

THE PECULIAR SLEEP OF THE BELOVED

NO. 12

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING,
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AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

“For so He gives His Beloved sleep.”
Psalm 127:2

THE sleep of the body is the gift of God. So said Homer of old, when he described it as descending from the clouds and resting on the tents of the warriors around old Troy. And so sang Virgil, when he spoke of Palinurus falling asleep upon the prow of the ship. Sleep is the gift of God. We think that we lay our heads upon our pillows and compose our bodies in a peaceful posture and that, therefore, we naturally and necessarily sleep. But it is not so. Sleep is the gift of God and not a man would close his eyes did not God put His fingers on his eyelids—did not the Almighty send a soft and balmy influence over his frame which lulled his thoughts into quiescence, making him enter into that blissful state of rest which we call sleep.

True, there are some drugs and narcotics whereby men can poison themselves well near to death and then call it sleep. But the sleep of the healthy body is the gift of God. He bestows it, He rocks the cradle for us every night. He draws the curtain of darkness. He bids the sun shut up his burning eyes and then He comes and says, “Sleep, sleep My child. I give you sleep.” Have you not known what it is at times to lie upon your bed and strive to slumber? And as it is said of Darius, so might it be said of you—“The king sent for his musicians, but his sleep went from him.” You have attempted it, but you could not do it. It is beyond your power to procure a healthy repose.

You imagine if you fix your mind upon a certain subject until it shall engross your attention you will then sleep. But you find yourself unable to do so. Ten thousand things drive through your brain as if the whole earth were agitated before you. You see all things you ever beheld dancing in a wild phantasmagoria before your eyes. You close your eyes, but still you see. And there are things in your ears and head and brain which will not let you sleep. It is God alone who alike seals up the sea boy’s eyes upon the giddy mast and gives the monarch rest—for with all appliances and means to boot, he could not rest without the aid of God. It is God who steeps the mind in oblivion and bids us slumber, that our bodies may be refreshed, so that for tomorrow’s toil we may rise recruited and strengthened.

O my Friends, how thankful should we be for sleep. Sleep is the best physician that I know of. Sleep has healed more pains of wearied bones than the most eminent physicians upon earth. It is the best medicine—the choicest thing of all the names which are written in all the lists of pharmacy. There is nothing like sleep! What a mercy it is that it belongs alike to all! God does not make sleep the gift of the rich man. He does not give it merely to the noble, or the rich, so that they can keep it as a peculiar luxury for themselves. He bestows it upon all. Yes, if there is a difference, the sleep of the laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much.

He who toils, sleeps all the sounder for his toil. While luxurious effeminacy cannot rest, tossing itself from side to side upon a bed of eider down, The hard-working laborer, with his strong and powerful limbs worn out and tired, throws himself upon his hard couch and sleeps—and waking, thanks God that he has been refreshed! You know not, my Friends, how much you owe to God, that He gives you rest at night. If you had sleepless nights, you would then value the blessing. If for weeks you lay tossing on your weary bed, you then would thank God for your favor. And as it is the gift of God, it is a gift most precious—one that cannot be valued until it is taken away. Yes, even then we cannot appreciate it as we ought.

The Psalmist says there are some men who deny themselves sleep. For purposes of gain, or ambition, they rise up early and sit up late. Some of us who are here present may have been guilty of the same thing. We have risen early in the morning that we might turn over the ponderous volume, in order to acquire knowledge. We have sat at night until our

burned-out lamp has chidden us and told us that the sun was rising—while our eyes have ached, our brain has throbbed, our heart has palpitated. We have been weary and worn out. We have risen up early and sat up late and have in that way come to eat the bread of sorrow. Many of you business men are toiling in that style.

We do not condemn you for it. We do not forbid rising up early and sitting up late. But we remind you of this text—“It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows—for so He gives His Beloved sleep.” And it is of this sleep, that God gives to His Beloved, that we mean to speak this morning, as God shall help us—a sleep peculiar to the children of God—a sleep which He gives to “His Beloved.”

