

FOLLY OF UNBELIEF

NO. 1980

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 28, 1887,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*Then He said unto them, O foolish men and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken.”
Luke 24:25.*

THE two disciples who walked to Emmaus and conversed together and were sad, were true Believers. We may not judge men by their occasional feelings. The possession of gladness is no clear evidence of Grace and the existence of depression is no sure sign of insincerity. The brightest eyes that look for Heaven have sometimes been so that they could not see their heart's true joy. Be not cast down, my Brothers and Sisters, if occasionally the tears of sadness bathe your cheeks. Jesus may be drawing near to you and yet you may be troubled by mysteries of grief.

The Lord Jesus Christ came to the two disciples and took a walk of some seven miles with them to remove their sadness, for it is not the will of our Lord that His people should be cast down. The Savior does, Himself, that which He commanded the ancient Prophet to do. “Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem.” Thus He spoke and thus He acts. He was pleased when He went away to send us another Comforter, because He wishes us to abound in comfort. But that promise proves that He was and is, Himself, a Comforter. Do not dream, when in sadness, that your Lord has deserted you—rather reckon that for this very reason He will come to you! As her babe's cry quickens the mother's footsteps to come to it more speedily, so shall your griefs hasten the visits of your Lord. He hears your groans, He sees your tears—are they not in His bottle? He will come to you as the God of All Consolation.

Observe that when the Savior did come to these mourning ones, He acted very wisely towards them. He did not at once begin by saying, “I know why you are sad.” No, He waited for them to speak and, in His patience, drew forth from them the items and particulars of their trouble. You that deal with mourners, learn here the way of wisdom! Do not talk too much, yourselves. Let the swelling heart relieve itself. Jeremiah derives a measure of help from his own lamentations—even Job feels a little the better from pouring out his complaint. Those griefs which are silent run very deep and drown the soul in misery. It is good to let sorrow have a tongue where sympathy has an ear. Allow those who are seeking the Lord to tell you their difficulties—do not discourse much with them till they have done so. You will be the better able to deal with them and they will be the better prepared to receive your words of cheer. Often, by facing the disease of sorrow, the cure is half effected, for many doubts and fears vanish when described. Mystery gives a tooth to misery and when that mystery is extracted by a clear description, the sharpness of the woe is over. Learn, then, you who would be comforters, to let mourners hold forth their wound before you pour in the oil and wine!

Learn also a sacred lesson, O you mourners! It is well for you, when you are pouring out your griefs, that you do so before the Lord. These two troubled wayfarers, though they knew it not, were telling their sorrow to Him who best of all could help them to bear it. You may tell your friends, if you will, and it will be some relief to you, but if you seek the Throne of Grace and make the Redeemer your chief Confidant, your relief will be sure! Get alone; shut the door; bow there, apart from the disciples, and say, “Jesus, Master, I would tell You that which saddens me! O great High Priest, who was compassed with infirmities, You will understand me better than my nearest friend and I would place myself beneath Your care!” How great the privilege that we have access with boldness to the ear and heart of Jesus our Lord!

Again, learn another point of wisdom. When our Lord had heard their statement of distress He might immediately have comforted them—a word would have done it. Did He not say, “Mary,” and did she not at once turn and say, “Rabboni,” with ecstatic delight? He went more wisely to work than to administer hurried consolation—He rather rebuked than encouraged them. He began by saying, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the Prophets have spoken!” Observe that I quote the Revised Version, for the Authorized is too harsh. Our Lord did not call them fools, but

foolish persons. The difference is rather in the manner than in the sense. He chided them gently, but still wisely. He let them know that their unbelief was blameworthy and He called them foolish for indulging it. O beloved Brother, if your Master chide you, do not doubt His love! If, when you go to Him in grief, He answers you roughly, it is His love scarcely disguised, which thus seeks your truest welfare. If you believe in your Lord, you will reply, “Master, say on.” If He calls you foolish, you will wonder that He does not say something worse of you—and in any case you will trust Him after the manner of Job when He said, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”

