the Father's house and acknowledged to be His child, you shall soon rejoice in the adoption! May the Lord be pleased to awake all seekers to passionate earnestness, for when they are filled with travail of soul they shall obtain mercy! If you are content to go without salvation you shall go without it, but if your soul longs, yes, even faints for it, you shall have it.

There are some poor souls who will, perhaps, be distressed with these remarks upon energetic seeking. They are constitutionally weak and feeble in all that they feel and do and, therefore, they will say, "Alas, Sir, I am afraid I never was so earnest as you describe. I am a poor feeble soul and very low in spirit. I fear I have no such eagerness and energy." No, dear Trembler, and I would not have you misunderstand me, for the force I am now commending is not physical, but *spiritual* and rather that of *weakness* than of strength! Have you not heard that once upon a time two knocks were given at Mercy's door and he who kept the door, opened to one in an instant, but to the other there was no reply. The knock to which the door was opened was but a gentle one and scarcely could be heard by those outside the gate, yet it evidently struck some secret spring upon the door, for the sound thereof thundered along the palace halls!

The second knock was very loud and was heard by all who stood around the door, but it commanded no answer from within. Then he who thus had knocked marveled and enquired of him that kept the gate and said, "How is it that I have knocked so loudly and yet have not entered, while the trembling woman whose knock was very soft and low obtained immediate admittance?" Then he that kept the door answered, "She who knocked so feebly, yet knocked with all her might. Her strength was little, but it was all she had and, therefore, it sounded powerfully within these palace walls. As for you, you have put forth much energy, but it was not your all and, therefore, there is no response to you. Take you the hammer of the gate with both your hands and throw your whole soul into each blow, and see if the door does not yield you admittance."

He did so, the gate flew open to him, and he entered into the place which his feeble Sister had already gained. If you seek God with all your heart, be your heart strong or feeble, you shall find Him!

II. Secondly, we have to consider THE REASON FOR THIS REQUIREMENT. The requirement is so natural that it needs no excusing—it must recommend itself to every thoughtful person. But since it may help us to be earnest if we are told why it is required of us, I would answer first, that *in every other pursuit where the object is at all worthy of a man's efforts, whole-heartedness is required.* I knew a man who had a business, but if you called to see him upon any matter you seldom found him in—he was taking a holiday, or else he had not risen. He made an appointment with you, but he never kept it, or came in so late that you were weary with waiting. Commissions that he was entrusted with were often left unexecuted by the week together, or attended to in a slovenly manner. Do you wonder that when I passed by his shop one day I saw the shutters up and learned that he had failed?

Do you not know that success in life depends upon *earnestness* in it? Do you not teach your sons this important lesson? And if it is so in the lower things of this mortal life, how much more is it in the matters of the world to come? No man becomes learned by sleeping with a book for his pillow, or famous by slumbering at the foot of the ladder of honor. You find, everywhere, that the kingdom of this world suffers violence and never more so than in these days of increasing competition. Surely you cannot expect that if you must run for this world, you may creep and win the next! No, no, you shall find the Lord, Seeker, if you seek Him with all your heart, but no other way! Spiritual sluggards shall starve! Labor, therefore, for the meat which endures to eternal life.

The danger from which the need to escape is so great, that the utmost earnestness is none too much! Consider for a moment the imminence of our peril and the overwhelming nature of it. The unsaved man lies under the wrath of God and

if any man did but know what the wrath of God is, he would think Nebuchadnezzar's furnace to be cool compared with that burning oven! He is, in instant danger of death and of the Judgment, and of that Second Death which follows on the heels of condemnation and consists in banishment from the Presence of God and the Glory of His power. Oh, if a man did but know, while he lived, what it is to *die*—if he could but guess what it is to stand before God's bar and if he could have an inkling of what it must be to be cast where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched—this would surely make him seek the Lord with all his heart!

O Man, if you were in a burning house you would be eager to get out of it! If there seemed a probability that you would sink in a river, you would struggle desperately to get to shore! How is it, then, that you are so little moved by the peril of your soul? Man is awakened when his life is once known to be in peril—how much more earnest ought he to be when eternal life or eternal death are the solemn alternatives! “What do you mean, O sleeper? Arise, and call upon your God!” Look, moreover, at *the greatness of the mercy* which you are seeking. It is none other than pardon of all your sins, perfect righteousness in Christ Jesus, safety through His precious blood, adoption into the family of God and eternal enjoyment of the Presence of God in Heaven!

