

Christ's People—Imitators of Him

A Sermon

(No. 21)

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“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”—[Acts 4:13](#).

BEHOLD! what a change divine grace will work in a man, and in how short a time. That same Peter, who so lately followed his master *afar off*, and with oaths and curses denied that he knew his name, is now to be found side by side with the loving John, boldly declaring that there is salvation in none other name save that of Jesus Christ, and preaching the resurrection of the dead, through the sacrifice of his dying Lord. The Scribes and Pharisees soon discover the reason of his boldness. Rightly did they guess that it rested not in his learning or his talents, for neither Peter nor John had been educated; they had been trained as fishermen; their education was a knowledge of the sea—of the fisherman's craft; none other had they; their boldness could not therefore spring from the self-sufficiency of knowledge, but from the Spirit of the living God. Nor did they acquire their courage from their station; for rank will confer a sort of dignity upon a man, and make him speak with a feigned authority, even when he has no talent or genius; but these men were, as it says in the original text, *idiotai*, private men, who stood in no official capacity; men without rank or station. When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and private individuals, they marveled, and they came to a right conclusion as to the source of their power—they had been dwelling with Jesus. Their conversation with the Prince of light and glory, backed up, as they might also have known, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, without which even that eminently holy example would have been in vain, had made them bold for their Master's cause. Oh! my brethren, it were well if this condemnation, so forced from the lips of enemies, could also be compelled by our own example. If we could live like Peter and John; if our lives were “living epistles of God, known and read of all men;” if, whenever we were seen, men would take knowledge of us, that we had been with Jesus, it would be a happy thing for this world, and a blessed thing for us. It is concerning that I am to speak to you this morning; and as God gives me grace, I will endeavor to stir up your minds by way of remembrance, and urge you so to imitate Jesus Christ, our heavenly pattern, that men may perceive that you are disciples of the Holy Son of God.

First, then, this morning, I will tell you *what a Christian should be*; secondly, I will tell you *when he should be so*; thirdly, *why he should be so*; and then fourthly *how he can be so*.

I. As God may help us then, first of all, we will speak of WHAT A BELIEVER SHOULD BE. A Christian should be a striking likeness of Jesus Christ. You have read lives of Christ, beautifully and eloquently written, and you have admired the talent of the persons who could write so well; but the best life of Christ is his living biography, written out in the words and actions of his people. If we, my brethren, were what we profess to be; if the Spirit of the Lord were in the heart of all his children, as we could desire; and if, instead of having abundance of formal professors, we were all possessors of that vital grace, I will tell you not only what we ought to be, but what we should be: we should be pictures of Christ, yea, such striking likenesses of him that the world would not have to hold us up by the hour together, and say, "Well, it seems somewhat of a likeness;" but they would, when they once beheld us, exclaim, "He has been with Jesus; he has been taught of him; he is like him; he has caught the very idea of the holy Man of Nazareth, and he expands it out into his very life and every day actions."

In enlarging upon this point, it will be necessary to premise, that when we here affirm that men should be such and such a thing, we refer to the people of God. We do not wish to speak to them in any legal way. We are not under the law, but under grace. Christian men hold themselves bound to keep all God's precepts; but the reason why they do so is not because the *law* is binding upon them, but because the *gospel* constrains them; they believe, that having been redeemed by blood divine; having been purchased by Jesus Christ, they are more bound to keep his commands, than they would have been if they were under the law; they hold themselves to be ten thousand fold more debtors to God, than they could have been under the Mosaic dispensation. Not of force; not of compulsion; not through fear of the whip; not through legal bondage; but through pure, disinterested love and gratitude to God, they lay themselves out for his service, seeking to be Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile. This much I have declared lest any man should think that I am preaching works as the way to salvation; I will yield to none in this, that I will ever maintain—that by grace we are saved, and not by ourselves; but equally must I testify, that where the grace of God is, it will produce fitting deeds. To these I am ever bound to exhort you, while ye are ever expected to have good works for necessary purposes. Again, I do not, when I say that a believer should be a striking likeness of Jesus, suppose that any one Christian will perfectly exhibit all the features of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; yet, my brethren, the fact that perfection is beyond our reach, should not diminish the ardore of our desire after it. The artist, when he paints, knows right well that he shall not be able to excel Apelles; but that does not discourage him; he uses his brush with all the greater pains, that he may, at least in some humble measure, resemble the great master. So the sculptor, though persuaded that he will not rival Praxiteles, will hew out the marble still, and seek to be as near the model as possible. Thus so the Christian man; though he feels he never can mount to the heights of complete excellence, and perceives that he never can on earth become the exact image of

