

"Is the Spirit of the Lord Straitened?"

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"O you that are named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" [Micah 2:7](#).

THERE may be some who think they can convert the world by philosophy; that they can renew the heart by eloquence; or that, by some witchcraft of ceremonies, they can regenerate the soul. But we depend wholly and simply and only on the Spirit of God! He, alone, works all our works in us and, in going forth to our holy service, we take with us no strength and we rely upon no power except that of the Spirit of the Most High. When Asher's foot was dipped in oil, no wonder he left a footprint wherever he went! But if his foot had not first been anointed, there would have been small trace of him and, unless we have the unction of the Holy One, and are endued with power from on high, in vain shall we seek to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, or to proclaim the opening of the prison to them that are bound!

We need the Holy Spirit to prepare us for our work. He first gives the desire to go forth to the field of service and only He can equip us for the fight. "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." Let us seek, then, to be charged with the Holy Spirit—to receive to the fullest the Divine influence—and go to our labor thus amply prepared. There is no preparation for the work of God like being with God! Go up into the solitude with Christ and then, when He calls you, you will be fit to go forth for Him and tell what you have seen with Him in the Holy Mount.

When we get at the work, our need remains. We long to see the people saved, but in order to that, they must be born again and this we cannot, ourselves, accomplish. Change a stone into flesh? Try that at home with a piece of stone on your table before you attempt it with the hard hearts of men! Create a soul between the ribs of death? Try that in a morgue before you pretend to create within a sinner, dead in sin, the spiritual life! Of regeneration we may say, "This is the finger of God." If our religion is not supernatural, it is a delusion! If the Holy Spirit is not with you, you are like Jannes and Jambres, attempting to work a miracle without Jehovah's aid—and you will be baffled and detected for an impostor. You will fail, like the seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, who tried to cast out devils. The devils do not know you—they know Jesus and they know the Holy Spirit—but at your idle efforts they mockingly laugh! Only those people who never do any spiritual work talk about what they can accomplish. When you get into the sacred service, you find how great your weakness

is! You feel out of your depth when you come to deal with souls and you must have the Holy Spirit or fail!

We must not conclude that because so many good people give their time to God's work, that necessarily the work is done. No, there is nothing done unless the Holy Spirit does it. We never personally go a step towards Heaven and we never lead another one inch in the way apart from the Holy Spirit! We must have the Holy Spirit and if we have Him not, all our machinery will stand still, or if it goes on, it will produce no effect whatever. I heard of a Christian man whose mill wheel was noticed to be in motion on a certain Sunday. The people going to worship greatly wondered about it, but one who went by set their minds at rest by pointing out that the wheel was only turning idly round because the water, by accident, was allowed to flow over it. And the man said, "It is very much like our minister and his sermons. There is no work being done, but the wheel goes round—clickety click, clickety click—though it is not grinding anything." It also greatly resembles many an organization for spiritual service—the water is passing over it, glittering as it flows—but the

outside motion does not join on to any human need, nor produce any practical result—and nothing comes of the click and hum—

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,

With all Your quickening powers," or else all our service for the Lord is in vain.

I. The text asks this question, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" As we try and dwell upon it a little while, we remark, first, that THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS NOT STRAITENED BY THE COMMANDS OF MEN, for in a previous verse we find that the people said to their Prophets, "Prophecy you not." When men spoke in the name of God, these people had grown so besotted, through their evil doings, that they bade them hold their tongues! They did not want to hear any more about God. They had given Him up and they wished to have no more to do with Him! What was said by the Prophets was unpleasant. It provoked unhappy memories. It made them think of things that they would rather forget. So they said to the Prophets, "Prophecy you not."