They that seek for pearls, gold and precious stones, use all their eyes and all their wits, but what are those gaudy toys compared with these immortal treasures? How ought a man to seek after Heaven and eternal life? Should it not be with all his heart? Remember that in this matter *everybody else is in earnest*. Poor Seeker, everyone that you have to do with in this matter is in earnest! Look down on Hell's domain and see how earnest Satan is to hold you and to ruin you! How diligently the enemy baits his hooks and sets his traps to catch the souls of men! How does he compass sea and land to hold his captives lest they escape. See how earnest, on the other hand, Christ is! He proved His earnestness by a life of toil by day and of prayer by night—by hunger, thirst, faintness and bloody sweat.

The zeal of God's House had eaten Him up. He was earnest even to the death for sinners. And God is in earnest—there is no mockery with Him, or carelessness or indifference about human souls. When He speaks of the sinner's perishing, He cries out with a solemn oath that He has no pleasure in their death. But if they, to the last, refuse His love and defy His justice, He will not trifle with them, but will judge in earnest and punish in earnest. Has He not said, “Beware therefore, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.” The majesty of His power is revealed in flaming wrath against transgressors! Hell is no trifle and His wrath is no small matter.

Heaven and Hell, then, are in earnest, and so must you be if you would find salvation. Shall we, who have to tell you to escape from the wrath to come, pray to be in earnest and shall we never feel earnest enough, but always cry that we may be seized with a yet more intense passion for your welfare? And shall it seem to you to be a common-place affair—a thing that you may let alone and let happen as it may? Oh, Sirs, if you talk so, the madness of sin is very manifest in you! May the Lord make you sane! Where everything else is in earnest, you need to be in earnest, too.

You have been earnest enough and whole-hearted enough in the ways of sin. Think of yourself as engrossed with those things of which you ought to be ashamed. Have you not been earnest, indeed, *there*? Concerning this world you have risen up early and sat up late, and eaten the bread of carefulness. When you went into sin, did you not sin with both your hands? Perhaps I speak to some here who could never sin enough. When they were in company they were ahead of all others—ringleaders in every sort of wickedness. It was not enough for them to be as *common* sinners, but they were known by everybody to be the boldest and most daredevil of all the crew. They led the van in the march to Hell!

Ah, Sirs, are you going to manifest all that earnestness in reviling and rebelling against God and is there to be no warmth, no ardor, no strong excitement of your nature when you seek the Lord and His Grace? Think of this and chide your laggard steps! Besides, look, Sirs, *how can there be anything true about your seeking if it is not whole-hearted?* Here is a man who *almost* repents of his sin, or half repents of it. Does not that mean that he does not repent of it at all? How can there be repentance of a deed to which half the heart is still wedded? If only half the heart seems to be separated from sin, it is but a *seeming*—the man's whole heart, in truth, still loves his sin.

And how can there be half-hearted faith? He that half believes, believes not at all. If you say, “I almost believe,” where is your faith? If you believe with all your heart you may be baptized and added to the Church. But if you believe half-heartedly, what sort of faith is this? For a man to turn half from sin and half to God, is that conversion? No, he has not turned to God who has turned but half to God. He abides where he was, only probably he has added hypocrisy to his

other sins. He who leaves half his heart behind him when he comes to God comes not at all. “Their heart is divided, now shall they be found faulty.”

And also, my Brethren, you that are seeking the Lord, there must be whole-heartedness in your seeking because *that which you seek, if you obtain it, is a whole-hearted thing*. Hear how true Christians *pray*. Do they pray with half their hearts? No, for one said, “with my whole heart have I sought You.” So say all the saints. They know that if they ask in a chilly style they are asking to be denied and, therefore, they besiege Heaven with all the *power* of prayer. They knock and knock again with fervor and importunity when they would obtain what they need. They say with wrestling Jacob, “I will not let You go unless You bless me.” Prayer is the vital breath of the Christian and if he cannot pray without whole-heartedness, then it is clear that to have spiritual life, you, O Seeker, must give all your heart to it.

Obedience to God in the Believer is whole-hearted. What did David say? “I will keep Your precepts with my whole heart.” There is no doing the will of God with half a heart. That would be such an obedience as He could not, in any way, accept. It would be a sign of formality and hypocrisy, but not of sincerity. Genuine Christians love God with all their heart. What is the demand of the old Law, but, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul”? To love God with half your heart would be another name for not loving God at all! Love to God is the proof and test of a Believer, but how can you have it if even in your seeking your heart is divided?

