

LOVING ADVICE FOR ANXIOUS SEEKERS

NO. 735

A SERMON
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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him.”
James 1:5.

IF YOU are acquainted with the context, you will at once perceive that this verse has a special reference to persons in trouble. Much-tempted and severely-tried saints are frequently at their wits end, and though they may be persuaded that in the end good will come out of all their afflictions, yet for the present they may be so distracted as not to know what to do. How fitly spoken and how reasonable is this word of the apostle, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God,” and such wisdom shall the Lord afford His afflicted children, that the trying of their faith shall produce patience, and they themselves shall count it all joy that they have fallen in many and different trials.

However, the promise is not to be limited to any one particular application, for the word, “If *any* of you,” is so wide, so extensive, that whatever may be our necessity, whatever the dilemma which perplexes us, this text consoles us with the counsel, “If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God.”

This text might be peculiarly comforting to some of you who are working for God. You cannot work long for your heavenly Lord without perceiving that you need a greater wisdom than your own. Why, even in directing an inquirer to the cross of Christ, simple work as that may seem to be, we shall often discover our own inability and folly. In rebuking the backslider, in comforting the desponding, in restoring the fallen, in guiding the ignorant, we shall need to be taught of God, or else we shall meet with more failures than successes. To every honest Christian worker this text speaks with all the soft melody of an angel's whisper. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God.” Your lips shall overflow with knowledge, and your tongue shall drop with words of wisdom, if you will but wait on God and hear Him before you speak to your fellow men. You shall be made wise to win souls if you will learn to sit at the Master's feet, that He may teach you the art which He followed when on earth, and still follows.

But the class of persons who just now win my heart's warmest sympathies are those who are seeking the Savior; and, as the text says, “If *any* of you,” I thought I should be quite right in giving seekers a share in it. They are seeking Christ, but they are in the dark; their soul desires Him, but it has little light, little guidance, and their cry is, “O that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat!” I thought that this text might be as the balm of Gilead to some of these unwise ones, who have found out all of a sudden their own sin and folly. I thought it would say to them, “If you, poor sinner, if you lack wisdom, seek of God who gives to all liberally, and upbraids not.” Let us put ourselves, then, at once in order for this work of comforting seekers, and may God the Holy Spirit, make it effectual.

I. First, I shall call your attention to THE GREAT NEED OF MANY SEEKERS, NAMELY, WISDOM. This need occurs from many reasons. Sometimes it is *their pride* which makes them fools. Like Naaman, they would do some *great thing* if the prophet had bid them, but they will not wash and be clean.

The natural heart rebels against the simplicity of the way of salvation. “What? Am I to do nothing but simply accept the righteousness already finished? Am I to leave off doing, and merely look unto Him who was nailed to the tree, and find all my salvation in Him? “Well, then,” says the proud heart, “I cannot understand it.” It cannot understand it because it does not love it. Now, soul, if this is your difficulty, and I believe, in nine cases out of ten, a proud heart is at the root of all difficulty about the sin-

ner's coming to Christ—if this is it which turns you aside and makes you foolish, then go to God about it, and seek wisdom from Him. He will show you the folly of this pride of yours, and teach you that simply to trust in Jesus is at once the safest and most suitable way of salvation. He will make you see that if the way of salvation had been by doing, the method would not have suited you, for what could you do? If it had been by feeling, it would not have suited you either, for what can your hard heart feel? How can you make yourself tender of heart? But, seeing that it is by faith, it is therefore by divine grace. O that you may be made wise enough to stoop and kiss the silver scepter which is outstretched to you, to come and buy this wine and milk, without money and without price, and accept with your whole heart, with intense joy, this perfect righteousness, this finished salvation which Christ has worked out and brought in for every seeking soul.

Many persons, also, are made foolish so that they lack wisdom through *their despair*. Probably, nothing makes a man seem so much like a maniac as the loss of hope. When the mariner feels that his vessel is sinking, that the proud waves must soon overwhelm her; he then reels to and fro, and staggers like a drunken man, because he is at his wits' end! Ah, poor heart, when you see the blackness of sin, I do not wonder that you are driven to despair; and when your sins come howling behind you like so many ravenous wolves, all seeking to devour you, I do not marvel if you should be ready even to lay violent hands upon yourself. It is no strange thing for men to be sorely tempted when they are under a sense of sin. And now you know not what to do. If you could be calm and quiet, we could tell you plainly the way of peace, and you might understand that there is no reason for despair, since Jesus died and rose again, and is "able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God by Him." But you cannot give us a calm hearing, for you are distracted, and you think that this comfort applies to everybody but you. You lack wisdom because you are in such a worry and turmoil. As John Bunyan used to say, you are much troubled up and down in your thoughts. I pray you, then, ask wisdom of God, and even out of the depths if you cry unto Him, He will be pleased to instruct you and bring you out into a safe way.

