THE RAVENS' CRY
NO. 672

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry."
Psalm 147:9.

I SHALL open this sermon with a quotation. I must give you, in Caryl's own words his note upon ravens. "Naturalists tell us, that when the raven has fed his young in the nest till they are well fledged and able to fly abroad, he thrusts them out of the nest, and will not let them abide there, but puts them out to get their own living. Now when these young ones are upon their first flight from their nest, and are little acquainted with means how to help themselves with food, then the Lord provides food for them. It is said by credible authorities that the raven is marvelously strict and severe in this; for as soon as his young ones are able to provide for themselves, he will not fetch any more food for them; yes, some affirm the old ones will not allow them to stay in the same country where they were bred; and if so, then they must wander. We say proverbially, 'Need makes the old wife trot,' we may say, 'and the young ones too.'" It has been, and possibly is, the practice of some parents towards their children, who, as soon as they can shift for themselves, and are fit in any competency to get their bread, to turn them out of doors as the raven does his young ones out of the nest. Now, said the Lord in the text, when the young ones of the raven are in this pinch that they are turned off, and wander for lack of food, who then provides for them? Do not I, the Lord? Do not I, who provide for the old raven, provide for his young ones, both while they abide in the nest and when they wander for lack of food?"

Solomon sent the sluggard to the ant, and learned himself lessons from conies, greyhounds, and spiders—let us be willing to be instructed by any of God's creatures, and go to the ravens' nest tonight to learn as in a school.

To the pure nothing is unclean, and to the wise nothing is trivial. Let the superstitious dread the raven as a bird of ill omen, and let the thoughtless see nothing but a winged thing in glossy black, we are willing to see more, and doubtless shall not be unrewarded if we are but teachable. Noah's raven brought him back no olive branch, but ours may! And it may even come to pass that ravens may bring us food tonight as of old they fed Elijah by Cherith's brook. Our blessed Lord once derived a very potent argument from ravens—an argument intended to comfort and cheer those of His servants who were oppressed with needless anxieties about their temporal circumstances. To such he said, "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn, and God feeds them: how much more are you better than the fowls?" Following the Master's logic—which you will all agree must have been sound, for He was never untruthful in His reasoning any more than in His statements—I shall argue tonight on this wise: Consider the ravens as they cry; with harsh, inarticulate, croaking notes they make known their needs, and your heavenly Father answers their prayer, and sends them food. You, too, have begun to pray and to seek His favor—are you not much better than they? Does God care for ravens, and will he not care for you? Does He not hearken to the cries of the unfledged ravens in their nests, when they are hungry and cry unto Him to be fed? Does He, I say, supply them in answer to their cries, and will He not answer you, poor trembling children of men who are seeking His face and favor through Christ Jesus? The whole business of this evening will be just simply to work that one thought out. I shall aim tonight, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to say something to those who have been praying for mercy, but as yet have not received it; and who have gone on their knees, perhaps for months, with one exceedingly great and bitter cry, but as yet know not the way of peace.

Their sin still hangs like a millstone about their neck; they sit in the valley of the shadow of death; no light has dawned upon them, and they are wringing their hands and moaning, "Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He shut His ear against the prayers of seeking souls? Will He be mindful of sinners'

piteous cries no more? Will penitents' tears drop upon the earth, and no longer move His compassion?" Satan, too, is telling you, dear friends, who are now in this state of mind, that God will never hear you, that He will let you cry till you die; that you shall pant out your life in sighs and tears, and that at the end you shall be cast into the lake of fire! I long, tonight, to give you some comfort and encouragement; I want to urge you to cry yet more vehemently! Come to the cross and lay hold of it, and vow that you will never leave its shadow till you find the gift which your soul covets. I want to move you, if God the Holy Spirit shall help me, so that you will say within yourselves, like Queen Esther, "I will go in unto the King, and if I perish, I perish." And may you add to that the vow of Jacob, "I will not let You go, except You bless me!"

Here, then, is the question in hand—GOD HEARS THE YOUNG RAVENS; WILL HE NOT HEAR YOU?