Especially observe that our Savior’s rebuke was aimed at their unbelief. Unbelief, which we so often excuse, and for which we almost claim pity, is not treated by our Lord as a trifle. It is for this that He calls them foolish. It is about this that He chides the slowness of their hearts. Do not let us readily excuse ourselves for mistrust of God. If we ever doubt our gracious Lord, let us feel ourselves to be verily guilty. Regard unbelief as a fault rather than a weakness. Brace yourselves to seek a braver and more constant faith than you have reached as yet. Why should we go on blundering and misjudging and, therefore, fretting when a little consideration will set us right and, at the same time, cause us to honor our Lord and to be, ourselves, filled with joy and peace through believing?

I am going to handle this rebuke as God the Holy Spirit shall help me—first addressing it *to the true Believer* and, secondly, *to the seeker*. I shall have to bring forth some bitter things which will act as a tonic, but by giving tone to your system, they will, in the end, remove your fears better than sweeter matters would have done. Hear, then, our Lord say, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the Prophets have spoken!”

In speaking to Believers, I would have them observe that our Lord rebuked their unbelief under two heads. First, *as being folly* and secondly, *as arising from slowness of heart*.

I. First, then, UNBELIEF IS FOLLY. Not to believe all that the Prophets have spoken and not to draw comfort out of it, is great folly. Folly! Note the word. “O fools! O foolish men!” It is folly such as makes the tender Jesus cry out!

It is folly because it arises from lack of thought and consideration. Not to think is folly. To give way to sadness, when a little thought would prevent it, is foolishness, is it not? If these two disciples had sat down and said, “Now the Prophets have said concerning the Messiah that He shall be led as a lamb to the slaughter and thus was it with our Master,” they would have been confirmed in their confidence that Jesus was the Messiah. If they had said, “The Prophet David wrote, ‘They pierced My hands and My feet,’” they would have recognized in this their crucified Lord. And if then they had turned to the other passages of the Prophets in which they speak of Messiah’s future Glory, they would have been refreshed with hope.

In the Scriptures they would have found types, figures and plain words in which the death and the rising again—the shame and the Glory of Christ are linked together—and His Cross is made the road to His Throne. Had they compared the testimony of the holy women with the prophecies of the Old Testament, they would have obtained ground of hope. The women reported that the body was no longer in the tomb and that they had seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. Two Apostles went to the sepulcher and gave a similar report—and this tallied with the Lord’s own words in which He made Jonah His type—because he came up from the deep on the third day. But they forgot the Scriptures! They did not think of that great source of hope. Their eyes were dimmed with tears so that they did not see what was plain before them. How many a precious text have you and I read again and again without perceiving its joyful meaning because our minds have been clouded with despondency! We take the telescope and try to look into heavenly things—and we breathe upon the glass with the hot breath of our anxiety till we cannot see *anything*—and then we conclude that there is nothing to be seen!

Do you not think, Beloved, you that are depressed and sorrowing today, that if you thought more of the promises revealed in God’s Word, you would soon see things differently and would rise out of your downcast condition? You put your Bibles away and read nothing but the roll of your troubles! There are no handkerchiefs for the tears of saints like those which are folded up within the golden box of God’s Word. He who inspired this volume is “The Comforter”—will you not apply to Him in your dark hours? O you whose melancholy arises from forgetfulness of the Words of your heavenly Father, of the tender Savior and of the Divine Spirit, I beseech you be more considerate! Think of God’s Providence, His unchanging love, His power, His faithfulness, His mercy. Think of the promises and, as you handle them by thought, they will exhale a sweet perfume which will delight you! Holy thought will charm you out of your griefs. But what folly

it is that, for lack of thought, we should bow our heads like the bulrush, when, like the sunflower, we might look at the light till we became little suns ourselves!