No doubt many other persons lack wisdom because they are *not instructed in gospel doctrine*. It is amazing how Satan will plague many timid hearts with the doctrine of election. That doctrine, rightly understood, is full of comfort; but, distorted and misrepresented, it often appears to be a bolt to shut sinners out from divine mercy—the fact being that it shuts none out, but shuts millions in. Why, the very doctrine of the atonement is not understood by many, while they are under a sense of sin. If they could see that Christ took their sins and carried their sorrows; if they could perceive the meaning of that word, "Substitution," light might break in. The window of the understanding is blocked up with ignorance, if we could but clean away the cobwebs and filth then might the light of the knowledge of Christ come streaming in, and they might rejoice in His salvation. Well, dear friends, if you are confused and puzzled with difficult doctrine, the text comes to you and says, "If any lacks wisdom, let him ask of God."

Ignorance also of Christian experience is another cause for the lack of wisdom. I have seen many inquirers who have told me what they have felt, and to them it was so amazing, that they half expected to see every individual hair of my head stand upright while they told me their feelings; and when I said, "Oh, yes, yes, I have felt just that; that is the common way of most souls that come to Christ," they have looked surprised beyond measure. The very road which is most safe, you think to be most dangerous; and that which leads to Christ, you fancy leads to hell. Little do you know the value of that stripping work which you so much dread. "Surely," you say, "I am being stripped that I may be cast away," whereas the Lord only strips those whom He intends afterwards to clothe with the robe of His salvation! Those cuts of the lancet are sharp, and you think the surgeon means to kill, but he intends to cure. When God is making you feel the burden of your guilt, you suppose that now He has forgotten to be gracious, whereas it is now that He *is* gracious to you in very deed, and is using the best means of making you understand and value His grace. The way of life is a new road to you, poor seeking soul, and therefore you lack wisdom in it, and make many mistakes about it. The text lovingly advises, "Ask of God." "Ask of God."

Very likely, in addition to all this, which may well enough make you lack wisdom, there are *certain singularities in the action of providence towards you*, which fill you with dismay. Ever since you have begun to think about the Lord Jesus, things have gone cross with you in the outward world. You have not only trouble within, but, strange as you think it is, you have now trouble without—it partly arises from friends who say you are mad—would God they were bitten with the same madness!—partly from circumstances over which you can have no control. It is not at all unusual for God to make a complete shipwreck of that vessel in which His people sail, although He fulfils His promise that not a hair of their heads shall perish. I should not wonder if He would cause two seas to meet around your ship, so that there should not be more than a few boards and broken pieces of the ship left to you, but oh, if you have faith in Christ, He will certainly bring you safe to shore! It is not at all an uncommon thing for the Lord to add to the inward scourging of conscience the outward lashings of affliction. These double scourging are meant for proud, stubborn hearts, that they may be humbly brought to Jesus' feet, for of us it may be said, in truth, as Solomon says of the child—"Foolishness is bound in his heart; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." God is thus, dear hearer, bringing folly out of you by the smarts of His rod. It is written, "The blueness of a wound cleanses away evil," and therefore the Lord is making your wounds to be black and blue, and I should not wonder if He will even let them putrefy, till you have to say with Isaiah, "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." Then it is that eternal mercy will take advantage of your dire extremity, and your deep distress shall bring you to Christ who never would have been brought by any other means.