I. I argue that He will, first, when I remember that *He hears the lowly raven cry, and that you, in some sense, are much better than a raven.* The raven is but a poor unclean bird, whose instant death would make no sort of grievous gap in creation. If thousands of ravens had their necks wrung tomorrow, I do not know that there would be any vehement grief and sorrow in the universe about them; it would simply be a number of poor birds dead, and that would be all. *But you are an immortal soul.* The raven is gone when life is over, there is no raven any longer; but when your present life is past, you have not ceased to be; you are but launched upon the sea of life; you have but begun to live forever. You will see earth's hoary mountains crumble to nothingness before your immortal spirit shall expire; the moon shall have paled her feeble light, and the sun's more mighty fires shall have been quenched in perpetual darkness, and yet your spirit shall still be marching on in its everlasting course—an everlasting course of misery, unless God hears your cry—

"Oh, that truth immense,
This mortal, immortality shall wear!
The pulse of mind shall never cease to play;
By God awakened, it forever throbs,
Eternal as His own eternity!
Above the angels, or below the fiends:
To mount in glory, or in shame descend—
Mankind is destined by resistless doom."

Do you think, then, that God will hear the poor bird that is and is not, is here a moment and is blotted out of existence, and will He not hear you, an immortal soul, whose duration is to be co-equal with His own? I think it surely must strike you that if He hears the dying raven, He will also hear an undying man. The ancients said of Jupiter that he was not at leisure to mind little things, but Jehovah condescends to care for the least of His creatures, and even looks into birds' nests; will He not mercifully care for spirits who are heirs of a dread eternity?

Moreover, I never heard that ravens were made in the image of God; but I do find that, defiled, deformed, and debased as our race is, yet originally God said, "Let Us make man in Our own image." There is something about man which is not to be found in the lower creatures, the best and noblest of whom are immeasurably beneath the meanest child of Adam. A council was held as to the creation of man, and in his mind, and even in the adaptation of his body to assist the mind, there is a marvelous display of the wisdom of the Most High. Bring here the most deformed, obscure, and wicked of the human race, and—though I dare not flatter human nature morally—yet there is a dignity about the fact of manhood which is not to be found in all the beasts of the field, be they what they may. Behemoth and Leviathan are put in subjection beneath the foot of man; the eagle cannot soar as high as man's soul mounts, nor the lion feed on such royal meat as man's spirit hungers after. And do you think that God will hear so low and so mean a creature as a raven, and yet not hear *you, when you are one of the race that was formed in His own image?* Oh, think not so harshly and so foolishly of Him whose ways are always equal! I will put this to you. Does not nature itself teach that man is to be cared for above the fowls of the air? If you heard the cries of young ravens, you might feel compassion enough for those birds to give them food if you knew how to feed them, but I cannot believe that any of you would succor the birds, and yet would not fly upon the wings of compassion to the rescue of a perishing infant whose cries you might hear from the place where it was cast by cruel neglect! If, in the stillness of the night,

you heard the plaintive cry of a man expiring in sickness, unpitied in the streets, would you not arise and help him? I am sure you would if you are one who would help a raven. If you have any compassion for a raven, surely much more would you have pity upon a man. I know it is whispered that there are some simpletons who care more for houseless dogs than for houseless men and women—and yet it is far more probable that those who feel for dogs are those who care most tenderly for men; at any rate, I should feel a strong presumption in their favor if I needed aid. And do you not think that God, the All-wise One, when He cares for these unfledged birds in the nest, will be sure also to care for you? Your heart says, "Yes," then from now on answer the unbelief of your heart by turning its own just reasoning against it.

But I hear you say, "Ah, but the raven is not sinful as I am; it may be an unclean bird, but it cannot be so unclean as I am morally; it may be black in hue, but I am black with sin; a raven cannot break the Sabbath, cannot swear, cannot commit adultery; a raven cannot be a drunkard, it cannot defile itself with vices such as those with which I am polluted." I know all that, friend, and it may seem to you to make your case more hopeless, but I do not think it really does so. Just think of it for a minute. What does this prove? *Why, that you are a creature capable of sinning, and, consequently, that you are an intelligent spirit living in a sense in which a raven does not live.* You are a creature moving in the spirit-world; you belong to the world of souls in which the raven has no portion. The raven cannot sin, because it has no spirit, no soul; but you are an intelligent agent of which the better part is your soul. Now, as the soul is infinitely more precious than the body, and as the raven—I am speaking popularly now—is nothing but body while *you* are evidently soul as well as body, or else you would not be capable of sinning, I see even in that black discouraging thought some gleam of light. Does God care for flesh, and blood, and bones, and black feathers, and will He not care for your reason, your will, your judgment, your conscience, your immortal soul? Oh, if you will but think of it, you must see that it is not possible for a raven's cry to gain an audience of the ear of divine benevolence, and for your prayer to be despised and disregarded by the Most High—

