

COMPASSION ON THE IGNORANT

NO. 1407

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way;
for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.”*
Hebrews 5:2.

THIS is a part of the necessary qualification of a priest. Under the old Law there were priests who were taken from among men in order that they might speak to God *for* men and might speak *to* men for God. They were taken from among men, not from among angels, and they were taken from men compassed with infirmity—not from absolutely perfect men like those in Heaven—in order that they might be familiar with sinful and suffering men and on a level with them. When the people of Israel came to them they saw that they were speaking to persons who knew and understood their weaknesses and sorrows—not to exalted beings who would look down upon them with serene indifference.

They felt that they could approach their priest without the awe which creates a freezing distance, as though a deep crevasse opened between them. And when they spoke to their friend, the minister of God, they felt that they could tell him their trials and troubles, for he had felt the same and, therefore, was able to console and comfort them. Many a kindly word the good man spoke, before he sent them back to their houses, which he never could have spoken unless he had been a man, himself, “compassed with infirmity.”

Loving them and being such as they were, he was able to have patience with the many strange cases which came before him. He was not soon vexed by their stupidity, but listened carefully to what they had to say, trying to solve their difficulties and to meet their cases. He knew that he, too, was weakness and folly, itself, before his God. And his own afflictions and trembling made him feel that he must be gentle to others since the Lord had been tender to him. It was, in the all-wise Providence of God, ordained that the sons of Aaron should be men compassed with infirmity that they might compass others with sympathy.

Men admire an iron duke for war, but who could bear an iron priest in the hour of trouble? A bronze wall is good for a defense, but we need a breast of flesh and blood for consolation. Give me, for a spiritual comforter and guide, not an infallible pontiff, nor a thrice-crowned spiritual lord, but a *brother* of my own condition, a *friend* possessed of a nature like my own! After mentioning this fact, which is stated in the text, I would bring forth two remarks which will constitute the essence of our discourse.

The first is that compassion and forbearance are two great qualifications for doing good to our fellow men. And, secondly—and upon this I shall dwell at length—that both of these are found pre-eminently in our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, we may with boldness come to Him. May the great Spirit whose teaching is our only means of profiting bless our meditation!

I. First, then, COMPASSION AND FORBEARANCE ARE TWO THINGS WHICH ANY MAN WHO WOULD DO GOOD TO HIS FELLOW MEN OUGHT TO POSSESS TO A VERY LARGE DEGREE. You will have plenty of use for all the compassion and all the tenderness that you can possibly command, for this will help to draw around you those who are ignorant and out of the way. Men will not gather to some individuals—they are too hard, too cold, too stern. They seem cut out of stone—they have no feeling. Or else they are dry and leathery and have none of the juice of humanity in them—no warm blood—no milk of human kindness and you are not attracted to them.

Who loves a bag of old nails, or a sack of sawdust? And yet some men and women are almost as hard and dry! If you want to draw people around you, you must have sympathy with them. Compassion magnetizes a man and makes him attract as the loadstone fascinates the needle. A big heart is one of the main essentials to great usefulness. Try and cultivate it. Do not let another man's sorrow fall upon a deaf ear as far as you are concerned, but sorrow with the sorrowful and have compassion upon the ignorant and those that are out of the way. They will soon perceive it and they will do to you as they did to your Master, of whom we read, “Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners.”

Men will cluster around you like bees around their queen! They will not be able to help it. They will not wish to help it. Love is the queen bee and where she is, you will find the center of the hive.

By this same spell you will hold those whom you gather, for men will not long remain with an unloving leader. Even little children in our classes will not long listen to an unsympathetic teacher. Great armies of soldiers must be led by a great soldier—and children must be held in hand by child-like instructors. When human beings surround an uncompassionate person, they soon find it out and fly away at a tangent as if by instinct. You may collect people for a time by some extraneous means, but unless they perceive that you love them and that your heart goes out with desires for their good, they will soon weary of you.

The multitude still clung to the skirts of Jesus, even to the last, whenever He preached, because they saw that He really desired their good. You, dear Friend, must have compassion if you are to keep up the attention of those whom you address. The earth is held together by the force of attraction and to the men upon it that same power is exercised by love and compassion. Compassion in your heart will also be greatly useful in moving sinners to care for themselves. I believe there are some people who will never feel about their own souls until they are driven to it by seeing that other people feel for them.

