

## THE SEED UPON A ROCK

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A SERMON

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*“Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.”*

*Matthew 13:5, 6.*

ON another occasion I hope to preach from the words, “because they had no root,” but, at this time, my subject is, “They sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth.” Every farmer knows the wonderful effect of heat below the soil, how quickly it makes things grow. I do not gather that this was a stony piece of ground, but that it had a mass of stone not far from the surface. It was ground where the soil was very shallow and underneath it was a hard pan of rock that had never been broken up, so that, when the sun shone upon it, the rock reflected the heat and what with the sun above, and the heat below, the seed was very soon made to sprout and up came the green blade almost immediately. But this very shallowness of the soil which made the seed spring up so quickly was the cause of its ruin, for the sun had not long shone upon it before that which made it grow also killed it. The heat scorched it and it withered away.

Those people who are represented by this soil which has no deepness of earth, very soon make the Good Seed to appear to grow in them. They hear a sermon, are apparently converted and they fancy that they are saved. Or there is a revival meeting where some earnest addresses are given by different speakers, and they at once profess to be Believers. They are brought forward as converts and there is great rejoicing over them—but after a very little while, days of trial arise and there being no depth in them, they wither away and their names are struck from the church roll. The hopeful success, as it seemed, becomes a bitter failure. Men ask, “Where are those converts?” And echo can only answer, “Where?” for nobody knows but the Lord—who was never deceived by them.

I want you to clearly understand that the fault did not lie in the suddenness of their supposed conversion. Many sudden conversions have been among the best that have ever happened. Take, for instance, the case of Saul of Tarsus, struck down on the road to Damascus. Within three days his sight is restored to him and he is baptized as a true, real, out-and-out Christian. There was great depth of earth in him, yet the seed sprang up very rapidly! And we have hundreds and even thousands of instances of persons who have been suddenly converted and yet who have been truly converted. The work has been very thorough—nobody could doubt its genuineness—yet it took place quite unexpectedly and was looked upon as a wonder.

Do not judge the reality of your conversion either by the suddenness of it or by the length of time which it occupied, for it is true that superficial conversions are usually sudden, although all sudden conversions are not superficial. There are many who, in the sight of God, are not converted at all, who appeared as if they were the subjects of a great, remarkable and complete change. Where there is no depth, there is no durability. That familiar proverb is a true one, “Easy come, easy go.” As a general rule, those persons who have, as they say, “found religion” all of a sudden, without any mental struggle and who have never found it in their heart and soul, are the very people to let it go quite as readily whenever a time of trial comes.

In case there should be any persons of that sort here unwarned, I am going to speak of them and to them now, answering these three questions. First, *what is meant by having deepness of earth?* Secondly, *what is meant by the scorching*

*of the sun?* And, thirdly, *how can we avoid the evil of having no deepness of earth* and so being withered by the scorching of the sun?

**I. First, then, WHAT IS MEANT BY HAVING NO DEEPNESS OF EARTH?**

I think it is, with some people, *a general superficiality of character*. There are some persons whom you ought to be able to see through, for there is so little substance in them. I do not say that you can always see all there is in them, for a pool, if it is not deep, may be very muddy and you may not be able to see to the bottom of it, even though it is quite shallow. And I think I know some people in whom there is as much deception as there is superficiality. Probably we all know some persons who, from their very early days, have always been superficial and changeable, like the man described by Dryden—“Everything by starts and nothing long.” Even in business they have been about 20 different things, “Jack of all trades and master of none.” Nobody knows what they are going to be next and they, themselves, have no idea. The weathercock does not shift more often than they do! When they went to school, they pretended to learn a thing, but they forgot it the next day. Even in their play, they never put any heart—there never was any earnestness about them in anything! And now they are just thin, shallow, vapid, empty. Like the baseless fabric of a vision, “such stuff as dreams are made of,” there is nothing in them.

