

A CHEERING INCIDENT AT BETHABARA NO. 1924

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 10, 1886,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Therefore they sought again to take Him, but He escaped out of their hands, and went away, again, beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized, and there He abode.
And many came to Him, and said, John did no miracle:
but all things that John spoke of this Man were true. And many believed on Him there.”
John 10:39-42.*

BECAUSE our Savior's reasoning was unanswerable, “therefore the Jews sought again to take Him.” When men are convinced against their wills; when the heart struggles against the head; it usually happens that they turn persecutors. If they cannot answer holy arguments with fair reasoning, they can give hard answers with stones. If you cannot destroy the reasoning, you may, perhaps, destroy the reasoner—and this naturally suggests itself to the heart which is rendered cruel by obstinate unbelief—he who hates Truth of God soon hates its advocate. You must not consider yourself to have been unsuccessful in your proofs when your opponent waxes angry at them. Perhaps it is your *success* which has startled his conscience and rendered it necessary for him to become malicious to retain his obstinacy. Yet it is a very wretched business when a man knows that he is wrong and, therefore, attacks the person who has convinced him.

Do I address any person here who, in the secret of his heart, is well aware that the Christian faith is true and, therefore, derides it in order to be able to resist its influence? Do I speak to any man here who has felt the ground clean gone from under him and, therefore, has flown in the face of the teaching which has unsettled him? Will he not, as a sensible man, quit his unjustifiable position and candidly yield to the force of Truth? It is a degrading thing to be willfully shutting one's eyes to the light and cursing the sun for shining! Oh, that such a person would have Grace! Let me even say—oh, that he would have sense enough to see that this cannot be a safe and right method of procedure! Oh that he would yield himself to those blessed influences which, I trust, will, this morning, operate upon his mind!

When our Savior found that there was nothing to be done with the bigoted Jews, but that all He said and did only provoked more furious opposition, He escaped out of their hands and went away. He knew when to speak and when to refrain. Divinely guided, He neither fled as a coward, nor rashly pushed on where nothing could be gained. Determined opposition in one quarter is sometimes an intimation to the preacher that he had better labor elsewhere. When the channel is blocked up by rocks, we had better steer in another direction. If we have found no son of peace to welcome us as the messengers of God, it may be time to shake off the dust of our feet against the violent rejecters of the Truth and open our commission in another quarter. If we fail in the first place, we may, in the second, find that the Lord has much people in the city. The Savior left the infuriated Jews of Jerusalem and went to a place of retirement, thus illustrating His own words, “When they persecute you in this city, flee you unto another.”

But though our Lord left the obstinate, He never ceased to do good. He did not say, “It is of no further use to preach and plead; I am, therefore, driven away to Bethabara, by the lonely Jordan, and I will warn the people no more.” No, rather, as many resorted to Him *there*, He went on with His teaching and, in that place many believed on Him! If, my dear Brother, speaking in Christ's name, you find that you have no place in such-and-such a town, it may be the Spirit's will that you should remove to a people who will receive you. Possibly in a place which promises less, you may gain more. Bethabara may yield converts when Jerusalem only yields persecutors. God has ways of changing the position of His servants for His own Glory and for the building up of His Church. As one has well said, “The flight of Christ from men in one place may cause the flight of souls to Him in another.” Though Jesus withdrew from the stones which filled the hands

of angry Jews, he went to that place where John had said, “God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.”

I think that this somewhat obscure incident of our Lord’s abiding in Bethabara, though seldom preached upon, may be made exceedingly profitable to us. Much prayer has been offered that many may believe on the Lord Jesus this morning in this House of Prayer and it seems suitable, therefore, to discourse upon the words, “Many believed on Him there.”

I. The first remark I shall make is that when men believe in Jesus Christ, IT IS VERY PLEASANT TO KNOW THE PLACE where they believed—therefore is it recorded by Inspiration that, “many believed on Him *there*.” I do not say it is essential for a man to know the place where he believed in Jesus—it is not at all essential! It is not necessary for a person’s life for him to know where he was born, yet I am glad that I know my birthplace and I am happy to remember the humble spot. If anybody were to say to you, “Do you know where you were born?” and you were forced to answer, “No,” would you expect him to say, “Then you are not alive”? If he *did* say so, it would be a very bad argument, as you would be able to prove at once by letting him see that you were far from non-existence and so, if you cannot state *where* you were converted, nor *when* you were converted, do not fret about it.

