

The Plowman

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Does the plowman plow all day to sow?" [Isaiah 28:24](#).

UNLESS they are cultivated, fields yield us nothing but briars and thistles. In this we may see ourselves. Unless the great Husbandman shall till us by His Grace, we shall produce nothing that is good, but everything that is evil. If one of these days I shall hear that a country has been discovered where wheat grows without the work of the farmer, I may then, perhaps, hope to find one of our race who will bring forth holiness without the Grace of God. Up to this day, all land on which the foot of man has trodden has needed labor and care. And even so among men, the need of gracious tillage is universal! Jesus says to all of us, "You must be born-again." Unless God the Holy Spirit breaks up the heart with the plow of the Law and sows it with the Seed of the Gospel, not a single ear of holiness will any of us produce, even though we may be children of godly parents and may be regarded as excellent moral people by those with whom we live!

Yes, and the plow is needed not only to produce that which is good, but to destroy that which is evil! There are diseases which, in the course of ages, wear themselves out and do not appear again among men. And there may be forms of vice which, under changed circumstances, do not so much abound as they used to do—but human nature will always remain the same and, therefore, there will always be plentiful crops of the weeds of sin in man's fields—and nothing can keep these under but spiritual husbandry carried on by the Spirit of God. You cannot destroy weeds by exhortations, nor can you tear out the roots of sin from the soul by moral persuasion. Something sharper and more effectual must be brought to bear upon them. God must put His own right hand to the plow, or the hemlock of sin will never give place to the corn of holiness! Good is never spontaneous in unrenewed humanity! And evil is never cut up till the plow of Almighty Grace is driven through it.

The text leads our thoughts in this direction and gives us practical guidance through asking the simple question, "Does the plowman plow all day to sow?" This question may be answered in the affirmative, 'Yes, in the proper season he does plow all day to sow.' And, secondly, this text may more properly be answered in the negative, "No, the plowman does not plow every day to sow—he has other work to do according to the season." Our text may be—

I. ANSWERED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE—"Yes, the plowman does plow all day to sow." When it is plowing time, he keeps at it till his work is done. If it requires one day, or two days, or 20 days to finish his fields, he continues at his task while the weather permits. The

perseverance of the plowman is instructive and it teaches us a double lesson. When the Lord comes to plow the heart of man, He plows all day—herein is His patience. And, secondly, so ought the Lord's servants to labor all day with men's hearts—herein is our perseverance.

"Does the plowman plow all day?" So does God plow the heart of man, and herein is His patience. The team was in the field, in the case of some of us, very early in the morning, for our first recollections have to do with conscience and the furrows of pain which it made in our youthful mind. When we were little children, we woke in the night under a sense of sin. Our father's teaching and our mother's prayers made deep and painful impressions upon us—and though we did not then yield our hearts to God, we were greatly stirred and all indifference to religion was made impossible. When we were boys at school, the reading of a Chapter in the Word of God, or the death of a playmate, or an address at a Bible class, or a solemn sermon so affected us that we were uneasy for weeks! The strivings of the Spirit of God within urged us to think of higher and better things. Though we quenched the Spirit. Though we stifled conviction, yet we bore the marks of the plowshare—furrows were made in the soul and certain foul weeds of evil were cut up by the roots, although no Seed of Grace was as yet sown in our hearts. Some have continued in this state for many years—plowed, but not sown. But,

blessed be God, it was not so with others of us, for we had not left boyhood before the good Seed of the Gospel fell upon our heart! Alas, there are many who do not thus yield to Grace, and with them the Plowman plows all day to sow. I have seen the young man coming to London in his youth, yielding to its temptations, drinking in its poisoned sweets, violating his conscience and yet continuing unhappy in it all—fearful, unrestful, stirred about even as the soil is agitated by the plow! In how many cases has this kind of work gone on for years and all to no avail? Ah, and I have known the man come to middle life and still he has not received the good Seed, neither has the ground of his hard heart been thoroughly broken up! He has gone on in business without God—day after day he has risen and gone to bed again with no more religion than his horses—and yet all this while there have been ringing in his ears warnings of judgment to come and chid-ings of conscience so that he has not been at peace. After a powerful sermon he has not enjoyed his meals, or been able to sleep, for he has asked himself, "What shall I do in the end thereof?" The Plowman has plowed all day, till the evening shadows have lengthened and the day has faded to a close. What a mercy it is when the furrows are at last made ready and the good Seed is cast in—to be received, nurtured and multiplied a hundredfold!