Sleep is sometimes used in a bad sense in the Word of God, to express the condition of carnal and worldly men. Some men have the sleep of carnal ease and sloth—of whom Solomon tells us they are unwise sons that slumber in the harvest, causing shame, so that when the harvest is spent and the summer is ended, they are not saved. Sleep often expresses a state of sloth, of deadness, of indifference, in which all ungodly men are found, according to the words, “It is time for us to awake out of sleep.” “Let us not sleep as do others, but let us who are of the day be sober.”

There are many who are sleeping the sluggard’s sleep, who are resting upon the bed of sloth. But an awful waking shall it be to them when they shall find that the time of their probation has been wasted. That the golden sands of their life have dropped unheeded from the hourglass. And that they have come into that world where there are no acts of pardon passed, no hope, no refuge, no salvation.

In other places you find sleep used as the figure of carnal security in which so many are found. Look at Saul, lying asleep in fleshly security—not like David, when he said, “I will lay me down and sleep, for You Lord make me to dwell in safety.” Abner lay there and all the troops lay around him, but Abner slept. Sleep on, Saul, sleep on. But there is an Abishai standing at your pillow and with a spear in his hand he says, “Let me smite him even to the earth at once.” Still he sleeps. He knows it not. Such are many of you, sleeping in jeopardy of your soul. Satan is standing, the Law is ready, vengeance is eager and all are saying, “Shall I smite him? I will smite him this once and he shall never wake again.”

Christ says, “Stay, Vengeance, stay.” Lo, the spear is even now quivering—“Stay, spare him yet another year in the hope that he may yet wake from the long sleep of his sin.” Like Sisera, I tell you, Sinner, you are sleeping in the tent of the Destroyer. You may have eaten butter and honey out of a lordly dish, but you are sleeping on the doorstep of Hell. Even now the enemy is lifting up the hammer and the nail to smite you through your temples and fasten you to the earth, that there you may lie forever in the death of everlasting torment—if it may be called a death.

Then there is also mentioned in Scripture a sleep of lust, like that which Samson had when he lost his locks and such sleep as many have when they indulge in sin and wake to find themselves stripped, lost and ruined. There is also the sleep of negligence such as the virgins had, when it is said, “they all slumbered and slept.” And the sleep of sorrow, which overcame Peter, James and John. But none of these are the gifts of God. They are incident to the frailty of our nature. They come upon us because we are fallen men. They creep over us because we are the sons of a lost and ruined parent. These sleeps are not the benisons of God. Nor does He bestow them on His Beloved. We now come to tell you what those sleeps are, which He does bestow.

I. First, there is a *miraculous sleep* which God has sometimes given to His Beloved—which He does not NOW grant. Into that kind of miraculous sleep, or rather trance, fell Adam when he slept sorrowfully and alone. But when he awoke he was no more so, for God had given him that best gift which He had then bestowed on man. The same sleep Abram had when it is said that a deep sleep came on him. He laid down and saw a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, while a voice said to him, “Fear not, Abram. I am your Shield and your exceeding great Reward.”

Such a hallowed sleep also was that of Jacob, when, with a stone for his pillow, the hedges for his curtains, the heavens for his canopy, the winds for his music and the beasts for his servants, he laid down and slumbered. Dreaming, he saw a ladder set upon the earth, the top of which reached to Heaven. The angels of God were ascending and descending upon it. Such a sleep had Joseph when He dreamed that the other sheaves made obeisance to his sheaf and that the sun, moon and seven stars were subject unto him.

So oftentimes did David rest, when his sleep was sweet unto him, as we have just read. And such a sleep was that of Daniel when he said, “I was asleep upon my face and behold the Lord said unto me, Arise and stand upon your feet.” And such, moreover, was the sleep of the reputed father of our blessed Lord, when in a vision of the night an angel said unto

him, “Arise, Joseph and take the young child and His mother and flee into Egypt, for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.”