Christ, still holds it up before him, and measures his own deficiencies by the distance between himself and Jesus. This will he do; forgetting all he has attained, he will press forward, crying, *Excelsior!* going upwards still, desiring to be conformed more and more to the image of Christ Jesus.

First, then, a Christian should be like Christ in his *boldness*. This is a virtue now-a-days called impudence, but the grace is equally valuable by whatever name it may be called. I suppose if the Scribes had given a definition of Peter and John, they would have called them impudent fellows.

Jesus Christ and his disciples were noted for their courage. "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Jesus Christ never fawned upon the rich; he stooped not to the great and noble; he stood erect, a man before men—the prophet of the people; speaking out boldly and freely what he thought. Have you never admired that mighty deed of his, when going to the city where he had lived and been brought up? Knowing that a prophet had no honor in his own country, the book was put into his hands (he had but then commenced his ministry), yet without tremor he unrolled the sacred volume, and what did he take for his text? Most men, coming to their own neighborhood, would have chosen a subject adapted to the taste, in order to earn fame. But what doctrine did Jesus preach that morning? One which in our age is scorned and hated—the doctrine of *election*. He opened the Scriptures, and began to read thus: "Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sodom, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus, the prophet; and none of them were cleansed, saving Naaman, the Syrian." Then he began to tell, how God saveth whom he pleases, and rescues whom he chooses. Ah! how they gnashed their teeth upon him, dragged him out, and would have cast him from the brow of the hill. Do you not admire his intrepidity? He saw their teeth gnashing; he knew their hearts were hot with enmity, while their mouths foamed with revenge and malice; still he stood like the angel who shut the lions' mouths; he feared them not; faithfully he proclaimed what he knew to be the truth of God, and still read on, despite them all. So, in his discourses. If he saw a Scribe or a Pharisee in the congregation, he did not keep back part of the price, but pointing his finger, he said, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites;" and when a lawyer came, saying, "Master, in speaking thus, thou condemnest us also;" he turned round and said "Woe unto you, lawyers, for ye bind heavy burdens upon men, while ye yourselves will not touch them with so much as one of your fingers." He dealt out honest truth; he never knew the fear of man; he trembled at none; he stood out God's chosen, whom he had anointed above his fellows, careless of man's esteem. My friends, be like Christ in this. Have none of the time-serving religion of the present day, which is merely exhibited in evangelical drawing-rooms,—a religion which only flourishes

in a hot-bed atmosphere, a religion which is only to be perceived in good company. No; if ye are the servants of God, be like Jesus Christ, bold for your master; never blush to own your religion; your profession will never disgrace you; take care you never disgrace *that*. Your love to Christ will never dishonor you; it may bring some temporary slight from your friends, or slanders from your enemies; but live on, and you shall live down their calumnies; live on, and ye shall stand amongst the glorified, honored even by those who hissed you, when *he* shall come to be glorified by his angels, and admired by them that love him. Be like Jesus, very valiant for your God, so that when they shall see your boldness, they may say, “He has been with Jesus.”