And here comes the question of the text. These men speak under the impulse of the Spirit of God. What do you think? Is the Spirit of the Lord to be straitened, shut up, put down, silenced by the commands of men? They thought so! They thought that they had only to say to these men of God, "Be quiet. If you speak again, we will put you in prison, or we will banish you, or we will cut off your heads." By those means they thought to stifle the voice of the Spirit of God and make Him dumb in their midst! The question comes, "Have you done it? Can you do it? Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

Beloved Friends, this can never be! The Spirit of God is not straitened, for any man in whom He dwells must speak. They may tell Him to be quiet and He may even, for a season, consent to be so. But one of old said, "His Word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing"—and he was obliged to speak out. If a man

has made a message of his own, or if he has borrowed it from another, he may or may not speak it. But if God has given it to him to speak, speak it he must, and nothing can silence him! Throughout long ages men have felt moved of God to speak and they have had to speak in peril of their lives, but they have spoken all the same. When the light of the Reformation first came to England, those who received the Gospel were mostly very feeble folk. They felt the force of the movement and thought that it must have come from God, but they were not sure of their standing ground and the major part of them recanted when they were brought in presence of the fire, or even laid in prison.

Some of the best of them, during the early days of Henry the Eighth, having but a slight hold of the Truth of God, drew back, and the enemy thought that they would all be of this kind. And so he hunted and persecuted them. But, after a very little time, the very men who had been cowards when first they learned the Truth, were pricked in their conscience and they came forward, saying that they found it to be more unbearable to live after having recanted than they could find it to die—and in the power of God they stood up boldly to declare Christ! There was little Bilney, of whom Latimer speaks so lovingly—a man grandly taught in many things, but at first a trembler. He thought that he might be mistaken and so he drew back. But afterwards he gave himself up to die. And when opportunities were given to him to escape, he would not embrace them. He felt that he must die for his Master!

And there was Frith, who, when they brought him through Croydon and he was desired by the Archbishop of Canterbury (I mean Cranmer, who was in an almost similar spiritual state, himself, but then, by force of his position compelled to be a persecutor) to escape into the woods—the north wood or Norwood and elsewhere—made the notable reply, "The moment that you let me alone, I will go up to Lambeth myself. I am to die for Christ and if you make me fly away for a time, I will be back again, for I must acknowledge my Master." The persecutors began to be surprised at this, but the reason was that the men grew surer of the Truth of God and, as they grew surer of it, they grew bolder to confess it—and confess it they must when once they felt the power of it in their souls! God will not leave Himself without a witness, be you sure of this, and if there should come a time of trembling, when even the brave hearts seem staggered and begin to fail, there will again come a time of confidence when men will step out and say, "I was a coward once, but now, in the name of the Most High, I will avow His cause and stand up for the faith once for all delivered to the saints." The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened by the commands of men. He will make His servants speak!

Know, again, that if some of these servants are put to death, or silenced, the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, for He will raise up others. He is never at a loss. They burned Huss, whose name was Goose, but he said that God would raise

up a swan, a bigger bird than he! And that was Luther's motto, his coat-of-arms—and they could never roast the swan, though they would have liked to have done so. Luther lived

on, for God wanted such a witness as he and as long as God needed him, the hate of his enemies was vain! Thus it has been in all ages. Where did God find many of His first witnesses in the Reformation? In the places where you would have thought it least likely that there should have been any to bear testimony for Him—in the monasteries! He laid His hand on priests, monks and nuns—and He said to these, "Go and preach the Gospel of Christ" and they did it, and did it faithfully, even to the death. They fell before their persecutors, the Romanists, like mowed grass in the month of June—one swathe of martyrs, and then another, and then another—but though their enemies reaped on, they never reaped that field clean, for by the time they had got to one end, it was all green grass, up to their ankles again, at the other end!

God made men who could bear witness to His Word to grow faster than they could kill them! And so He will while the world stands. The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened. If the whole Church of God were to apostatize—and I should not be surprised if almost the entire visible Church were to do so, seeing that it has, to a great extent, done so already—it would make no difference whatever to the eternal purposes of God. Outside the professing church He would soon find His own people and soon build up for Himself a truer and better Church that would not be as the past, but would hold fast by the Gospel of the Grace of God with the energy and simplicity of faith. Therefore, fear not, but answer this question with confidence and say, "The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened."

