

THE FINAL SEPARATION

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A SERMON

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“And before him shall be gathered all nations:
and he shall separate them, one from another,
as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.”
Matthew 25:32*

JESUS Christ, the man of Nazareth, who is also the Son of God, was crucified, dead, and buried, and the third day, He rose again from the dead. After He had showed Himself to His disciples for forty days—sometimes to one alone, at other times, to two or three together, and on one occasion, to above five hundred brethren at once—He ascended into heaven.

From the Mount Olivet, from the midst of His disciples, He rose into mid air, and by and by a cloud received Him out of their sight. That same Jesus who is gone into heaven shall so come in like manner as He was seen to go up into heaven. That is to say, in person, in His own risen body. The same Christ who rose into the skies will, in the latter day, surely descend again.

The time of His coming is not revealed to us—“Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of God,” but the time is certainly growing nearer every day, and we cannot tell when the hour shall be.

We are told that He will come quickly. It seems a long time since that was said, even eighteen hundred years, but we remember that things which are slow with us may be very quick with the Lord, for one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. It is not for us to know the times and the seasons. They remain hidden in the purpose of God.

For excellent reasons these times and seasons are unrevealed, that we may be always on the watch-tower, not knowing at what hour the Lord Jesus may be revealed. To the ungodly world He will come as a thief in the night, and take them unawares. But we, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake us as a thief. Being children of the day, we are taught to be wakeful, and standing in the clear light, with our loins girt, we ought to be always looking for our Master’s appearing. Always are we to be watching, never sleeping.

Our text tells us that as one result of His coming, there will be a general judgement. I am not going tonight to try and arrange the other events which will happen at the Lord’s coming. It is probably true that at His coming there will be first of all a resurrection and rewarding of His saints, a dividing of the ten cities, and the five cities, according to the faithfulness of those who were entrusted with talents.

And at the close of that period will come that last tremendous day of which prophets and apostles have spoken.

*“The day that many thought should never come;
That all the wicked wished should never come;
That all the righteous had expected long;
Day greatly feared, and yet too little feared
By him who feared it most.”*

A day of fear and wrath, a day of destruction of the ungodly, a testing day to all mankind, a day which shall burn as an oven. We may tremblingly say of it, “Who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire and like fuller’s soap.”

At that day, when Christ shall come, He shall judge all nations. There will be gathered before Him, not only the Jews, to whom the law was given, but the Gentiles also. Not merely those nations who for many an age have heard the Gospel, but those to whom it shall then have been but lately published, for the kingdom of God must be published throughout all nations as a testimony against them.

Everywhere Christ will have been preached, and then from all regions, men shall be summoned to stand before Him. Remember, not merely all the living nations, but all the nationalities that have passed away. There shall rise from the dead the hosts that perished before the flood, and those also who were drowned amid its awful surges.

There, too, shall appear the myriads that followed at the call of Nimrod, the swarms of the sons of Japheth, who divided the isles of the Gentiles, and the hordes that marched to battle at the command of the kings of Assyria and Babylon. The dead of Egypt shall rise from their beds of spices, or from the earth with which their dust has mingled.

The tens of thousands shall be there over whom Xerxes wept when he remembered how soon they would all pass away. The Greek and the Persian, these shall rise, and the Roman too, and all the hordes of Huns and Goths that swarmed like bees from the northern hives. They all passed into the unknown land, but they are not lost—they shall each answer to the muster roll in the great day of the Lord.

The earth, which is now becoming more and more a graveyard, shall yield up her dead, and the sea itself, transformed into a solid pavement, shall bear upon its bosom the lonely ones who lie asleep today in her gloomy caverns. All of woman born shall come forth from the prolific womb of the sepulchre—myriads, myriads countless as the drops of the morning, or as the sands of the sea shore.

Multitudes, multitudes shall be gathered together in the valley of decision. Their bones shall come together, and breath shall enter their bodies anew, and they shall live once more. Long as they have slept in the tomb, they shall all rise with one impulse, and start up with one thought—to appear before their Judge.

The great white throne shall be set on high, all pure and lustrous, bright and clear like a sapphire stone, as one vast looking-glass in which every man shall see himself and his sins reflected—and on that throne shall sit the Son of Man. That same Jesus who was nailed to the tree, and rose to heaven, shall sit upon the judgement seat, appointed to determine the cases of all mankind of every age.