It is mournful to remember that we have seen this plowing continue till the sun has touched the horizon and the night dews have begun to fall. Even then the long-suffering God has followed up His work—plowing, plowing, plowing, plowing till darkness ended all! Do I address any aged ones whose lease must soon run out? I would affectionately beseech them to consider their position. What? Three score years old and yet unsaved? Forty years

did God allow the manners of Israel in the wilderness, but He has borne with you for 60 years! Seventy years old and yet unregenerated? Ah, my Friend, you will have but little time in which to serve your Savior before you go to Heaven. But will you go there at all? Is it not growing dreadfully likely that you will die in your sins and perish forever? How happy are those who are brought to Christ in early life! But still remember—

"While the lamp continues to burn, The vilest sinner may return."

It is late, it is very late, but it is not too late. The Plowman plows all day and the Lord waits that He may be gracious to you. I have seen many aged persons converted and, therefore, I would encourage other old folks to believe in Jesus. I once read a sermon in which a minister asserted that he had seldom known any converted who were over 40 years of age if they had been hearers of the Gospel all their lives. There is certainly much need to caution those who are guilty of delay, but there must be no manufacturing of facts! Whatever that minister might think, or even observe, my own observation leads me to believe that about as many people are converted to God at one age as at another, taking into consideration the fact that the young are much more numerous than the old. It is a dreadful thing to have remained an unbeliever all these years, but yet the Grace of God does not stop short at a certain age—those who enter the vineyard at the 11th hour shall have their penny and Grace shall be glorified in the old as well as in the young! Come along, old Friend, Jesus Christ invites you to come to Him even now, though you have stayed away so long! You have been a sadly tough piece of ground—and the Plowman has plowed all day—but if at last the sods are turned and the heart is lying in ridges, there is hope for you yet!

"Does the Plowman plow all day?" I answer—Yes, however long the day may be, God, in mercy still plows! He is long-suffering, full of tenderness, mercy and Grace. Do not spurn such patience, but yield to the Lord who has acted towards you with so much gentle love!

The text, however, not only sets forth patience on God's part, but it teaches perseverance on our part. "Does the Plowman plow all day?" Yes, He does. Then if I am seeking Christ, ought I to be discouraged because I do not immediately find Him? The promise is, "He that asks, receives, and he that seeks, finds, and to him that knocks, it shall be opened." There may be reasons why the door is not opened at our first knock. What then? "Does the Plowman plow all day?" Then I will knock all day! It may be at the first seeking I may not find—what then? "Does the Plowman plow all day?" Then I will seek all day. It may happen that at my first asking I shall not receive—what then? "Does the Plowman plow all day?" Then will I ask all day. Friends, if you have begun to seek the Lord, the short way is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Do that at once! In the name of God, do it at once and you are saved at once! May the Spirit of God bring you to faith in Jesus—and you are at once in the Kingdom of Christ! But if, perhaps, in seeking the Lord, you are ignorant of this, or do not see your way, never give up seeking! Get to the foot of the Cross, lay hold

of it and cry, "If I perish, I will perish here! Lord, I come to You in Jesus Christ for mercy, but if You are not pleased to

look at me immediately and forgive my sins, I will cry to You till You do." When God's Holy Spirit brings a man to downright earnest prayer, which will not take a denial, he is not far from peace! Careless indifference and shilly-shallying with God hold men in bondage. They find peace when their hearts are awakened to strong resolve to seek until they find! I like to see men search the Scriptures till they learn the way of salvation and hear the Gospel till their souls live by it! If they are resolved to drive the plow through doubts, fears and difficulties, till they come to salvation, they shall soon come to it by the Grace of God!

The same is true in seeking the salvation of others. "Does the plowman plow all day?" Yes, when it is plowing time. Then, so will I work on, and on, and on. I will pray and preach, or pray and teach, however long the day may be that God shall appoint me, for—

"'Tis all my business here below The precious Gospel Seed to sow."

Brother worker, are you getting a little weary? Never mind, wake yourself and plow on for the love of Jesus and dying men! Our day of work has in it only the appointed hours—and while they last, let us fulfill our task. Plowing is hard work, but as there will be no harvest without it, let us put forth all our strength and never flag till we have performed our Lord's will and His Holy Spirit has worked conviction in men's souls! Some soils are very stiff and cling together and the labor is heartbreaking. Others are like the unreclaimed waste, full of roots and tangled bramble—they need a steam plow and we must pray the Lord to make us such, for we cannot leave them untilled and, therefore, we must put forth more strength that the labor may be done.