But if those who believe in God's name should die and if no more were raised up, the Spirit of our Lord would not, even then, be straitened—He could find other ways of reaching men's minds. He could still speak by the Bible. Give us an open Bible and we shall never be in the dark. And He can speak by many a holy book that in the present evil age is despised. There are many good books, like the saints of old, wandering about in sheepskins and goatskins—old Puritans, "destitute, afflicted, tormented," that will yet bear witness for Christ! Just remember how Guthrie's, "Saving Testimony," long forgotten in Scotland, was found by a shepherd lad, taken to a minister and read—and how there broke out, from the reading of that old book that had well-near gone out of date and notice—a blessed revival of evangelical religion!

And if all books were gone, the Spirit of God could act directly upon the hearts of men. He is not straitened! He can still call some Saul of Tarsus without a Bible and without a minister. And if the enemies of the Lord were so to conquer that the very name of Christian should be forgotten—still the Spirit of God could begin again and, out of nothing, "create a new Heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness." Despair? What have we who know the might of God to do with despair? What have we to do, even, with doubt or fear? The Lord lives and His eternal Spirit will work His Divine purposes without fail.

II. Our second remark is equally emphatic. THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS NOT STRAITENED BY ANY CONCEIVABLE CAUSE—if not by the commands of men, certainly not by any other cause.

The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened by any change in Himself The Holy Spirit, as very God of very God, might truly say of Himself, "I am the Lord, I change not." He is today what He was at Pentecost, what He always was from that beginning which had no beginning. He is Divine, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Omnipotent, All-Wise, Infinite. He does as He wills. Therefore He is not straitened. He is not straitened by the spirit of the age, whatever that may be. I have heard a good deal about it and I believe that "the spirit of the age" is Satan. That is short and not very sweet—but that is the only spirit of the age that I know of. Ages have followed ages, but there has never been but one "Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience." He has appeared in different forms—the spirit of ignorance, the spirit of intolerance, the spirit of superstition, the spirit of envy, the spirit of infidelity, the spirit of speculation. All these work one and the same spirit, dividing unto his disciples severally as he wills. And though the spirit of evil is mighty, he must fly before the Spirit of God, who is infinitely more powerful and who is not to be hindered, hampered or straitened by the spirit of the age!

Certainly the Spirit of God is not to be straitened by the discoveries of science. Last night, I think, they found out something very new. They will probably be finding out something new tonight. With reference to my faith in Christ, it does not make the slightest difference what is discovered, nor should any true revelation of science unsettle any preacher of the Gospel. The more that is known of God's works, the better! The more they are understood and rightly explained, the better! Let the Father's Words be magnified. But the Gospel that God's servants were bound to preach when our

forefathers were in the utmost ignorance, is the same Gospel that we are bound to preach now, amid the dazzling electric light. If we had gone into the catacombs of Rome, illuminated by a few flickering lamps, we should have had nothing to preach down there but Jesus Christ and Him crucified!

And when we come together, now, in this enlightened 19th Century, we have still no other subject but Christ crucified, "the old, old story of Jesus and His love." Modern discoveries need not make us tremble, for that the Spirit of God is not straitened by science is proved by the fact that the most scientific men have been subdued by His power. He is as able to convert the learned as the unlearned. He has often done it and we have had those who have seemed to know all about the earth and the heavens, too, who yet were little children at the feet of Christ. Where the Spirit of God comes, He is not straitened in that way.

Neither is He straitened by the worldliness of the great masses in the midst of whom we live. As we look round about on the people, we are almost broken-hearted about them and seem to think the world was never so hard as it is now—and that men were never so

indifferent, never so wrapped up with worldly gain as they are now. Oh, yes they were! It is only another phase of the same evil. "The whole world lies in wickedness," just where it has always lain. There is the same sin, the same hardness of heart, the same blindness, the same callousness—and the Word of God is as much able to work here in London as in old pagan Rome! It is as able to subdue our cities in England as it was to subdue Athens and Corinth and the other cities where Paul preached it. Let us have confidence that nothing about the people today—their poverty, their love of drink, their search after pleasure, their indifference, or anything else—has at all affected the power of the Holy Spirit over the minds of men!