Unbelief is folly *because it is inconsistent with our own professions*. The two disciples professed that they believed in the Prophets and I have no doubt that they did. They were devout Jews who accepted the Holy Books as Divinely Inspired and, therefore, Infallible. And yet now they were acting as if they did not believe in the Prophets at all! Are we not often found guilty of the same inconsistency? O Brothers and Sisters, it is one thing to say, "I believe the Bible," but it is quite another thing to act upon that belief! We have more of *seeming* faith than of real faith! That Book is true and every promise in it is true—and I know and believe that it is so—and yet, when I come to the test, how much of faith evaporates and how sadly my fluttering heart proves that my belief was more in fancy than in fact? There is more infidelity in the best Believer than he dreams of. We think we believe in the whole and yet, when it comes to the *detail* and we have to deal with this promise and with that as a matter of fact in everyday life, we have to light a candle and sweep the house to find our faith. What folly this is!

If the Word of the Lord is true, it is true and we ought to act upon it. If it is not true, why do we profess to believe it? That which is unquestionably true will bear all the strain and pressure which life and its trials may put upon it and it is for us to *act* upon this belief. Brethren, it ill becomes us to *play* at believing—let us have our wits about us and make serious business of that which is not sent to delude us, but soundly to instruct us! The Word of the Lord is in harmony with His Providence and as we believe Him as to the one, we must trust Him as to the other! We may safely rest the weight of our body and soul—our present and future—upon the sure promise of a faithful God. And we are bound by our profession to do so. It is folly to call ourselves believers in the Bible and then to doubt and distrust.

Folly, again, is clearly seen in unbelieving sadness because *the evidence which should cheer us is so clear*. In the case of the Brothers going to Emmaus, they had solid ground for hope. They speak, to my mind, a little cavalierly of the holy women as, "certain women." Yet there were no better disciples in the world than those women. They were surely the best of the chosen company—Mary and the Magdalene. Even the testimonies of Peter and John, the very chief of the Apostles, are not sufficiently valued, for they speak of, "certain of them which were with us." I say not they speak disrespectfully, but there is a slurring of their witness by casting a doubt upon it. Concerning these godly women, they leave an impression on my mind as if they had said, "Women will talk and these women said that they had seen a vision of angels which said that He was alive." It is rehearsed as hearsay of a hearsay—they said that they had seen those who had said. If they had been pushed to the point, the two disciples would not have allowed that the Magdalene and the other women, or Peter, or John, were unworthy of credence! And yet they were, by their sadness, acting as if the witnesses were mistaken. If those who were at the empty sepulcher were to be believed, why did they doubt? The evidence which they, themselves, detail, though we have it only in brief in this place, was conclusive evidence that Christ had left the tomb—and yet they doubted it!

Now, dear Friends, you and I have had superabundant evidence of the faithfulness of God and if we are unbelieving, we are unreasonable and foolish! At least I stand here to confess that whenever I doubt my God it is, on my part, a superfluity of naughtiness. I have never had any reason to distrust Him! These many years that I have trusted in Him, He has never failed me once! Experienced Christians, how can you waver in your confidence? If we disbelieve, is it not folly? If the Savior does not call us fools, we are forced to call ourselves so!

We could not suppose that the promise, Covenant and oath of God could fail. The supposition cannot be tolerated for an instant! Thousands of souls are resting everything upon the faithfulness of God and desire no other security. But if God is unfaithful, what will become of them? If the foundations are removed, what can the righteous do? Then they that have fallen asleep in Christ have perished, or, even if they are in Heaven, what security have they there if God can change? I feel quite safe on board the ship of the Covenant, for all the saints are floating in this one vessel. If God fails, then we all fail together and that is the end of faith, hope and all things! Therefore, let us not be so foolish as to sin against the light of clear Truths of God. Let us believe what we have known, tasted and handled. Let past experience anchor us firmly as to future circumstances.