But no one feature will give a portrait of a man; so the one virtue of boldness will never make you like Christ. There have been some who have been noble men, but have carried their courage to excess; they have thus been caricatures of Christ, and not portraits of him. We must amalgamate with our boldness the *loveliness* of Jesus' disposition. Let courage be the brass, let love be the gold. Let us mix the two together; so shall we produce a rich Corinthian metal, fit to be manufactured into the beautiful gate of the temple. Let your love and courage be mingled together. The man who is bold may indeed accomplish wonders. John Knox did much, but he might perhaps have done more if he had had a little love. Luther was a conqueror—peace to his ashes, and honor to his name!—still, we who look upon him at a distance, think that if he had sometimes mixed a little mildness with it—if, while he had the *fortitior in re*, he had been also *suaviter in modo*, and spoken somewhat more gently, he might have done even more good than he did. So brethren, while we too are bold, let us ever imitate the loving Jesus. The child comes to him; he takes it on his knee, saying, “Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.” A widow has just lost her only son; he weeps at the bier, and with a word, restores life to the dead man. He sees a paralytic, a leper, or a man long confined to his bed; he speaks, they rise, and are healed. He lived for others, not for himself. His constant labors were without any motive, except the good of those who lived in the world. And to crown all, ye know the mighty sacrifice he made, when he condescended to lay down his life for man—when on the tree, quivering with agony, and hanging in the utmost extremity of suffering, he submitted to die for our sakes, that we might be saved. Behold in Christ love consolidated! He was one mighty pillar of benevolence. As God is love, so Christ is love. Oh, ye Christians, be ye loving also. Let your love and your beneficence beam out on all men. Say not, “Be ye warmed, and be ye filled,” but “give a portion to seven, and also to eight.” If ye cannot imitate Howard, and unlock the prison doors—if ye cannot visit the sad house of misery, yet each in your proper sphere, speak kind words, do kind actions; live out Christ again in the kindness of your life. If there is one virtue which most commends Christians, it is that of kindness; it is to love the people of God, to love the church, to love the world, to love all. But how many have we in our churches of Crab-tree Christians, who have mixed such a vast amount of vinegar, and such a tremendous quantity

of gall in their constitutions, that they can scarcely speak one good word to you: they imagine it impossible to defend religion except by passionate ebullitions; they cannot speak for their dishonored Master without being angry with their opponent; and if anything is awry, whether it be in the house, the church, or anywhere else, they conceive it to be their duty to set their faces like flint, and to defy everybody. They are like isolated icebergs, no one cares to go near them. They float about on the sea of forgetfulness, until at last they are melted and gone; and though, good souls, we shall be happy enough to meet them in heaven, we are precious glad to get rid of them from the earth. They were always so unamiable in disposition, that we would rather live an eternity with them in heaven than five minutes on earth. Be ye not thus, my brethren. Imitate Christ in you loving spirits; speak kindly, act kindly, and do kindly, that men may say of you, "He has been with Jesus."

Another great feature in the life of Christ was his deep and *sincere humility*; in which let us imitate him. While we will not cringe or bow³(far from it; we are the freemen whom the truth makes free; we walk through this world equal to all, inferior to none)³yet we would endeavor to be like Christ, continually humble. Oh, thou proud Christian (for though it be a paradox, there must be some, I think; I would not be so uncharitable as to say that there are not some such persons), if thou art a Christian, I bid thee look at thy Master, talking to the children, bending from the majesty of his divinity to speak to mankind on earth, tabernacling with the peasants of Galilee, and then—aye, depth of condescension unparalleled—washing his disciples' feet, and wiping them with the towel after supper. This is your Master, whom ye profess to worship; this is your Lord, whom ye adore. And ye, some of you who count yourselves Christians, cannot speak to a person who is not dressed in the same kind of clothing as yourselves, who have not exactly as much money per year as you have. In England, it is true that a sovereign will not speak to a shilling, and a shilling will not notice a sixpence, and a sixpence will sneer at a penny. But it should not be so with Christians. We ought to forget caste, degree, and rank, when we come into Christ's church. Recollect, Christian, who your Master was—a man of the poor. He lived with them; he ate with them. And will ye walk with lofty heads and stiff necks, looking with insufferable contempt upon you meaner fellow-worms? What are ye? The meanest of all, because your trickeries and adornments make you proud. Pitiful, despicable souls ye are! How small ye look in God's sight! Christ was humble; he stooped to do anything which might serve others. He had no pride; he was an humble man, a friend of publicans and sinners, living and walking with them. So, Christian, be thou like thy Master—one who can stoop; yea, be thou one who thinks it no stooping, but rather esteems others better than himself, counts it his honor to sit with the poorest of Christ's people, and says, "If my name may be but written in the obscurest part of the book of life, it is enough for me, so unworthy am I of his notice!" Be like Christ in his humility.

