

Obedience Better Than Sacrifice

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

1 Samuel 15:2.

SAUL had been commanded to utterly slay all the Amalekites and their cattle. Instead of doing so he preserved the king and suffered his people to take the best of the oxen and of the sheep. When called to account for this he declared that he did it with a view of offering sacrifice to God—but Samuel met him at once with the assurance that such sacrifices were no excuse for an act of direct rebellion. In so doing he altered his sentence, which is worthy to be printed in letters of gold and to be hung up before the eyes of the present generation: "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

I think that in this verse—and here I shall dwell mainly—there is, first, a voice to professing Christians, and then, secondly, to unconverted persons.

I. First, I will speak to you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, you who have made a PROFESSION of your faith in Him. Be it ever in your remembrance, that to obey, to keep strictly in the path of your Savior's command, is better than any outward form of religion. And to hearken to His precepts with an attentive ear is better than to bring the fat of rams or anything else which you may wish to lay upon His altar. Probably there are some of you here tonight who may be living in the neglect of some known duty. It is no new thing for Christians to know their duty—to have their conscience enlightened about it—and yet to neglect it.

If you are failing to keep the least of one of Christ's commands to His disciples, I pray you, Brethren, be disobedient no longer. I know, for instance, that some of you can see it to be your duty, as Believers, to be baptized. If you did not think it to be your duty, I would not bring this text to bear upon you. But if you feel it is right, and you do it not, let me say to you that all the pretensions you make of attachment to your Master and all the other actions which you may perform, are as nothing compared with the neglect of this! "To obey," even in the slightest and smallest thing, "is better than sacrifice," and to hearken diligently to the Lord's commands is better than the fat of rams.

It may be that some of you, though you are professed Christians, are living in the prosecution of some evil trade, and your conscience has often said, "Get out of it." You are not in the position that a Christian ought to be in—but then you hope that you will be able to make a little money—and you will retire and do a world of good with it. Ah, God cares nothing for this rams' fat of yours! He asks not for these sacrifices which you intend to make. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

Perhaps you are in connection with a Christian church in which you may see much that is wrong and you know that you ought not to tolerate it, but still you do so. You say, "I have a position of usefulness, and if I come out I shall not be so useful as I am now." My Brother, your usefulness is but as the fat of rams, and "to obey is better than" it all. The right way for a Christian to walk in is to do what his Master bids him, leaving all consequences to the Almighty. You have nothing to do with your own usefulness further than to keep your Master's commands at all hazards and under all risks. "I counsel you to keep the King's commandments," and, "whatever He said unto you, do it." Sit at His feet with Mary and learn of Him! And when you rise up from that reverent posture, let it be with the prayer—

"Help me to run in Your commands, 'Tis a delightful road. Nor let my head, nor heart, nor hands, Offend against my God."

Possibly, too, dear Brother, there may be some evil habit in which you are indulging and which you excuse by the reflection, "Well, I am always at the Prayer Meeting. I am constantly at communion, and I give so much of my substance to the support of the Lord's work." I am glad that you do these things, but oh, I pray you give up that sin! I pray you cut it to pieces and cast it away, for if you do not, all your show of sacrifice will be but an abomination! The first thing which God requires of you as His beloved is obedience! And though you should preach with the tongue of men and of angels, though you should give your body to be burned and your goods to feed the poor, yet if you do not hearken to your Lord and are not obedient to His will, all besides shall profit you nothing.

It is a blessed thing to be teachable as a little child, and to be willing to be taught of God. But it is a much more blessed thing, still, when one has been taught to go at once and carry out the lesson which the Master has whispered in his ear. How many excellent Christians there are who sacrifice a goodly flock of sheep so as to replenish the altar of our God who, nevertheless, are faulty because they obey not the Word of the Lord? Look at our Missionary Society's list of subscribers, and ask yourself the question, Do all these help the spread of the Gospel by obedience to the precept, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature"?