"The insect that with puny wings,
Just shoots along one summer's ray.
The flower which the breath of Spring
Wakes into life for half a day.
The smallest mote, the most tender hair,
All feel our heavenly Father's care."

Surely, then, He will have respect unto the cry of the humble, and will not refuse their prayer!

I can hardly leave this point without remarking that the mention of a raven should encourage a sinner. As an old author writes, "Among fowls He does not mention the hawk or falcon, which are highly prized and fed by princes, but He chooses that hateful and malicious bird, the croaking raven, whom no man values but as she eats up the carrion which might annoy him. Behold then, and wonder at the providence and kindness of God, that He should provide food for the raven, a creature of so dismal a hue, and of so untuneable a tone—a creature that is so odious to most men, and ominous to some. There is a great providence of God seen in providing for the ant, who gathers her food in summer—but a greater in the raven, who, though he forgets, or is careless to provide for himself, yet God provides and lays up for him." One would think the Lord should say of ravens, Let them shift for themselves or perish; no, the Lord God does not despise any work of His hands; the raven has his being from God, and therefore the raven shall be provided for by Him. Not only the fair innocent dove, but the ugly raven has his food from God. Which clearly shows that the lack of excellence in you, you black, raven-like sinner, will not prevent your cry from being heard in heaven! Unworthiness the blood of Jesus shall remove, and defilement He shall utterly cleanse away. Only believe on Jesus, and you shall find peace.

II. Then, in the next place, *there is a great deal of difference between your cry and the cry of a raven.* When the young ravens cry, I suppose they scarcely know what they need. They have a natural instinct which makes them cry for food, but their cry does not, in itself, express their need. You would soon find out, I suppose, that they *meant* food; but they have no articulate speech; they do not utter so much as a single word; it is just a constant, croaking, craving cry, and that is all. But *you* do know what you need, and few as your words are, your heart knows its own bitterness and dire distress; your sighs and groans have an obvious meaning; your understanding is at the right hand of your hungry heart. You know that you need peace and pardon; you know that you need Jesus, His precious blood, His perfect

righteousness. Now, if God hears such a strange, chattering, indistinct cry as that of a raven, don't you think that He will also hear the rational and expressive prayer of a poor, needy, guilty soul who is crying unto Him, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? Surely your reason tells you that!

Moreover, *the young ravens cannot use arguments, for they have no understanding.* They cannot say as you can—

"He knows what arguments I'd take
To wrestle with my God,
I'd plead for His own mercy's sake,
And for a Savior's blood."

They have one argument, namely, their dire necessity, which forces their cry from them, but beyond this they cannot go; and even this they cannot set forth in order, or describe in language. But you have a multitude of arguments ready at hand, and you have an understanding with which to set them in array, and marshal them to besiege the throne of grace. Surely, if the mere plea of the unuttered need of the raven prevails with God, much more shall you prevail with the Most High if you can argue your case before Him, and come unto Him with arguments in your mouth. Come, despairing one, and try my Lord! I do beseech you, now; let that doleful ditty ascend into the ears of mercy! Open that bursting heart and let it out in tears, if words are beyond your power!