When such people become affected by religion, they are just the same. They hear, yet they do not hear, for they are looking around the place half the time. If anyone else is affected by the preaching of the Word, they may be affected too, or may appear to be so. They are the kind of people who are always ready, like a flock of sheep, to follow the leader, but their following is only temporary, their affection is mere affectation. They profess to be Christians, but they will give up that profession before long. As far as they can be, they are sincere—what little there is of them—but their sincerity is, after all, a poor, feeble, fickle thing. They will soon be as sincerely wrong as they are, for the moment, sincerely right! You know the kind of people that they are—they were born without any backbone, and it is very hard to grow one if you do not possess one! They seem to go through the world soft, plastic, like Mr. Pliable, who figures in the early part of Bunyan’s, “Pilgrim’s Progress.” He resolved to go to the Celestial City, but, very soon he was quite as determined to get out of the Slough of Despond on the side nearest to his own home. You know the sort of people that I am trying to describe.

Next, the lack of deepness may mean something else—not so much superficiality of character, *as lack of knowledge*. I believe that, at this present time, we are in great danger of being burdened with a crowd of so-called converts who do not really know anything as it ought to be known. They attended a revival meeting, were much excited and thought they were converted—but just ask them to explain to you the simplest Truths of the Gospel and you will soon discover how little they know. Could they explain the three R’s—ruin, redemption and regeneration? Do they know what the ruin is? Do they know what the remedy for that ruin is? Do they understand at all what it means to be born-again? Do they comprehend what the new nature is, or what, “justification by faith” means? Perhaps someone says, “They do not comprehend your theological terms.” I do not mind whether they know the meaning of the terms that are familiar to many of us, but do they know the *Truths*, themselves?

There is a certain degree of Christian knowledge which is absolutely necessary to salvation. David said, “The Lord is my light and my salvation” and we must always have light first. The first word of the spiritual creation, as of the natural, is, “Let there be light.” Where there is no light, there is no life. Where there is no knowledge of God, there is no peace with God. O dear Hearers, if you think you are converted, I trust that it will prove to be so, but do not be content unless you really know the Truth! Search the Scriptures! Try to sit under an instructive ministry. You need not seek to make yourself a Doctor of Divinity, but do learn all you can of the Truth of God. “Grow in Grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Know yourself. Know Christ Jesus as your Savior. Know the work of the Holy Spirit. All this is knowable and must be known, or else, before long, you will wither away because you have no deepness of earth. Some atheist or infidel will come along and turn you aside. Someone will lead you to trust in a priest, or in some false doctrine and if you do not know the Truth, you will be bowled over at once!

Sometimes, this lack of deepness of earth means *lack of thought*, because there may be people who have knowledge, but who have never used their knowledge to any proper purpose. Knowledge is the food of the mind, but thought is the digestion by which we turn knowledge into true mental nutriment. I believe in a serious thoughtful conversion and I hardly think that any other kind can be real. You have sinned against God. *Think* of that great fact. You are lost. *Think*

of that. “God is angry with the wicked every day” and He must punish them. *Think* that over most solemnly. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” *Think* that over and try to understand what is meant by that declaration. *Think* how He stood in the sinner’s place, how He suffered in the sinner’s place. While you are thinking all this over, it will look very different to you from what it did before you thought it over! Hearing of these Truths with the ear may just be a useless process, but when you get them into the *mind*—when you read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them—then your conversion will be like the Good Seed sown in deep, prepared soil and that which springs up in your heart will not wither away because there was no depth of earth.

So do, I pray you, especially before you make a profession of religion, think what you are doing. In joining a Church, I would try to find out what that Church believed and I would not join it if I did not believe its doctrines. I would also want to know what I, myself, believed, for I would be afraid to profess that I believed what I did not believe. I like to see a convert who thinks at every step and who does not put his foot down without first considering whether it is a right place to set his foot. Think, carefully, what the Lord would have you to do and, then, when you come to Him, you will come in deed, and of a Truth. Much thought produces much deepness of earth.