What an assemblage! No imagination can compass it. Far as the eye can carry—ay, far as the eagle's pinion can soar—the earth shall be covered with men, like a field with grass in the springtide. And there will they all stand with the Judge upon the great white throne as the common center of observation, for every eye shall see Him, and they also that crucified Him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him.

It will be a motley throng, as you may well imagine, but the Shepherd, the great Shepherd, the Judge Himself, shall divide them. That division will be the one work of the judgement day. He will divide them as readily and unerringly as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. My business tonight shall be to draw the attention of each one to that division, that each of you may inquire what will be the result of it upon himself.

I have thought it over on my own account, and desire to think of it still. I would bid my mind fly into the future, and see for a moment, "The pomp of that tremendous day when Christ with clouds shall come." I would anticipate the verdict of that hour, and bethink me of the dread alternative of heaven or hell.

I pray we may all think of it, and especially you who are unprepared for it, that you may at once fly to Him whose blood and righteousness alone can make you hold up your head in that tremendous hour.

Three things we shall speak about—the first is *the division*. The second is *the divider*. And the third is *the rule of the division*.

I. The first, then, is THE DIVISION.

"Before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats."

That is to say, first, *they shall be divided into two parts*—His sheep and the goats. There shall be two positions—He shall put His sheep on the right hand, but the goats on the left. Is there no place for a third party? No, for the simple reason that there will then be no third class. And there will then be none for this reason—that there never was a third class.

I know there are some even here tonight who dare not say they believe in Jesus, but they would not like to be put down among the ungodly. Yet I pray you remember that there are but two books—and in one or the other of those two, your name must stand recorded by the hand of God—for there is no third book.

There is the Lamb's Book of Life, and if your name is there, happy are you. If it is not there, your sins still stand recorded in the books which contain the condemning evidence which will seal the death-warrants of unbelievers.

Listen to me. There are in this world nowhere any other sort of people beside those who are dead in sin and those who are alive unto God. There is no state between. A man either lives or is dead. You cannot find a neutral condition. A man may be in a swoon, or he may be asleep, but he is alive—no state is there that is not within the boundary of either life or death.

Is not this clear enough? There is no state between being converted and unconverted—between being quickened and being dead in sin. There is no condition between being pardoned and having our sins upon us. There is no state between dwelling in darkness and being brought into marvelous light. One or the other must always be our condition—and this is the great folly of mankind in all times—that they will dream of a middle state and try to loiter in it.

It was for this cause that the old prophet, standing on Carmel's brow, said, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, follow him." And it is for this reason that we have constantly to call the attention of mankind to the great declaration of the Gospel—"He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned."

God has given to the preacher two hands, that he may set the people on each side, and deal out the truth to two characters and no more. Be not deceived about it, you are either on the way to heaven or on the road to hell. There is no purgatory or middle condition in the next world.

Purgatory is an invention of the Pope for the filling of his cellar and his pantry—and no more profitable speculation has ever been set agoing than the saying of masses and the robbing of dupes, under the pretence of altering that state which is fixed forever. Purgatory Pick-Purse was the name the first reformers gave it. You will go to heaven or to hell—and you will remain in one place or the other—for you have either a character that is fit for heaven or a character that is fit for hell.

And there is no character which can be supposed, if we understand the Scriptures aright, which would be fit for a middle place, neither is there any middle place prepared for it. "He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." The human flock will be divided into two companies.

Observe, next, that *they will be divided readily*. It is not everybody that could divide sheep from goats. I suppose according to your ordinary judgement of goats, you would very readily tell them from sheep.

But one who has traveled in the East, and even in Italy, knows that it takes a somewhat tutored eye to know a certain kind of goat from a certain kind of sheep. They are extremely like each other—the wool of some sheep in a warm climate becomes so like hair, and the hair of a kind of goat is so much like wool, that a traveler scarcely knows which is which—but a shepherd who has lived among them knows the difference well.

So in this world, it is easy enough to tell the sinner from the saint in some cases—you need no great wit to discern the characters of the grossly dishonest, the drunken, the debauched, the Sabbath-breaking, the profane. You know that they have no part among the people of God, for they bear upon their forefront the ensigns of the children of the evil one—the immoral are easily separated from the pure in heart.