So might I continue, dear brethren, speaking of the various characteristics of Christ Jesus; but as you can think of them as well as I can, I shall not do so. It is easy for you to sit down and paint Jesus Christ, for you have him drawn out here in his word. I find that time would fail me if I were to give you an entire likeness of Jesus; but let me say, imitate him in his holiness. Was zealous for his master? So be you. Ever go about doing good. Let not time be wasted. It is too precious. Was he self-denying, never looking to his own interest? So be you. Was he devout? So be you fervent in your prayers. Had he deference to his Father's will? So submit yourselves to him. Was he patient? So learn to endure. And best of all, as the highest portraiture of Jesus, try to forgive your enemies as he did; and let those sublime words of you Master, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," always ring in your ears. When you are prompted to revenge; when hot anger starts, bridle the steed at once, and let it not dash forward with you headlong. Remember, anger is temporary insanity. Forgive as you hope to be forgiven. Heap coals of fire on the head of your foe by your kindness to him. Good for evil, recollect, is god-like. Be god-like, then; and in all ways, and by all means, so live that your enemies may say, "He has been with Jesus."

II. Now, WHEN SHOULD CHRISTIANS BE THUS? For there is an idea in the world that persons ought to be very religious on a Sunday, but it does not matter what they are on a Monday. How many pious preachers are there on a Sabbath-day, who are very impious preachers during the rest of the week! How many are there who come up to the house of God with a solemn countenance, who join the song and profess to pray, yet have neither part nor lot in the matter, but are "in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity!" This is true of some of you who are present here. When should a Christian, then, be like Jesus Christ? Is there a time when he may strip off his regimentals—when the warrior may unbuckle his armor, and become like other men? Oh! no; at all times and in every place let the Christian be what he professes to be. I remember talking some time ago with a person who said, "I do not like visitors who come to my house and introduce religion; I think we ought to have religion on the Sabbath-day, when we go to the house of God, but not in the drawing-room." I suggested to the individual that there would be a great deal of work for the upholsterers, if there should be no religion except in the house of God. "How is that?" was the question. "Why," I replied, "we should need to have beds fitted up in all our places of worship, for surely we need religion to die with, and consequently, every one would want to die there." Aye, we all need the consolations of God at last; but how can we expect to enjoy them unless we obey the precepts of religion during life? My brethren, let me say, be ye like Christ at all times. Imitate him in *public*. Most of us live in some sort of publicity; many of us are called to work before our fellow-men every day. We are watched; our words are caught; our lives are examined—taken to pieces. The eagle-eyed, argus-eyed world observes everything we do, and sharp critics are upon us. Let us live the life of Christ in public. Let us take care that we exhibit our Master, and not ourselves—so that we can say, "It is no

longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me.” Take heed that you carry this into the *church* too, you who are church-members. Be like Christ in the church. How many there are of you like Diotrophes, seeking pre-eminence? How many are trying to have some dignity and power over their fellow Christians, instead of remembering that it is the fundamental rule of all our churches, that there all men are equal—alike brethren, alike to be received as such. Carry out the spirit of Christ, then, in your churches, wherever ye are; let your fellow members say of you, “He has been with Jesus.”

But, most of all, take care to have religion in your *houses*. A religious house is the best proof of true piety. It is not my chapel, it is my house—it is not my minister, it is my home-companion—who can best judge me; it is the servant, the child, the wife, the friend, that can discern most of my real character. A good man will improve his household. Rowland Hill once said, he would not believe a man to be a true Christian if his wife, his children, the servants, and even the dog and cat, were not the better for it. That is being religious. If your household is not the better for your Christianity—if men cannot say, “This is a better house than others,” then be not deceived—ye have nothing of the grace of God. Let not your servant, on leaving your employ, say, “Well, this is a queer sort of a religious family; there was no prayer in the morning, I began the day with my drudgery; there was no prayer at night, I was kept at home all the Sabbath-day. Once a fortnight, perhaps, I was allowed to go out in the afternoon, when there was nowhere to go where I could hear a gospel sermon. My master and mistress went to a place where of course they heard the blessed gospel of God—that was all for them; as for me, I might have the dregs and leavings of some over-worked curate in the afternoon.” Surely, Christian men will not act in that way. No! Carry out your godliness in your family. Let everyone say that you have practical religion. Let it be known and read in the house, as well as in the world. Take care of your character there; for what we are there, we really are. Our life abroad is often but a borrowed part, the actor’s part of a great scene, but at home the wizard is removed, and men are what they seem. Take care of you home duties.