A far more necessary enquiry is—*Are you converted?* Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you, indeed, born from above by the Spirit of God? If so, it is by no means essential that you should know the place, or the means, or the hour. Still, it is very interesting to be able to point out the place of our new birth. I am thankful to be able to do so and many others of us are glad that they have an equally vivid memory of the spot whereon they stood when they passed from death unto life. “Yes,” you can say, “I believed on Him *there*.” Happy place! Holy place! Some of us know the spot to a yard where we looked unto Christ and felt our burden of sin loosed from our weary shoulders. Standing in one of the halls of the Orphanage is the very pulpit from which I savingly heard the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though I have no reverence for relics of any sort, yet a flood of grateful memories flows before me as I look upon the platform whereon stood the unknown brother who pointed me to Jesus.

Who he was I shall never know till the Day of Judgement—but the text, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth,” was the voice of God to my soul! It is an interesting thing to know where you were converted. May the Tabernacle prove to be the birthplace of a multitude of you, that we may continue to say, “Many believed on Him there.”

What was there particular about the retired place in which our Lord, on this occasion, gathered so many disciples? What was there about the place beyond Jordan where John first baptized?

It was a place *where Divine ordinances had been observed*— “The place where John at first baptized; and many believed on Him there.” Where the Lord is obeyed, we may hope to see him revealed. We are not among those who condemn others for their mistakes about outward ordinances, but yet we do not look upon erroneous practices without sincere regret and apprehension. If the ordinance of Baptism is altered, applied to the wrong subjects, practiced in an unscriptural manner and used for unwarranted purposes, it is a serious error and will be sure, one day or other, to lead to other errors of still greater importance! Disobedience on this point may even now be grieving the Spirit of God and restraining His sacred operations. We must be careful to keep the ordinances as they were delivered unto us. We may not tamper with royal statutes. It is forbidden, even, to batter a penny which bears the king’s face upon it—and it is far worse to alter an ordinance which is stamped with Divine authority!

“Whatever He says unto you, do it,” was the word of the blessed Virgin concerning her Son, and it was a good word, worthy to be spoken in the ear of the entire Christian Church. If a Church labors to keep the ordinances as they were delivered and endeavors to follow in the tracks of Christ’s teaching and example, it may hope to receive the Divine blessing. At any rate, one reason for the withdrawal of the Spirit of God is gone and one reason why the Lord Jesus should bless the work is present. Oh that in this place, where we have baptized many into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we might meet with an abundant blessing! In keeping His Commandments there is great reward. Outward ordinances cannot secure a blessing, but the spirit of obedience which leads to a careful observance of them according to the Divine Command is a blessed fruit of the Spirit! Where John baptized and Jesus submitted thus to fulfill all righteousness, we find a spot which is suited for a Divine revival.

Secondly, remember, this Bethabara was the place *where faithful preaching concerning Jesus had been heard*. For this John, who baptized, also preached the Gospel of repentance. He laid great stress upon that part of the Gospel which prepares men for the coming Kingdom of God. Where repentance has been thoroughly preached, I believe that many will

come to believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus fitly followed John and faith will follow readily where repentance has been thoroughly preached and explained. The plow must lead the way—and then it is good sowing. We must first send in the sharp needle and then the silken thread will be drawn after it. There must be a measure of conviction of sin before there will be a joyful acceptance of the great Sin Offering! John had preached repentance.

“Oh,” you say, “but John was dead.” Yes, but he, being dead, yet speaks! There were the stones of the brook to which John had pointed and the reeds shaken of the wind to which he could never be likened. There was the river Jordan still flowing on, fit emblem of the stream of Grace which washes away the sin of the repentant. The good which men have done lives after them. Herod had cut off John’s head, but he had not silenced John’s voice. From the wilderness there still came the cry, “Repent you: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” A hallowed influence lingers about the scenes of faithful labors and I wonder not that our Lord sought retirement where every ripple of the river repeated the Baptist’s testimony. From scenes like these, the Church will be recruited with new disciples.