If I remember the story correctly, Mr. Knill at one time was distributing tracts at Chester and went out where there was a company of soldiers. Many received the tracts, but one man tore a little book in pieces before the good man's eyes! And on another occasion the same individual said to the soldiers, "Now make a ring round him." The men stood round the preacher and then the wicked fellow cursed him in such a frightful manner that Mr. Knill burst into tears to hear such awful sounds. The sight of Knill's tears broke the heart of the blasphemer—nothing else could have touched him—he could not bear to see a strong man who was at least his equal, and, probably, his superior, weeping over him. Years later he came forward to acknowledge that the tender emotion displayed by Mr. Knill had touched his inmost soul and led him to repentance.

Now, if you have compassion on other people, they will wonder why you should be so much concerned for them. "Why do you care for me?" said a reprobate to an earnest Christian who tried to win him. "Ah," said another, who looked at it from the opposite side, "no one cares for my soul. I have nobody to pray for me, nobody to care for me, or I might have some hope." It is clear, beloved Brothers and Sisters, that if you feel moved of God to seek the good of your fellow men, as I trust you do, the first things you need are compassion, forbearance, patience, sympathy—and without these you will no more touch the hearts of those to whom you speak than would a parrot or a talking robot.

You also need great compassion to insure your own perseverance, for if you do not love the children of your class, if you do not love the people whom you try to benefit as you go from house to house, if you have no compassion for the dying sinners around you, you will soon give up your mission or go about it in a merely formal manner. You will not find the conquest of the human heart to be an easy thing. Indeed, it is the most difficult of all enterprises! Unless you so love men that you will bear a thousand rebuffs and disappointments and will still press on with the blessed news of mercy—unless, I say, you have a compassion as enduring as your own life, you will fail and be discouraged and cast away the sacred nets with which you fish for men and the seed basket from which you scatter the heavenly Seed.

You may, perhaps, continue to sow a handful here and there, but you will never reap a large harvest unless the *heart* moves the hand. Besides, only compassion of the heart can teach you how to speak to others. I have often been pleased to see how young converts manage to tell of the love of Christ to people much older than themselves and do it very effectively, too. You cannot take a man into college and teach him how to preach to sinners rightly by giving him books, or lectures, or rules. No, that must be learned by a kind of instinct of the new nature which teaches the man who is ordained to do it.

Nobody, I suppose, teaches the young mother how to manage her first child and yet, somehow or other, it is done because she loves it. It is wonderful, to me, how a widow with quite a swarm of children somehow provides for them. I cannot tell how, but the love she bears them leads her to make exertions which would seem impossible to anyone else and the little ones are somehow or other housed and fed and clothed! If you have love enough, you can, by God's Grace, win any man to Jesus. If his heart is as hard as a diamond, why, then, you must have a purpose *twice as hard* as a diamond and you will yet cut him to his heart!

If you are resolved that you will move Heaven and earth that some soul shall feel the power of the Gospel and if you will go with mighty prayer and invoke the aid of the Divine Spirit, I do not see that you can fail. You must do good if you have but love enough and heart enough! These are the main qualifications, I believe, for a minister of the Gospel, for the teacher of a Sunday school class, or for any other sort of Christian worker—plenteous compassion and unflinching forbearance.

If you possess these two things, dear Friends, you will find that they will be very much tried and exercised. It will not be long, young worker, if you plunge into the midst of Christian service, before you will meet with open opposition. Scoffers will rail at you. Fools will laugh at you. It may be profane persons will swear at you. This is no uncommon thing. Now, if you can look upon an open opposer with compassion, you will not lose your temper, neither will you be at all distressed except for his sake. The surest way of putting down your opponents is to feel that they cannot make you angry or drive you from your purpose.

You must feel that you love them all the more because you see how greatly they need the Gospel—and then the more they sin the more will you be certain that theirs is a case of great necessity requiring you to be in sevenfold earnest. I do not think, however, that all workers are so much put about by open opposition as they are by those persons who never oppose, but who, at the same time, never yield. I do not know, sometimes, how to get on with certain people with whom I speak about Christ. They say, “Yes, Sir. Yes, Sir. Yes, Sir.” You say, “But, my dear Friend, there is a necessity for a new heart.” They answer, “Yes, Sir, yes.” “And you know there is no salvation except by faith in Christ.” “Yes, Sir. Yes, Sir.”