When Believers praise God, they do it in the style of the Psalmist who said, “I will praise You, O God, with my whole heart.” What other songs can have music in them to the ears of the God of Truth? Vain must all ten-stringed instruments be if the heart praises not. “Unite my heart to fear Your name,” said the holy man, and we must pray the same, for the Christian life is impossible without wholeness of heart. Only imagine for a moment that I were permitted to come here and say to you sinners, “God is very easily entreated and if you seek Him, no matter in what cold and careless way, He will be found of you. You may be half asleep, but yet so long as there is a little desire in your soul, it will go well with you. You need not be very earnest or specially prayerful, or whole-hearted—you may take it very easy—it will all go well with you”?

What pretty preaching that would be! Some might like it, but what sort of Christians should we produce by it? Even when we preach earnestness, a great number of professors are drowsy enough! But what would they be if we had such a slumbering Gospel as this to preach? I have known persons go to sleep in the House of Prayer when the seats have been hard. But suppose we provided pillows for all armholes and downy cushions for drowsy heads? Who would wonder if you all went to sleep? What sort of a Church should we build up if we did not bid the enquirer seek with his whole heart, but urged him to be indifferent from the very first? Have I not reduced the whole thing to an absurdity? And do you not see, at once, that there must be a seeking of the Lord with all your heart if, indeed, you are ever to find Him? May the Divine Spirit, who comes as a rushing mighty wind and as a consuming fire, come upon all wavering hearts at this hour and cause them to be eager after the things which make for their peace!

III. I am going to mention, in the third place, one or two of THE HINDRANCES which stand in the way of a sincere, whole-hearted, persevering search after the Lord and His salvation. I verily believe that a principal hindrance is *presumption*. The ungodly say within themselves, “God is very merciful and ready to forgive. We like to hear the preacher set forth the abundant mercy of God. We are pleased to hear him show how willing the Father is to forgive and how He delights to receive returning prodigals.”

Yes, and after saying this you continue in sin—your mean, dastardly, worse than brutish heart resolves to sin because God is merciful! I know not how to find adjectives sufficiently strong to set forth the degradation of a nature which can multiply offenses because the offended One is of a forgiving spirit! How worse than brutish are they who say, “Because God is so merciful, therefore we will go on in sin!” Are you not ashamed of yourselves? I am sure I am ashamed of you, that such a thought should ever dwell in your mind! It is so ungrateful, so ungenerous—I was going to say, it is so devilish—but the devil himself has never been so guilty, for he has never had any *hope* of mercy!

To sin because of mercy is a step lower than even the devil has descended. Because God is merciful, therefore, you will not seek His mercy, but will continue in sin. Ah, be ashamed and be ashamed! You hear us continually say that whoever believes in Jesus is not condemned. And you say to yourself in the secret of your heart, “This is very easy. Only believe, and you shall be saved. Simply put your confidence in Christ,” and from this you take license to go on in sin! Let me put

this to you again that you may see the meanness of such a course. Do you say, “Because the way of salvation is so simple, therefore I will not attend to it at present. Any day will do. I will put it off”?

Oh, Man, can it be that you have fallen so low as this? Oh, the deep depravity of your spirit, that if God is so ready to forgive, you are, therefore, all the more unready to be forgiven! And because He puts it on such easy terms, you, therefore, turn upon your heels and refuse His love! What is this but virtually to crucify Christ afresh by sinning because He is gracious? What is this but mocking Him and spitting in His face by refusing His salvation because it is so free? Oh, do not do this! Be not so unmanly, so cruel to yourself, and so ungenerous to the Christ of God.

“Ah,” says one, “a few words of prayer at the last will do.”—

*“While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return.”*

Ah, I have often wondered how men can venture to speak thus within themselves! They seldom talk like that to others because they dare not! But they flatter themselves in secret. How do you know that you will have the few minutes in which to utter those pious words? “God be merciful to me a sinner,” may be more than you will be able to say! Beware, lest He take you away with a stroke, for then you will not be able to raise even the shortest prayer! Some have been smitten down in their sins and those have been the very men who said, “Any time will do. I can turn to God when I please and make my peace with Him.” Many men have fallen from a height, or been killed on the railway, or drowned at sea, or seized with an epileptic fit and their souls have stood in all their naked shame before the bar of God to answer for their ungodly speeches! Presumption upon the mercy of God is the reason why so many wrap themselves up in the garments of carnal security and put far from them the evil day. God deliver you from this great evil!