What fine preaching was that of John! He did no miracle, but all things that he spoke concerning Jesus were true. He spoke of One that was coming after him who was preferred before him, the laces of whose shoes he was not worthy to unloose. He spoke of Him in terms so plain that the Gospel preacher of today, in the full light of the Spirit of God, cannot find better language—“Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” No wonder that many believed on Jesus there, where the savor of such a ministry lingered in men’s minds! The population of the country round about had been saturated with such teaching as this and they had not forgotten, although they might not thoroughly have accepted, what the last of the Prophets had declared in their hearing. The true Elijah that was to come had so spoken as to fix his words in men’s memories like well-fastened nails! Brothers, wherever there has been earnest preaching, we may expect that many will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ before long. Let no faithful preacher’s heart be faint within him! Christ is not preached in vain—you have not pointed to the Lamb of God for nothing. Even should you die without seeing it, there will come another after you who will reap a harvest from the Seed which you have sowed. Hidden Truths of God will break out all of a sudden and it shall be said, “Many believed on Him there.”

As for the place wherein we stand, I can solemnly assert that I have, with all my heart, preached to you the Gospel of the Grace of God. If a thousand persons were to believe in Jesus this morning, I would not be in the least surprised, for this I surely can claim, that to the best of my knowledge and ability I have, these many years, preached nothing among you but the Cross of Christ. I, too, have cried, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” I have endeavored to point out to you Him whose shoe laces I am not worthy to unloose. I have prayed that He might baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Many saints have joined me in that earnest prayer. If at Bethabara many believed on Him there, we may expect that many will believe on Him here!

The next remark about the place is this—it was a spot *where God had borne witness to His Son Jesus*. Jesus had come to be baptized by John and when He was baptized, He came up straightway out of the water—and the heavens were opened and the Spirit descended upon Him like a dove, while a voice said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The Holy Spirit is known to go where He has gone before—and where the Father has borne witness to Christ, once, we may expect Him to bear witness again! Where Jesus was anointed for his lifework, the spot was hallowed. Where the Divine Voice sounded forth, not through a Prophet, but distinctly out of Heaven, we might look for other displays of God! Where God has spoken, He will speak again!

Has not God spoken to your soul in this Tabernacle? My Brothers and Sisters, has not God often borne witness to His Son in your hearts and consciences in this beloved House of Prayer? Not only has Christ been set forth visibly crucified among you, but the attesting Voice of God’s Holy Spirit has been heard within your spirits, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Therefore let us hope that of this house it shall be said again and again, “Many believed on Him there!”

Once more—not only was this a very interesting spot to our Lord Jesus Christ, but Bethabara was also very interesting to the leaders of the little band who accompanied Him—it was the place *where the Lord’s first disciples had been won*. They heard John speak and followed Jesus. John and James and Andrew and Peter had been, there, brought to Jesus and certain others also had joined the chosen band. To visit the place of their own spiritual birth would cause a renewal of their vows and act as an encouragement to persevere in winning others. Brothers and Sisters, we feel hopeful that God will bless others in the place where He has blessed us. In the place where Peter and John and Andrew have been found, it

is to be hoped that other Peters and Johns and Andrews will be discovered. Where solid stones have been quarried, there remains much more material which may yet be brought forth.

Eternity, alone, shall tell how many souls have been born to God in this House. We have actually registered nearly 11,000 persons who have come forward and confessed their faith, and joined this Church—but these are only a small part of the whole, for great numbers come here and return to the country and unite with other Churches. My Brethren, if the Lord has found you out in this place, you will cry day and night unto Him that others may be found of Him also. Sit in your pews this morning and say, “Lord, I believed on You in this place; therefore I pray You this day grant that many others may do the same and may it be said—‘Many believed on Jesus in the Tabernacle.’”