I heard some time ago of a minister who called to see a poor man who was dying, but he was not able to gain admittance. He called the next morning and some idle excuse was made so that he could not see him. He called again the next morning, but he was still refused. He went on till he called 20 times in vain, but on the 21st occasion he was permitted to see the sufferer and, by God's Grace, he saved a soul from death! "Why do you tell your child a thing 20 times?" asked someone of a mother. "Because," she said, "I find 19 times is not enough." Now, when a soul is to be plowed, it may so happen that hundreds of furrows will not do it. What then? Why, plow all day till the work is done! Whether you are ministers, missionaries, teachers, or private soul-winners, never grow weary, for your work is noble and the reward of it is infinite! The Grace of God is seen in our being permitted to engage in such holy service—it is greatly magnified in sustaining us in it and it will be pre-eminently conspicuous in enabling us to hold out till we can say, "I have finished the work which You gave me to do."

We prize that which costs us labor and service—and we shall set all the higher value upon the saved ones when the Lord grants them to our efforts! It is good for us to learn the

value of our sheaves by going forth weeping to the sowing. When you think of the plowman's plowing all day, be moved to plod on in earnest efforts to win souls. Seek—

"With cries, entreaties, tears to save And snatch them from the fiery wave." Does the plowman plow all day for a little bit of oats or barley, and will not you plow all day for souls that shall live forever, if saved, to adore the Grace of God, or shall live forever, if unsaved, in outer darkness and woe? Oh, by the terrors of the wrath to come and the glory that is to be revealed, gird up your loins and plow all day!

I would beg all the members of our Churches to keep their hands on the Gospel plow and their eyes straight before them. "Does the plowman plow all day?" Let Christians do the same! Start close to the hedge and go right down to the bottom of the field. Plow as close to the ditch as you can and leave small headlands. What though there are fallen women, thieves and drunks in the slums around you, do not neglect any of them! For if you leave a stretch of land to the weeds, they will soon spread among the wheat. When you have gone right to the end of the field once, what shall you do next? Why, just turn around and make for the place you started from! And when you have thus been up and down, what next? Why, up and down again! And what next? Why, up and down again! You have visited that district with tracts—do it again—fifty-two times in the year multiply your furrows! We must learn how to continue in well-doing. Your eternal destiny is to go on doing good forever and ever—and it is well to go through a rehearsal here. So just plow on, plow on and look for results as the reward of continued perseverance! Plowing is not done with a skip and a jump—the plowman plows all day. Dash and flash are all very fine in some things, but not in plowing! There the work must be steady, persistent, regular. Certain persons soon give it up—it wears out their gloves, blisters their soft hands, tires their bones and

makes them eat their bread rather more in the sweat of their face than they care for! Those whom the Lord fills with His Grace will keep to their plowing year after year, and verily I say unto you, they shall have their reward. "Does the plowman plow all day?" Then let us do the same, being assured that one day every hill and valley shall be tilled and sown—and every desert and wilderness shall yield a harvest for our Lord—and the angel reapers shall descend and the shouts of the harvest home shall fill both earth and Heaven! But, now, somewhat briefly—

II. THE TEXT MAY BE ANSWERED IN THE NEGATIVE. "Does the plowman plow all day to sow?" No, he does not always plow. After he has plowed, he breaks the clods, sows, reaps and threshes. In the Chapter before us you will see that other works of husbandry are mentioned. The plowman has many other things to do beside plowing. There is an advance in what he does—this teaches us that there is the same on God's part and should be the same on ours.

First, on God's part there is an advance in what He does. "Does the plowman plow all day?" No, he goes forward to other matters. It may be that in the case of some of you, the

Lord has been using certain painful agencies to plow you. You are feeling the terrors of the Law, the bitterness of sin, the holiness of God, the weakness of the flesh and the shadow of the wrath to come. Is this going to last forever? Will it continue till the spirit fails and the soul expires? Listen—"Does the plowman plow all day?" No, he is preparing for something else—he plows to sow. Thus does the Lord deal with you! Therefore be of good courage, there is an end to the wounding and slaying—and better things are in store for you. You are poor and needy and you seek water, but there is none and your tongue fails for thirst. But the Lord will hear you and deliver you! He will not contend forever, neither will He always be angry. He will turn again and He will have compassion upon us. He will not always make furrows by His chiding. He will come and cast in the precious corn of consolation and water it with the dews of Heaven and smile upon it with the sunlight of His Grace—and there shall soon be in you, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear—and in due season you shall joy as with the joy of harvest! O you who are sorely wounded in the place of dragons, I hear you cry! Does God always send terror and conviction of sin? Listen to this—"If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land." And what is the call of God to the willing and obedient but this, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved"? You shall be saved now, find peace now if you will have done with yourself and all looking to your own good works to save you—and will turn to Him who paid the ransom for you upon the Cross! The Lord is gentle and tender, and full of compassion. He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever.