There you see in the money gift the sacrifice, but better far to have obedience. Both ought to be joined together. But of the two, better is the act of obedience than of giving! Noah's sacrifice sent up a sweet savor before God, but in God's sight the obedience which led him to build the ark and enter in with his family was far more precious—and for this his name is written among the champions of faith and handed down to us as a word of honor and renown. Moreover, Brethren, to obey is better than sacrifice in the matter of caring for the sick and needy of all classes. We rejoice in the number of hospitals which adorn our cities. These are the princely trophies of the power of our holy religion.

To these we triumphantly point as among the ripe fruits of that Christianity which is for the healing of the nations, chiefly in a spiritual, but also in the physical aspect of man's

diseased and miserable state. There are no nobler words in our language than those inscribed on so many walls—"Supported by voluntary contributions." We glory in them! Rome's monuments, Grecian trophies, Egyptian's mighty tombs and Assyria's huge monoliths are dwarfed into petty exhibitions of human pride and vanity before the sublime majesty of these exhibitions of a God-given love to our fellow men!

But all these homes of mercy and healing become evils to ourselves, though they are blessings to the distressed, if we contribute of our wealth to their financial support and neglect personally to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, to feed the hungry, to care for the sick, and do not, like the Master, go about doing good. Give as God has given to you, but remember God acts as well as gives. "Go you and do likewise." Sacrifice, but also obey! A cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple, and in obedience to the Lord, is a golden deed valued by our heavenly Master above all price—more precious in His sight than silver—yes, than much fine gold.

I put this very earnestly to the members of this church, and, indeed, to all of you who hope that you are followers of Christ: Is there anything that you are neglecting? Is there any sin in which you are indulging? Is there any voice of conscience to which you have turned a deaf ear? Is there one passage of Scripture which you dare not look in the face because you are living in neglect of it? Then let Samuel's voice come to you and set you seeking for more Divine Grace, for "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

II. But my main business tonight is with the UNCONVERTED—and may the Master give us Grace to deal with them affectionately, faithfully, and earnestly! My Hearer, in the first place, God has given to you in the Gospel dispensation a command. It is a command in the obeying of which there is eternal life, and the neglect of which will be and must be your everlasting ruin! That command is this: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

The Gospel does not come to you as the Law does, and say, "Do this and you shall live." It speaks as in the language of Isaiah the Prophet, and says, "Hearken diligently unto Me. Hear, and your souls shall live." It tells you that whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God, and it bids the heralds of the Cross go out and cry, "He that believe and is baptized shall be saved. He that believe not shall be damned."

To use the expressive language of the beloved Apostle John, "This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." To believe is to trust—to trust with your whole heart—and whoever trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ with his whole heart has the promise of eternal life. No, if that act is sincere, it is the result of eternal life already given! God, the just One, must punish sin, therefore He must punish you—but Jesus Christ became Man and stood and smarted in the sinner's place—that whoever trusts in Him might neither smart nor suffer because God punished Christ in the place of every man who comes

to Christ and rests upon Him. To trust in Jesus, therefore, is God's first and great commandment of salvation.

Now, listen, Sinner! God commands you to keep this and surely He has a right to do so. If He wills to save, He has a sovereign right to choose His own way of saving! If a man gives to the poor he may do so as he wills, whether he gives at this door or at that, or through the window—and so God is pleased to use the door of simple faith as the only door through which to bestow mercy on the sons of men. And not only has He a right to choose this way, but it is the only way that would suit you! If God determined to save none but those who kept His Law, what would become of you? If He only gave Divine Grace to the holy and to the good, where would you be?

But the way of faith suits, and readily suits, one who has broken God's commandments. Though a sinner is dying, though he may be on the cross like the dying thief, yet, as the way of salvation is but a looking at Christ, there is hope for him even in the last extremity that he may still be able to look and live! Why should you kick against God's way when it is the best to suit you—when none can be more suitable—none more simple? He has chosen it because it is a way which honors His dear Son.