I suppose it was a lovely quiet spot by the banks of the Jordan with only a little village or hamlet, named Bethany, close by. The word Bethany was altered by Origin into Bethabara, I suppose for distinction’s sake. It really was Bethany, and so our Lord had two Bethanys. It was there, in a rural retreat, that many believed on His name. O hills of Piedmont, when the Vaudois preached the Christ amidst your valleys, it may be said of you, “Many believed on Him there!” O mosses and hillsides of Scotland, in the Covenanting times, many believed on Him there! Talk not so exceedingly proud, O you cathedrals or you great tabernacles, for many have believed on Jesus by the side of the highway, out on the village green, or under the spreading oak. Out in the desert of southern France, where men fled for their lives to hear the Gospel, many believed on Jesus!

In what place cannot Jesus triumph? He needs no Solomon’s Temple, no, in its porch He finds quibblers, but yonder by the willows of the Jordan He finds a people that believe on Him! Go forth, you heralds of the Cross, and preach the Gospel everywhere beneath the arch of Heaven. At the corners of the street or on the hillside, publish the proclamation of the Great King. Let the trees of the woods sing out and the inhabitants of the rocks sing! In all ears proclaim the Gospel, till, by river, sea and plain it shall be said, “Many believed on Him there.” Thus have we seen that it is pleasant to note the place where we first believed in Jesus.

II. Secondly, IT IS VERY INSTRUCTIVE TO NOTE THE TIME when persons are led to faith. Many believed on Him then and there—when He was preaching at the place where John first baptized.

As I have said, some of you do not know when you believed, but you know that you have believed and that knowledge is quite sufficient. Still, it is interesting to know when you believed. Let us see if there were not certain noteworthy circumstances about the season of the conversion of these many. When was it?

First, it was *after a time of very great and obstinate opposition*. The Savior could make nothing of these quibbling Jews. They were so desperately prejudiced against Him that He turned away from them to more hopeful spirits. No sooner does He cross the river than we read that, “many believed on Him there.” So great a difference may we find in a few miles and a few hours! Opposition is no sign of defeat, but the contrary. When the devil roars, it is because his kingdom is being shaken, or he is afraid that it will be shaken. It should not depress us when we see a bitter spirit awakened—it should grieve us to see men opposing the Truth of God, but it should not lead us to abstain from spreading it. In the face of intense opposition our eyes should sparkle—

*“With that stern joy which warriors feel
In foemen worthy of their steel.”*

In the name of God expect victory! Now the foe advances to the fight, the Lord has delivered him into our hands. Hear how David puts it—“They compassed me about like bees, they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.” Have but confidence in God and all will be well. Nothing is worse than stagnation. The stolid indifference of a thoughtless age is hard to deal with, but there is some little hope of a people who will resist you. Take courage from the blackening down of the darkness and hope that very soon you will see the dawn of a better day. “Be you steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” If today men take up stones to stone the Christ, tomorrow hearts of stone may be turned to flesh and we may hear that, “Many believed on Him there.”

The next point which is worthy of thought is that the time when these believed was *a time of calm, unbroken quietude*. The Savior was abiding at Bethany beyond Jordan and there He found a resting place. I suppose there was a ferry there and, by this means, our Lord crossed to the other side of the Jordan, into a lone spot where He could feel safe from quibblers. Those who came there came with the desire to hear and learn—they resorted to Him and were prepared to hear

thoughtfully. Some persons may be converted through those who strive and cry and cause their voice to be heard in the streets, but I do not think the best minds are won in that manner. Conversion of a solid character is effected in a more solid way. Solemn thought and consideration are the healthiest for Gospel preaching.

One of the fathers has a famous sermon upon this text in which he deals with women and speaks of them as having so much more time for retirement and quiet than men. And he thinks that this is one of the reasons why so many of them believe in proportion to men. Men live in the noise of public life and so grow worldly and forget the Lord, but women are more often alone and walk in quieter places and we may, therefore, expect to see more of them turning to God. Certainly an opportunity to think is a great privilege to any man or any woman—and these people at Bethabara, delivered from the noise and clamor of Jerusalem and its priests and sectaries, were able to weigh the claims of Jesus and were led to decide for Him. Give me the riverside, away from the rush of fashion, and I will preach with great hopefulness!

They began to speak of John. Do you wonder? It was the natural topic to discuss upon the spot where John, at first, baptized. “John did no miracle, but all things that he spoke concerning this Man were true”—therefore this Man is the Messiah. This is He of whom John said, “Who coming after me is preferred before me: for He was before me.” I thank my God most heartily for giving us quiet worship. We are not dull and sleepy, but we are not excited and noisy. I am glad to hope that some men are converted to God amid war, earthquakes and pestilence—but I am inclined to be suspicious of that kind of conversion, for fear it should die with its cause.