Yet again, my brethren, before I leave this point, imitate Jesus in *secret*. When no eye seeth you except the eye of God, when darkness covers you, when you are shut up from the observation of mortals, even then be ye like Jesus Christ. Remember his ardent piety, his secret devotion—how, after laboriously preaching the whole day, he stole away in the midnight shades to cry for help from his God. Recollect how his entire life was constantly sustained by fresh inspirations of the Holy Spirit, derived by prayer. Take care of your secret life; let it be such that you will not be ashamed to read at the last great day. Your inner life is written in the book of God, and it shall one day be open before you. If the entire life of some of you were known, it would be no life at all; it would be a death. Yea, even of some true Christians we may say it is scarce a *life*. It is a dragging on of an existence—one hasty prayer a day—one breathing, just enough to save their souls alive, but no more. O, my

brethren, strive to be more like Jesus Christ. These are times when we want more secret prayer. I have had much fear all this week. I know not whether it is true; but when I feel such a thing I like to tell it to those of you who belong to my own church and congregation. I have trembled lest, by being away from our own place, you have ceased to pray as earnestly as you once did. I remember your earnest groans and petitions—how you would assemble together in the house of prayer in multitudes, and cry out to God to help his servant. We cannot meet in such style at present; but do you still pray in private? Have you forgotten me? Have you ceased to cry out to God? Oh! my friends, with all the entreaties that a man can use, let me appeal to you. Recollect who I am, and what I am—a child, having little education, little learning, ability or talent; and here am I called upon week after week, to preach to this crowd of people. Will ye not, my beloved, still plead for me? Has not God been pleased to hear your prayers ten thousand times? And will ye now cease, when a mighty revival is taking place in many churches? Will ye now stop your petitions? Oh! no; go to your houses, fall upon your knees, cry aloud to God to enable you still to hold up your hands like Moses on the hill, that Joshua below may fight and overcome the Amalekites. Now is the time for victory; shall we lose it? This is the high tide that will float us over the bar; now let us put out the oars; let us pull by earnest prayer, crying for God the Spirit to fill the sails! Ye who love God, of every place and every denomination, wrestle for your ministers; pray for them; for why should not God even now put out his Spirit? What is the reason why we are to be denied Pentecostal seasons? Why not this hour, as one mighty band, fall down before him and entreat him, for his Son's sake, to revive his drooping church? Then would all men discern that we are verily the disciples of Christ.

III. But now, thirdly, WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS IMITATE CHRIST? The answer comes very naturally and easily, Christians should be like Christ, first, *for their own sakes*. For their honesty's sake, and for their credit's sake, let them not be found liars before God and men. For their own healthful state, if they wish to be kept from sin and preserved from going astray, let them imitate Jesus. For their own happiness' sake, if they would drink wine on the lees well refined; if they would enjoy holy and happy communion with Jesus; if they would be lifted up above the cares and troubles of this world, let them imitate Jesus Christ. Oh! my brethren, there is nothing that can so advantage you, nothing can so prosper you, so assist you, so make you walk towards heaven rapidly, so keep you head upwards towards the sky, and your eyes radiant with glory, like the imitation of Jesus Christ. It is when, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you are enabled to walk with Jesus in his very footsteps, and tread in his ways, you are most happy and you are most known to be the sons of God. For your own sake, my brethren, I say, be like Christ.