Secondly, many are hindered, I doubt not, by *remains of self-confidence*. If they knew that they could not save themselves they would be in earnest to seek after God and His righteousness. But they still harbor some vain notion that there must be at least a little good thing about them, at least a spark—and a great fire may come from a spark. They never were as bad as some—they were not swearers or drunks—they have never plunged into actual lust and defiled themselves with uncleanness. Somewhere or other they have hoarded up a little store of native goodness and upon this they dote in a timorous, half suspicious way and, therefore, they do not cry out to God with the energy of those who must find mercy in Christ or be forever lost.

He who thinks that he can swim will never seize the life buoy with the clutch of a drowning man. How fierce is the grasp of a man who is drowning and knows that his fast hold is his only chance! How he clutches, as if his fingers were made to be welded to the buoy! When a man feels that nothing is left for him but God in Christ, then with earnestness he seizes upon the hope set before him! I am afraid that some are hindered by a very opposite evil, namely, *despair*. Ah, some of you do not believe that you can be forgiven! You fancy that you never can be God’s people. If you were quite sure that you could obtain perfect peace with God—if you knew that before the sun goes down today you might have the bright eye which looks up to Heaven and say, “There is a throne there for me,” and the placid heart that feels perfect rest in Christ—if you knew that these could be yours, would you not seek them?

Well now, I want to read you a verse which comes before my text. And as I read it, I pray the Holy Spirit to apply its comfortable assurance to your soul. Look at the 11th verse—“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil.” Oh, if God’s thoughts towards you are good, come to Him now and kiss His feet! The prodigal, when he was returning home, did not doubt that his father would receive him somehow or other, even if it were as one of his hired servants. He knew that he would be received, somehow, and he was willing to be received!

Come, poor Soul, the Lord will receive you, whoever you may be! If with your whole heart you do consent at once to trust the Lord Jesus, He will receive you! Yes, He will show you how to trust! He will give you faith and give you the blessing which your faith seeks. Why should you not meet your Lord in these pews this morning? Why, before you descend the steps of the Tabernacle, should you not breathe the prayer of faith and lean your weight upon the Cross of Christ, and find the mercy which our text declares you shall find if you seek it with all your heart?

Lastly, I am afraid that some people have been kept from whole-hearted seeking by *the conduct of Christian professors*. Let me urge you never to take your pattern—you that are coming to Christ—from those who *profess* to be His followers, for some of them are a sorry sort! Yet let them be as bad as they may, what is that to you? You have your own soul to look after—and you have to seek Christ with all the more earnestness because some who think that they have

found Him have been mistaken! It is a great pity when there are Christian people about, or those who *say* that they are Christians, to whom a poor seeking soul is unable to appeal because he would get no sympathy from them.

I heard of one who, being ill, desired someone to visit him, occasionally, and pray with him. A young man, a professing Christian, was mentioned as one who would willingly do so. “No,” said the other, “I do not want *him* to pray with me, for his *life* does not pray.” There are people of that sort about, many of them. There are some such here. One would not have much faith in their prayers, or derive much comfort from their conversation, for, though you may hope, charitably, that there may be Grace in them, it is like coal in a pit—it is a long way down and hard to get at. Their hearts are lukewarm at the best and, therefore, they never boil with warm and loving expressions.

The genuine and healthy Christian is one who is so full of love that his heart boils over with a good matter and others are compelled to feel that the fire of God is burning in his soul, for they see and feel the effects. O Christian Brothers and Sisters, I do trust that you will see to this, because if you are half-hearted, the chill which surrounds you will freeze the hearts of many who are seeking the Savior! Father, mother, may you not fear that you are hindrances to your children? Sunday school teachers, if you go to your class like blocks of ice this afternoon, you will have cold attention when you come to talk of Christ! If the minister preaches with icicles hanging on his lips, how can he expect that men’s hearts will be thawed by his icy words? No, we must set the example of seeking God with our whole heart—we that are His people—and then God, by the Holy Spirit, will bless our example to others and they will come to seek Him with their whole hearts, too.

The Lord make us to be in downright earnest, so we may hope that toward us He will fulfill that ancient promise, “I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me. Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul.”

Think of God thus blessing us with His whole heart and His whole soul. Amen, Lord, so let it be!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 11:1-28.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—427, 594, 605.

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