These are miraculous slumbers. God’s angel has touched His servants with the magic wand of sleep and they have slept, not simply as we do, but slept a wondrous sleep. They have dived into the tenfold depths of slumber, they have plunged into a sea of sleep where they have seen the invisible, talked with the unknown and heard mystic and wondrous sounds—and when they have awoke, they have said, “What a sleep! Surely, my sleep was sweet unto me.” “So He gives His Beloved sleep.”

But, now-a-days, we do not have such sleeps as these. Many persons dream very wonderful things but most people dream nonsense. Some persons put faith in dreams—and, certainly God does warn us in dreams and visions even now. I am sure He does. There is not a man but can mention one or more instances of a warning, or a benefit, he has received in a dream. But we never trust dreams. We remember what Rowland Hill said to a lady, who knew she was a child of God, because she dreamed such-and-such a thing—“Never mind, ma’am, what you did when you were asleep. Let us see what you will do when you are awake.”

That is my opinion of dreams. I never will believe a man to be a Christian merely because he has dreamed himself one. For a dreamy religion will make a man a dreamer all his life—and such dreamers will have an awful waking at last, if that is all they have to trust to.

II. He gives His Beloved, in the second place, the sleep of a quiet conscience. I think most of you saw that splendid picture in the Exhibition of the Royal Academy—the Sleep of Argyle—where he lay slumbering on the very morning before his execution. You saw some noblemen standing there, looking at him, almost with compunction. The jailer is there, with his keys rattling—but positively the man sleeps, though tomorrow morning his head shall be severed from his body and a man shall hold it up and say, “This was the head of a traitor.”

He slept because he had a quiet conscience—for he had done no wrong. Then look at Peter. Did you ever notice that remarkable passage where it is said that Herod intended to bring out Peter on the morrow, but, behold, as Peter was sleeping between two guards, the angel smote him? *Sleeping between two guards*, when on the morrow he was to be crucified or slain! He cared not, for his heart was clear. He had committed no ill. He could say, “If it is right to serve God or man, judge you.” And, therefore, he laid down and slept.

O Sirs! Do you know what the sleep of a quiet conscience is? Have you ever stood out and been the butt of calumny—pelted by all men? The object of scorn—the laugh, the song of the drunkard? And have you known what it is, after all, to sleep, as if you cared for nothing, because your heart was pure? Ah, you who are in debt! You who are dishonest—you who love not God and love not Christ—I wonder you can sleep, for sin does put pricking thorns in the pillow. Sin puts a dagger in a man’s bed so that whichever way he turns it pricks him.

But a quiet conscience is the sweetest music that can fill the soul to sleep. The demon of restlessness does not come to that man’s bed who has a quiet conscience—a conscience right with God—who can sing—

***“With the world, myself and You,
I, before I sleep, at peace shall be.”
“So He gives His Beloved sleep.”***

But let me tell you who have no knowledge of your election in Christ Jesus, no trust in the ransom of a Savior’s blood—you who have never been called by the Holy Spirit. You who never were regenerated and born again—let me tell you that you do not know this slumber.

You may say your conscience is quiet. You may say you do no man any wrong and that you believe at the bar of God you shall have little to account for. But, Sirs, you know you have sinned. And your virtues cannot atone for your vices. You know that the soul that sins, if it sins but once, must die. If the picture has a single flaw, it is not a perfect one. If you have sinned but once, you shall be damned for it, unless you have something to take away that one sin.

You do not know this sleep, but the Christian does—for all his sins were numbered on the “scape-goat’s head of old.” Christ has died for all his sins, however great or enormous and there is not now a sin written against him in the Book of God. “I, even I,” says God, “am He that blots out your transgressions for My name’s sake and I will not remember your sins.” Now you may sleep. For “so He gives His Beloved sleep.”

III. Again—there is the sleep of contentment which the Christian enjoys. How few people in this world are satisfied. No man ever need fear offering a reward of a thousand pounds to a contented man. For if anyone came to claim the reward, he would of course prove his discontent. We are all in a measure, I suspect, dissatisfied with our lot. The great majority of mankind are always on the wing. They never settle, they never light on any tree to build their nest—they are always fluttering from one to the other. This tree is not green enough, that one is not high enough, this one is not beautiful enough, that one is not picturesque enough.