Further, I think that in truly gracious conversions, the deepness of earth, at least in part, lies in *deepness of emotion*. I often regret that I do not see so many converts of the old-fashioned sort as I used to meet with. I know that emotion does not save the soul, but I believe that those who are saved are usually filled with emotion. We are saved by faith, but that faith produces very decided feelings. For instance, where there is true deepness of earth, there is generally a deep sense of sin. A man does not usually truly say, “I believe in Christ,” until he has first of all felt, “I need a Savior.” In the present day, far too many seem to come out of the City of Destruction without any burden on their backs—and I am afraid that means that they never really come out at all. Some of us had the burden on our backs much longer than we need have, and we do not hold ourselves up as examples to others. But I, for my part, have often blessed God for those bitter years of conviction, because now I know what others may have to endure and I can help other poor souls who are deep down in the dungeons of Giant Despair. But where there is no true sense of sin, or very little of it, there is generally a very poor sort of conversion.

If that kind of man ever tries to preach, and he may do so, he never says much about Free Grace and dying love. He is the man who talks a great deal about the dignity of human nature and the evolution of Grace out of man’s own sinfulness. He does not know any better, so he talks according to his light, which is darkness. But, my dear Hearers, may God give you to have so much depth of earth that you may be pricked in your hearts and may be weighed down with a sense of your own sinfulness! May the great steam-plow of the Law of God go right through the rock that lies at the bottom of your heart! May God’s almighty Grace change the rock into good, soft soil which will be suitable to the Good Seed!

Where there is very little feeling, there is generally only a poor conversion, for, as a general rule, where there is no great sense of sin, there is no great sense of love. It is a grand thing to see a converted Pharisee—but a converted harlot may bring more glory to God. Look, she is washing the Savior’s feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head! And why is that? Because she has had much forgiven and, therefore, she loves much! When publicans and sinners are converted, we find what precious metal there is in them. They love their Lord so fervently and oh, how they pray, and how they praise, and how they serve, and how they delight in God! You who have broken hearts on account of sin can indeed give joy to Christ when whole hearts do not. Bruised and mangled sinners glorify the Great Physician who sets their broken bones and binds up their gaping wounds. Poor bankrupt sinners who have not a rag left to put on their backs cannot help magnifying Him who paid all their debts and clothed them with the spotless robe of righteousness which He had, Himself, worked for them! But if any of you think that you do not owe Him much, I fear that thought comes to you because you have not much depth of earth and that you may be like those converts who soon wither away in the sun.

Another mark of those who are without much depth of earth is that *they do not count the cost when they are converted*. They never expect to meet with any difficulties, or troubles, or persecutions, or doubts or fears—and when they have, afterwards, to count the cost of being Christians, they turn back to the world.

This lack of depth of earth also means *lack of reality*. There is no soul in what they do and he who is not converted in his whole soul needs converting over again. He that does not go in for it with body, soul and spirit, all for Christ, and Christ all to him, needs to go back to the wicket-gate and start on the heavenly journey once more. The fact is, depth of

earth means heart—putting our heart into whatever we do. But where there is no faith in the heart, no repentance in the heart, when everything is from the lips and outward, instead of being from the very heart, and upward, then it all comes to nothing in a very short time!

II. I shall only occupy a few minutes in trying to answer the second question, WHAT IS MEANT BY THE SCORCHING OF THE SUN?

Our Lord told His disciples that it meant that *tribulation arises*. The man was so joyful and felt so happy at being converted that, on the next Sunday, he shut his shop up. But, on the Monday night, he said to himself, “I lost so much yesterday that I shall not close my shop next Sunday.” So he returns to his Sunday trading, or in some other way, if there is any trouble for the sake of the Gospel, the sudden convert who has not much depth of earth finds that he has made a mistake and he tries to retrieve his position and to get back to where he was before.