I have spoken to one person several times who always thanks me for doing so and declares that it is very kind of me to speak to him. He says he is very much obliged to me and, “Yes, Sir. Yes, Sir.” That is all I can get out of him! I do not wish he would swear at me, but if he would but say something or other rather outrageous, so that I might go at him hammer and tongs, I should really feel a little hopeful about him! But he never does this and I cannot, therefore, get at him. He will come and hear a sermon and he will not make many remarks about it, but he will say, “It was very nice and very clever and quite a treat,” and that is all.

You cannot entice these Pliables any farther—they conquer you by yielding—even as the bulrush vanquishes the north wind by bowing before it. These people disquiet earnest laborers and make heavy demands upon their compassion. We must get much love into our hearts and have pity upon these poor India rubber-souled people, or we shall become wearied and leave them to their fate. Have pity upon them and still go on with your holy endeavors, bearing and forbearing, even though they seem to frustrate you!

You will, also, often meet with very deceitful, hopeful persons, who encourage you much but disappoint you more. You say, “I saw a tear in that man’s eye when I was preaching.” Yes, he has a watery eye—perhaps he has been drunk and it is easy to weep, then! You lose your man, after all. You say, “That woman is so attentive and earnest. I really think there is an impression made upon her.” But by-and-by you discover that there was a motive for the apparent attention and it was all pretense. Now is the time to have your compassion in full exercise—the more often you are disappointed the more compassion must you feel. And the more must you resolve, God helping you, never to give up anyone until the funeral knell shall toll and the soul shall have passed beyond the region of your influence.

Alas, there is another and still more wearisome trial of faith and patience, for out of those who profess to be converted there are many who cause us grief of heart! Even when the wheat is come to the ear we may yet lose our harvest, even as the farmer, by smut and mildew, may see his fields blasted before his eyes. There are to be found persons who come forward and declare themselves to be upon the Lord’s side, but very soon grow cold, fall into sin and turn aside from the narrow way. “They went out from us, but they were not of us,” says John, “for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.”

These are heart-breakers, thorns in our side and swords in our bones, causing us sharp sorrows and doing grievous mischief. Like Judas, they sell Christ for money and betray their Master and so prove themselves to be the children of Hell, though, for a while, numbered with Christ’s disciples. Even these we must not cast off utterly, but pity them and seek after the straying sheep. Do, my dear Brothers and Sisters, shun everything that would make your heart callous towards the most provoking and deceitful—it is true their conduct tends to petrify the heart—but yield not to the wretched influence or you will suffer loss.

Living in a city like this, where you get imposed upon very often, it is recommended to some people to get a little hard-hearted, but I cannot sanction such advice. I fear you will find the process acting upon you without your seeking it and I urge you to strive against it. Better to be often deceived than to become unfeeling. I would sooner be a dupe than a brute, though there is no need to be either the one or the other. Try to be tenderhearted, pitying and full of compassion. Labor with all your might to be as the text says—“A man who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.”

Now, there are many reasons why we should have a great deal of compassion and forbearance. God has a great deal with us. You say that such a person grieves you. Alas, he has grieved God much more than you! Oh, but you have had patience with him and tried to bring him to Christ, now, these 10 years. Remember that the Lord has had patience with him, perhaps, these 50 years! Do you reply, “But you do not know how badly he treats me”? No, but *you* forget how badly he treats your Lord, Jesus. Has not man always provoked God? Have not the people grieved His Holy Spirit these thousands of years? It is a thought that ought to lay us in the dust—the innumerable provocations which surround the Most High and arise, even, from one man!

But what must be the provocations caused by the four millions of this great city? What must they be from all the millions of the known world? Idols are worshipped and blocks of wood and stone set up and called gods while the true God is neglected! False doctrine is taught. A *man* claims to be *infallible*! Christ is forgotten, men trust in their own works and glory in their own pretended righteousness—is not the Lord angered by all this? What with open blasphemy, Sabbath-breaking and a thousand forms of sin, God is terribly provoked! And yet He bears with it from day to day and does not suffer His fierce anger to smoke against His guilty creatures. Is not the Divine forbearance the miracle of miracles?