So they are ever on the wing and never build a peaceful nest at all. The Christian builds his nest. And as the noble Luther said, “Like yon little bird upon the tree, he has fed himself tonight—he knows not where his breakfast is tomorrow. He sits there while the winds rock the tree—he shuts his eyes, puts his head under his wing and sleeps. And when he awakes in the morning, sings—

***‘Mortals cease from toil and sorrow;
God provides for the morrow.’***

How few there are who have that blessed contentment—who can say, “I want nothing else, I want but little here below—yes, I long for nothing more—I am satisfied—I am content.”

You sung a beautiful hymn just now, but I suspect that many of you had no right to it, because you did not feel it—

***“With Your will I leave the rest
Grant me but this one request.
Both in life and death to prove
Tokens of Your special love.”***

Could you say there was nothing you wanted on earth, save Jesus? Did you mean that you are perfectly content—that you had the sleep of contentment? Ah, no. You, who are apprentices, are sighing till you shall be journeymen. You who are journeymen, are groaning to be masters. Masters are longing till they shall retire from business and when they have retired, they are longing that all their children shall be settled in life.

Man always looks for a yet beyond—he is a mariner who never gets to port—an arrow which never reaches the target. Ah, the Christian has sleep. One night I could not rest and in the wild wanderings of my thoughts I met this text and communed with it—“So He gives His Beloved sleep.” In my reverie, as I was on the border of the land of dreams, methought I was in a castle. Around its massive walls there ran a deep moat. Watchmen paced the walls both day and night. It was a fine old fortress, bidding defiance to the foe. But I was not happy in it. I thought I lay upon a couch.

And scarcely had I closed my eyes, before a trumpet blew, “To arms! To arms!” And when the danger was overpass I lay me down again. “To arms! To arms!” once more resounded and again I started up. Never could I rest. I thought I had my armor on and moved about perpetually clad in mail, rushing each hour to the castle top, aroused by some fresh alarm. At one time a foe was coming from the west. At another, from the east. I thought I had a treasure somewhere down in some deep part of the castle and all my care was to guard it. I dreaded, I feared, I trembled lest it should be taken from me.

I awoke and I thought I would not live in such a tower as that for all its grandeur. It was the Castle of Discontent, the Castle of Ambition in which man never rests. It is ever “To arms! To arms! To arms!” There is a foe here or a foe there. His dear-loved treasure must be guarded. Sleep never crossed the drawbridge of the castle of discontent. Then I thought I would supplant it by another reverie. I was in a cottage. It was in what poets call a beautiful and pleasant place but I cared not for that. I had no treasure in the world, save one sparkling jewel on my breast. And I thought I put my hand on that and went to sleep, nor did I wake till morning light.

That treasure was a quiet conscience and the love of God—“the peace that passes all understanding.” I slept, because I slept in the House of Content, satisfied with what I had. Go, you overreaching misers! Go, you grasping ambitious men! I envy not your life of inquietude. The sleep of statesmen is often broken. The dream of the miser is always evil. The sleep of the man who loves gain is never hearty, but God “gives,” by contentment, “His Beloved sleep.”

IV. Once more—God gives His Beloved the *sleep of quietness of soul as to the future*. O that dark future! That future! That future! The present may be well but ah, the next wind may wither all the flowers and where shall I be? Clutch your gold, miser, for “riches make to themselves wings and flee away.” Hug that babe to your breast, mother, for the

rough hand of death may rob you of it. Look at your fame and wonder at it, O you man of ambition! But one slight report shall wound you to the heart and you shall sink as low as ever you have been lifted high by the voices of the multitude.

The future! All persons have need to dread the future, except the Christian. God gives to His Beloved a happy sleep with regard to the events of coming time—

***“What may be my future lot,
High or low concerns me not;
This does set my heart at rest,
What my God appoints is best.”***

Whether I am to live or die is no matter to me. Whether I am to be the “offspring of all things,” or “the man whom the king delights to honor,” matters not to me. All alike is provided by my Father if He does but give it. “So He gives His Beloved sleep.”