The scorching of the sun also means *persecution*. Yes, the man professed to be converted, but there was not much depth of earth in him so, when he went into the workshop where he was employed, he heard one of the men ask another, “Were you at such-and-such a place, the other night?” “No,” replied the other, “I was not there, but I heard that some of your mates were there and that one of them was converted. He is a full-blown saint this morning, the very man who used to swear and drink as much as any one of us.” And the men chat away among themselves, all the while hitting side blows at him—and they say some very cruel, nasty, sarcastic things. And as he has not much depth of earth, he says, “I can’t stand this chaff. If I lived in a Christian family, I should go to Heaven with the rest, but, as I have to work with the men in this shop, I shall have to do as they do. The old saying is, ‘If you go to Rome, you must do as the Romans do.’ Therefore I shall do just the same as the other men do.” He was going to run with the hare, but the hounds barked so loudly that he must run with them, so away he goes! You know the gentleman, do you not? There are plenty of that sort all round us.

The scorching of the sun, however, comes in many other forms. Sometimes, it is in the form of *great depression of spirit*. The woman professed to be converted and she felt oh, so happy. But, after about a week or so, she was perhaps not in good health, or something happened that crossed her and she felt oh, so unhappy! “Oh, dear,” she exclaimed, “I thought I was always going to travel in the sunshine.” Do any of you think so? If so, you are mightily mistaken! If you fancy that all the way to Heaven it will be hosannas and palm branches, we may as well correct your mistake at once. There are lions to be faced and giants to be fought with! There is the Slough of Despond, the Valley of the Shadow of Death and Vanity Fair! The pilgrim’s way lies through them all and if you are not prepared for these experiences, I do not wonder that, having no depth of earth, you say, “I shall give it all up.” As for myself, I am resolved that if I never have a ray of comfort between here and Heaven. If I live to be 80 years of age in darkness, I will still follow Christ! “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” If that resolution is not in your mind, I fear that you have not much depth of earth and that you will very soon wither away.

Sometimes the scorching of the sun comes in another form, namely, that of *outward debate and discussion*. The young convert meets with somebody who says to him, “But you know that what Mr. Spurgeon tells you is not philosophical. Many discoveries have been made of late and the learned Dr. So-and-So says just the very opposite of what you hear at the Tabernacle.” You do not know how to answer him and I do not suppose that anybody else does, because any fool can raise difficulties and it may not be easy, at once, to answer them, though they can be answered. Now, if you have much depth of earth, you will say to yourself, “Difficulty or no difficulty, I trusted my soul to Christ and I mean to do so to the very end.” But if you have not much depth of earth, you will be staggered by the objections that you hear. “I cannot answer this man,” you will say, “so I do not know what I shall do.” Well, if you cannot answer him, do not try to answer him—is there any reason why you should? If nobody is to go to Heaven until he can explain all the difficulties that anybody can suggest to him, who will ever go there? What you need is not the wisdom which can answer puzzling questions, but the *faith* which clings to Christ through thick and thin. That is the deepness of earth which will keep the Good Seed alive within your soul.

I know another kind of scorching of the sun which many poor souls cannot endure, and that is *difficulties arising from Christian people*. “Well,” you say, “when I was anxious about my soul, Mrs. So-and-So was very kind to me, but now that I trust I have believed in Christ, she does not take any notice of me.” Well, what if she does not? Of course we nurse the babies, but when you begin to run alone, we do not keep on nursing you, for we are looking after other babies!

A young man said, “When first I joined the Church, the members paid me great attention, but now I seldom get anybody to speak to me.” Well, suppose it is so—have we not something else to do beside be always looking after you? We expect you now to be looking after other people! I have before mentioned to you that I had the portraits of my two sons taken on their birthdays for many years. The first year they were in a baby carriage. I did not object to that. But suppose that, at the age of twenty-one, they had still been in a baby carriage? I would have thought myself a very unhappy parent! And are we always to have Christians in baby carriages and, because we begin to treat you as you ought to be treated, namely, make you look to yourselves a little, is that to cause you to go away from us? Well, if it does, then it is evident that you have not much depth of earth.

“Ah,” says another, “but I have not found Christian people to be all that I thought they were.” I daresay you have not! Nor have I and, more than that, I have not found myself to be all that I ought to be, or hoped to be. And I should not wonder if it has been the same with you. But, after all, in this matter of cleaving to Christ, are you to forsake Him because you do not quite admire all His disciples? If they prove unworthy of your admiration, give it all to Him! If they do not write a good fair hand, imitate the style of the great Writing-Master, for then you will write correctly. The inconsistencies of Christians ought not to make you shrink back from following the eternal Son of God, but should rather cause you to cling the more closely to Him!