But inside the church there are a number of persons who have so much about them that looks good, and yet so much that is terribly inconsistent, that we are quite unable to discover which is their true nature. Thank God we are not called upon to judge them, nor even allowed to do so. The most experienced pastor must scarcely attempt to do so. Certainly, if he feels so much trouble about the matter that he takes it to his Lord, and asks for directions as to how to deal with these tares, he will be told to let them grow on till harvest time, lest in rooting up the tares he should root up also the wheat with them.

I talked today to a certain good man who labors hard among the poor in the East-end. He said, "We have a great number who profess to be converted, but," he said, "I do not think that much more than one in five actually stay and turn out to be really so. But," said he, "we have no trouble about them in the church—no such trouble as you would be likely to have with your people, because," said he, "amongst the class of people who go to the Tabernacle, there is a feeling that it is right to go to the house of God at least once on the Sabbath, if not twice. And if persons join the church there, they will from habit continue to attend.

"But," said he, "the moment a man of the poorest class ceases to be a Christian in heart, he ceases at the same time to attend the public services, because there is no fashion to keep him up to it. And so he follows his own tastes, stops at home and loafs about, and in all probability gets drunk, or falls into some other of the common vices of his class, and he is sifted off at once."

In such cases, the classes are easily separated. But among a more respectable class of people, who do not drink and who observe the Sabbath-day, you will have a number of people who remain in the church, though they have no secret piety, no real love to Christ, no private prayer, and therefore, there is all the more danger.

Now, dear friends, what *we* cannot do, and must not try to do, Jesus Christ will do easily enough. The Shepherd, when He comes, will soon separate His sheep from the goats. His eye of fire will read each heart. The hypocrites in the church will tremble in a moment—instinctively reading the meaning of that glance, as Christ will by that glance say to them, "What do ye here amongst My people?"

Remember, that as the division will be made readily, *it will be made infallibly*, that is to say, there will not be found amongst the goats one poor trembling sheep left to be driven off with the unclean herd. When Christ says, "Depart, ye cursed," He will not say that to one sincere, but feeble soul.

Ah no, you may condemn yourself, but if you really have a living faith, the Lord will not condemn you. You may often be afraid that He will bid you depart, but He will not. No lamb of His flock shall be amongst the goats. The whole company of His redeemed shall be safely gathered into their eternal mansions.

*"Lord, those shall bear that day, so dread, so splendid,
Whose sins are by Thy merits cover'd o'er,
Who when Thy hand of mercy was extended,
Believ'd, obey'd, and own'd Thy gracious power;
These, mighty God, shall see without dismay
The earth and heaven before them pass away."*

The sword cuts the other way too, and therefore be you sure of this, that there will be no goat suffered to enter the pastures of the blessed among the sheep. No unconverted graceless person will follow the Great Shepherd to those living fountains above, which afford eternal draughts of bliss to the purchased flock.

Though the sinner may have led a sort of outwardly consistent life for forty or fifty years, though he may have preached the Gospel, and done many wonderful works, yet Christ will say to him, "I never knew you." He will not be able to keep on his sheep's clothing then, or bleat any longer in sheep fashion. Christ will know him under whatever disguise he may wear. He will find him out and drive him to his own place, so that not a single one of the accursed shall enter into the city with the blessed.

It will be an infallible judgment. There is, therefore, good reason that we be prepared for it. There is no bribing or deceiving the judge, and no avoiding His tribunal. Oh, be you ready to face that eye which will read you through and through!

That division, when it shall take place, let me further beg you to remember, *will be very keen and sharp*. Think it over, think it over, for some of you may have to smart through it. Two men shall be in the field, one shall be taken and the other left. There were two laborers who worked together. They had guided the same plough and driven the same oxen, but the one shall be upon the right hand and the other on the left.

Two carpenters at the same bench had handled the same hammer and the same plane, but one shall be taken and the other left. Two had served in one shop at the same counter with the same goods—and one shall be taken and the other left—they were familiar acquaintances and old shop mates, but one shall rejoice to hear the welcome, “Come,” and the other shall tremble as he receives the dread sentence, “Depart.”