How many of you have arrived at that happy point that you have no wish of your own at all? It is a sweet thing to have but one wish, but it is a better thing to have no wish at all—to be all lost in the present enjoyment of Christ and the future anticipation of the vision of His face. O my Soul! What would the future be to you if you had not Christ? If it is a bitter and a dark future, what matters it, so long as Christ your Lord sanctifies it and the Holy Spirit still gives you courage energy and strength?

It is a blessed thing to be able to say with Madame Guyon—

***“To me ‘tis equal, whether love ordained,
My life or death, appoint me pain or ease;
My soul perceives no real ill in pain
In ease or health, no real good she sees.
One good she covets and that good alone,
To choose Your will, from selfish bias free,
And to prefer a cottage to a throne,
And grief to comfort, if it pleases You.
That we should bear the Cross is your command—
Die to the world and live to sin no more.
Suffer unmoved beneath the rudest hand,
As pleased when shipwrecked, as when safe on shore.”***

It is a happy condition to attain. “So He gives His Beloved sleep.” Ah, if you have a self-will in your hearts, pray to God to uproot it. Have you self-love? Beseech the Holy Spirit to turn it out. For if you will always will to do as God wills you must be happy.

I have heard of some good old woman in a cottage, who had nothing but a piece of bread and a little water. Lifting up her hands, she said, as a blessing, “What? All this and Christ, too?” It is “all this,” compared with what we deserve. And I have read of someone dying, who was asked if he wished to live or die and he said, “I have no wish at all about it.” “But if you might wish, which would you choose?” “I would not choose at all.” “But if God bade you choose?” “I would beg God to choose for me, for I should not know which to take.” Happy state! Happy state! To be perfectly content—

***“To lie passive in His hand,
And know no will but His.”***

“So He gives His Beloved sleep.”

V. In the fifth place—there is the *sleep of security*. Solomon slept with armed men round his bed and thus slumbered securely. But Solomon’s father slept one night on the bare ground—not in a palace—with no moat round his castle wall—and he slept quite as safely as his son, for David said, “I laid me down and slept and I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.”

Now, some persons never feel secure in this world at all. I query whether one half of my hearers feel themselves so. Suppose I burst out in a moment and sing this—

“I to the end shall endure,

***As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy but not more secure,
Are the glorified spirits in Heaven,”***

you would say, that is too high doctrine. And I would reply, very likely it is for you, but it is the Truth of God and it is sweet doctrine for me. I love to know that if I am predestinated according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, I must be saved if I was purchased by the Sun's blood.

I cannot be lost, for it would be impossible for Jesus Christ to lose one whom He has redeemed, otherwise He would be dissatisfied with His labors. I know that where He has begun the good work He will carry it on. I never fear that I shall fall away, or be lost. My only fear is lest I should not have been right at first. But, provided I am right, if I am really a child of God, I might believe that the sun would be smitten with madness and go reeling through the universe like a drunken man before I may perish.

I might believe that the stars would run from their courses and instead of marching with their measured tramp, as now they do, whirl on in wild courses like the dance of Bacchanals. I could even conceive that this great universe might all subside in God, “even as a moment's foam subsides again upon the wave that bears it.” But neither reason, heresy, logic, eloquence, nor a conclave of divines, shall make me pay a moment's attention to the vile suggestion that a child of God may ever perish. Hence I tread this earth with confidence.

Arguing a little while ago with an Arminian, he said, “Sir you ought to be a happy man, for if what you say IS true, why you are as secure of being in Heaven as if you were there.” I said, “Yes, I know it.” “Then you ought to live above cares and tribulations and sing happily from morning to night.” I said, “So I ought and so I will, God helping me.” This is security. “He gives His Beloved sleep.” To know that if I died I should enter Heaven—to be as sure as I am of my own existence that God, having loved me with an everlasting love and He being immutable, will never hate me if He has once loved me. To know that I must enter the kingdom of glory—is not this enough to make all burdens light and give me the hind's feet wherewith I may stand upon my high places? Happy state of security! “So He gives His Beloved sleep.”