But perhaps the fiery trial comes to you in this form. *You are surrounded by evil examples.* You say, “I do not know how I am to be a Christian at home—and in the circle in which I move, I do not know how I am to hold out.” Ah, such talk as that proves that you have not much depth of earth. May I beg you, in laying hold on Christ, to lay hold on Him with both hands for yourself? Do not be a sort of, “lean-to” Christian—you know what that expression means? A man built a lean-to house resting against his neighbor’s wall and, when his neighbor took his wall down, his house went down too! Build your house with every wall of it your own, on your own ground, so that whoever pulls his wall down, your structure will stand! God help us to avoid being dependent upon other people about these things! Let us not have a second-hand religion which we bought from somebody else, but let us go direct to Jesus Christ, Himself, and get it for ourselves and believe in Him for ourselves. Then shall we have much depth of earth and, let the sun shine as fiercely as it may, its beams shall only cause us to grow and we shall give God all the Glory!

**III.** Now I must turn, for a little while, to the third question—HOW CAN WE AVOID THIS EVIL OF BEING SO SHALLOW, THEREFORE WITHERING IN THE SUNSHINE?

Dear Friends, above all things, dread insincerity and, next to that, above all other things, dread superficiality in religion. You know that the beginning of all godliness is believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, *so mind what and why you believe.* Do not be content to say, “I believe,” but *really* believe and, in order to this, know *what* you believe and *why* you believe it. Get a clear view of who Christ is, what He did, what right you have to trust Him and the way in which what Christ did avails for your salvation. Clear out the space for the foundation of your building. Get right down to the solid rock before you lay a single brick or stone. That is to say, let your faith be real faith, clear, distinct, Scriptural faith in what God has revealed and in the Savior whom God has set forth as the Propitiation for our sins. Begin, in that way, with real faith—and you will begin with a good depth of earth.

Then, as repentance comes with faith, *see that you have real repentance.* Think much of the evil of sin and of the consequences of sin both in this life and in that which is to come. Pray to God, with Charles Wesley—

*“Before me place, in dread array,  
The pomp of that tremendous day,  
When You with clouds shall come  
To judge the nations at Your bar.  
And tell me, Lord, shall I be there,  
To meet a joyful doom?”*

Think of what would result from your appearing there red with your guilt! And when you have thought that over most seriously, pray to God to make you really hate sin, every sin. If you do not hate every sin, you do not, with all your heart, hate *any* sin. They must all go. Sin, as sin, is to be abhorred, repented of and practically quitted in your life. Oh, may God help you to make sure work of your repentance! Make no profession of faith if you have not real faith—and have no repentance at all rather than sham repentance.

Then, *in every spiritual Grace, and in every religious duty, be thorough.* If you pray, really pray. If you praise, do praise. I like the thought of a holy man of God who said that he would never give up praying till he had prayed. When he came to be instructed in the reading of the Scriptures, he would read till he was instructed. And when he praised God, he said, he would not cease from the holy exercise till he felt that his heart did truly praise God. O Brothers and Sisters, let us beware of leaving our heart out of our worship or service! You never read, in the Old Testament, that anybody ever brought a fish to be offered upon God's altar. Why not? Because you could not bring it alive—and every victim must be brought to the altar alive. God loves living worship. Among the old Romans, when they killed a bullock as a sacrifice, if they did not find its heart, or if the heart was shriveled, they never offered that animal, for they considered that it was an omen of evil when the heart was not there in full vigor. So must it be with all the sacrifices that we bring to the Lord—

*“God abhors a sacrifice  
Where not the heart is found.”*

I pray you never to go beyond reality in any part of your worship. If you do not really pray, do not pretend to pray. If you have no experience of the things of God, do not talk as if you had. To be a liar anywhere is hateful—but to lie in religion is the most abominable form of lying that can be! God make us straight as a line about all these things! Then, we shall soon come to much depth of earth.