And the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, even, by the skill of His enemies. Certainly they are now skillful beyond anything we have ever read of! We have those who pretend to preach the Gospel but, all the while, they are trying to stab it. They appear to give it a kiss, but they smite it under the fifth rib. Many, nowadays, claim to be evangelical, when they know that the very essence of the evangelical system is abhorrent to them. But the Holy Spirit is not straitened today, any more than when He met the sophistries of the Greek philosophers and overthrew them all! The simple Truth of God will win its way. The fog may darken and become so thick that a man cannot see his hand, but the Holy Spirit knows the road and He can see through the darkest midnight that the Church of God will ever have to endure! And He will bring out the righteousness and Truth of the Gospel as the light—and the glory thereof as a lamp that burns. He is not straitened by the skill of His enemies.

I do not know how to express all that I feel about this, but this I do know—that I cannot imagine anything that can really diminish the power of the Holy Spirit. If He is Divine, He is Omnipotent and, if Omnipotent, nothing can lay hands on Him to bind Him as the Philistines bound Samson. He would burst their bands asunder! He is the free Spirit of God and no power can hold Him—

"When He makes bare His arm, What shall His work withstand?" III. But now I come to a very practical part of my subject, which is this—THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD MUST

NOT BE TREATED BY US AS THOUGH HE WERE STRAITENED. How can we do this? In many ways. I mention

nine.

If we act towards Him as if His holy Word would not, now, convert and sanctify, comfort and conquer, as it used to do, we are, in this, in a horrible position of practical unbelief! His holy Book, in days gone by, did great wonders. It was like Goliath's sword, of which David said, "There is none like that; give it to me." It was double-edged and even he that played with it might wound himself to spiritual death. Many have wrested the Word to their own destruction. "But surely the Word has not, now, the same power?" Try it! Give the Bible to the wicked, to the careless and the thoughtless. Read it to them. Induce them to read it and see if it does not still convert! When you are in great trouble, turn to the Book and pray the

Holy Spirit to bless it, and see if it does not comfort you! In your darkest hour you shall find light in it! When you are ready to give up in despair, you shall be strengthened and return to your labor with hope, if you do but search it and believe its message. It is full of consolation.

Never think that the Spirit cannot bless the Word to you, as He used to do. He is not straitened. When you hear and do not profit, it is your hearing that is wrong, not His power that has failed. When you read the Bible and have not that enjoyment you once had, be sure that it is your own fault. The meat is as rich—you have lost your appetite. The Spirit of

God is not straitened! There is as much Inspiration in this Book as when it was first penned. It is still Inspired and he that reads it aright still feels its inspiring influence, as God comes into his heart through His own Word. The Spirit of God in the Book and through the Book, is not straitened. Let us keep to it. Let us preach it more and more. Let us take care that our sermons are made out of the Bible, not out of our own heads! Then, speaking God's Word, we shall see that the Spirit of God is not straitened.

We behave as if the Spirit of God were straitened, in the next place, if we conceive the present state of things to be hopeless. If you are ready to fold your arms and say that nothing can be done, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? The church to which you belong may be cold and dead and the ministry powerless, but is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Your own works seem to have no good results following from them and though you plod on, the service has become almost a monotony to you. But is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Perhaps I address some man, so far ungodly that he has no hope of salvation, yet still is anxious to be saved. Perhaps he says, "How can I ever become a Christian? How can I have a new heart and a right spirit?" Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Cannot He give you the tenderness you desire? Cannot He give you the desire that seems to be lacking? Cannot He give you faith in Christ at this very moment? Cannot He breathe into you, right now, that breath of spiritual life that shall make you a living soul, looking up to the Cross and finding life in the Crucified?