Your trusting Jesus gives glory to Jesus and therefore God delights in your faith. And, besides, it brings a blessing to your own soul. To trust in Christ is in itself a blessing. It is humbling, but it is comforting. It empties you, but it fills you. It strips you, but it clothes you. Faith has a double action like a two-edged sword. It kills pride but at the same time it heals the wound it gave by giving to the sinner trust in Jesus. To trust Jesus is the best conceivable way I can imagine by which a sinner can be reconciled unto God through the blood of the great Redeemer. I pray you, therefore, be not angry because God is gracious. Be not rebellious when the still small voice says, "Look, Sinner, look to Him who died upon the tree, and by that look you shall live."

Now, this first point being clear, that God has given a command, the second remark is that the most of men, instead of obeying God, want to bring him sacrifices. They suppose that their own way of salvation is much better than any that the Almighty can have devised and therefore they offer their fat of rams. This takes different forms, but it is always the same principle. One man says, "Well now, I will give up my pleasures. You shall not see me at the ballroom. You shall not catch me at the theater. I will forsake the music hall. You shall not discover me in low company. I will give up all the things that my heart calls good—will not that save me?"

No, it will not. When you have made all this sacrifice all I shall, or can say of it is, "To obey is better than sacrifice." "Well, but suppose I begin to attend a place of worship? Suppose I go very regularly, and as often as the doors are open? Suppose I go to early matins, and to the evening song? Suppose I attend every day in the week where the bell is always going? Suppose I come to the sacrament and am baptized? Supposing I go through with the thing,

and give myself thoroughly up to all outward observances—will not all this save me?" No, nor will it even help you to being saved! These things will no more save you than husks will fill your hungry belly. It is not the husks you need, you need the kernels, and so, poor Soul, you do not need external ceremonies—you need the inward substance and you will never get that except by trusting Jesus Christ!

There was a time when doctrine was far more highly valued than is now the case with some Christians. You will often meet with those who seem to value men by their contributions to Church funds rather than by their soundness in the faith. Now, if I am to judge men at all, I prize the man who hearkens to God's voice far more than the one who can bring the "fat of rams" to the altar of God's House. A rich heretic I would reject and put from me, while the poor but obedient God-fearing disciple I would welcome with all my heart. An ear ever open to listen to God's voice, a heart ever soft to receive the impress of God's teaching—these are far more precious than a handful of silver and gold, and a mouth promising large things. For "to hearken is better than the fat of rams."

All the costly gifts cast into the treasury are valuable chiefly as representing an inner spirit of devotion and of self-consecration. They may exist as outward acts without the living spirit which gives them value in God's eyes. We need, therefore, to cultivate the soul—and to see that that sacred spirit of devout submission dwells within us which dwelt in Him—who not only sacrificed Himself on the Cross, being obedient unto death, but ever lived in that state of heart which was embodied in His prayer, "Nevertheless, not My will but Yours be done."

Would the washing of the windows of a house make the inhabitants clean? Does the painting and ornamenting of the exterior of a mansion make the dwellers in it healthier or holier men? We read of devils entering into a clean swept and garnished house, and the last end of that man was worse than the first! All the outward cleansing is but the gilding of the bars of the cage full of unclean birds—the whitewashing of sepulchers full of rottenness and dead men's bones. Washing the outside of a box will leave all the clothes inside as foul as ever. Remember, therefore, that all that you can do in the way of outward religion is nothing but the sacrifice of the fat of rams—and "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

"Yes," says another, "but suppose I punish myself a good deal for all that I have done? I will abstain from this. I will deny myself that. I will mortify myself in this passion. I will give up that evil." Friend, if you have any evil give it up, but when you have done so do not rely upon that, for this you ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone! God's command is, "Believe," and if you should go about to sacrifice your lusts till they are bleeding like a hecatomb of bullocks upon the altar, yet I must say to you, as Samuel sternly said to Saul, "To obey is better than to sacrifice, and to hearken to the Gospel message is better than all this fat of rams."