Unbelief is folly because *it very often arises out of our being in such a hurry*. They said, "Beside all this, this is the third day." I know that they had expected great things on that third day and were justified in expecting them. But still, the day was not yet over and they were in as great a fever as if it were past a month ago! Although the Savior had said

that He would rise on the third day, He had not said that He would *appear* to them all on the third day. He told them to go into Galilee and there they should see Him—but that meeting had not yet come. “He that believes shall not make haste,” but they that do not believe are always restless! Well is it written, “You have need of patience.” God’s promises will be kept to the moment, but they will not all be fulfilled today. Divine promises are, some of them, bills which are payable so many days after sight—and because they are not paid at sight we doubt whether they are good bills—is this reasonable? Are we not foolish to doubt the sure handwriting of a God that cannot lie? Because the Lord has not carried out *your* interpretation of His promise in the way of your own dictation, therefore you question His truthfulness? If the vision tarries, will you not wait for it? It will come in its own appointed time. Would you have it hurried on for you? What next? Shall the sun and moon be quickened in their pace to suit your rashness? Must God, Himself, alter His purposes at *your* bidding? Truly, things have come to a pretty pass! Are you a man, or God? If you are a man, wait God’s time and in your patience possess your soul. If you do not, but, like a fretful child, must have everything now, or else cry and fight, you deserves the rod and well may the Lord say to you, “O foolish one!”

Yet, again, I think we may well be accused of folly whenever we doubt, because *we make ourselves suffer needlessly*. There are enough bitter wells in this wilderness without our digging more. There are enough real causes of sorrow without our inventing imaginary ones. I believe that the sharpest griefs in the world are those that men make for themselves. No asp ever stung Cleopatra so terribly as that which she held to her breast, herself. Certain of our friends spend all their days in stitching away to make themselves garments of sackcloth. I have seen the cobbler with his lap stone cobbling up a trouble and he has done his work so well that the shoe has pinched his feet for many a day. It seems a pity, does it not? Yet, Brothers and Sisters, we have those about us who are great at self-worrying. When you were boys, I do not suppose you ever went into the woods to find a stick for your father to beat you with—but you have done so, again and again, since you have been men—and the more is the pity that you should be so foolish. If these two travelers had considered and believed, they would have known that Christ was risen from the dead! And as they walked along to Emmaus, if, indeed, they had ever taken that walk at all, their faces would have brightened at the prospect of soon seeing Him whom they loved so well.

I want you to notice yet further that it was folly, but *it was nothing more*. I feel so thankful to our Lord for using that word. Though we ought to condemn our own unbelief with all our hearts, yet our Savior is full of tenderness and so freely forgives that He looks upon our fault as folly and not as willful wickedness. He does not take our doubt as an affront, but He calls it folly. He knows that it is true of His children, as it is of ours, that folly is bound up in the heart of a child. He puts that down to childish folly which He might have called by a harsher name. I am sure that any dear, obedient child, will feel thankful if his father calls his fault by the lighter name of, folly—because it will prove that he loves him and will endeavor to teach him better. It was not wicked rebellion—there was no enmity in it. They loved their Lord, though they feared He had not risen from the dead.

I do not want you to draw undue comfort from this gentle word, but yet I would have you lose none of the cheer it is meant to convey. You that are vexed at your own doubts are not to come to the conclusion that the Lord utterly rejects you. He discriminates between the folly of a child and the wickedness of a rebel—He knows what is in your heart and knows that you are His. You are like a ship that is well anchored and though the tide is rushing in and makes your vessel roll from side to side, so that you stagger, yet the vessel is not loosed from its moorings—neither are you in any danger! Your faith is fixed on Christ and this Anchor holds you. Though you are tossed about a little, you will suffer no shipwreck because of sin, but much sea-sickness because of folly! So much concerning unbelieving sadness as folly.