A raven, however, I fear has sometimes a great advantage over some sinners who seek God in prayer, namely in this: *young ravens are more in earnest about their food than some are about their souls.* This, however, is no discouragement to you, but rather a reason why you should be more earnest than you have been. When ravens need food, they do not cease crying till they have it; there is no quieting a hungry young raven till his mouth is full, and there is no quieting a sinner when he is really in earnest till he gets his heart full of divine mercy. I would that some of you prayed more vehemently! "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." An old Puritan said, "Prayer is a cannon set at the gate of heaven to burst open its gates." You must take the city by storm if you would have it. You will not ride to heaven on a featherbed, you must go on pilgrimage; there is no going to the land of glory while you are sound asleep—dreamy sluggards will have to wake up in hell! If God has made you to feel in your soul the need of salvation, cry like one who is awake and alive. Be in earnest! Cry aloud! Spare not! And then I think you will find that my argument will be quite fair—that in all respects a reasonable, argumentative, intelligent prayer is more likely to prevail with God than the mere screaming, chattering noise of the raven, and that if He hears such a cry as the raven's—it is much more certain that He will hear yours.

III. Remember that *the matter of your prayer is more congenial to the ear of God than the raven's cry for food.* All that the young ravens call for is food; give them a little carrion and they have done. Your cry must be much more pleasing to God's ear, for you entreat for forgiveness through the blood of His dear Son. It is a nobler occupation for the Most High to be bestowing spiritual than natural gifts; the streams of divine grace flow from the upper springs. I know He is so condescending that He does not dishonor Himself even when He drops food into the young raven's mouth, but still there is more honor about the work of giving peace, and pardon, and reconciliation to the sons of men. Eternal love appointed a way of mercy from before the foundation of the world, and infinite wisdom is engaged with boundless power to carry out the divine design; surely the Lord must take much pleasure in saving the sons of men! If God is pleased to supply the beast of the field, do you not think that He delights much more to supply His own children? I think you would find more congenial employment in teaching your own children, than you would in merely foddering your ox, or scattering barley among the fowls at the barn door; because there would be in the first work something nobler, which would more fully call up all your powers, and bring out your inward self. I am not left here to conjecture. It is written, "He delights in mercy." When God uses His power He cannot be sad, for He is a happy God; but if there is such a thing possible as the infinite Deity being happier at one time than at another, it is when He is forgiving sinners through the precious blood of Jesus. Ah, sinners, when you cry to God you give Him an opportunity to do that which He loves most to do! He delights to forgive, to press His Ephraim to His bosom, to say of His prodigal son, "He was lost, but is found; he was dead, but is alive again." This is more comfortable to the Father's heart than the feeding of the fatted calf, or tending the cattle of a

thousand hills. Since then, dear friends, you are asking for something which will honor God far more to give than the mere gift of food to ravens, I think there comes a very forcible blow of my argumentative hammer tonight to break your unbelief in pieces! May God the Holy Spirit, the true Comforter, work in you mightily! Surely the God who gives food to ravens will not deny peace and pardon to seeking sinners. Try Him! Try Him at this moment! No, stir not! Try Him *now!*

IV. We must not pause on any one point when the whole subject is so prolific. There is another source of comfort for you, namely, that *the ravens are nowhere commanded to cry. When they cry, their petition is unwarranted by any specific exhortation from the Divine mouth, but you have a warrant derived from Divine exhortations to approach the throne of God in prayer.* If a rich man should open his house to those who were *not* invited, he would surely receive those who *were* invited. Ravens come without being bid to come, yet they are not sent away empty; you are commanded to come as an invited guest—how shall you be denied? Do you think you are not bid to come? Listen to this—"Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." "Go you into the entire world, and preach the gospel *to every creature;* he who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who believes not shall be damned." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus." These are exhortations given without any limitation as to character. They freely invite you; no, they bid you come. Oh, after this can you think that God will spurn you? The window is open, the raven flies in, and the God of mercy does not chase it out; the door is open, and the word of promise bids *you* come—don't think that He will deny you, but believe rather that He will "receive you graciously, and love you freely," and then you shall "render to Him the calves of your lips." At any rate try Him! Try Him even now!