I would say finally, Beloved, *bring your hearts to God and ask Him to search you.* After many years of looking at one's self, how little one knows about himself after all! A gray-headed man of long experience thinks, “Well, now, I really do know something about my human nature.” So you do, Brother, but not much, for “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” And when a man says, of any particular temptation, “I shall never fall in that way,” the probability is that this is the very way in which the man will fall. I well remember a lady, whom I would not be slandering if I said that she was as proud as she was tall, but, on one occasion, when I scarcely knew her, she said to me, “I always pray for you, Mr. Spurgeon, every day.” I said, “I thank you very much,” and she added, “My one prayer for you is that God will keep you humble.” I said, “Thank you, Madam, that is a very wise prayer. I am sorry that I have not remembered you in that way, but I will do so in the future.” “Oh,” she said, “but I do not need it, for I was never tempted to pride.” “Madam,” I said, “I shall remember you, now, twice a day, night and morning, for I think that you are in greater danger of pride than anybody whom I have met with for a long time.”

There was a person who said that she had not any pride and was not in danger of being tempted to be proud, yet, if I had asked any half-dozen of her acquaintances to find me a proud woman, they would have called on her, and said that I needed to see her—I am sure that they would. So is it with us! When we think that we are getting over some particular temptation, it is just then that *it* is getting over us! When you suppose that you are master of that temptation, in all probability it has mastered you. Come, Brothers and Sisters, we had better give over this kind of folly. This person, whom we are trying to search, is much too deep for us. I mean, that we are so ready to cheat ourselves, that we cannot find ourselves out! Let us rather pray to the Lord, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

I suggest to you this prayer, “Lord, show me the worst of my case. Put me in the place where I ought to be. Make me to feel and know what I really am and then, my Lord, break my heart if it never was broken, and heal it if it is broken. Empty me of myself and bring me to Yourself. Turn me upside down till the last drop of my self-sufficiency runs out even to the dregs—and then pour in the fullness of Your Grace in Christ Jesus till I am filled even to the brim.”

The Lord hear that prayer, and bless every soul here now, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

### EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *MARK 9:14-32, 43-48.*

Our Lord had been absent from the people and transfigured on the top of the mountain. When He came down from this manifestation of His Glory, He was brought face to face with Satan's work at almost the first step He took. Let us read about what He did.

**Verses 14, 15.** *And when He came to His disciples, He saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes disputing with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted*

*Him.* There was a Glory about His face not altogether unlike that of Moses when he came down from the other mountain, so that the people were struck with wonder when they looked upon Him.

16. *And He asked the scribes, What are you discussing with them?* The battle had been raging between Christ's enemies and His disciples but now that their Captain has come, He rallies His forces and at once attacks His foes—"What are you discussing with them?"

17. *And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto You my son, who has a dumb spirit.* We do not know if the scribes gave any answer to Christ's question and it does not matter at all. What does *always* matter is practical, living, earnest *prayer*. So what the scribes may have said is not recorded, but the prayer of the poor father is—"Master, I have brought unto You my son, who has a dumb spirit." If any of you have come here to quibble, we shall take no notice of that! But if there is a soul that has come here to pray, the recording angel will write it down in the eternal book.

18. *And wherever he takes him, he throws him down and he foams and gnashes his teeth, and pines away: and I spoke to Your disciples that they should cast him out, but they could not.* No, it was no use going to the disciples, it is of no use to pray to saints and angels—go to the Master Himself! "Straightforward makes the best runner." There is nothing like carrying your case to headquarters. Get to the Court of King's Bench as soon as you can, for there the matter will be finally settled.

19. *He answered him and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.* Grand words, "Bring him to Me." Lord, he has a dumb spirit. "Bring him to me." It is the devil who is his enemy. "Bring him to Me."

20. *And they brought him to Him: and when He saw him, straightway the spirit threw him down; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.* What a dreadful sight! He struggled on the ground, like one in a fit of epilepsy.