When I stood, for a few minutes at the bottom of Pilate’s Staircase in Rome and saw the poor creatures crawling up and down it on their knees—and the priests looking on—I thought that if I had the loan of a thunderbolt or two I would have cleared out all the impostors and their trumpery in the twinkling of an eye! And then I remembered that they were dealing with God and not with man. He looks down on Antichrist and all its blasphemies and still stays His hand! He sees in this city of London sins which I dare not mention—yet does His thunder sleep. He hears man curse Him and even defy Him to His face—and still His compassions go forth and He bears with them! Wonderful, wonderful is the Omnipotent long-suffering of the Lord! Oh, then, my Brethren, we ought surely to have patience with the trifling affronts which we have to put up with in the service of God! And we ought never to grow weary in well-doing!

Here is another point which will touch some of you more closely. Think, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, what patience God had with you all those years before *your* conversion and multitudes of times since! He has not cast you off nor grown weary of you despite your ill manners. And if He has had patience with you, should not you have patience with your fellow sinner even to the end? There is one reflection which may help you. Remember that these poor souls who sin as they do should be looked upon by you as persons who are deranged, for sin is *madness*. That prodigal who spent his money riotously was out of his mind, for we read that when he repented, “he came to himself.”

Look at sinful men as mad and you will pity them and bear with them. If you have a poor daughter at home whose mind is gradually failing, you say, “Do not take much notice of what she says. Her poor mind wanders. Her faculties are out of order.” These poor souls are out of order, too. Their minds have wandered from God. Do not take much notice of their ravings—go on and do them all the good you can—in spite of their idle talk and petulant complaining. View them as sick and when people are ill, you know, they will be very touchy and very soon irritated. And, perhaps, they will say naughty things, but you must say to yourselves, “It is the fever or the pain which makes them rattle on in that bewildered manner. Never mind them.”

You are very tender with the ailing ones, are you not? A man tells you that when he spoke a cross word to you the other night he had a wretched toothache at the moment, and you reply, “I beg you not to mention it. I quite understand you now.” Look on sinners in that light and say of them, “Poor souls, this malady of sin has so laid hold upon them that I must not regard them as in their senses, but must pity them.” Such a view of human nature will greatly help you to have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way. And do remember this—if you do not have compassion you cannot do them good. If you become weary of them and speak sharply, you cannot bless them and, perhaps, if you are not the means of blessing them, nobody else may be.

Ah, is it your own husband? Wife, win him! Win him! Do not drive him from bad to worse by scolding him. Sister, is it your brother? Woo him and win him to Christ! Do not vex him by becoming acid and sour. I am afraid that sharpness of speech and quickness of temper may have much to answer for, since in a moment it may cut the cords with which men were being drawn in the right direction. Have compassion! Have compassion on obstinate ignorance and willful rebellion! Remember, the more trouble it costs you to bring a soul to Christ, the greater will be your reward. In your own conscience you will feel a sweet recompense when you will, in later days, be able to say, "I travailed in birth for that soul."

You will love it all the more because of the anguish of your spirit during its birth. I am sure it is so—that which costs us most we value most. Jabez was more honorable than his brethren because his mother bore him with sorrow. Jacob gave one portion to Joseph above his brothers because the archers had sorely shot at him and wounded him. And that portion was the more precious because the Patriarch took it out of the hand of the Amorite with his sword and with his bow. If there is a soul that you have, as it were, brought to Christ by severe fighting, taking it out of the hand of the Amorite with your sword and with your bow, that soul will be more precious to you than any other!

So, Beloved, I pray the Holy Spirit to overshadow the company of Christian workers here present and all that are throughout the whole earth, that they may have "compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that they themselves also are compassed with infirmity."