To close this somewhat painful picture. Many lack wisdom because in addition to all their fears and their ignorance, they are fiercely attacked by *Satan*. John Bunyan tells us of Apollyon, that he said, "No king will willingly lose his subjects." Of course he will not; and Apollyon, as he sees his subjects one after another desert him to enlist under the banner of King Jesus, howls at his losses, and he leaves no stone unturned to keep souls back from divine mercy. Just at that critical moment when the soul is beginning to turn to God, he says to himself, "It is now or never. If I do not nip these buds, they will become flowers and fruits; but if I can bring in a withering frost, I shall kill the young plant." The great enemy takes dead aim at anxious souls. He it is who digs that Slough of Despond right in front of the Wicket Gate, and keeps the big dog to howl before the door, so that poor trembling mercy may go into a fainting fit, and find herself too weak to knock at the door. "Now," he says to all his servants, "shoot your arrows at that awakened soul; it is about to escape from me—empty your quivers, you soldiers of the pit of hell; launch your hot temptations, you fiends of hell! Sting that soul with infidel insinuations and hideous blasphemies, for if I once lose it I have lost it forever; therefore, hold it, you princes of the pit, hold it fast, if you can." Now, in such a plight as that, with your foolish heart, and the wicked world, and the evil one, and your sins in dreadful alliance to destroy you, what could such a poor timid one as you do if it were not for this precious promise, "If any of *you*"—that must mean you—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally, and upbraids not"?

II. We shall now mention the second point in the text. THE PROPER PLACE OF A SEEKER'S RESORT—"Let him ask of God."

My dear friends bear me witness that it is my constant effort to teach you the spirituality of true religion, and the necessity of our own hearts having personal dealings with the living God. Now, though this you have heard thousands of times, I was about to say from me, yet, once again, I must remind you of it: the text says, "Let him *ask of God*." Now, you perceive, that we are directed at once to God without any intermediate object, or ceremony, or person. You are not told here to seek direction from good books; they may become very useful as auxiliary helps, but the best of human books, if followed slavishly, will mislead. For instance, I am sure that hundreds of persons have been kept in unnecessary bondage through that wonderful and admirable book, Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*. It has been the means of the conversion of hundreds; it has been profitable to thousands more; but there is a point in which it fails, so that, if you slavishly follow it, you may read the book through, and I

undertake to say, you will not find comfort by following its exhortations. It fails, as all human guides must, if we trust in them and forget the Great Shepherd of Israel. When a man is really under concern of soul, he is in a condition of considerable danger. Then it is that an artful false teacher may get hold of him, and trick him into heresy and unscriptural doctrine. Therefore the text does not say, “If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask his priest.”—that is about the *worst* thing he can do, for he who sets himself up for a priest is either a deceiver or deceived. “Let him ask of God”—that is the advice of the Scripture. We are all so ready to go to books, to go to men, to go to ceremonies, to anything except to God. Man will worship God with his eyes, and his arms, and his knees, and his mouth—with anything but his heart—and we are all of us anxious, more or less, until we are renewed by divine grace, to get off the heart-worship of God. Juan de Valdey says, that, “Just as an ignorant man takes a crucifix and says, ‘This crucifix will help me to think of Christ,’ so he bows before it and never does think of Christ at all, but stops short at the crucifix; so,” he says, “the learned man takes his book and says, ‘This book will teach me the mysteries of the kingdom,’ but instead of giving his thoughts to the mysteries of godliness, he reads his book mechanically and stops at the book, instead of meditating and diving into the truths of God.” It is the action of the mind that God accepts, not the motion of the body; it is the thought communing with Him; it is the soul coming into contact with the soul of God; it is spirit-worship which the Lord accepts. Consequently, the text does not say, “Let him ask books,” nor, “ask priests,” but, “let him ask of God.”

Above all, do not let the seeker ask of himself and follow his own imagination and feelings. All human guides are bad, but you, yourself, will be your own worst guide. “Let him ask *of God*.” When a man can fairly and honestly say, “I have bowed the knee unto the Lord God of Israel, and asked Him, for Jesus’ sake, to guide me and to direct me by His Spirit, and then I turned to the Book of God, asking God to be my guide into the book,” I cannot believe but what such a man will soon obtain saving wisdom.

I beg to caution all of you against stopping short of really asking *of God*. I conjure you by the living God, do not be satisfied with asking of me. I am no priest, except as all believers are priests, thank God. I wear no title of ecclesiastical dominion. Be not content with asking my brothers, the deacons and elders—God has made many of them wise in helping souls out of difficulties, but do not be satisfied with the advice of any man, however godly and holy, but go directly to the Lord God of heaven and earth, and say unto Him, “Lord, teach me! Show me Your way, O God! Teach me in Your truth!” You are not bid to go to any second-hand source of wisdom, but to God the only wise, who alone can direct you. “Let him ask of God.”

Such advice as this must be good. You cannot suspect us of any interested motive in exhorting you to this. It is your good which we seek, and not our own glory. It must be best to go to the headquarters—you will surely be led aright if so you seek direction. Some say, Lo, here! Others say, Lo, there! But if you go to God, and then with His guidance study His Word, you shall not fail of wisdom. How can you?