We had an earthquake in Essex, some time ago, and in the little towns everybody went to the place of worship that week. I asked one of the ministers of a certain village in Essex how they were getting on, now that frisky Essex had, once more, settled down. “Oh,” he said, “we are as dead as ever. We need an earthquake every week to wake us up.” If that had not been true of Essex, I am sure it is true of other places. That which is born with fear dies with fear, but our Savior, in the calm of the hamlet by the river’s bank, instilled the Truth of God into thoughtful minds. The Jordan rolled between Him and His adversaries; no disturbance of the peace was to be feared; those who came to Him were sincere enquirers and our Lord, therefore, preached with great success and, “many believed on Him there.”

A time of calm thoughtfulness and peace of mind should suggest to us the propriety of setting our house in order towards God and considering the claims of the Lord Jesus. If you are, this day, free from care, free from labor, free from fret, I beseech you calmly judge of your condition as to the world to come of which we speak. Think of the Son of God. See whether He is not worthy of your immediate confidence. Judge whether it is not a day of Grace to your soul wherein it would be wise to believe in Jesus.

This time when many believed was *a time of great desire for hearing*. Let me read it—“Many resorted unto Him and many believed on Him there.” You cannot catch fish where there are none. But when the fish come swarming up to the net, we may hope that some will be taken in its meshes. We cheerfully hope that when men dock to hear the Gospel, some will believe it. When I see the vast crowds flooding this place like a sea, I hope it will not all be in vain. When men are as eager to enter the House of Prayer as others are to get into a theater, surely we may hope that God means to bless them! Oh that God would bless the multitudes that contend for standing room in these aisles! To what purpose does He incline them to come here if it is not that they should believe and live? May it be said of this House, not only that many resorted to it, but that they resorted to Jesus—not only that they *heard* of Him, but that they *believed* in Him!

What else shall I say as to this time when many believed in Jesus? I will say nothing else except that it was a time of which nothing else need be said. “Many believed on Him there.” Blessed is that age which has no history, but more blessed is that age of which this is the history—“Many believed on Him there.” Happiest of days in which many believed in Jesus! Brightest of spots of which it is said, “Many believed on Him *there!*” The most honorable record of any House of Prayer will be this—“Many believed on Him there.” I am praying that this may be the case here today. I began the morning with this prayer and my dear Brothers, the deacons and elders, when they came in to pray with me before I ventured on this platform, pleaded for the same thing. Only one note has sounded from the harp of our prayer—it is this—“Oh that many may, this day, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Oh that this second Sabbath of October may be marked, not only by the fall of the leaf, but by the Lord Jesus Christ gathering ripe fruit which shall be the reward of the travail of His soul! Why should it not be so? Why should it not be said today—“Many believed on Him then and there!”

III. We now make a third remark, which is this—IT IS CHEERING TO OBSERVE THE FACT ITSELF. We have noticed the place and the time, but these are of secondary consequence—it is most charming to observe the fact—“Many believed on Him.”

This fact was a great refreshment to our dear Savior’s heart. I do not say that John tells us so, but I think that from the style of his writing in this passage it looks so. There is an air of quietude about the passage. He writes, “And there He abode.” He seemed at home there. He could rest at Bethabara, because many believed on Him there. He must have been wounded when the inhabitants of His Father’s city again and again took up stones to stone Him. But He was pleased to see the plain country folk flock to hear Him. When the polished citizens rejected Him; when the wise Jews would not hear Him, the plain rustics of Peraea stood listening with delight to His dear Words and then weighed them with care and expressed, one by one, the conviction that John’s witness was, indeed, true, and that in Jesus of Nazareth they saw the Messiah! This was to be an oasis of comfort for our Lord before He traversed the burning desert of His passion and death. Before He was called by His last bitter agony to finish the work which the Father had given Him to do, He was to be refreshed by many true hearts putting their trust in Him.