Many of your doubts and fears come from unbelief, or of Satan, or of the flesh—and are not of God at all! Blame Him not for what He does not send and does not wish you to suffer! His mind is for your peace, not for your distress, for thus He speaks, "Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned." "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you." He has smitten, but He will smile! He has wounded, but He will heal! He has slain, but He will make alive! Therefore turn unto Him at once and receive comfort at His hands. The plowman does not plow forever, else would he reap no harvest. And God is not always breaking hearts— He also draws near on heart-healing errands!

You see, then, that the Great Husbandman advances from painful agencies, and I want you to mark that He goes on to productive work in the hearts of His people. He will take away the furrows, you shall not see them, for the corn will cover them with beauty. As she that was in travail remembers no more her sorrow for joy that a man is born into the world, so shall you, who are under the legal rod, remember no more the misery of conviction, for God will sow you with Grace, and make your soul, even your poor, barren soul, to bring forth fruit unto His praise and Glory! "Oh," says one, "I wish that would come true to me." It will. "Does the plowman plow all day to sow?" You expect, by-and-by, to see plowed fields

clothed with springing corn—and you may look to see repentant hearts gladdened with forgiveness! Therefore, be of good courage.

You shall advance, also, to a joyful experience. See that plowman? He whistles as he plows. He does not own much of this world's goods, but yet he is merry! He looks forward to the day when he will be on the top of the big wagon, joining in the shout of the harvest home—and so he plows in hope, expecting a crop. And, dear Soul, God will yet joy and rejoice over you when you believe in Jesus Christ and you, too, shall be full of joy! Be of good cheer, the better portion is yet to come! Press forward to it. Gospel sorrowing leads on to Gospel hoping, believing, rejoicing—and the rejoicing knows no end! God will not chasten all day, but He will lead you on from strength to strength, from glory unto glory,

till you shall be like He! This, then, is the advance that there is in God's work among men, from painful agencies to productive work and joyful experience!

But what if the plowing should never lead to sowing? What if you should be disturbed in conscience and should go on to resist it all? Then God will make another advance, but it will be to put up the plow and to command the clouds that they rain no rain upon the land—and then its end is to be burned. Oh, Man, there is nothing more awful than for your soul to be left to go out of cultivation—God Himself giving you up! Surely that is Hell. He that is unholy will be unholy still. The law of fixed character will operate eternally and no hand of the Merciful One shall come near to till the soul again! What worse than this can happen?

We conclude by saying that this advance is a lesson to us, for we, too, are to go forward. "Does the plowman plow all day?" No, he plows to sow, and in due time he sows. Some Churches seem to think that all they have to do is to plow—at least all they attempt is a kind of scratching of the soil and talking of what they are going to do. It is fine talk, certainly, but does the plowman plow all day? You may draw up a large program and promise great things, but pray do not stop there! Don't be making furrows all day—get to your sowing! I fancy that those who promise most, perform the least. Men who do much in the world have no program at first—their course works itself out by its own inner force by the Grace of God—they do not propose, but perform! They do not plow all day to sow, but they are like our Lord's servant in the parable, of whom He says, "The sower went forth to sow."

Let the ministers of Christ also follow the rule of advance. Let us go from preaching the Law to preaching the Gospel. "Does the plowman plow all day?" He does plow—he would not sow in hope if he had not first prepared the ground. Robbie Flockart, who preached for years in the Edinboro streets, says, "It is in vain to sew with the silk thread of the Gospel unless you use the sharp needle of the Law." Some of my Brothers do not care to preach eternal wrath and its terrors. This is a cruel mercy, for they ruin souls by hiding from them their ruin! If they need try to sew without a needle, I cannot help it, but I do not mean to be so foolish myself! My needle may be old-fashioned, but it is sharp and when it carries

with it the silken thread of the Gospel, I am sure good work is done by it! You cannot get a harvest if you are afraid of disturbing the soil, nor can you save souls if you never warn them of Hell fire. We must tell the sinner what God has revealed about sin, righteousness and judgment to come. Still, Brothers, we must not plow all day. No, no! The preaching of the Law is only preparatory to the preaching of the Gospel! The stress of our business lies in proclaiming glad tidings. We are not followers of John the Baptist, but of Jesus Christ! We are not rugged Prophets of woe, but joyful heralds of Grace. Be not satisfied with revival services and stirring appeals, but preach the Doctrines of Grace so as to bring out the full compass of Covenant Truth. Plowing has had its turn, now for planting and watering! Reproof may now give place to consolation. We are first to make disciples of men and then to teach them to observe all things whatever Jesus has commanded us. We must pass on from the rudiments to the higher Truths of God, from laying foundations to further building!