Moreover, remember that there is one blessed person of the divine Unity who makes it His special office to teach us! Therefore, if you go to God for wisdom, you only go for that which it is His nature and His office to give. The Holy Spirit is given to this end: “He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you.” When you go to God, you may say to Him these words, “O Father, You have been pleased to reveal to us the Holy Spirit who is to enlighten our darkness, and to remove our ignorance. Oh, let that Spirit of Yours dwell in me; I am willing to be taught by Your Spirit, through Your word, or through Your ministers, but I come first to You, because I know that Your word and Your ministers, apart from Yourself, cannot teach me anything. O Lord, teach me.” I do not mean by any word of mine to make you think little of Scripture—God forbid!—nor little of those who may speak to you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, but I did mean to make you look even at this Book, and at God’s ministers, as being subservient to the Holy Spirit Himself. Go to Him; ask Him; for there in the Book is the letter which kills; He, He alone can make you to know the living essence and the quickening power of that word. Without the Holy Spirit, my dear hearer, you will

still be as blind with the light of God as you would have been without it. You will be as foolish after having been taught the gospel in the theory of it, as you were before you knew it. Let the Holy Spirit, however, teach you, and you shall know all things that are necessary for this life and godliness.

Thus, then, we have brought two points before you—the great need of the seeker is “wisdom,” and the right place to get that need removed.

III. Thirdly, THE RIGHT MODE IN WHICH TO GO TO GOD. “*Let him ask.*” Oh, that simple word, “Let him *ask*”—“let him *ask!*” No form of asking is prescribed, no words laid down, no method dictated, no hour set apart, no rubric printed; but there it stands in gracious simplicity, “let him *ask.*”

He who will not have mercy when it is to be had for the asking, deserves to die without it. While I am thinking of this word, before I plunge into its fullest meaning, I may well say, if God will give wisdom to the seeker only because he asks for it, what shall I say of the folly which will not even ask to be *made* wise? May God forgive you such folly for the past, and deliver you from it for the future.

The text says, “Let him ask,” which is a method implying that *ignorance is confessed*. No man will ask wisdom till he knows that he is ignorant. Come, dear hearer, confess your ignorance into the ear of God, who is as present here as you are; say unto Him, “Lord, I have discovered now that I am not as wise as I thought I was; I am foolish and vain. Lord, teach me.” Make a full confession, and this shall be a good beginning for prayer.

Asking has also in it the fact that *God is believed in*. We cannot ask of a person of whose existence we have any doubt, and we *will not* ask of a person of whose hearing us we have serious suspicions. Who would stand in the desert of Sahara and cry aloud, where there is no living ear to hear? Now, my dear hearer, you believe that there is a God. Ask, then! Do you not believe that He is here, that He will hear your cry, and that He will be pleased in answer to your cry to give you what you ask for? Now, if you can believe that there is a God, that He is here and that He will hear you, then confess your ignorance, and ask Him now to give you the promised wisdom for Jesus’ sake.

There is in this method of approaching God by asking, also *a clear sight that salvation is by divine grace*. It does not say, “Let him buy of God, let him demand of God. let him earn from God.” Oh, no!—“let him ASK of God.” It is the beggar’s word. The beggar asks for alms. You are to ask as the beggar asks of you in the street, and God will give to you far more liberally than you give to the poor. You must confess that you have no merit of your own. If you will not acknowledge that, neither will God hear your prayers; but come now with the acknowledgment of ignorance, with the confession of sin, and believing that God is the rewarder of them who diligently seek Him, and He will even now give you the wisdom which saves the soul.

Observe here, what *an acknowledgement of dependence* there is. The man sees that he cannot find wisdom anywhere else, but that it must come from God. He turns his eyes to the only Fountain, and leaves the broken cisterns. Do this, dear hearer. I feel as if the text did not need any explanation from me, but only needs carrying out by you. Let him ask of God. I think I can hear 50,000 objections from different parts of the building. One is saying, “But I don’t understand; ‘ask of God.’” Another is saying, “I cannot comprehend; ‘ask of God.’” If you have made some difficulties for yourself, if you are such a fool as to be tying knots and wanting to get them untied before you will believe in Jesus, then I have nothing to say to you, unless it were, beware lest you tie a knot that shall destroy your soul; but if you are troubled with an honest objection, I say to you *now*, in God’s name, “*Ask of God.*” You need not wait till you get home, you need not stay till you have left that seat, but *now*, silently, in your soul, as Hannah did when she went up to the tabernacle, breathe the prayer—“O God, teach me: lead me to the foot of the cross; help me to see Jesus; save my soul this day; end the doubtful strife; answer these questions; bring me, as an humble seeker, to lie before the footstool of Your sovereign mercy and to receive pardon through the mediatorial sacrifice.” “Let him ask—that is all—*let him ask.*”