II. But now for the second part of our subject, which may the eternal Spirit greatly bless. COMPASSION AND FORBEARANCE PREEMINENTLY DWELL IN JESUS CHRIST. Though He was not compassed with any sinful infirmity, for in Him is no sin, yet physical infirmity He did take and He is, to the highest possible degree, the Lord of tenderness—

*"His heart is made of tenderness,
His heart melts with love."*

First—for I will keep to my text, and not be very long—first, He has compassion on the ignorant. That is to say, sins of ignorance Jesus readily puts away. Some of you did not know better while you lived in unregeneracy. You had been trusting in your good works, but though you might well have *suspected*, you did not know that they were a faulty foundation for your hope.

Some of you were very diligent in outward forms and ceremonies. You had a zeal for God, but it was not according to knowledge—you did not know that salvation is to be found only in Jesus. There are many who, if they had known, would not have crucified the Lord of Glory year by year as they have done. They may say, as Paul did, "But I did it ignorantly in unbelief." Well, dear Hearts, if you have been living in sin, not knowing what you were doing. If you have rejected the Savior whom you would not have rejected if you had known Him better, the Lord Jesus, our great High Priest, readily blots out such sins! Come to Him! Say, "What I know not, teach me. Cleanse me from secret faults," and though you cannot now, in looking back, discover all the evil of your conduct and the sin of your life, yet, nevertheless, let Him see what is in your heart—lay it bare before Him and He will have compassion on your ignorance and put away your sin forever!

But the text does not refer only to sins resulting from ignorance, but to ignorance itself. Very many persons are willfully ignorant of Christ. They might have known about Him if they would. Possibly some have come to this place, this evening, who very seldom attend a place of worship though there is one on the street in which they live. Any man in London who does not know the Gospel has nobody to blame for it but himself. It would be well worth while for you to walk a hundred miles to hear Jesus Christ preached, but I thank God few of you need to walk *one* mile to hear the Gospel. You may hear it if you will—and if you Londoners perish, you perish with the opportunity of life brought to your very doors.

I believe, no doubt, there are many now living in utter ignorance of Christ and yet they have the Bible in their houses and have Christian neighbors who would be glad enough to explain it to them—and they might go and hear the Gospel if they would. It is as if the sun is shining and they shut their eyes—the thunder is pealing and they close their ears. Is not this enough to move the Lord to anger? And yet His patience continues! Still will the Lord Jesus have compassion upon you who have been cruel to yourselves as well as contemptuous to Him! Come to Him just as you are and confess your willful blindness and He will put it away and enable you to understand the things which make for your peace.

Some are ignorant, however, because they have been cast where they could not well know. They were born in an ungodly family, or thrown among godless people, or, what is much the same, among those who have only a mere formal religion. They do not know the Truth of God, but they can scarcely be blamed for it. Well, dear Hearts, Christ is able to teach you! Come and sit at His feet, for He will have compassion on your ignorance! Some are very young and, therefore, do not understand much. Dear young people, there are some of you here—Jesus is quite ready to have compassion on the ignorance of little children and save them! They may know but very little, but if they know Christ Jesus to be the Savior of sinners, He will have compassion on their ignorance.

Alas, others are getting very old, but they are so dull that we cannot get much knowledge into their heads and their ears are dull of hearing. I sometimes have such an enquirer to talk to and I try to show great compassion to such. I have long, long ago given up estimating character by the amount of intelligence, for I sometimes find that the most intelligent are the best able to deceive me. How often in daily life we find that the most knowing are the most cunning—and the greatest scholars are the biggest rogues! We see plenty of instances in the newspapers.

On the other hand, many a poor soul who cannot get two ideas into his head has got the right idea, the grand Gospel idea, and that fills his head and heart! He knows that Christ came into the world to save sinners and he hangs on to that. Some of the most simple-hearted people are quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord. The Lord will have compassion on such ignorance readily enough. There are many, alas, who are ignorant, not from lack of capacity or lack of faculty, but because sin has made them so brutish that they cannot understand. Like salt cast on the soil, it has made the mind barren.

This is a frightful state of heart! There are, in this city of ours, many who have so soaked themselves in the most gross vices that they appear to be incapable of knowing purity, delicacy, truth, holiness, or any Divine excellence. They have so indulged themselves in drunkenness and chambering wantonness that you really cannot get a spiritual idea into them! They have developed backward into a mere animal and, like the swine, they feed on husks and have no idea above the mire they wallow in. Our City Missionaries can tell us the brutal power of sin if we have never seen it for ourselves! As Divine Grace makes fools wise, so sin makes wise men fools! As Grace turns stone to flesh, so sin turns flesh to stone! As Grace lifts man to the angels, so sin sinks him to the devils!