V. Again, there is yet another and a far mightier argument. *The cry of a young raven is nothing but the natural cry of a creature, but your cry, if it is sincere, is the result of a work of divine grace in your heart*. When the raven cries to heaven it is nothing but the raven that cries; but when you cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner"—it is *God the Holy Spirit crying in you!* It is the new life which God has given you crying to the Source from where it came to have communion and communication with its great Original. It needs God Himself to set a man praying in sincerity and in truth. We can, if we think about it, teach our children to "say their prayers," but we cannot teach them to *"pray."* You may make a "prayer-book," but you cannot put a grain of "prayer" into a book, for it is too *spiritual* a matter to be encased between pages. Some of you, perhaps, may "read prayers" in the family. I will not denounce the practice, but I will say this much of it—you may read those "prayers" for 70 years, and yet you may never once pray, for prayer is quite a different thing than mere words. True prayer is the trading of the heart with God, and the heart never comes into spiritual commerce with the ports of heaven until God the Holy Spirit puts wind into the sails and speeds the ship into its haven. "You must be born-again." If there is any *real* prayer in your heart, though you may not know the secret, God the Holy Spirit is there. Now if He hears cries that do not come from Him, how much more will He hear those that do! Perhaps you have been puzzling yourself to know whether your cry is a natural or a spiritual one. This may seem very important, and doubtless is so—but whether your cry is either the one or the other, still continue to seek the Lord! Possibly you doubt whether natural cries are heard by God; let me assure you that they are. I remember saying something on this subject on one occasion in a certain Ultra-Calvinistic place of worship. At that time I was preaching to children, and was exhorting them to pray. I happened to say that long before any actual conversion I had prayed for common mercies, and that God had heard my prayers.

This did not suit my good brethren of the superfine school; and afterwards they all came round me professedly to know what I meant, but really to cavil and carp according to their nature and practice. "They compassed me about like bees; yes, like bees they compassed me about!" After awhile, as I expected, they fell to their usual amusement of calling names; they began to say what rank Arminianism this was; and another expression they were pleased to honor me with, was the title of "Fullerist"—a title, by the way, so honorable that I could heartily have thanked them for appending it to what I had advanced. But to say that God should hear the prayer of natural men was something worse than Arminianism to them, if, indeed, anything could be worse! They quoted that counterfeit passage, "The

prayer of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord," which I speedily answered by asking them if they would find me that text in the Word of God, for I ventured to assert that the devil was the author of that saying, and that it was not in the Bible at all. "The *sacrifice* of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord" is in the Bible, but that is a very different thing from the "*prayer* of the wicked." And moreover there is a decided difference between the word wicked there intended, and the natural man about whom we were arguing. I do not think that a man who begins to pray in any sense can be considered as being altogether among "the wicked" intended by Solomon, and certainly he is not among those who turn away their ears from hearing the law, of whom it is written that their prayer is an abomination. "Well, but," they said, "How could it be that God could hear a natural prayer?" And while I paused for a moment, an old woman in a red cloak pushed her way into the little circle round me, and said to them in very forcible way, like a mother in Israel as she was, "Why do you raise this question, forgetting what God Himself has said! What is this you say, that God does not hear natural prayer? Why, doesn't He hear the young ravens when they cry unto Him? And do you think *they* offer *spiritual* prayers?" Straightway the men of war took to their heels; no defeat was more thorough; and for once in their lives they must have felt that they might possibly had erred. Surely, brothers and sisters, this may encourage and comfort *you*.

I am not going to set you just now to the task of finding out whether your prayers are natural or spiritual, whether they come from God's Spirit or whether they do not, because that might, perhaps, discourage you. If the prayer proceeds from your very heart, we know how it got there, though you may not. God hears the ravens, and I do believe He will hear you, and I believe, moreover, though I do not now want to raise the question in your heart, that He hears your prayer, because—though you may not know it—there is a secret work of the Spirit of God going on within you which is teaching you to pray!