II. In the second place, our Lord rebuked them for SLOWNESS OF HEART TO BELIEVE.

This is an evil greatly to be fought against, but it is by no means a rare sin among the people of God. Let me try and bring home the charge made by our Lord against the two disciples, since I fear it applies to us as much as to them. Our hearts are full often sluggish in believing—at least, mine is so—and I suppose we are much alike.

First, we are slow in heart to believe our God, for *we are much more ready to believe others than to believe Him*. I am often amazed with the credulity of good people whom I had credited with more sense. Credulity towards man and incredulity towards God are amazing things to find in the same person! We cannot help seeing in the daily papers how easily people are duped. Get up a prospectus and a list of names as directors, including a titled pauper, and you can bring in money by the wagonload! The confidence trick can still be successfully performed. One impostor lived for months by call-

ing at the door of guileless old people in almshouses and telling them that a cousin in America had died and left them a fortune—but it was essential that fees should be paid at the government offices—and *then* the legacy would at once be handed over. Times after times the money has been scraped together; the rogue has gone his way and no more has been heard of the cousin in America!

There are so many simpletons about that rogues reap harvests all the months of the year. And yet the God of Truth is doubted! Yet the incorruptible Word is mistrusted! This makes our slowness of heart in believing God all the more sad a sign of our inward depravity of nature. We *can* believe, for we believe in man! In the course of our lives we are fools enough to believe in men to our cost. In fact, it is not easy to rise out of this snare, and yet we are slow at heart to believe our God! Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, can we excuse ourselves? The Lord forgive and cleanse us! Let us henceforth accept every syllable of God's Word as Infallible while we turn our unbelief towards man and his philosophies and infidelities!

Is it not clear that we are slow of heart to believe since *we judge this of others when they are mistrustful*? When we see our Brethren in trial desponding and distrusting, we are very apt to think them needlessly dull and sinfully slow to grasp the promise. And yet, if we come into the same case, we are by no means better than they! That which we censure, we commit. The beam is in our own eye as well as the mote in our brother's eye. You have come home from visiting a friend who was distressed at heart and you have said, "I cannot make her out, I have put the promises before her, but she is so foolish that she refuses to be comforted." Yes, and from this learn what you may be! Within a month's time, you may be sinking in the same mire! An evil heart of unbelief is to be found in many a breast where its existence is least suspected.

But if we see the folly of others, will we not confess our own? Dare we commit what we condemn? Did you ever say of Job, "It was a pity that after all his patience, he spoke so bitterly and cursed the day of his birth"? I wonder how many of us would have been any better than Job? I dare not hope that I should have been worthy to unloose the laces of his shoes. If I had been bereaved as he was—and tortured with the same burning boils and, worst of all, irritated by critics with their cruel candor and malignant sympathy—I could not have behaved so grandly as he did. Let us not severely judge others. They ought to believe, of course. They ought to be more cheerful. They ought not to let their burdens crush them so completely—but when we, also, are tempted, shall we be so very much superior? I fear not! Let us see ourselves in the weakness of our Brothers and Sisters and confess that the Savior's Words are true—we are "slow of heart to believe."

There is another point in which we are very slow of heart to believe, namely, that *we believe and yet do not believe*. We must be very slow of heart when we say "Yes, I believe that promise," and yet we do not expect it to be fulfilled! We are quick of mind to believe *mentally*, but we are slow of heart to believe *practically*. The very heart of our believing is slow. Our dear Friend, Mr. George Mueller, whom may God long preserve, says that one of his objectives in journeying about, at his advanced age, from Church to Church, is to try and lead God's people to real faith in the promises of God. He says, "As for 57 years I have seen how very little real trust in the living God there is, (generally speaking), even among true Christians, I have sought, in these, my missionary tours, particularly to strengthen their faith, because in the course of my pastoral labors, the blessed results of real confidence in God, on the one hand, have come to my knowledge, and the misery of distrusting Him, on the other."