I observe again that no doubt *it was the fruit of John’s words.* The good man’s labors were not in vain. Now, at last, the Seed which the faithful John had sown brings forth the blade and the ear! By the river’s brink the handful of corn grows and ripens to a harvest. Good work never dies!

It was, however, more directly and clearly *the result of our Lord’s own Presence.* They first saw Him and what He did, and what He said and then they compared this with what John had testified, beforehand, and drew the conclusion that all things that John spoke of this Man were true! Brethren, we *must* have Jesus, Himself, here, and I rejoice to believe that He will not refuse to come! Our dear Lord has been known to come to this House on errands of love—there is scarcely a seat in this House which He has not visited—all over the place He has caused the tears of repentance and the songs of faith to flow forth! He is no stranger, by His Spirit, to this House of Prayer! This week He has been here, not only with those who have confessed His name, but with some who last Wednesday were stricken down by conviction and made to cry out in the midst of the congregation, “What must we do to be saved?” In His infinite mercy and boundless condescension Jesus is with us! And from this fact we believe and are sure that power to heal and save will go forth on all sides. By prayer we will hold Him fast—we will not let Him go until He bless many souls!

The fact is very cheering, for you notice concerning the faith produced, that *it was decided.* They did not say that they would *try* to believe, but they believed on Him there! They did not promise to *think* on it, but they believed on Him there! They did not say that they felt impressions, but they believed on Him there! They did not say that they hoped and trusted and so on, but they believed on Him there! That is the consummation for which I pray at this time, that you should not *talk* about faith or feeling, nor resolve and promise, but that you should actually *believe on Him straight away!* Oh that I might see in you a sharp, clear, crisp faith in Jesus Christ—a faith about which there shall be no question! Remember, if you have a certain faith, you have a certain salvation! A doubtful faith will leave a doubt about your security, but those who believe out and out shall have joy and peace through believing!

That belief was prompt. Christ had preached without result for years to some others, but to those who came to this place He spoke only for a short time and they believed on Him there! How I wish that many who have never heard the Gospel before may believe on Jesus this day! I believe that new hearers are often the most hopeful hearers. If you could take a blind man out under the heavens and in a moment remove the scales from his eyes and let him see the stars for the first time, how amazed he would be! It is said that much of the special results of the preaching of Wesley and Whitefield arose out of the fact that the Gospel had become a novelty in England, so that when they preached it, men were struck with amazement at it! I have, therefore, hopes that the preaching, today, of the fact that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleanses as from all sin—and that there is immediate pardon to be had by simply trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ—will take some of you so by surprise that you will believe at once and it shall be said, “Many believed on Him there.” These people did not stop to get home; they did not wait for next week—but then and there, by the river’s brink—they looked to Him who is the Lamb of God and believed on His name!

The believing was of the most solid kind because they could give a reason for it. It was not a hasty, ignorant faith, but they argued thus—“This is the Man of whom John spoke: we have seen what He did and what He said and He is exactly the Man that John said He would be. Assuredly He is the Messiah, of whom John spoke.” And “They believed on Him

there.” I would like you to argue the matter out. I would have you know your sin and the way by which it is removed. I desire you to understand the Doctrine of Substitution, to get at the back of the plan of salvation and see the reason why the Lord Jesus is the fit object of our faith. When you do this, you will believe with a grip and a hold to your faith such as an ignorant faith can never supply. Oh that we might see worked here, today, a solid immovable faith which can give a reason for its existence!

This faith is said to have been widespread, for, “many believed on Him there.” I dare say many men, women and children—many of all sorts believed on Him there. Oh, the privilege of knowing that Christ is no Savior for the few, but He gave His life a ransom for many! Heaven is not confined in its admissions to a few score, but a number that no man can number shall fill the Glory Land. I do not think we have anybody left in this congregation of that ancient order of close fellows who glory in the fewness of the elect. I hope they are nearly all gone to Heaven out of all the congregations whom once they harassed! These Brothers and Sisters used to think that if one or two converts were brought in each year, a great work was being done. If they heard of an evangelist holding revival services and learned that two or three hundred were added to the Church, they said, “Ah, h’m! These excitements end in rejection. It is all very fine to hear of so many joining the Church. I hope they will all turn out right.” This meant, being interpreted, that they did not think they would and that they would be sorry if they did! Now we are not of that mind. We believe in many conversions—we look for them and we have them! That power which converts one can convert a hundred! The same argument which convinces one candid man will convince a thousand candid men. The same Gospel which wins one heart by the Holy Spirit’s power can win 10,000 hearts! O great Master, let us see it done today!