And there is a sleep, my dear Friends, of security which is enjoyed on earth even in the midst of the greatest troubles. Do you remember that passage in the book of Ezekiel where it is said, “They shall dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods”? A strange place to sleep in! “In the woods.” There is a wolf over yonder. There is a tiger in the jungle, an eagle is soaring in the air. A horde of robbers dwell in the dark forest. “Never mind,” says the child of God—

***“He that has made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode;
Shall walk all day beneath His shade,
And there at night shall rest his head.”***

I have often admired Martin Luther and wondered at his composure. When all men spoke so ill of him, what did he say? Turn to that Psalm—“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble; therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.” In a far inferior manner I have been called to stand up in the position of Martin Luther and have been made the butt of slander, a mark for laughter and scorn. But it has not broken my spirit yet, nor will it, while I am enabled to enjoy that latent state of—“So He gives His Beloved sleep.”

But thus far I beg to inform all those who choose to slander or speak ill of me that they are very welcome to do so till they are tired of it. My motto is *cedo nulli*—I yield to none. I have not courted any man's love. I asked no man to attend my ministry. I preach what I like and when I like and as I like. Oh, happy state—to be bold, though downcast and distressed—to go and bend my knee and tell my Father all and then to come down from my chamber and say—

***“If on my face, for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,
For You'll remember me.”***

VI. The last sleep God gives His Beloved, is *the sleep of a happy dismissal*. I have stood by the graves of many servants of the Lord. I have buried some of the excellent of the earth. And when I bid farewell to my brother down below

there slumbering in his coffin, I usually commence my speech with those words, “So He gives His Beloved sleep.” Dear servants of Jesus! There I see them! What can I say of them, but that “so He gives His Beloved sleep”? Oh, happy sleep! This world is a state of tossing to and fro. But in that grave they rest. No sorrows there. No sighs. No groans to mingle with the songs that warble from immortal tongues.

Well may I address the dead thus—“My Brother, oftentimes have you fought the battles of this world. You have had your cares, your trials and your troubles. But now you are gone—not to worlds unknown but to yonder land of light and glory. Sleep on, Brother! Your soul sleeps not, for you are in Heaven! But your body sleeps. Death has laid you in your last couch. It may be cold, but it is sanctified. It may be damp, but it is safe. And on the resurrection morning, when the archangel shall set his trumpet to his mouth, you shall rise.

“Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord—yes, says the Spirit, for they rest from their labors and their works do follow them.” “Sleep on in your grave, my Brother, for you shall rise to glory.” “So He gives His Beloved sleep.”

Some of you fear to die and have good reason to do so, for death for you would be the beginning of sorrows. And as it approaches you might hear the voice of the angel of the Apocalypse—“One woe is past, but behold two woes more are to come.” If, Sirs, you were to die unprepared and unconverted and unsaved, “There remains nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.” I need not speak like a Boanerges, for it is to you a well known Truth that without God, without Christ, “strangers from the commonwealth of Israel,” your portion must be among the damned—the Fiends—the tortured—the shrieking ghosts—the wandering souls who find no rest—

***“ On waves of burning brimstone tossed,
Forever, O forever lost!”***

“The wrath to come!” “The wrath to come!” “The wrath to come!” But, Beloved Christian Brothers and Sisters, why do you fear to die? Come let me take your hand—

***“ To you and me by grace ‘tis given
To know the Savior’s precious name;
And shortly we shall meet in Heaven
Our end, our hope, our way the same.”***

Do you know that Heaven is just across that narrow stream? Are you afraid to plunge in and swim across? Do you fear to be drowned? I feel the bottom—it is good. Do you think you shall sink? Hear the voice of the Spirit—“Fear not, I am with you, be not dismayed, I am your God—when you pass through the river, I will be with you and the floods shall not overflow you.”