But it is thought by some if they should add to all this a good deal of generosity, surely they will be saved. "Suppose I give money to the poor, build a lot of alms-houses and help to build a church? Suppose I am generous even beyond my means, will not this help me?" Sinner, why do you ask such a question? God has set before you a door—an open door—and over it is written, "Believe and live"! And yet you go about and wander abroad to find another door! What is all your gold worth, Man? Why, Heaven is paved with it! All the gold you have would not buy a single slab of the eternal pavement, and do you think to enter there by way of your poor giving?

If God were hungry He would not tell you, for His are the cattle on a thousand hills, and His are the mines of silver, and the sparkling ores of gold. The diamond, and the topaz, and the chrysolite are all His own, and His eyes see them hidden in their secret veins and lodes! Do you think to bribe the Eternal with your paltry purse? Oh, do you understand that "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams"?

"Yes, but," says the sinner, "if I could add to all this a great deal of confidence in those good men who are recognized by the world as priests? Suppose I put myself into their bonds? I would not go to the Roman Catholics, for I do not like them much, but supposing I go to the Episcopalians—they have priests, too, and sprinkle children with holy water, and bury the reprobate dead, in 'sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection to everlasting life'—could not they do something for me? Or suppose I go to some Dissenting minister, and put myself under his care, cannot he help me?"

No, Sir, there is nothing in us that can help you one jot. We hate the very thought of being priests! I would sooner be a devil than be a priest with the exception of being what all Christians are—priests unto God. Let me justify that strong remark—of all pretensions on earth there is none so detestable as the pretense of being able to bestow Divine Grace upon men and of standing between their souls and God! Beloved, we are your servants for Christ's sake, but as for any priestly authority to give Grace to you, we shake off the imputation as Paul shook off the viper from his hand into the fire.

We speak to men of our own kith and kin, we talk to you out of warm earnest hearts, but we can only say to you, "Do not trust in us, for you will be fools if you do. Do not trust in any man, for though you might make a sacrifice of your reason by so doing, yet remember that 'to obey is better than sacrifice.' " God demands of you not submission to your fellow men, whoever they may be—He requires of you not to listen to the pealing of organs, not to attend gorgeous ceremonies where the smoke of incense goes up in gaudy palaces dedicated to His service. He requires this—that you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then He tells you that you shall live. Trust the Savior and you shall not perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hand! But if you refuse this way of salvation, then there is none other presented to you and you must perish in your sins. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

And now I have to show that it is so. Men are always setting up these ways of salvation of their own, and they will run anywhere sooner than come to Christ and do as God tells them! Let me show how to obey is better than sacrifice, and how to hearken is better than the fat of rams. It is better in itself. It shows that you are more humble. There are persons in the world who say that to trust Christ to save us from sin is not to be humble. Now, is it not always humility on the part of a child to do exactly what its parent tells it without asking any questions? I think it is so.

Some poor Papists go down on their knees and even lick the dust to do penance, and they think that this is being humble! Now, suppose one of your children has offended you, and you say to him, "Come, my Dear, I freely forgive you. Come and give me a kiss, and it is all over." He shakes his head, and says, "No, Father, I cannot kiss you." And he runs upstairs and shuts himself up. You knock at the door, and say, "Come, my Child, come and kiss me, and it is all forgiven." But he shakes his head and says, "No, never!" He shuts himself up there all alone, and he thinks he is doing more to put away your anger by so doing than by obeying your command!

You say to him solemnly, "My Child, I will chasten you again for disobedience if you do not come and accept the forgiveness which I offer to you if you will but kiss me." The child sullenly says, "No, Father, I will do something else that is more humbling." And then you feel in your soul that that is an unhumiliated child or else he would at once do what his father told him—without thinking whether it would be a humiliating thing or not! It would be a humbling thing because his father told him to do it, and if he were a right-minded child he would do it from a spirit of obedience.