21, 22. *And He asked his father, How long is it since this came unto him. And he said, From childhood. And oftentimes it has cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if You can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.* "Help us," he cries, identifying himself with his child. Father, Mother, when you pray, use the plural, as this man did, "Have compassion on *us* and help us." That is the way to pray for every sinner whom you bring before Christ. Join yourself to the poor soul for whom you are pleading and say, "Have compassion on us, and help us."

23. *Jesus said unto him, If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.* Hear that, any of you who have come in here desiring to be delivered from sin, to be made holy, to break off old habits and to become new men in Christ Jesus! "All things are possible to him that believes." So, take courage, trust in Christ and cry unto Him to save you.

24. *And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief.* There were within him two men, as it were, a believing man and an unbelieving man—and the two struggled for mastery. "Lord, I do believe, but there is so much unbelief in me, I pray You to drive it out, that I may believe in You wholly."

25, 26. *When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, You dumb and deaf spirit, I charge you, come out of him and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him.* It must obey Christ. The Master bids that dog of a devil to lie down and he must do so. It shows what an abject creature, after all, the Prince of Darkness is! He must obey the voice of Christ. Lord, speak to him at this moment and drive him out of other souls by your Omnipotent Word!

26. *And he was as one dead; inasmuch that many said, he is dead.* It was not a case of "kill or cure," but it seemed to be one of "cure and kill" and, sometimes, poor sinners, in their struggles with sin and Satan are brought to such despair that they are afraid that they will die before they get a glimpse of hope. "Many said, he is dead," but he was not.

27. *But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.* So may the Lord come and take by the hand any here who seem to be dead in despair! A touch of His hand will enable them to stand.

28, 29. *And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting.* The watchword for Christ's disciples is, "intensity." Here was the devil in an intensely terrible form and he could only be driven out by intense Grace.

There must be prayer and fasting. Even Christ, Himself, must exert the greatness of His power to work a cure in such a case as this. Oh, for more intensity in us all! Carry that word in your ear as we read on.

**30-32.** *And they departed from there, and passed through Galilee; and He would not that any man should know it. For He taught His disciples, and said unto them, The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after He is killed, He shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask Him.* See how intense He was—always thinking of His approaching death, that cruel, bitter death—yet He hastened towards it, longed for that baptism to be accomplished, for the great redeeming price to be paid! Oh, that you and I were as fully absorbed in the service of God as our great Master was! Now let us see what intensity He requires of us.

**43.** *And if your hand offends you, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into Hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched.* Anything is better than the loss of your soul. It is better to lose the greatest joy, skill, comfort, honor that you ever had, than to lose your soul forever.

**44-46.** *Where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched. And if your foot offends you, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than having two feet to be cast into Hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.* That is the second time He said these words. Our Lord was not fond of dreadful metaphors and terrible language, but He knew that they must be used, though some of His servants shrink from the use of them. Are they more loving than He is? Is it, after all, a greater love for souls that makes men keep back terrible Truths of God? Is it not more honest and loving to tell the whole Truth, whatever it may be? It is harder to speak, but does it not show a tender heart to be able to speak so as to warn men of their peril? If anything should seem as necessary to you as your foot, so that you can make no progress in life without it, yet if it would cost you your soul, give it up! Just as it would be better to live without a foot than to die, so is it better to go to Heaven without even the necessities of life on the road than to perish everlastingly.

**47.** *And if your eye offends you, pluck it out.* Notice how severe our Savior is, how deep He goes. He does not say, “Shut it, cover it up with a green shade,” but, “Pluck it out.”

**47, 48.** *It is better for you to enter into the Kingdom of God with one eye than having two eyes to be cast into Hell fire: where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.* That is the third time He has uttered those terrible words! Then they must mean something. What do they mean? Can they mean anything less than everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord? Oh, that we might be prepared to sacrifice everything rather than be lost forever! Dear Hearts, are you saved or not? If you are not saved, see first to this all-important business! Let everything else go sooner than that, in eternity, you should find yourself forever shut in where hope can never come!

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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