Next, for *religion's sake*, strive to imitate Jesus. Ah! poor religion, thou hast been sorely shot at by cruel foes, but thou hast not been wounded one-half so much by them as by thy friends. None have hurt thee, O, Christianity, so much as those who profess to be thy follow-

ers. Who have made these wounds in this fair hand of godliness? I say, the professor has done this, who has not lived up to his profession; the man who with pretences enters the fold, being naught but a wolf in sheep's clothing. Such men, sirs, injure the gospel more than others; more than the laughing infidel, more than the sneering critic, doth the man hurt our cause who professes to love it, but in his actions doth belie his love. Christian, lovest thou that cause? Is the name of the dear Redeemer precious to thee? Wouldst thou see the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ? Dost thou wish to see the proud man humbled and the mighty abased? Dost thou long for the souls of perishing sinners, and art thou desirous to win them, and save their souls from the everlasting burning? Wouldst thou prevent their fall into the regions of the damned? Is it thy desire that Christ should see the travail of his soul, and be abundantly satisfied? Doth thy heart yearn over thy fellow-immortals? Dost thou long to see them forgiven? Then be consistent with thy religion. Walk *before God* in the land of the living. Behave as an elect man should do. Recollect what manner of people we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness. This is the best way to convert the world; yea, such conduct would do more than even the efforts of missionary societies, excellent as they are. Let but men see that our conduct is superior to others, then they will believe there is something in our religion; but, if they see us quite the contrary to what we avow, what will they say? "These religious people are no better than others! Why should we go amongst them?" And they say quite rightly. It is but common-sense judgment. Ah! my friends, if ye love religion for her own sake, be consistent, and walk in the love of God. Follow Christ Jesus.

Then, to put it in the strongest form I can, let me say, *for Christ's sake*, endeavor to be like him. Oh! could I fetch the dying Jesus here, and let him speak to you! My own tongue is tied this morning, but I would make his blood, his scars, and his wounds speak. Poor dumb mouths, I bid each of them plead in his behalf. How would Jesus, standing here, show you his hands this morning! "My friends," he would say, "hehold me! these hands were pierced for you; and look ye here at this my side. It was opened as the fountain of your salvation. See my feet; there entered the cruel nails. Each of these bones were dislocated for your sake. These eyes gushed with torrents of tears. This head was crowned with thorns. These cheeks were smitten; this hair was plucked; my body became the centre and focus of agony. I hung quivering in the burning sun; and all for you, my people. And will ye not love me now? I bid you be like me. Is there any fault in me? Oh! no. Ye believe that I am fairer than ten thousand fairs, and lovelier than ten thousand loves. Have I injured you? Have I not rather done all for your salvation? And do I not sit at my Father's throne, and e'en now intercede on your behalf? If ye love me,"—Christian, hear that word; let the sweet syllables ring forever in your ears, like the prolonged sounding of silver-toned bells;—"if ye love me, if ye love me, keep my commandments." Oh, Christian, let that "if" be put to thee this morning. "If ye love me." Glorious Redeemer! is it an "if" at all? Thou precious, bleeding

Lamb, can there be an “if?” What, when I see thy blood gushing from thee; is it an “if?” Yes, I weep to say it is an “if.” Oft my thoughts make it “if,” and oft my words make it “if.” But yet methinks my soul feels it is not “if,” either.

“Not to mine eyes is light so dear,
Nor friendship half so sweet.”

“Yes, I love thee, I know that I love thee. Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee,” can the Christian say. “Well, then,” says Jesus, looking down with a glance of affectionate approbation, “*since* thou lovest me, keep my commandments.” O beloved, what mightier reason can I give than this? It is the argument of love and affection. Be like Christ, since gratitude demands obedience; so shall the world know that ye have been with Jesus.

IV. Ah! then ye wept; and I perceive ye felt the force of pity, and some of you are inquiring, “HOW CAN I IMITATE HIM?” It is my business, then, before you depart, to tell you how you can become transformed into the image of Christ.

In the first place, then, my beloved friends, in answer to your inquiry, let me say, you must know Christ as your Redeemer before you can follow him as your Exemplar. Much is said about the example of Jesus, and we scarcely find a man now who does not believe that our Lord was an excellent and holy man, much to be admired. But excellent as was his example, it would be impossible to imitate it, had he not also been our sacrifice. Do ye this morning know that his blood was shed for you? Can ye join with me in this verse,—

“O the sweet wonders of that cross,
Where God the Saviour lov’d and died;
Her noblest life my spirit draws
From his dear wounds and bleeding side.”