IV. Fourthly, the text has in it ABUNDANT ENCOURAGEMENT for such a seeker.

There are four encouragements here. “Let him ask of God, *who gives to all men.*” What a wide statement—Who “gives to all men!” I will take it in its broadest extent. In natural things, God does give

to all men life, health, food, raiment. Who “makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good,” Who causes the rain to descend upon the fields of the just and of the unjust. Every creature is favored with divine benevolence; and there is not a creature, from the tiniest ephemera which creeps upon the green leaf of the forest, to the swift-winged angel who adoringly flies upon his Master’s will, which is not made to partake of the gifts of the Great Father of Lights. Now, if God has gifts for all men, how much more will He have gifts for that man who earnestly turns his tearful eyes to heaven and cries, “My Father, give me wisdom, that I may be reconciled to You through the death of Your Son”? Why, the grass, as Herbert says, never asked for the dew, and yet every blade has its own drop; and shall you daily cry for the dew of divine grace, and there be no drop of heaven’s grace for you? Impossible! Fancy your own child saying, “My Father, my Father, I want to be obedient, I want to be holy.” And suppose that you have power to make your child so, could you find it in your heart to refuse? No; it would be a greater joy to you to give than it could be to the child to accept.

But it has been said, the text ought not to be understood in that broad a sense. Very probably it ought not to be so. I conceive that there is implied the limitation that God gives to all *who seek*. Though the limitation is not stated, yet I think it is intended, because of spiritual mercies God does not give to *all* men liberally. There are some men who live and die without the liberal favors of divine grace, because they wickedly refuse them; but He gives to all true seekers liberally. We may take that view of it, and we may find you hundreds of witnesses to prove the truth of it, and can find them in this very place this morning. Here is one witness; I myself personally sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. My dear brothers, and my sisters, too, I know you could spring up like a great army, if it were a fitting thing to ask you to do, and you could say, “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him.” “The God of Jacob has not despised nor abhorred the cries of His people.” Now, soul, if God has heard so many who sought His face, why should He not hear you? Is it not a comfort to think that hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands have gone to God, and there never has been a case in which He has refused one? Will He begin with you? Shall you be the first rejected seeker? Oh, then, what a strange destiny yours will be, to have to say in another world, “I am the first who sought divine grace, and found it not; I wept at the foot of the cross, and I found no mercy. I said, ‘Lord, remember me,’ but He would not remember me.” You will never be able to say that! Hell will never make its boast over such a case; heaven will never have its honor tarnished by one such solitary instance. Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face evermore. Your hearts shall live who seek Him.

The next comfort is, He gives to all men *liberally*. God does not give as we do, a mere trifle to the beggar, but He bestows His wealth by the handfuls. Solomon asked for wisdom—God gave him wealth and power. In nearly every instance of prayer in the Old Testament, God gives 10 times as much as is asked for. Jacob asked that he might have bread to eat, and raiment to put on—God made him to be two bands. The Lord will “do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” This is the divine habit. He not only redeems His promises, but when He might pay them in silver He prefers to pay them in gold. He is exceedingly bountiful. Dear hearers, we have found Him so when we have tried Him, and do you think He will begin to be stingy with you? If He should liberally forgive your sins, He will be none the poorer; if He should withhold forgiveness, He will be none the richer. Why should He limit His favor? You need to wash away your sins—there is a river of grace to wash in. You need grace to refresh your souls—He has floods to pour upon the dry ground. We read of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Ho, you leviathan sinners, here is an ocean of mercy for you to swim in! Ho, you elephantine sinners, here is an ark large enough to hold you and float you above the waters of the deluge! Ho, you gigantic sinners, whose sins of pride reach up to heaven, and whose feet of lust are plunged in the mire of hell, the sacred hiding place is large enough to hide even you! The Lord is great in mercy. Oh, who would not ask of so liberal a God, whose thoughts are as high above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth!