Alas, the division will come closer home still. Two women shall be in one house—the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill, that is, engaged about the household duties, grinding the morning’s breakfast corn—one shall be taken and the other left. So you may be two servants in the same house, cook and housemaid, one saved and the other lost.

Two sisters living together under the same roof, one brought into glory and the other cast into shame. Two of you may be dwellers under the same roof, eating bread at the same table, drinking from the same cup, and yet one of you shall feast at the eternal banquets, and the other shall cry for a drop of water to cool his burning tongue.

You would not like to be separated, but separated you must be. Alas, there will be a separation still more painful yet! Two shall be in one bed, the one shall be taken and the other left—the husband torn away from the wife—and the wife taken from her husband. Oh, there will be partings, there will be partings. And consequently, there will be weeping, there will be weeping at the judgment seat of Christ.

Not for the godly, for in them the glory of their Lord will swallow up all other thought, but for the Christless, the prayerless, the graceless. Oh, the wailing of the children, and the wailing of the women, and the wailing of the husbands, and the wailing of the fathers, when their children are saved, or their parents are saved, or their husbands and wives are saved—and they themselves are cast out forever!

***“O there will be mourning
Before the judgment seat,
When this world is burning
Beneath JEHOVAH’S feet.***

***“Friends and kindred then shall part,
Shall part to meet no more;
Wrath consume the rebel’s heart,
While saints on high adore!”***

The separation will be agony indeed to the lost. I could scarce have the heart to bid a man, “Good-bye,” if I knew that I should never see him again. The worst wish I could entertain concerning the worst enemy I ever had—though I do not know that I have one in the world—would not go so far as to say I wished I might never see him again. For since I hope I shall be where Jesus is, I should like to see him, be he who he may, and see him there amongst the blessed.

But it must not be. It must not be if sinners will not repent of sin, if they persist in rejecting Jesus Christ. Unless you believe in Jesus, the parting will be keen and cutting, dividing between joints and marrow, tearing asunder marriage ties, and bonds of filial or parental affection—slaying all vain hopes forever.

O souls impenitent, I could weep for you! If you are linked in blood relationship with the saints, it will not help you if you die unregenerate! Though you were bone of each other's bone, and flesh of each other's flesh, yet must you be separated unless you are one with Christ. I entreat you unregenerate ones to lay this to heart at once, and trifle no longer!

That division, dear friends, remember, *will be very wide* as well as very keen. For the division will be such as will be represented in its distance by heaven and by hell—and what a distance is that! The distance between God and devil! Between happiness and misery! Between glory and everlasting contempt! Between infinite joy and boundless sorrow! Between songs and weeping! Between triumphs and wailing, feasting and gnashing of teeth!

If the only division would be such as might arise from difference in degrees of glory (if such there be), one might still pine to have the companionship of our dear ones—but the difference is between heaven and hell—and Christ says of it that there is “a great gulf fixed,” so that they that would pass from us to you cannot, neither can they come to us that would come from thence. The distance will be wide as eternity, the separating gulf will be deep as the abyss, and impassable as hell.

And remember, *the separation will be final*. There is no flinging a bridge across that vast abyss. Damned spirits may look down into that dread gulf, into the unutterable blackness of its darkness, but they will never see a hope of crossing to the land of the blessed. The key is lost—they can never come out of the dungeon of despair. “Forever, forever, forever,” is written upon the chain which binds the lost spirit.

No hope of restoration was ever indulged by a man in hell, and it is idle to dream about it now. Of all figments of the brain, it has the least support in Scripture. The lost sinner is forever separated from Jesus and from the disciples of Jesus, however near akin in the flesh those disciples may have been to him. Unalterable is the separation and eternal.

Beloved, these are such weighty things that while I dwell upon them I feel far more inclined to sit down and weep than to stand up and speak to you. The theme causes me to feel the weakness of mere words, and in a measure makes me lose the power of expression. For what if any of you should be lost forever?

It was a touching thing to me yesterday when I saw a sister in Christ who has been my hearer for many years. And she told me that she was decided for Christ by my saying, when I went away last time, that perhaps I might never address you again, and might find a grave in a foreign land. I felt that it might be so at the time I uttered the words, though I am glad that they have not been fulfilled.