If so, you are in a fair way to imitate Christ. But do not seek to copy him until you are bathed in the fountain filled with blood drawn from his veins. It is not possible for you to do so; your passions will be too strong and corrupt, and you will be building without a foundation, a structure, which will be about as stable as a dream. You cannot mould your life to his pattern until you have had his spirit, till you have been clothed in his righteousness. “Well,” say some, “we have proceeded so far, what next shall we do? We know we have an interest in him, but we are still sensible of manifold deficiencies.” Next, then, let me entreat you to study Christ’s character. This poor Bible is become an almost obsolete book, even with some Christians. There are so many magazines, periodicals, and such like ephemeral productions, that we are in danger of neglecting to search the Scriptures. Christian, wouldst thou know thy master? Look at him. There is a wondrous power about the character of Christ, for the more you regard it the more you will be conformed to it. I view myself in the glass, I go away, and forget what I was. I behold Christ, and I become like Christ. Look at him, then; study him in the evangelists, studiously examine his character. “But,” say you,

“we have done that, and we have proceeded but little farther.” Then, in the next place, correct your poor copy every day. At night, try and recount all the actions of the twenty-four hours, scrupulously putting them under review. When I have proof-sheets sent to me of any of my writings, I have to make the corrections in the margin. I might read them over fifty times, and the printers would still put in the errors if I did not mark them. So must you do; if you find anything faulty at night, make a mark in the margin, that you may know where the fault is, and to-morrow may amend it. Do this day after day, continually noting your faults one by one, so that you may better avoid them. It was a maxim of the old philosophers, that, three times in the day, we should go over our actions. So let us do; let us not be forgetful; let us rather examine ourselves each night, and see wherein we have done amiss, that we may reform our lives.

Lastly, as the best advice I can give, seek more of the Spirit of God; for this is the way to become Christ-like. Vain are all your attempts to be like him till you have sought his spirit. Take the cold iron, and attempt to weld it if you can into a certain shape. How fruitless the effort! Lay it on the anvil, seize the blacksmith’s hammer with all you might, let blow after blow fall upon it, and you shall have done nothing. Twist it, turn it, use all your implements, but you shall not be able to fashion it as you would. But put it in the fire, let it be softened and made malleable, then lay it on the anvil, and each stroke shall have a mighty effect, so that you may fashion it into any form you may desire. So take your heart, not cold as it is, not stony as it is by nature, but put it into the furnace; there let it be molten, and after that it can be turned like wax to the seal, and fashioned into the image of Jesus Christ.

Oh, my brethren, what can I say now to enforce my text, but that, if ye are like Christ on earth, ye shall be like him in heaven? If by the power of the Spirit ye become followers of Jesus, ye shall enter glory. For at heaven’s gate there sits an angel, who admits no one who has not the same features as our adorable Lord. There comes a man with a crown upon his head, “Yes,” he says, “thou hast a crown, it is true, but crowns are not the medium of access here.” Another approaches, dressed in robes of state and the gown of learning. “Yes,” says the angel, “it may be good, but gowns and learning are not the marks that shall admit you here.” Another advances, fair, beautiful, and comely. “Yes,” saith the angel, “that might please on earth, but beauty is not wanted here.” There cometh up another, who is heralded by fame, and prefaced by the blast of the clamor of mankind; but the angel saith, “It is well with man, but thou hast no right to enter here.” Then there appears another; poor he may have been; illiterate he may have been; but the angel, as he looks at him, smiles and says, “It is Christ again; a second edition of Jesus Christ is there. Come in, come in. Eternal glory thou shalt win. Thou art like Christ; in heaven thou shalt sit, because thou art like him.” Oh! to be like Christ is to enter heaven; but to be unlike Christ is to descend to hell. Likes shall be gathered together at last, tares with tares, wheat with wheat. If ye have sinned with Adam and have died, ye shall lie with the spiritually dead forever, unless ye rise in Christ

to newness of life; then shall we live with him throughout eternity. Wheat with wheat, tares with tares. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Go away with this one thought, then my brethren, that you can test yourselves by Christ. If you are like Christ, you are of Christ, and shall be with Christ. If you are unlike him, you have no portion in the great inheritance. May my poor discourse help to fan the floor and reveal the chaff; yea, may it lead many of you to seek to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, to the praise of his grace. To him be all honor given! Amen.