Now, you may think it very humble on your part to need to feel a great deal of conviction and to shed a great many tears, and to pray a great many prayers—but the most lowly thing you can do is to perform what the Master tells you. "Trust Me," He said, "do not go over there to weep—come to Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Do not stand at the swine's trough saying, "I will not arise and go to my Father, for I am not fit to go till I have suffered a great deal more." Hear the voice which bids you say, "I will arise and go unto my Father. And what I have to say I will say unto him. And if I have to weep I will weep with my head in his bosom, while I receive the kisses of his love."

Come, poor Sinner, do not set up your proud humility in the teeth of God, but since He bids you look and live, oh, give up your prayers and even your tears, and your repenting, and your convictions—have done with them all as grounds of confidence—and look to Jesus Christ, and to Jesus Christ alone!

But in the next place, it is really a more holy thing. There are some soldiers here tonight. Now suppose one of these received orders from the commanding officer to keep guard at such-and-such a door. All of a sudden he thinks to himself, "I am very fond of our commander and I should like to do something for him." He puts his musket against the wall and starts

out to find a shop where he can buy a bunch of flowers. He is away from his post all the while, of course, and when he comes back he is discovered to have been away from the post of duty.

He says, "Here is the bunch of flowers I went to get." But I hear his officer say, "To obey is better than that—we cannot allow you—military discipline would not permit it—to run off at every whim and wish of yours and neglect your duty, for who knows what mischief might ensue?" The man, however much you might admire what he was doing, would certainly be made to learn by military law that "To obey is better than sacrifice." It is a holier and a better thing to do one's duty than to make duties for one's self and then set about them.

Now, does it not seem a very pretty thing when a man puts on a very handsome-looking gown with a yellow cross down his back, and something else in pink, and I know not what colors, and ministers in a place decorated with flowers? And where there are such sweet things—incense smoking from silver censers and choristers all in white—is not that man serving God? When he preaches he does not say to the people, "Believe and live," but begins to talk about "the blessed sacrament of the altar," or some other such stuff? Is he not serving God when he does this? I will appeal to this old Book.

Where inside these leaves and covers is there a word about burning this smoking incense? When did Christ ever say anything about it? Where have we anything about that decorated font, or about that pulpit that looks so very glorious? Why, the man has been making up a spiritual pantomime for himself and he has left out altogether the soul of the matter. He has left out Christ! Therefore he has NOT done his work! He has done twenty other things—I dare say very sincerely and with a very pure desire—but after all he needs to be made to learn the meaning of this passage, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

And better than smoking incense, and flowers, and gilded crosses, and chasubles, and albs, and dalmatics, and all such things as could possibly be brought together, if he had God's Word for it, it would be right, but without God's Word it is a mere invention of man to which God can have no regard. It is a more holy thing to do what God bids you than to do what you yourselves invent. When I have done with what I have invented, however pretty it may be, however venerable it may seem, yet what does it come to? Suppose I worship God in one of those smart robes—is my worship a bit the better? Suppose I should go home to-night and spend the night on my knees and think that by that means I should satisfy God? What should I have done but made my knees ache?

Supposing I had filled this place with incense—what should I have done but probably have made you cough? Suppose I had decorated myself and this place—some of you might have been pleased—but what connection on earth can there be between flowers and holiness, or between gilding and millinery and glorifying God? If our God were like some of the fabled deities of Greece and Rome He might be delighted with these pretty things, but our God is

in the heavens, and when He does show His splendor He scatters stars broadcast across the sky with both His hands—so what are all your prettinesses to Him? What is your swelling music and all your pretty things to Him who built the heavens and piled the earth with all its rugged splendor of forest, and mountain, and stream? "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

But while I remark upon these things, let me also say that to obey the precept, "Believe and live," is certainly a great deal more effectual to the soul's salvation than all the sacrifice and all the fat of rams which you can offer. Let me give you a picture by way of illustration. Naaman was a leper. He desired healing. The Prophet said to him, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and you shall be clean." Now Naaman thought to himself, "I dare say, wash? Does he think me to be some filthy wretch who needs washing? He says I must wash seven times! Does he really think that I have not washed for so long that it will take seven washings to get me clean?"