She thought, “Well, he has been preaching to me these many years, and if I die unconverted, I shall never see him again.” And then it flashed across her mind, “How much worse to feel that I shall never see the King in His beauty. I shall never see the Savior.” And she was thus led by the Holy Ghost to give her heart to Jesus.

Perhaps the Lord may use the thought of this separation to move some of you to say, “I will come to Jesus, and I will rest in Him.” O Lord, my God, grant it may be so, for Jesus' sake.

II. We have spoken about *the division*. We will now have a few words about THE DIVIDER. “*He shall separate them, one from another.*”

Christ Jesus will be the divider of the race of men into two parts. And this I am glad to know, because first of all, this will be *the occasion of lasting, yea, of eternal joy to all the saints*. No child of God will ever have a doubt in heaven, but it is needful that they begin their bliss with a very strong assurance of divine love, or else, methinks, they might.

Unless God had ordained the method at which the text hints, I could well imagine myself in heaven saying to myself, after I had been there a little while, “Oh, can it be, can it be that I am here? I do remember the sin of such a day, and the shortcomings of such an hour, and my murmurings, and my unbelief, and all my departures from my God, and am I here, after all?”

I could imagine, if there had not been the means used to put an end to such a possibility, my saying, “Surely I am to taste this only for a moment that I may be driven to my due deserts after all, that my hell

may be made the more terrible because I have seen what heaven is, and that my hunger may grow the more intolerable because I have eaten of the bread of angels.”

If such a fear were possible, behold the answer to it. “He, the Judge, the Judge, the Judge Himself, has said, ‘Come, ye blessed of My Father.’” That Judge cannot be mistaken, for He is Jesus the infallible Son of God. God Himself has blessed His chosen, and Jesus tells them so in the plainest terms—“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.”

Since Jesus has decreed His everlasting happiness, the child of God cannot doubt throughout eternity. That voice will sound forever in his ears, sweeter than music of flute or harp or dulcimer. “Come, ye blessed of my Father.” Why, it will be the very basis of the bliss of heaven to think, “Jesus bade me come. Who shall ask me the question, ‘How came you in here?’ Did not *He* admit me? Who shall question my right to be here? Did not *He* say, ‘Come, ye blessed of my Father?’”

Do you not see that it is a choice and comforting fact that we shall not divide ourselves at the last, nor shall an angel do it who might err, but the divider will be Jesus Himself, the Son of God. And therefore, the glory which He metes out to us will be most surely ours, and we may enjoy it without fear.

But then, note on the other hand, that *this will increase the terror of the lost*, that Christ will divide them.

Christ, full of infinite love, would He destroy a sinner unless it must be! He that would have saved Jerusalem, and wept because it must be destroyed! The guilty city was resolved to perish, but as her Lord pronounced the sentence He wept. When I hear of a judge putting on the black cap to condemn a man, I like to read in the papers, “The judge’s voice faltered and he was evidently unable to suppress his emotion as he uttered the sentence of death.” What right-minded man could be otherwise than moved when compelled to deliver his fellow creature to the gallows?

But no judge on earth has such compassion for his fellow man as Jesus has for sinners. And when it comes to this that *He* says, “I must do it, I must condemn you,” then, sinner, it must be so indeed. When incarnate love says, “Depart, ye cursed,” you must be cursed with an emphasis. You must be infamous beings indeed when He, whose lips drop blessings as lilies drop sweet-smelling myrrh—when *He* calls you so!

There must be something very horrible about you that *He* should bid you, “Depart.” And indeed, there is an abominable thing in you, for unbelief in God is the most horrible thing, even in hell. Not to believe that God is love is worthy of the utmost condemnation. You will have to say, if you are lost, “I was condemned by the most loving Judge that ever sat upon a judgement seat. The Christ that died lifted His pierced hands at the very moment when He said, ‘Depart, ye cursed!’”

Yet there is something more, though this might be enough. If you should be lost, as God forbid you should, it will infinitely add to your terror to know that you were condemned by one who is infinitely just. You will feel that the Christ who condemned you was the holiest of men, in whom was no sin and that, besides, He is pure and perfect God, so that you will not be able to cavil at the sentence.