And now, another lesson to those of you who are as yet hearers and nothing more. I want you to go from plowing to something better, namely, from hearing and fearing to believing. How many years some of you have been hearing the Gospel! Do you mean to continue in that state forever? Will you never believe in Him of whom you hear so much? You have been stirred up a good deal—the other night you went home almost brokenhearted! I should think you are plowed enough by this time, and yet you have not received the Seed of eternal life, for you have not believed in the Lord Jesus! It is dreadful to be always on the brink of everlasting life and yet never to be alive. It will be an awful thing to be almost in Heaven and yet forever shut out! It is a wretched thing to rush into a railway station just in time to see the train steaming out—I had much rather be half an hour behind time! To lose a train by half a second is most annoying. Alas, if you go on as you have done for years, you will have your hand on the latch of Heaven and yet be shut out! You will be within a hair's breadth of Glory and yet be covered with eternal shame! Oh, beware of being so near to the Kingdom of God and yet lost—almost, but not altogether saved! God grant that you may not be among those who are plowed and plowed, and plowed, and yet never sown! It will be of no avail at the last to cry, "Lord, we have eaten and drunk in Your Presence and You have taught in our streets. We had a seat at the Chapel. We attended the services on weeknights as well as on Sundays! We went to Prayer Meetings, we joined a Bible class, we distributed tracts, we subscribed our guinea to the funds! We gave up every open sin, we used a form of prayer and read a Chapter of the Bible every day." All these things may be done and yet there may be no saving faith in the Lord Jesus! Take heed lest your Lord should answer, "With all this, your heart never came to Me. Therefore, depart from Me! I never knew you." If Jesus once knows a man, He always knows him. He can never say to me, "I never knew you," for He has known me as His poor dependent, a beggar for years at His door! Some of you have been all that is good, except that you never came into contact with

Christ, never trusted Him, never knew Him. Ah, me, how sad your state! Will it always be so?

Lastly, I would say to you who are being plowed and are agitated about your souls, go at once to the next stage of believing. Oh, if people did but know how simple a thing believing is, surely they would believe! Alas, they do not know it, and it becomes all the more difficult to them because in itself it is so easy! The difficulty of believing lies in there being no difficulty in it! "If the Prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it?" Oh, yes, you would have done it and you would have thought it easy, too! But when he simply says, "Wash, and be clean," there is a difficulty with pride and self. If you can truly say that you are willing to abase your pride and do anything which the Lord bids you, then I pray you understand that there is no further preparation required—believe in Jesus at once! May the Holy Spirit make you sick of self and ready to accept the Gospel! The Word is near you, let it be believed! It is in your mouth, let it be swallowed! It is in your heart, let it be trusted! With your heart believe in Jesus and with your mouth make confession of Him and you shall be saved! A main part of faith lies in the giving up of all other confidences. Oh, give up at once every false hope! I tried once to show what faith was by quoting Dr. Watts' lines—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Your kind arms I fall.
Be You my strength, and righteousness,
My Jesus and my All."

I tried to represent faith as falling into Christ's arms and I thought I made it so plain that the wayfaring man could not err therein. When I had finished preaching, a young man came to me and said, "But, Sir, I cannot fall upon Christ's arms." I replied at once, "Tumble into them anyway you can! Faint away into Christ's arms, or die in Christ's arms, so long as you get there." Many talk of what they can do and what they cannot do, and I fear they miss the vital point. Faith is leaving off "can-ing" and "cannot-ing," and leaving it all to Christ, for He can do all things, though you can do nothing! "Does the plowman plow all day to sow?" No, he makes progress and goes from plowing to sowing. Go, and do you likewise—sow unto the Spirit the precious Seed of faith in Christ—and the Lord will give you a joyous harvest!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MATTHEW 10:16-33.