I pray, dear Friend, if you are under a horrible sense of sin—if you think yourself the worst wretch that ever poisoned the air and if you feel unfit to live as well as unfit to die—yet believe that the Holy Spirit can renew you and can turn the sinner into a saint and make you to glorify God even now, this instant! If not, you limit the power of the Holy Spirit and I come to you with this question, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" The case is desperate if it were not for the Divine hand. It is beyond all hope if there were no God. There is no balm in Gilead—there is no physician there—if there had been, the health of the daughter of my people would long ago have been recovered. Where, then, is the balm? Look upward for it! Where is the physician? Look upward for Him! There is the Christ of God, "mighty to save," and there is the living Father Himself, and there is the almighty Spirit! Oh, that you would no longer be filled with suspicions as to the power of God! With God all things are possible. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Is the Lord's arm waxed short? Trust that

He can do all things and do all things for you whether you are a saint or a sinner! I shall have to come again to you with the question, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

Do you not think, again, that we very much act as if the Spirit of the Lord were straitened when we only look for little blessings? I am very glad to see 300 to 400 persons in a year converted and added to this Church and this has long been the case. But if I ever imbibed the idea that this were all that might be done, I would be straitening the Spirit of God! If you have had a number of conversions in the Sunday school—and I thank God that you have and you have never been without them—yet if you conceive that you have reached the maximum of success, I must come to you with this question, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" Dear Friends, there is no reason that I know of why the sermon that brings one sinner into the Light of God, should not bring a thousand into the Light, supposing a thousand sinners to be hearing it! The same power which saves one is precisely that power that would save a thousand—

"The very Law which molds a tear,
And bids it trickle from its source—

That power preserves the earth a sphere

And guides the planets in their course." The same Law, the same Power operates to little and to gigantic ends. Oh, for a mighty belief in that God who "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us"—and that Power is the Holy Spirit who cannot be straitened!

Why, then, should we not come up to the House of God with the prayer, "O Lord, work mighty marvels"? Is He not the God that does great wonders? Should we not expect Him to do large things? I know some will say, "Well, if I were to see a great many converted, I would be afraid that they would, many of them, go back." But my experience tells me that there is no reason to believe that when many are converted there are more mistaken persons in the number, in proportion, than when few are converted. In fact, I think that I have noticed that the more that are received into the Church, the better is the quality. And the reason is this—that, when few are coming, there is a strong temptation to accept them with less discretion. But, when there are a great many, we can afford to be somewhat more rigid so that the more the merrier, and the more the sounder! I think that it is often the case. Let us believe that the Spirit of God can save a parish, can save

a city, can shake London from end to end! Oh, that God would enlarge the capacity of our faith! "According to your faith be it unto you." But we have not more than sixpenny-worth of faith and when we get as much as that represents, we think that we are getting rich! And yet there are mines of untold wealth of the Grace of God to be had. Oh, that we had the faith with which to take possession of them!

Again, dear Friends, do you not think that we also treat the Spirit of God as though He were straitened when we imagine that our weakness hinders His working by us? "Oh," says

one, "I have no doubt that God can bless a great many by you!" Well, dear Fiend, if you knew what I am often obliged to feel of myself, you would never talk so. I am the weakest of you all, in my own apprehension. Another says, "I know that I am inferior in ability, in knowledge, in opportunity." Just so, dear Friend, and, therefore, you suppose that the Spirit of God cannot use you? Do you not see that though you think such a confession is an evidence of humility, you are straitening the Spirit of God? However weak and feeble you may be, He can use you! If you think that He cannot, you deprive Him of power in your apprehension. It is not yourself, you see, that you are lowering, you are really lowering the power of God! He can use a person who is very insignificant, very obscure, very unlearned, very feeble. No, He delights to do this, and He makes even those that are strong feel weak before He uses them, so that they say, "When I am weak, then am I strong." He will use empty vessels and if you do not need emptying because you are already empty, then that is one little thing that needs not be done and God can begin with you at once! There is nothing in you—nothing! Now, if God will use you, He will manifestly have all the Glory. Believe that He can use you—and get to work and do something! Proclaim His Gospel! Tell it over and over again. Tell it where you have told it, or where you have never told it, and believe that God can use you—AND HE WILL! Otherwise, if you say, "He cannot use me," I shall put the question to you again, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