Sin is a murky cloud which buries the human mind in sevenfold night, which, it seems impossible to pierce with a beam of day. Yet when a flash of light from God the Holy Spirit penetrates the thick Egyptian darkness of such a soul, Jesus manifests His compassion on the ignorant and proves His saving power! Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, what a mercy it is that the Lord Jesus Christ saves people who know very little about Him! The poor woman who touched the hem of His garment made a mistake, I suppose, in imagining that power must necessarily dwell in His clothes, but, nevertheless, the Lord went with her mistake and let the virtue go even out of His robe as well as out of Himself.

He will meet you, dear Friend—meet you where you are and grasp the hand of even your blind and lame faith and save you! However deeply ignorant you may be, He will have compassion on your ignorance by sending forth His light and His salvation—and you shall know Him and rejoice in Him! When He was here, you know, He picked up a few fishermen and tax gatherers and such—and He set to work to teach them—and how beautifully He did it! He taught them with parables and little easy words, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little.

Look at that Gospel of John. Look at any of the sermons of Christ. How very different they are from the very magnificent discourses which we get from the learned and thoughtful divines of the present period! They preach over people's heads, but Christ preached *into* people's hearts! He taught so plainly and simply that anybody could understand Him! But these great doctors of today preach so that they do not even understand themselves! All this makes us see that our Lord had compassion on the ignorant.

I would repeat the thought that He did not teach those disciples too much at once. He gave them one idea at a time and He did not drive that out with another. He said, "I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." What He did teach was mainly simple and He left it till the Holy Spirit was given for Paul to elaborate the Gospel and tell us in plain language some of the more doctrinal Truths. He was bent on teaching His disciples as much as they could receive and so He did—but He taught them no more lest they should be overfed and become unable to digest what they had received.

And then how very little chiding there was in all our Lord's conversation with His pupils. He did say, "Have I been so long a time with you and yet have you not known Me, Philip?" He did have, now and then, to upbraid because of the hardness of their hearts, but still, what gentleness there was about such rebukes and how seldom did they occur! And He never turned one of them out of class for being stupid. If He had done that, perhaps some friend here might suppose He would turn him or her out—but out of all the 12 there was not one to whom He said, "Now, I really never shall make much of you! Your intellect is too weak." Not at all. He taught each one as much as he could receive and then said, "Go and tell it to others!"

And while they told it to others they were learning it better, themselves, for one of the best ways of learning a thing is trying to teach it. "What I tell you in secret that tell you upon the housetops." He was the wisest of teachers because He was the most compassionate. And I may add here that we know this to be the case with some of us, because He has been very tender in teaching us. Some of our teachers wanted us to learn the big doctrines, first. They did not like it because we could not at once see all the sublime truths of election and predestination. Certain of the old standards who are very orthodox—16, if not 18 ounces to the pound—expect all new-born babes to eat meat at once! As soon as ever a person is converted they would have him know all about the sublapsarian and supralapsarian schemes. And if he does not, they say, "He is a doubtful character. He is not sound."

Ah, but that is not the manner of our Lord who is tender over us as a nurse with a child! He begins by working into our experience a few elementary Truths of God and then, when we get farther on, we find out something more. And as we are able to bear it, He reveals to us His Truths. He does not teach us experimentally all at once any more than He taught the Apostles all at once! By degrees He illuminates our minds. Our poor blind eyes could not bear sunlight at first and, therefore, He gives us just a little starlight, then moonlight, then twilight. Then afterwards He brings us into the high unclouded noon of the clear revelation of His love which is to be our portion in Heaven! Our sight through a glass darkly is purposely made dim to suit our feeble vision for He has compassion on the ignorant.

I speak, then, to everyone here who feels himself to be theologically backward and doesn't know much about the things of God's Word. Never mind, dear Brother. Never mind, dear Sister. Come to Jesus Christ and trust Him—and He will teach you as well as save you! And if you are now untaught and unlearned, do not hold back because of that, but come forward with all hopefulness. If you do not know one letter in the alphabet from another and if you do not know one doctrine of the Word of God except that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, yet come and welcome to your great High Priest, for He will have compassion on the ignorant!