VI. But I have mightier arguments, and nearer the mark. *When the young ravens cry, they cry alone, But when you pray you have a mightier one than you praying with you.* Hear that sinner crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Listen! Do you hear that other cry which goes up with his? No, *you* do not hear it because your ears are dull and heavy, but God hears it. There is another voice, far louder and sweeter than the first, and far more prevalent, mounting up at the same moment, and pleading, "Father, forgive them through My precious blood." The echo to the sinner's whisper is as majestic as the thunder's peal. Never sinner prays truly without Christ praying at the same time. You cannot see nor hear Him, but never does Jesus stir the depths of your soul by His Spirit without His soul being stirred, too. Oh, sinner, your prayer, when it comes before God, is a very different thing from what it is when it issues forth from you. Sometimes poor people come to us with petitions which they wish to send to some company or great personage. They bring the petition and ask us to have it presented for them. It is very badly spelt, very strangely written, and we can but just make out what they mean; but still, there is enough to let us know what they need. First of all we make out a fair copy for them, and then, having stated their case, we put our own name at the bottom, and if we have any interest, of course they get what they desire through the power of the name signed at the bottom of the petition. This is just what the Lord Jesus Christ does with our poor prayers. He makes a fair copy of them, stamps them with the seal of His own atoning blood, puts His own name at the bottom, and thus they go up to God's throne. It is *your* prayer, but oh, it is HIS prayer, too! And it is the fact of its being *His* prayer that makes it prevail. Now, this is a sledge hammer argument—if the ravens prevail when they cry all alone, if their poor chattering brings them what they need of themselves, how much more shall the plaintive petitions of the poor trembling sinner prevail who can say, "For Jesus' sake," and who can clench all his own arguments with the blessed plea, "The Lord Jesus Christ deserves it! O Lord, give it to me for His sake."

I do trust that these seeking ones to whom I have been speaking, who have been crying so long and yet are afraid that they shall never be heard, may not have to wait much longer, but may soon have a gracious answer of peace; and if they shall not just yet get the desire of their hearts, I hope that they may be encouraged to persevere till the day of grace shall dawn. *You have a promise which the ravens have not*, and that might make another argument if time permitted us to dwell upon it. Trembler having a promise to plead, never fear but that you shall be heard at the throne of grace!

And now, let me say to the sinner, in closing, IF YOU HAVE CRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY, STILL CRY ON. "Go again seven times," yes, and 70 times seven! Remember that the mercy of God in Christ

Jesus is your only hope; cling to it, then, as a drowning man clings to the only rope within reach. If you perish praying for mercy through the precious blood, you will be the first that ever perished so. Cry on; just cry on; but oh, *believe*, too; for believing brings the morning star and the day dawn. When John Ryland's wife, Betty, lay dying, she was in great distress of mind, though she had been for many years a Christian. Her husband said to her in his quaint but wise way, "Well, Betty, what ails you?" "Oh, John, I am dying, and I have no hope, John!" "But, my dear, where are you going, then?" "I am going to hell!" was the answer. "Well," he said, covering up his deep anguish with his usual humor, and meaning to strike a blow that would be sure to hit the nail on the head and put her doubts to speedy flight, "What do you intend doing when you get there, Betty?" The good woman could give no answer, and Mr. Ryland continued, "Do you think you will pray when you get there?" "Oh, John," she said, "I would pray anywhere; I cannot help praying!" "Well, then," said he, "They will say, 'Here is Betty Ryland praying here in hell. Throw her out! We won't have anybody praying here! Throw her out!" This strange way of putting it brought light to her soul, and she saw at once the absurdity of the very suspicion of a soul really seeking Christ, and yet being cast away forever from His presence! Cry on, soul! Cry on! While the child can cry, it lives; and while you can besiege the throne of mercy, there is hope for you! But *hear* as well as cry, and believe what you hear, for it is by *believing* that peace is obtained.

But stay awhile, I have something else to say. Is it possible that you may have already obtained the very blessing you are crying after? "Oh," you say, "I would not ask for a thing which I already had! If I knew I had it, I would leave off crying, and begin praising and blessing God." Now, I do not know whether all of you seekers are in so safe a state, but I am persuaded that there are some seeking souls who have received the mercy for which they are asking. The Lord, instead of saying to them tonight, "Seek you My face," is saying, "Why do you cry unto Me? I have heard you in an acceptable hour, and in an acceptable time have I succored you. I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities. I have saved you. You are Mine! I have cleansed you from all your sins. Go your way and rejoice." In such a case *believing praise* is more suitable than agonizing prayer.

"Oh," you say, "But it is not likely that I have the mercy while I am still seeking for it." Well, I don't know. Mercy sometimes falls down in a fainting fit outside the gate; is it not possible for her to be taken inside while she is in the fainting fit, and for her to think all the while that she is still on the outside? She can hear the dog still barking, but ah, poor soul, when she comes to, she will find that she is inside the wicket and is safe! Some of you may happen to have fallen into a swoon of despondency just when you are coming to Christ; if so, may sovereign grace restore you, and perhaps I may be the means, tonight, of doing it.