But I hear another say, "I think, dear Sir, you do not know where I live. If you did, you would not think there could be any very great blessing." Where do you live? In No-Man's-Ground? At the other end of the world? At Land's End, just over the edge of the universe? Here is a word for the little places, little Churches, hamlets with scanty population, where only a few people come together for worship. Do not believe that the Spirit of the Lord is narrowed by the small-ness of the place. Some of the greatest works for Christ have begun in hamlets and in small villages. The fire has commenced to burn there which has afterwards become a mighty conflagration, like the flames which are driven in terrible grandeur across the forests of America. It matters not how few begin, but where two or three are met together in Christ's name there He is! And if He is there, He will soon, by means of that little company, be somewhere else, and He will make the fire to fly abroad to the utmost ends of the earth! If you have only two or three souls committed to your charge, you have quite as many as you will give good account of. Do not hunger for big congregations—hunger to save those you have! If the Lord will but bless you to the Sunday school class, or to the two or three children in your own family, you cannot tell what good will come of it, for the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened by the scantiness of the population!

A great many persons are guilty of thinking the Spirit of God to be straitened when they fancy that He must always work in one way. When I am seeing persons who come forward to confess their faith, I find they often begin by telling me how they were brought low under a sense of sin—and I like that old-fashioned way of conversion. But when I find one beginning

by saying, "The Lord met me and filled my heart with joy and gladness under a sense of pardon, almost before I had any sense of sin, and the sense of sin followed after," I say to myself, "Let the Lord do His work in His own way." I am not going to make a pattern and lay them all on it and say that they must all be just that length, or else be stretched out a bit, or be cut shorter. No! Let the Lord save His own people in His own way! And if one is made to go down to the dark dungeon of law-work and gets whipped till he has not a bit of whole skin in his soul, I hope that it will do him good. But if another is gently led to Christ and does not know that there is a rod, but through love and kindness is led to rejoice in his Savior, I trust that he will remember it, and be glad all his days. Conversions are not run into molds. You cannot get a gross of conversions like a gross of steel pens. Each living child is different from any other living child. A great painter never paints exactly the same picture twice. There is always a difference, somewhere, be it ever so slight. And when there is a work for eternity done in a Church, it is done in very varied ways. If we begin to tie the Lord down to one way of work, we shall make a great mistake.

"Oh," says one, "we meet together, a number of us, and anybody speaks who likes—and that is God's way of working. I do not believe in a one-man ministry." But we are in great danger of grieving the Spirit of God if we think that He

only works with one set of men, with one order of government, or with only those who have none. Another man, who goes to hear one particular individual, says, "I am profited by Mr. So-and-So's preaching and do not get so much good under anybody else. I do not like that other open way of worship." Brethren, let them worship as they like! God blesses a one-man ministry and God blesses a twenty-man ministry. If the ministry is in the power of His Spirit, let it take what shape it likes. God is not bound by our rules and regulations—if you see God at work, bless His name that He is there and let Him work as He wills. You must not think that God works only on one set of lines. "Oh," says one, "I always get a blessing from So-and-So." Yes, you expect it, and you pray God to send it. "But I do not expect a blessing from such-and-such a man. He has such a curious way of going to work." Very likely. God has some very strange servants and, may I add, He has some very strange children!

We have strange families, ourselves, sometimes. Some parents have very old boys and a number of God's sons and daughters are the oddest children that ever were born. Yet He bears with them and surely we may bear with them, too. Some of the most useful people one has ever known have also been very eccentric and have gone their own way to work. If you do not like their way, do not go with them—go your own way. They will not like your way, but they must not blame you, neither must you despise them. As the Lord directs you and as you find the Word of God guides you, set to work for Him and believe that the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened! God blessed William Huntington, the coal-heaver, to many souls, though he preached a very strong Calvinism, while, at the same time, He was blessing some who preached a very weak Arminianism—but God blesses neither the