Verses 16-25. Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be you therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And you shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak For it is not you that speaks, but the Spirit of Your Father which speaks in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the

father the child; and the children shall rise against their parents, and cause them to be put to death And you shall be hated of all men for My name's sake; but he that endures to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee you into another: for verily I say unto you, you shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man is come. The disciple is not above his master, nor his servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he is as his master, and the servant as his lord. It is more than enough, for the disciple might expect to fare worse than his master, and the servant to have less comfort than the lord. So it is in worldly things—that our Lord and Master has such fellowship with His people that He does not put it so, but He says, "It is enough for the disciple that he is as his master, and the servant as his Lord."

25. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? But they cannot call them any more or any worse. They have given our Master the blackest of all the epithet and any hard and opprobrious titles that can ever be applied to us must fall short of these which were applied to Him. Surely we ought not to wince—not for a single moment!

26. Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. They may cover your name and character with temporary dishonor, but the covering will soon break off. Like

fire hidden under autumn leaves, it will burn up, by-and-by, and there will be a resurrection of reputations, as well as of persons! And what a wondrous resurrection that will be for those who are cast out as the offscouring of all things, when they shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father!

27. What I tell you in darkness, that speak you in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach you upon the housetops. There is a secret learning, but there must be a public teaching. Christ takes us aside to reveal Himself, that afterwards we may boldly go forth to others and tell them what we have learned in private. Oh, child of God, if you have a sweet morsel in the chamber by yourself, do not be so selfish as to keep it to yourself! Go and tell your Brothers and Sisters, and your house, and of the same place, the things which you have learned. If any of you have had a very choice experience, and a more than usual manifestation of Divine Love, be sure to let others be enriched with your riches. Have you found honey? Eat it not all yourself, but, like Samson, when he found it in the carcass of the lion, go to father and mother, and friends with your hands full of the secret, and let them eat it also.

28. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell Oh, fearful destruction! This is what we may well fear—both body and soul to undergo everlasting ruin, broken in pieces and destroyed as to all excellency, happiness and peace. This we may fear.

29. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father He rules over all things, the least as well as the greatest! We see

His hand in the tempest and we look at the black wing of the storm and see that God rides it. But the wing of the tiny sparrows, so insignificant in value, is equally directed by His power and wisdom!

30. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Minute is the Providence of God, taking care of you, even as to that part of your person which is not vital and without which you could still live on. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." The tiniest and most insignificant benefits are all ordered by His eternal purpose.

31-33. Fear you not, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows. Whoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father who is in Heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men—And you see from the connection, that here the denying means not confessing. "Whoever shall deny Me before men."

33. Him will I also deny before My Father who is in Heaven. The attempt, therefore, to avoid all publicity in religion—to endeavor to slink into Heaven by the back gate—to somehow or other find an underground road to salvation, is a futile attempt! Christ requires that we should acknowledge Him, seeing that He so graciously acknowledges us. He puts it as a solemn command—and I would press it upon the conscience of any Believer here who has never confessed his faith. You miss, at any rate, the promise here—but you miss some others besides. You are walking in the path of disobedience. You are, to some extent, guilty of putting Christ to shame, for if others see that you are ashamed of Him, they conclude that there is something to be ashamed of in Him. Your practice dishonors Him. Why should you hold back? Are you not going to take your place among His people? You tell me that they have many faults. Have they more than you? If you never join a Church till you find a perfect one, you will never join one this side of Heaven! And if the Church were perfect when you joined it, it would certainly cease to be so then—for you would bring your shortcomings and imperfections into it! I have lived among the people of God now these many years and I, as pastor of this Church, have had to mourn over many and many for its faults, but still, there is no people like God's people, and of His House I will say—

"Here my best friends—my kindred—dwell. Here God my Savior reigns!"

Some of the best and noblest spirits that ever lived have not been ashamed to associate with their fellow Christians, though they perceived their errors. They have rather cast in their lot with them, poor and despised as they were, and have accounted it even their honor if they might but be numbered with the redeemed among men.

34. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword. The ultimate result of Christ's mission will be peace. Swords shall be broken into plowshares, and the spears into pruning hooks, but on the way to peace there will be war. On the way to universal peace there will be a general confusion. When true religion comes into a man's heart, it at once makes him a warrior. He begins to contend against evil—to contend against contention. He fights for peace, though it may seem strange that it should be so.

35. 36. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. They will drive us back

when they perceive that our face is set towards Heaven. When you see a fish swimming with the stream, it is almost always a dead one. The living fish goes against the stream—and the true child of God has to go against the current of mankind, and oftentimes the hardest push in life is to go against father, mother, brother, sister, for Christ's sake and the Gospel.