Neither will there be any question about a new trial—your own conscience will make you feel that the decision is final, for it is just—and you will be too well-assured of its reality and certainty, for He who will pronounce that sentence is the God of truth. He said, “I am the way and the truth.” You would not have Him for the way, but you will find Him to be “the truth.” And when He pronounces you cursed, cursed you will be beyond all question.

Once more, if He that condemns you be the Christ of God, you will know that He has power to carry out the sentence, for all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth, and the government shall be upon His shoulders. And if He says, “Depart into everlasting fire,” into that fire you must go. If He declares that the fire shall never be quenched, depend upon it, it will burn on forever.

And if He decrees that the worm shall never die, that worm will live and gnaw to all eternity, for He who gives forth the sentence is able to make it good. Remember how He said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall never pass away”? Firmer than the rocks shall

stand the irrevocable decree—“These shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal.”

My soul trembles while I thus proclaim Jesus as the Judge whose awful voice divides the sinners from the saints.

III. Lend me your ears but for a minute or two longer, while I notice, in the third place, THE RULE OF THE DIVISION.

Did you notice where the division is made? It is very wonderful to me—very wonderful indeed! *The great division between the sons of men is Christ.* Here are the sheep—there are the goats. What separates them? Christ! He is the center. There is no great barrier set up, as it were, on that last tremendous day, but He Himself is the division. He shall set the sheep on His right hand, and the goats on His left.

Now, that which parts us tonight into two portions is our relationship to Jesus Christ. On which side of Christ are you tonight? I want you to question yourselves about that. If you are on His right hand, you are among His people. If you are not with Him, you are against Him, and so are on His left hand. That which parts the saint and the sinner is Christ. The moment a sinner comes to Christ, he passes over to the other side and is numbered with the saints. This is the real point of separation.

Christ stands between the believers and the unbelievers, and marks the boundary of each class. When Aaron stood between the living and the dead, swinging the censer full of incense, what separated the dead from the living? Realize the scene before you answer the question. There they lie! There they lie, I say, stricken with pestilence! The unseen avenger has slain them in heaps. But here are the living, rejoicing and safe. What separates them? The priest standing there with the censer.

Even thus, our great High Priest stands at this moment between the living and the dead, while the incense of His merits ascends before God, and makes the most real dividing wall between dead sinners and those who are alive unto God by Jesus Christ. Christ is the divider. Christ is Himself the division.

But what is the rule by which He separates the people? *The rule of the division is, first, actions.* Actions! Did you notice that? He says nothing about words. He dwells upon deeds of mercy, “I was an hungered and you gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink. I was naked and ye clothed me.” These are all actions. Now, perhaps you would have liked the Judge to have said, “You were wont to sing hymns out of ‘Our Own Hymn Book.’ You were wont to talk very sweetly about Me, and call Me Master and Lord. You were accustomed to sit at the communion table.”

Not a word is said about these things. No, nor is anything said about ceremonial actions. He does not say, “You used to bow before the pyx. You reverently stood up at one part of the service, and knelt at another. You walked round the church singing the processional hymn.” Nothing is said about these performances, only common actions are noticed—“I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink.”

These are all commonplace matters. Actions will be the great rule at the last judgment. I am not preaching now contrary to the Gospel, but only repeating in other words what our Lord Himself has said. “We shall give an account for the deeds done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil,” is the statement, not of the law, but of the New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Those that have *done* evil shall go away into eternal punishment.

Are we, then, saved by our works? By no manner of means. Yet our works are the evidences of our being saved, and grace will bring out these evidences in our lives if we possess them. A magistrate judges by the actions which are proved upon evidence. It is true he may and will have respect to the motive which urged the action, but first of all the actions themselves must be before him in evidence. And so here the King mentions the actions that were done.

Let us notice that the actions which were the rule of judgment *were all of them actions about Christ.* I want you to carefully note this. The Lord says, “*I* was hungry and ye gave *me* meat. *I* was thirsty and ye gave *me* drink. *I* was sick and ye visited *me*.” This summary is made up of actions about Christ. I will, therefore, earnestly put this question to each of you—What actions have you ever done in reference to Jesus?