Mr. Mueller's objective is a very desirable one, but what fools we must be that this should be necessary! There are plenty of people who believe God after a superfine kind of fashion up there on the edge of the moon, or, "at the back of the north wind." But they do not believe the Lord in their shops, or on their beds, or in their kitchen—they cannot believe as to bread, cheese, house rent and clothes. They talk about believing in the Lord for eternity, but for this day and next week they are full of fear! True faith is everyday faith! The faith of the Patriarchs was a faith which dwelt in tents and fed sheep. We need a faith which will endure the wear and tear of life—a practical, realizing faith which trusts in God from hour to hour! Oh, to be delivered from shams and windbags—and to believe God as a woman believes her husband, or a child believes its father! I hear of writers of "the realistic school"—we need Believers of the realistic order! We need faith in which there is backbone and grit. We are sham Believers and so we lead sham lives. The promises of God speak to us as Jesus spoke to His disciples when He rose from the dead—each one cries, "Handle Me and see." God's Words are not chaff, but wheat! Not wind, but bread! We are slow of heart because, while we think we are believing all that God says to us, it often turns out that our believing is all a puff.

These two disciples must have been slow of heart to believe, again, because *they had enjoyed so much excellent teaching* and they ought to have been solid Believers. They had been for years with Jesus Christ, Himself, as a Tutor, but they

had not learned the elements of simple faith. "Oh," you say, "they were very slow!" Are not you the same? How many years have you been with Jesus? Perhaps for even 30 years, He has, Himself, taught you, has He not? Let me remind some of you of the remarkable events of your lives. What wonderful Providences you have seen! What singular deliverances you have experienced! What Divine upholding you have enjoyed! What heavenly consolations you have received! If you doubt the Savior, you may well be called, "slow of heart to believe." After what you have experienced, my Brothers and Sisters, the shadow of a doubt should never fall upon you! Have you not said many times, in the flush of your gratitude for some signal favor, "There, I can never doubt my Lord again"? You were foolish when you made that boastful observation, but you are more foolish, still, for running back from it! You have passed through the Red Sea and with your timbrel in your hand you have sung unto the Lord—and yet, perhaps, after a short march—you have tasted the bitter waters of Marah and opened your mouth in murmuring! Only God is wise—and we are fools! He alone has understanding—and we are "slow of heart."

Once more, these two disciples were very slow of heart to believe because *there is so much in the Word which ought to have convinced them*. See how the Savior puts it—"Slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken." What a mighty, "all," that is! Brethren, are you half aware of the treasure hidden in the field of Scripture? Are you as familiar with your Bibles as you should be? If so, you will join with me in speaking of Scripture as having almost a redundancy of confirmatory testimony! There is rock enough here for us to build upon. We have here not only precept upon precept, but promise upon promise—and all these confirmed by pledge, oath, and Covenant of the Lord God Almighty! The teaching of Scripture is so full, so varied, so convincing, that we are, indeed, slow of heart if our faith is not firm and immovable.

Brothers and Sisters, a lack of familiarity with the Word of God is very often the seed-plot of our doubts! Half our fears arise from neglect of the Bible. Our spirits sink for lack of the heavenly food stored up in the Inspired Volume. God forbid that you should fly to light literature to awaken your mind! Go to the solid literature of the promises and be established with food more suitable for an immortal soul. Like Luther, say, "Come, let us sing a Psalm and drive away the devil." There is no enchantment for the casting out of evil spirits like a resort to the Divine Word. When you see more of what God has revealed, you will rise out of your doubts and fears—and your slowness of heart to believe will depart from you.