“Many believed on him.” *This was what He lived for!* This is what He died for, that men might believe in Him. This is what we preach for! This is what you have come here for! God gives you to hear the Gospel that you may believe on Jesus! This is why the Bible was written—“These are written, that you might believe on His name.” Your Sundays are given you that you may believe in Christ. Your houses of prayer are built that you may believe in Christ. If you will not believe, our preaching is an unhappy failure for us, an unhappier failure for you. “If you believe not, you shall die in your sins.” “If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved: he that believes not shall be damned.” God save us from that, for Christ’s sake!

IV. And now I close with the fourth head, which is this—it has been pleasant to know the place, instructive to note the time and cheering to observe the fact—and now **IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT WE SHOULD HAVE A SECOND EDITION OF IT.** It is most important that many should believe on Christ here, in this very place, at this very hour!

For first, this morning many are here. From different motives and from different quarters of the globe you have come *here* at this time. We have so far realized the text that “many resorted unto Him.” This is a good beginning—we ought to be very thankful to see it.

Next, *the Lord Jesus Christ is here* by His Spirit. He declares that where two or three are met together in His name, there He is—we have many twos and threes here. He has promised to be with His people to the end of the world when they go forth to preach the Gospel. We have been crying to Him for a blessing, this morning, and He comes to answer our prayers! So far all is hopeful. We have the Lord and the many resorting to Him.

Furthermore, *the witness borne is even more abundant than that which was borne at Bethabara.* John is not here, but then he was not there, for he had been beheaded. His witness was there as his witness is here. Truth is not affected by time—John’s witness is as good after 19 centuries as after three years. We have also the witness of the Prophets who all spoke of Jesus. We have what these people had not—we have the witness of the Apostles who saw Him live and die and rise again and go up into Heaven! We have, moreover, the witness of beloved friends who have been saved by the Lord Jesus and can testify that all that has ever been said in the Savior’s honor is true. He is able to save; He is willing to save; He casts out none that come to Him! If you put hundreds of us into the witness box, we shall all utter our solemn testimony that Jesus is a Savior and a great one, willing to deliver you from the wrath to come!

Beside that, you have the testimony of His own Gospel. The Gospel is its own sufficient witness. Somebody wrote a book and wished to present it to old George the Third. Farmer George asked, “What’s the book about, Sir?” “Sire, it is an apology for the Bible.” “What?” said George, “What? Apology for the Bible? Apology for the Bible? Never heard of such a thing! Don’t want your book, Sir! Apology for *the Bible*, indeed!” Quite right, King George! Surely we do not

need any apologies for the Gospel—it is its own witness. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Jesus Christ suffered, bled, and died, bearing human sin in Himself, and whoever believes in Him shall be immediately forgiven, immediately renewed in his heart by the Holy Spirit and made a new creature in Christ! Why, this is evidently a Divine message. “Look and live.” Such a Gospel never was invented by *men*, for no man likes it well enough to invent it, nor even to accept it after it is invented till God renews his heart! Let it sound forth that Jesus, mighty to save, invites men to trust Him and, trusting Him, they shall live!

Let us now come to bayonet point. Friend, will you believe in Jesus Christ?—that is the point! You have heard about Him long enough—will you now believe on Him? Wagon loads of sermons have been lost upon you—will you now believe on Him? “I will think about it.” I don’t ask you to think about it, but to believe on Him. “I shall go home and try what I can do.” Do not try to do anything—believe on Jesus, for the Gospel precept is—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” May the sweet Spirit of God come upon you mightily, now, and take you away from all things but the one thing necessary! Oh that you would cast your guilty souls on Jesus and find Him mighty to redeem! Here is a simple verse for you to say in your hearts—

*“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ’s kind arms I fall;
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my All.”*

If you have said that from your heart, you are a saved man! Go your way rejoicing in His salvation! The Lord bless you! Amen and amen!

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