“I am a church member,” says one. I will not hear about that just now, because the judge will not say anything about it. I am glad you are an avowed disciple, if you are honestly so, but do your actions prove that you are really so? That is the question. Have you ever *done* anything for Christ? Have you ever given anything to Christ?

Could Christ say to you, “I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink”? Now, I know some professors of whom I fear that Jesus Christ could not speak thus, for He cannot speak that which is not true. Their pockets are hermetically sealed, like tins of Australian meat—even the smell of their money never reaches Christ’s poor.

Give meat to a hungry man? Not they. Let him go to the parish. Give clothes to a naked man? Not they. What do we pay taxes for? The idea of giving anything to another, or doing anything for another, without getting paid for it or praised for it, seems to them to be out of all character. Now, selfishness is as much opposed to the spirit of the Gospel as the cold of the northern region is to the warmth of the sun.

If the sun of Christ’s love has shone into your heart, you will love others, and you will show your love to others by desiring to do them good in all sorts of ways. And you will do it for Christ’s sake—for *Christ’s sake*—so that when He comes He will be able to say, “*I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison under reproach and ye came unto me.*”

What have your actions been with regard to Christ? I pray you, brethren and sisters, who are one with me in the profession of allegiance to Christ, judge yourselves by your actions with regard to Him, as I also will judge myself.

Now, notice that Christ, as it were, inferentially, tells us that *the actions which will be mentioned at the judgment day, as the proof of our being the blessed of the Lord, spring from the grace of God*, for He says, “Ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundations of the world.”

They fed the hungry, but sovereign grace had first fed *them*. They clothed the naked, but infinite love first clothed *them*. They went to the prison, but free grace had first set them free from a worse prison. They visited the sick, but the good Physician, in His infinite mercy, first came and visited them.

They evidently had no idea that there was anything meritorious in what they did. They had never dreamed of being rewarded for it. When they stand before the judgment seat, the bare idea of there being any excellence in what they have done will be new to the saints, for they have formed a very lowly estimate of their own performances—and what they have done seems to them too faulty to be commended.

The saints fed the hungry and clothed the naked, because it gave them much pleasure to do so. They did it because they could not help doing it—their new nature impelled them to it. They did it because it was their delight to do good, and was as much their element as water for a fish or the air for a bird. They did good for Christ’s sake, because it is the sweetest thing in the world to do anything for Jesus.

Why is it that a wife is so kind to her husband? Because it is her duty, you say. All very well, but the real reason is because she loves him so intensely. Why is a mother so careful over her baby? Is there any rule or act of parliament commanding mothers to be fond of their little ones? No, there is no act of parliament. There is an act of God, in the bosom somewhere, passed *nem. con.* in the chamber of the heart, and the mother cannot but be kind.

Now, when the Lord puts a new nature into us, and makes us one with Jesus Christ, we cannot help loving His people, and seeking the good of our fellow men. And the Lord Jesus Christ will own this at the last day as an evidence that there was love in the heart, because love was shown by the hand. May God grant that when the Judge of all shall come, we may be found renewed in heart and full of love through the power of His Holy Spirit.

“Oh,” says one, “I wish I had that renewed heart which would produce such actions.” Jesus can give it to you. You will always live for self in some sense or other until you are saved—even the most

philanthropic who have loved their fellow creatures best, without religion, have generally sought for their esteem, and the verse is true concerning the praise of our fellow creatures—

*“The proud, to gain it, toils on toils endure;
The modest shun it but to make it sure.”*

But when you receive a new heart you will not live for the approbation of your fellow men. Then your alms will be done in secret, and you will not let your left hand know what your right hand does. Then, when you do your kindnesses, it will not be that others may publish abroad the announcement that you have visited the sick and clothed the naked, but your alms’ deeds will be done behind the door and in the corner, where none shall know of them but your God, and the grateful recipients of your bounty.

You will quietly put into the treasury the two mites that make a farthing, and think yourself unobserved, but One who sits over against the treasury, who knows your heart, will take good note of it. Your Lord will accept what you do because you do it out of love to Him—and at the last, while you blush to hear it, He will tell it to the angels and to the listening hosts of earth and heaven—and swing wide the gates of immortal bliss, and let you in, according to the promise of His grace.

God bless you, beloved, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MATTHEW 25

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—846, 362, 360

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.