What is it you are looking after? Some of you are expecting to see bright visions, but I hope you never may be gratified, for they are not worth a penny a thousand! All the visions in the world since the days of miracles, put together, are but mere dreams, after all—and dreams are nothing but vanity! People eat too much supper and then dream; it is indigestion, or a morbid activity of the brain, and that is all! If that is all the evidence you have of conversion you will do well to doubt it; I pray you never to rest satisfied with it; it is wretched rubbish to build your eternal hopes upon. Perhaps you are looking for very strange feelings—not quite an electric shock, but something very singular and peculiar. Believe me; you need never feel the strange motions which you prize so highly. All those strange feelings which some people speak of in connection with conversion may or may not be of any good to them, but I am certain that they really have nothing to do with conversion so as to be at all necessary to it. I will put a question or two to you. Do you believe yourself to be a sinner? "Yes," you say. But supposing I put that word "sinner" away? Do you mean that you believe you have broken God's law, that you are a good-for-nothing offender against God's government? Do you believe that you have in your heart, at any rate, broken all the commandments, and that you deserve punishment accordingly? "Yes," you say, "I not only believe that, but I feel it; it is a burden that I carry about with me daily." Now something more—do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ can put all this sin of yours away? Yes, you do believe that. Then, can you trust Him to save you? You *need* saving; you cannot save yourself; can you trust *Him* to save you? "Yes," you say, "I already do that." Well, my dear friend, if you really trust Jesus, it is certain that you are saved, for you have the only evidence of salvation which is continual with any of us. There are

other evidences which follow afterwards, such as holiness and the graces of the Spirit, but the only evidence that is continual with the best of men living is this—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your cross I cling.

Can you use Jack the huckster's verse—

"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all-in-all"?

I hope you will go a great deal farther in experience on some points than this, by and by, but I do not want you to advance an inch farther as to the ground of your evidence and the reason for your hope. Just stop there, and if now you look away from everything that is within you or without you to Jesus Christ, and trust to His sufferings on Calvary, and to His whole atoning work as the ground of your acceptance before God, you are saved! You do not need anything more! You have passed from death unto life. "He who believes on Him is not condemned." "He who believes has everlasting life." If I were to meet an angel presently in that aisle as I go out of my door into my vestry, and he should say—"Charles Spurgeon, I have come from heaven to tell you that you are pardoned," I would say to him—"I know *that* without your telling me anything of the kind; I know it on a great deal better authority than yours." And if he asked me how I knew it, I would reply, "The word of God is better to me than the word of an angel, and He has said it—'He who believes on Him is not condemned.' I do believe on Him, and therefore I am not condemned—and I know it without an *angel* to tell me so." Do not, you troubled ones, be looking after angels, and tokens, and evidences, and signs. If you rest on the finished work of Jesus, you have already the best evidence of your salvation in the world! You have God's word for it—what more is needed? Cannot you take God's word? You can take your father's word. You can take your mother's word—why can't you take God's word? Oh, what base hearts we must have to suspect God Himself!

Perhaps you say you would not do such a thing. Oh, but you doubt God, if you do not trust Christ—for, "he who believes not has made God a liar." If you do not trust Christ, you do in effect say that God is a liar! You do not want to say that, do you? Oh, believe the truthfulness of God! May the Spirit of God compel you to believe the Father's mercy, the power of the Son's blood, and the willingness of the Holy Spirit to bring sinners to Himself!

Come, my dear hearers, join with me in the prayer that you may be led by divine grace to see in Jesus all that you need—

"Prayer is a creature's strength, his very breath and being;
Prayer is the golden key that can open the wicket of mercy;
Prayer is the magic sound that said to fate, so be it;
Prayer is the slender nerve that moves the muscles of Omnipotence.
Therefore, pray, O creature, for many and great are your needs;
Your mind, your conscience, and your being, your needs commend you unto prayer,
The cure of all cares, the grand panacea for all pains,
Doubt's destroyer, ruin's remedy, the antidote to all anxieties."

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