It is added as a third comfort, “*and upbraids not.*” That is a sweet word. If you help a friend who is in debt, and wants to borrow money, you say, “Remember, I do not like it, you ought not to be in such a

state.” Your brother needs some aid; you have helped him many times, and will again, but still you upbraid him and tell him he is very imprudent; ought not to get into these messes; he ought to manage his business better. If you do not tell him so with your mouth, you look at him, and he thinks to himself, “It’s very kind of him to give me the help, but really, it is very humiliating to me to have to ask of him because I get so severe a lecture.” I suppose we do right to upbraid. I have no doubt we do so with good motives. But God never does upbraid seeking souls. He gives liberally, and does not dim the luster of His grace by harsh rebukes. He does not say, “Ah, you sinner, how came you to commit such sin; I will forgive you, but _____.” The Father does not talk thus to the returning prodigal. One would have supposed that when the prodigal came back, the father would have said, “Well, dear boy, you are forgiven, but never let me see you do that again. How wrong of you to take that portion of my goods, and spend it in that way! I shall never be as well off as before; you have wasted half my estate; and now think where you have been—what a dishonor you have cast upon your father’s name and character through wasting your living with harlots. I forgive—but I cannot forget.” My brothers and sisters, it was not so! The prodigal remembered his sins, but his father forgot them all, and exclaimed with joy, “This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.” O soul, if you did but know the heart of the Savior, you would not tarry in sin. If you could but know the overflowing love of the divine Father, you would not linger in unbelief”—

*“His heart is made of tenderness,
His heart melts with love.”*

Fool as you are, be not such a fool as to be unwilling to ask for wisdom, but now breathe the prayer, “Teach me, O God, to trust Your dear Son this day.”

Then comes the last encouragement. *“It shall be given him.”* Looking through my text last night, I asked the question—Is that last sentence needed? “Let him ask of God, which gives to all liberally, and upbraids not.” Now, if the Lord gives to all men, He will certainly give to the seeker. Is that last promise needed? And I came to this conclusion, that it would not have been there if it was not required. There are some sinners who cannot be content to draw obvious inferences; they must have it in black and white. Such is the fearfulness of their nature; they must have the promise in so many exact words. Here they have it—“it shall be given him.” You are not left to suppose that it shall be, or to infer that it may be, but it is written, “it shall be given him.”

But to whom shall it be given? *If any of you lack wisdom.* “Well,” says one, “I am quite out of all catalogs; I am one by myself.” Well, but you are surely contained in this, *“any of you.”* “Ah,” says another, “but I have a private fault, a sin, an offense which I would not dare to mention, which I believe has damned me forever.” Yet the text says, *“If any of you.”* If I saw a door open, and it said, “If *any of you* are hungry, let him come in here,” I would not stay outside because I feared that I was not quite the person intended, I would say, “It is their business who mean to keep me out, to be more specific in their invitation. They have put it, *‘any of you.’* I am certainly one of the sons of men, and I will step into the feast.” Ah soul, if God had meant to shut you out, He would have been plainer about it! But here is not a shutting-out word at all; it says, “If any of you lack wisdom”—well, that is you, surely—that lack of wisdom helps to include you within the boundary. It does not limit the character; it widens it to you because you feel how foolish you are. The promise is, “it shall be given him.” “Suppose I do not get it,” you ask. You must not suppose God to be a liar. How can you suppose such a blasphemy? “Let him ask of God, and *it shall be given him.*” “But,” says one, “suppose my sins should prove to be too great?” I cannot, will not suppose anything which can come in conflict with the positive word of God. “Let him ask of God, and it shall be given him.” Do you think God does not mean what He says? O sinner, will you add to all your other sins this sin of thinking that God would lie? O man, He invites you to ask of Him wisdom, and He says He will give it to you; doubt not the Lord, distrust not the veracity of Jehovah, but come at once humbly, tremblingly, to the foot of the Savior’s cross. View Him lifted on high as the great atoning sacrifice; look to His streaming wounds; behold His brow still covered with the crimson drops which flow from the wounds caused by His crown of thorns. Look to Him and live! There’s

life in a look at the Crucified One! Look to Him, and the promise is that you shall be saved! I commend the text to the careful, thoughtful, believing acceptance of every sinner here. Ask that the sun may not go down until you each and all have received the promise which the text presents to you. May the Holy Spirit now give His own blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MATTHEW 5:1-12.

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