Calvinism nor the Arminianism—but the Christ that is in the sermon! The true, eternal, evangelical Truth of God that is brought out, God Himself will bless to the souls of men! Let us not, therefore, speak of the Holy Spirit as tied to any set of men. "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

Once more—we act as if we did not believe in this Divine Truth concerning the Spirit of God when we think that some men are beyond His reach. Let us never imagine that those who have been sitting under the sound of the Word for years are so Gospel-hardened as to be past hope—or those who have gone deep into sin are too deeply-dyed ever to be cleansed—or those who have wandered from the fold are too far away ever to be recalled! Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened, that we should despair of any whom God has permitted to remain on this side of His judgement bar? Have faith for the worst of men and the worst of women, too—great sinners, when saved, bring great Glory to that God whose Spirit leads them to the Truth.

And again, we may treat the Spirit of God as straitened if we cannot believe that He can bless us today. "I feel so gloomy," you say. "I hope that I shall be better tomorrow." Brother, why should you not be converted at this good hour? "Oh," says some sister, "I mean to serve the Lord when I got a little older." Do you? Well, you are a little older since I began to speak to you, and I think that your best time to begin is now. Believe in God's nows. Believe that any moment is a good moment with God. "This day is a day of good tidings." Why should not I, at this moment, dedicate myself afresh to God? Why should I not come to Christ, again, and ask Him to give me more life, more faith, more hope, more joy, more likeness to Himself now? "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

IV. On the fourth and last point, our words must be few, though the Truth of God affords much scope for instruction. THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD WILL PROVE THAT HE IS NOT STRAITENED and at the last all men shall acknowledge His power, whether they have bowed to it or not! He will be magnified in those who are saved and in those who are lost.

He will exact punishment for resistance. Those who now despise the messages which are sent to them will, at last, be left to their own devices. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," says the Eternal God. And continual rejection will, at last, end in the total withdrawal of His Presence and the eternal ruin of all who have resisted Him.

But notwithstanding the rejection of men, He will fulfill the Divine Decree. Man's obstinacy shall not frustrate the purpose of God and the things which He has predestinated shall surely come to pass. In this shall be clear evidence that the Spirit of the Lord was not straitened. Not one of God's chosen shall be suffered to continue in the way to ruin—they shall all be effectually called and enabled to embrace Christ as He is freely preached to them in the Gospel!

Thus, the third proof will be given, in that He will glorify Christ and prepare a people to welcome His Advent. The Gospel shall be preached among all nations and out of every

tribe and people witnesses shall be gathered to await the glorious appearing of the victorious Christ which cannot be long delayed. Then it shall be seen how grandly the Spirit of

the Lord has perfected both the number and the character of the Church, which, like a chaste virgin, shall be presented to the Lamb as the reward of His agony and intercession!

You that are not converted, but are longing to be, what are you waiting for, seeing that the Spirit of the Lord is thus always ready to work and will never be more able at another time than He is now? The great point with many is to precipitate decision, to bring them across the border. You are almost over it! You have often been so. You are almost persuaded. O Spirit of God, make them believe in Jesus now! May they turn their eyes to Him who hung upon the Cross and look, now, and live! What reason should there be why tomorrow should be better for repenting than today? In what way can 1892 be better than 1891? I am at a loss to think, but I can easily find a great many reasons why delays are dangerous, why delays are expensive, why delays will end in rejections! May God the Holy Spirit come and turn you to God now, lest, at last, you should share in that awful judicial blindness which falls on those who spurn His entreaties—lest the Gospel should be hid from you because you are lost—lest standing in the way of God's purpose, you should be cut down as a cumberer of the ground! Lest, at last, you should miss being numbered with that glorious throng who are now being called away from their idols to serve the living God and to wait for His Son from Heaven!

Has He not said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out"? When may they come? Whenever they come He will not cast them out! What sort of people will He receive? "Him that comes"—any, "him," that comes, no matter who he or she is! How do they come? They must just trust—trust Jesus! May the Holy Spirit enable you to trust Him now! The Lord bless you, for His name's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Micah 4.