Before I leave this point, I beg you to notice that the Savior does not say that they were "hard of heart," but, "slow of heart." I like to notice that. When He is most severe, He is still tenderly discriminating. "Slow of heart" we are, but there is no enmity in our heart towards Him. It is slowness and that is bad enough, but our Lord graciously helps our pace. Our face is in the right direction and our feet are going the right way—but we are slow in heart and lame in faith. As David spared Mephibosheth and admitted him to his table, though lame in both his feet, so the Lord loves us and communes with us, slow of heart though we are! It is bad to have a slow heart, very bad. But it would be much worse to have an unrenewed heart. With all our doubts and fears, we have no longer a heart of stone, but a heart of flesh which mourns because of its sinful unbelief. The Lord knows the difference between the sin of hating the Truth of God and the folly of doubting it. Strive against this slowness of heart, but still, let not Satan come in as an accuser and condemn you as though you were not a child of God at all.

So there I leave it. There is the Master's gentle rebuke not meant to discourage you, but to encourage you. He calls you foolish in order that you may be so no longer. Believe—and this shall be your wisdom.

III. Will the Lord's people kindly pray for me while I now speak *to the unconverted*? Ask that I may have God-speed while I try and speak to those who are seeking the Lord and have not yet believed in Him. I want to say to them just this—"O foolish men and slow of heart to believe!" Some of you are really seeking the Lord, but you say that you cannot believe though you long to. You are not like the spider, whose motto is, "I get everything out of myself." You do not hope to spin salvation out of your own heart—you admit that salvation must be through faith in Christ. So far so good! But how is it that you do not at once believe? You say you cannot! How is it that you cannot believe in Jesus? He *commands* you to believe in Him and promises that you shall be saved! Trust Him and you shall live as surely as His Word is true.

Listen! This unbelief proves you to be foolish and slow of heart, for *there are other parts of His Word which you easily believe*. If there is a threat or a condemnation, you believe it. If there is a text that speaks of judgment to come, you be-

lieve it. You have a quick eye for anything which reads hard and looks dismal. Have I not seen you reading the Word and stopping at a passage and saying, “Alas, this makes my case hopeless. I have sinned the sin that is unto death”? You believe in more than God has said, for you read your own thoughts into God’s Word and make it say more than it means! You are ready enough to take in the hard things, but the gracious promises of the loving Christ you will not believe. How can you justify this? How foolish you are! The promises are in the same Book as the threats—and if you believe the one, believe the other! Certainly the cheering Words come from the same Inspiration as the depressing ones—if you believe that which looks dark, believe that which looks bright!

Next, you are very foolish because *your objections against believing are altogether poor and puerile*. I think I have heard hundreds of them in my time, but out of all the objections raised by troubled souls against believing in Jesus, there is not one worthy of serious discussion. One man cannot believe in Jesus because he does not feel humble enough—as if that affected Christ’s power to save! If he felt more humbled, *then* he could believe in Jesus. Would not that be just believing in *himself* and trusting in his own *humility* instead of trusting in Christ? One man cannot believe in Christ because he is not like a certain great saint. Does he expect that he is to be like a great saint when he first comes to Christ? Has not Christ come to save *sinners*?

Another says he cannot believe because he has not felt the terrors of the Law and the dread of Hell. Does he think that his *terrors* are to save him? Would his dreads and horrors help Christ to save him? Would he not be trusting his terrors and not Christ? The Lord Jesus says, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” The Gospel is to be preached to every creature—and every creature that believes it shall be saved! But these people back out of it and begin hammering out reasons for their own destruction! A sadly suicidal business this! Let the devil invent reasons for my not being saved—it is not a business which can bring me any form of good. Nothing can stand against the promise of God—He commands me to believe on His Son, Jesus, and I do believe—and I am saved and shall be saved—despite all the objections which may be raised by carnal reason.

Though you find it so hard to believe Christ, *you have found it very easy to believe in yourself*. Not long ago you were everybody and now you cannot believe that Christ is everybody. You thought you were very good. You were wonderfully easy in your own mind when you ought to have been afraid. What? Was it easy to believe your poor self and can you not believe the faithful Word of a good and gracious Savior who says that if you trust Him you shall be saved?