"He says I must wash! What a simple thing! I have washed every day, and it has done me no good. He says I must wash in Jordan! Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Jordan? Why cannot I wash in them and be clean?" This is just what some of you say about believing. You say, "Well, but sacraments—there must be something in them! Believing in Christ—why it is such a simple thing! I am such a respectable person. This is a very good religion to preach to thieves and so on, but surely you forget that I have a great many good works of my own—cannot I think of them? You say I must trust in Christ as though you thought nothing of my good works."

Well, you are near the mark, Sir. I do not think anything of them! I would not give a penny for a wagon load of them! The whole of them are just what Paul calls them—"refuse." He says, "I count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in Him." All your best works are but so much rubbish to be carted out of the way, and if you trust in them they will be your ruin! All we say to you is, "BELIEVE AND LIVE."

Now Naaman was in a great rage and he went away, but his servant said to him, "My Father, if the Prophet had bid you do some great thing would you not have done it? Much rather, then, will you not do what he tells you when he says, Wash and he clean?" Now, if my Master were to say to you tonight, "Walk to the city of York barefoot and you shall be saved," if you believed it, the most of you would start off tonight! But when the message is, "Believe and live," oh, that is too simple! What? Just trust Christ and be saved on the spot?! Why, it cannot be, you think! If we bade you do some great thing you would do it, but you refuse to do so simple a thing as to believe.

But if Naaman had gone to Abana and Pharpar he would not have been healed. And if he had sought out all the physicians in Syria and paid away all his money, he would have been white with leprosy still. There was nothing but washing in Jordan that would heal him. And so with you, Sinner—you may go and do fifty thousand things but you will never get

your sins forgiven! And you never, never shall have a hope of Heaven unless you will obey this one precept— "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." But if you do this you shall find that "to obey is better than sacrifice" indeed, and "to hearken" than all "the fat of rams."

But now we must close with a remark which we have made over and over again during this discourse, namely, that by not obeying and not hearkening to the Gospel, Sinner, you must perish. I know that some think it rather hard that there should be nothing for them but ruin if they will not believe in Jesus Christ. But if you will think for a minute you will see that it is just and reasonable. I suppose there is no way for a man to keep his strength up except by eating. If you were to say, "I shall never eat, I will not take refreshment," you might go to Madeira, or travel to all the climates, (supposing you lived long enough!) but you would most certainly find that no climate and no exercise would avail to keep you alive if you refused to eat!

And would you then say, "Well, it is a hard thing that I should die because I refused to eat"? It is not an unjust thing that if you are such a fool as not to eat, you must die. It is precisely so with believing. "Believe, and you are saved." If you will not believe, it is no hard thing that you should be damned! It would be harder if it were not to be the case! There is a man who is thirsty, and there stands before him a fountain. "No," he says, "I will never touch a drop of moisture as long as I live. Cannot I get my thirst quenched in some other way?" We tell him, no, he must drink or die. He says, "I will never drink, but it is a hard thing that I must therefore die, a very hard thing." No, it is not, poor Simpleton! It is nothing but an inevitable law of nature. You must drink or die. Why play the fool at such a cost as that? Drink, Man, drink! And so with Christ. There is the way of salvation—and you must trust Christ or perish—and there is nothing hard in it that you should perish if you do not.

Here is a man out at sea. He has a chart, and that chart, if well studied, will, with the help of the compass, guide him to his journey's end. The polestar gleams out amidst the clouds, and that, too, will help him. "No," he says, "I will have nothing to do with your stars. I do not believe in the North Pole. I shall not attend to that little thing inside the box. One needle is as good as another needle. I do not believe in your rubbish and I will have nothing to do with it. It is only a lot of nonsense got up by people on purpose to make money, and I will have nothing to do with it." The man does not get to shore anywhere—he drifts about, but never reaches port—and he says it is a very hard thing, a very hard thing.