My time is almost gone and I want to speak a word upon the last point, which is that He will have compassion upon those that are out of the way. "Out of the way"—out of the *right* way, the *narrow* way, the *happy* way, the *ONLY* way! Who are these people? Some are out of the way because they never were in it and never knew it. They have heard of it, perhaps, a little, but they have never tried it by setting one foot in it. You are not church-goers or chapel-goers, for you are altogether out of the way. You are not hearers of the Gospel, not people who even *practice* a form of prayer. You are avowedly out of the way.

Listen then, while I tell you that Jesus can have compassion on those that are out of the way! Many are in a very emphatic sense, out-of-the-way sinners! They have gone to such extravagances that they are out of the way of common morality and quite startle their careless comrades. Even those who have no religion yet say, "Well, now, you go beyond me! You are an out-of-the-way fellow." "I drink sometimes," says one man, "but as for you, you are an out-of-the-way drinker." "I," says another—"well, I make no pretensions to be very precise, but still I draw a line *somewhere*. As for you, you go beyond all bounds and are an out-of-the-way fellow altogether."

Well, I have to say tonight that my Lord Jesus will have compassion on you out-of-the-way sinners! However far you have gone, only turn to Him—for pardon is freely published. Forsake your sin, tonight, and come to Jesus' feet and cast yourself there and say, "I will not go till You renew me and deliver me from the guilt and bondage of my sin." He can do it, yes He WILL do it, for He has compassion on out-of-the-way sinners! Perhaps I am addressing some who were once *nominally* in the way. You were members of a Church years ago. Where are you now? The Church may well disown you and you may well disown the Church, for you are a disgrace to it.

What have you been doing this morning? How do you spend your Sabbaths? What is your conduct during the week? I would speak personally to those of you who were once professors and are now prodigals. You were with the Methodists,

were you not, when you were in the country? You have nothing to do with them now. Ah, yes, before you entered the army you had some idea of religion and loved, in some respects, the service of your mother's God. But you have forgotten it since you have been in the barracks. I know how it is with many—they are very willing to go with Christ when He wears His golden vest and His starry crown and walks out on sunshiny days—but to bear a cross and follow Him through the mocking mob is quite another matter! And, therefore, they go out of the way.

Backslider, do not despair, the great High Priest of our profession will have compassion on you—only return to Him! He still has the greatest pity for the greatest wanderer. He rejoices more over one lost sheep that He has found than over 99 that went not astray. And oh, dear child of God, here is a word for you, for it may be you feel, tonight, as if you were out of the way. You are not enjoying religion as you once did. When the hymn is sung, your heart does not make music, and when prayer is offered you feel as if you could not pray. Despair not, for He can have compassion on you. You are ignorant, for who among us is there that is not ignorant?

He who knows most of Christ knows very little. We are all ignorant and He has compassion on us all. And we are all out of the way in some measure—the best child of God on earth is not perfect. I did hear from a Brother that *he* was perfect, but I did not believe him nor think any the better of him for his being so conceited. I thought, when he said he was perfect, that I could see an imperfection in his eyesight and, if I had looked a little closer, I should probably have found another in his tongue. Better, far, to pray, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep. Seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments." The Good Shepherd will have compassion upon us, bind up our wounds and bear with our weaknesses and follies—therefore let us come to Him anew and trust Him more and more.

Let us come to Him as He is now, enthroned in the highest heavens, and say, "Jesus, we have heard that You have compassion on the ignorant and those that are out of the way, and such are we. Behold, we trust ourselves with You." Trembling Believer, be not slow to draw near, for His loving heart is unable to refuse you! If you will trust yourselves with the Savior, He cannot betray or deceive your trust. Only do that and your faith will have power over the sacred heart of the Crucified One!

You know if a child trusts you—if it is only to buy a penny toy—you do not like to go home without doing it. You City men, if your little daughter trusted you to buy her something, you would not like to disappoint her. Well, and God, our blessed Savior, cannot, *will not* disappoint His trusting children! If we can trust Him with our souls we have a hold upon Him which He will not shake off, but He will bless us—yes, He will bless us eternally! God help you to trust Him now, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.