Death is the gate of endless joys and do you dread to enter there? What? Fear to be emancipated from corruption? Oh, say not so, but rather gladly lay down and sleep in Jesus and be blessed. I have finished expounding my subject. There is only one question I want to ask of you before you pass out of those doors. Do you seriously and solemnly believe that you belong to the “Beloved” here mentioned? I may be impertinent in asking such a question. I have been accused of that before now and I have never denied it. I rather take the credit of it than not.

But seriously and solemnly I ask you—Do you know yourselves to be among the Beloved? And if it happens that you want a test, allow me to give you three tests, very briefly and I have done. It has been said that there are three kinds of preachers—doctrinal preachers, experimental preachers and practical preachers. Now I think there are three things that make up a Christian—true doctrine, real experience and good practice. Now, then, as to your doctrine. You may tell whether you are the Lord’s Beloved partly by that. Some think it matters not what a man believes. Excuse me—Truth IS ALWAYS precious and the least atom of Truth is worth searching out.

Now-a-days the sects do not clash so much as they did. Perhaps that is good, but there is one evil about it. People do not read their Bibles so much as they did. They think we are all right. Now I believe we may be all right in the main, but we cannot be all right where we contradict one another. And it becomes every man to search the Bible to see which is right. I am not afraid to submit my Calvinism, or my doctrine of Believer’s Baptism, to the searching of the Bible. A learned lord, an infidel, once said to Whitfield, “Sir, I am an infidel, I do not believe the Bible, but if the Bible is true, you are right and your Arminian opponents are wrong. If the Bible is the Word of God, the doctrines of grace are true.”

He added that if any man would grant him the Bible to be the Truth, he would challenge him to disprove Calvinism, the doctrines of original sin, election, effectual calling, final perseverance and all those great truths which are called Calvinism—though Calvin was not the author of them, but simply an able writer and preacher upon the subject. These are, I believe, the essential doctrines of the Gospel that is in Jesus Christ. Now, I do not ask you whether you believe all this—it is possible you may not—but I believe you will before you enter Heaven.

I am persuaded, that as God may have washed your hearts, He will wash your brains before you enter Heaven. He will make you right in your doctrines. But I must enquire whether you read your Bibles. I am not finding fault with you this morning for differing from me. I may be wrong—but I want to know whether you search the Scriptures to find what is Truth. And if you are not a reader of the Bible, if you take doctrines second-hand, if you go to chapel and say, “I do not like that,” what matters your not liking it provided it is in the Bible? Is it Biblical Truth, or is it not?

If it is God’s Truth let us have it exalted. It may not suit you, but let me remind you that the Truth that is in Jesus never was palatable to carnal men and I believe never will be. The reason you love it not is because it cuts too much at your pride. It lets you down too low. Search yourselves, then, in doctrine. Then take care that you remember the experimental test. I am afraid there is very little experimental religion among us—but where there is true doctrine there ought always to be a vital experience. Sirs, try yourselves by the experimental test.

Have you ever had an experience of your wretchedness, of your depravity, your inability, your death in sin? Have you ever felt life in Christ, an experience of the light of God’s countenance, of wrestling with corruption? Have you had a grace-given Holy Spirit-implanted experience of a communion with Christ? If so, then you are right on the experimental test.

And, to conclude, take care of the practical test. “Faith without works is deed being alone.” He that walks in sin is a child of the devil and he that walks in righteousness is a child of light. Do not think because you believe the right doctrines, therefore you are right. There are many that believe right, act wrong and they perish. “Be not deceived. God is not mocked, whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap.”

I have done. Now let me beseech you by the frailty of your own lives—by the shortness of time—by the dreadful realities of eternity—by the sins you have committed—by the pardon that you need—by the blood and wounds of Jesus—by His second coming to judge the world in righteousness—by the glories of Heaven—by the awful horrors of Hell—by time—by eternity—by all that is good—by all that is sacred—let me beg of you, as you love your own souls, to search and see whether you are among the Beloved, to whom He gives sleep. God bless you.

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