I do not think so. So some of you say, "Well, I am not going to read your Bible. I am not going to listen to your talk about Jesus Christ. I do not believe in such things." You will be damned, then, Sir! "That's very hard," you say. No, it is not! It is not more so than the fact that if you reject the compass and the polestar you will not get to your journey's end. There is no help for it—it must be so—you say you will have nothing to do with these things, and you pooh-pooh them. You will find it a very hard thing to laugh these matters down when

you come to die, when the cold, clammy sweat must be wiped from your brow, and your heart beats against your ribs as if it wanted to get out and get away to God.

Oh Soul, you will find then that these Sundays, and these services, and this preaching, and this old Book are something more and better than you thought they were! And you will wonder that you were so simple as to neglect them, the only guides to salvation. And above all, that you neglected Christ, that Polestar which alone shines aloft to guide the mariner to the port of peace.

Now, where do you live tonight? You live, perhaps, on the other side of London Bridge, and you have to get over there tonight as you go home. But while you have been sitting here you have got a fancy into your head that you do not believe in bridges, and you do not believe in boats, and you do not believe in water. You say, "I am not going over any of your bridges! Do not tell me—I shall not get into any of your boats. If there is a river I am not going over it. I do not believe in crossing rivers." You go along and you come to the bridge, but you will not cross it. There is a boat, but you will not get into it. There is the river, and you say you will not cross that anyway, and yet you think it is very hard that you cannot get home.

Now I think you must have got something that has over-balanced your reasoning powers, for you would not think it so hard if you were in your senses. If a man will not do the thing that is necessary to a certain end, I do not see how he can expect to gain that end. You have taken poison and the physician brings an antidote, and says, "Take it quickly, or you will die. But if you take it quickly I will guarantee that the poison will be neutralized." But you say, "No, Doctor, I do not believe it. Let everything take its course—let every tub stand on its own bottom—I will have nothing to do with you, Doctor." "Well, sir, you will die, and when the coroner's inquest is held on your body, the verdict will be, 'Served him right!' "

So will it be with you if, having heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ, you say, "Oh, pooh-pooh! I am too much of a commonsense man to have anything to do with that, and I shall not attend to it." Then, when you perish, the verdict given by your conscience, which will sit upon the King's quest at last, will be a verdict of "Felode-se"—"he destroyed himself." So says the old Book—"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself!" But when I quote that text I must not stop there, for the next line is, "but in Me is your help found."

Oh, my dear Hearer, what a mercy it is that there is help in God! There is help in God for you! There is help in God for the worst of you! I cannot tell who there may be here tonight. There may be some who have sinned very greatly, but there is help laid upon One who is "mighty to save." Where are you, big Sinner? Here is a great Savior able to put all your sins away! Have you grown gray in wickedness? Ah, my Master can put away seventy years of sin by a moment's application of His precious blood! See him bleeding on the Cross in agonies so great that angels might have wept to gaze upon Him?—

"See from His head, His hands, His feet, Sorrow and love flow mingled down? Did ever such love and sorrow meet,

Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

There must be merit in such mighty agonies! If you trust in the merits of that precious blood you shall one day be with Him in Paradise. God give you Divine Grace to trust Jesus, to trust Jesus now, and then we shall meet again where they sing, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, be glory forever and ever. Amen."

"Behold the Lamb of God!
Behold, believe and live!
Behold His all-atoning blood,
And life receive.
Look from yourself to Him,
Behold Him on the tree!
Though the eye of faith be dim
He looks on you.
That meek, that languid eye,
Turns from Himself away,
Invites the trembling sinner near,
And bids him stay.
Stay with Him near the tree.
Stay with Him near the tomb.
Stay till the risen Lord you see.
Stay 'till He comes."