Moreover, *you are very apt, now, to believe Satan* if he comes and says that the Bible is not true, or that Jesus will not accept you, or that you have sinned beyond hope, or that the Grace of God cannot save you. Of course you believe the Father of Lies—and you go mourning and moping—when you might at once go singing and dancing if you would believe your Savior! Jesus bids you trust and live! Satan says it is of no use your trusting—you believe Satan—and treat your Lord as if He had intended to deceive you! “O fools and slow of heart!”

Then you know *how ready you are, you seekers, to stop short of Christ*. If you hear a sermon and get a little melted and go home and pray a bit, you get quite easy and say, “Now I am on the road.” Why, your melting and your praying are not the road to Heaven! Jesus says, “I am the way.” You are *not* on the way till you get to *Him*. You have been in gracious company and singing holy hymns. You feel quite good and are highly pleased with yourselves. What right have you to be restful even for a moment? How dare you linger till you have reached the City of Refuge, which is Jesus Christ? Till you believe in *Christ* you have no right to a single moment’s peace, or hope, or joy! And yet you do get a sort of peace and a kind of hope which are only sparks of your own kindling which will die out in blackness. Because you are content to trust in something short of Christ, I say to you—Why not rest in Jesus? O fools and slow of heart! Refuges of lies you fly to, but the true refuge of the finished work of Jesus Christ you do not accept? Why is this?

And then some of you are foolish and slow of heart because *you make such foolish demands upon God*. You would believe if you could hear a voice! If you could dream a dream! If some strange thing were to happen in your family. What? Is God to be tied to your fancies, that you will not believe Him unless He does this and that extravagant thing? If He chooses to bring some to Himself by extraordinary means, must He do the same with you, or else you prefer to be cast into Hell? Surely you are mad! Who are you that you are to dictate to the Lord and say He *shall do this*, or *that*, or else you will refuse to believe Him? And so you will trample on the blood of Jesus and turn our back upon the Kingdom of Heaven unless an angel is sent to you, or you hear a voice from Heaven? O fools and slow of heart, to make these irrational demands upon the ever-blessed God!

You are foolish and slow of heart because, to a great extent, *you ignore the Word of God and its suitability to your case*. If a soul in distress will take down the Bible and turn it over, he need not look long before he will light upon a passage which describes himself as the object of mercy. “The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Does not that fit you? “Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake His way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” Does not that fit you? “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Does not that apply to you? Why, if you will but look through the Word, you shall find passages so pertinent to your condition that, as a key fits a lock, they will seem *made* for you! Those two disciples did not, for a while, see how the Prophets met the case of the crucified and risen Christ. But as they did see it, their hearts burned within them. As you also see how God has provided for your condition in His Word, in His Covenant, in His Son, your sadness will flee away.

I close with this one word of warning to those of you who are distressed in heart and are falling into the habit of looking for reasons why you should not believe in Christ. I do pray you to leave off this silly practice. Before this evil becomes chronic with you, quit it as a deadly thing. People can reason themselves down, but they cannot reason themselves up again. If you see a door open, in God’s name hasten in, for one of these days you may be so blind as never to see an open door again! Seize this opportunity—and while Christ stands and says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden”—come along with you! If you sit down to argue against Christ, He may allow your conclusions to stand to your own destruction. Those who are so foolish as to find 20 unhallowed reasons today, will be foolish enough to find 200 such reasons next year! A man may act the cripple till he grows hopelessly lame. Mind what you are doing! You may lock a door and open it again for many a year—but one of these days you may so hamper the lock that it will not open again. Oh, that you may at once believe in Jesus Christ unto eternal life!

I have come to this pass myself—if I perish, I will perish believing in Jesus! If I must be lost, I will be lost clinging to His Cross! Can any man be lost there? No, “fools and slow of heart” though we may be, we know that none shall perish who come to Christ, for that would greatly dishonor the Savior’s name. God bless you! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 24:13-35.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—676, PSALM 42 (VER. 1), 191.

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