

THE GREAT PRIVATION—OR THE GREAT SALVATION

NO. 610

A SERMON
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments!
 then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.”*
Isaiah 48:18

FROM this verse we may learn that when God smites men on account of sin, it gives Him no pleasure. The voice which speaks is not that of the seraphic prophet, but it is the voice of the Lord God of the prophets Himself. The manner is not merely the majestic formula, “Thus saith JEHOVAH,” but it is supplemented with words intended to remind us of His graciousness and His goodwill. “Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer,” He who rescued you from perils past, “the Holy One of Israel,” the faithful Promiser, who has shown you His counsels and His statutes.

Moreover, He challenges attention with more simple, touching mementoes of His kindness, when He adds, “I am the LORD thy God which teacheth you to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.” As the instructor of their childhood and the guide of their riper years, He first expresses the most natural interest in their welfare, and then pitifully bewails the folly of His children.

Speaking after the manner of men, to chasten His own people is a pain and a grief to His heart—“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.” John Knox said that he never chastised his children without tears in his own eyes. Jeremiah, in the bitterest chapter of his unparalleled Lamentations, bears this grateful witness to our covenant God—“He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.” And surely if in the gentler chastisement of His hands, the Most High takes no pleasure, much less can He find delight in that withering curse which destroys the finally impenitent.

Beloved, the eternal torment of men is no joy to God. The ruin of a sinner gives Him no satisfaction. While the calamity is such as He only can estimate, the warnings, expostulations, and entreaties He has spoken furnish proof upon proof of His pity. Hear His own words, nay, listen as He swears, listen to His own oath—“As I live, saith the LORD God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.”

Not vengeance, but mercy. To kiss the returning prodigal. To wash the feet of the guilty sinner. To press the rebel to His bosom, and to adopt him into His family—this is happiness to God. When, therefore, He rises to judgment and pronounces the fearful sentence, “Depart, ye cursed,” and casts down the transgressor to hell, and delivers him over to the tormentors, though He vindicates the justice of His throne, it is—“His strange work, to bring to pass his act, his strange act.”

Even the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction have experience of God’s longsuffering. How tardily He puts off the time! How often He tarries before He inflicts the stroke! How He hides His power while He unfolds His patience. He refrains the fierceness of His anger, because He is “God, and not man!” “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? my heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.”

Let me appeal to you then, my hearers, those of you who have entertained hard thoughts of God—correct them now, banish them from your breasts tonight. You may take pleasure in the damnation of your fellow men—my God has no such pleasure. You may find gratification in your sins, but He grieves over them, for as He sees your course, He foresees your end.

Nor is this the only lesson which lays on the surface of the text. Still speaking after the manner of men, I beg you to observe that the Lord addresses words of poignant regret over the *prize* the sinner has lost, as well as the *penalty* he has incurred. So did Jesus Christ look upon Jerusalem. Musing on the desolation to which she should shortly come, He reflected on the preservation in which she might have safely stood. Just as little chickens cluster under the hen's wings, nestling there in genial warmth and peaceful security, so might Israel have found prosperity in her own borders, and protection against foreign invaders under the shadow of the wings of the Lord God Almighty.

You remember how He burst into tears? You can never forget that cry of His, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

Such, too, are the words of my text—words which I pray God may rouse your thoughts and be graven deeply on your hearts. God looks upon the "*peace*" you might enjoy, and the "*righteousness*" that would enrich you, did you hearken to His commandments and obey His great mandate, "Believe and live."

He espies *you* afar off from peace. He beholds what you cannot yet discern—the clouds gathering round your head. It may be you feel in a dead calm. He utters this pathetic exclamation, "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been like a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."

Sinner! the eternal God weeps over you while you are utterly careless about yourself. The infinite heart of my divine Master yearns over you. The voice which has often reproved you, now mourns your hapless state in plaintive tones. Methinks I hear the chords of His heart in notes of pity, far exceeding all that prophets, apostles, and ministers could ever utter. "O that that sinner would believe in Jesus! O that he would give Me his heart! O that he would be obedient to My Word! Then his peace should flow in purity and fertility like a river, and then his righteousness should roll in boundless plenty, and multiply its grand impressive witness like the waves of the sea."

And now, instead of giving you the order of my sermon, let me speak straight on. How great is the grace which the sinner despises! He cannot tell the loss he suffers. And what sweet figures these are by which God has been pleased to set that grace forth! Gladly would I woo you by their charms. But oh! how terrible the consequences of neglect. May God enable me to sound the warning faithfully in your ears this night.

What loss think you is that which God bewails on your account? It is not for you, O sinner, to understand, or to appreciate such blessings as you have never known or possessed. We strive in vain to describe the blessing of sight to him who was born blind or the sweetness of melody to the deaf. "Peace like a river," and "righteousness like the waves of the sea," are not within the limits of your comprehension.

Be it so, then. There is a need which you unconsciously suffer. You are a stranger to peace. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." David Hume used to say that Christians were melancholy people. But that was a happy retort, in which somebody observed, "David Hume's opinion is not worth much, for he never saw many Christians. And when he did see any, there was enough to make them miserable in the sight of David Hume."

The true Christian has a peace which is totally unknown to any other man. Yea, he has "the peace of God which passes all understanding." There are indeed two kinds of peace into the secret satisfaction of which no unconverted person can enter—peace with God and peace in the heart. Yet both of these are the inalienable right of the believer. For the peace which our Lord Jesus Christ made by the blood of His cross has sealed his acceptance with the Father. And the peace which is produced in his conscience as the fruit of the Spirit calms the troubled passions of his breast.

He enjoys peace with God. Happy soul! He says of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.” The terrors of the Lord do not make him afraid. When he walks in the midst of God’s works, this is his joy—

“My Father made them all.”

When he is on the deep and hoary sea, he says, “The deep is in the hollow of my Father’s hand, and were I to sink beneath its surging billows, I could only drop on to His bare arm.” When the thunder is abroad, and the lightning-flashes dart across the jet-black sky, he trembles not, his lips do not grow pale, nor is his face all blanched with fear. They are but his Father’s servants that do His pleasure, why should he be alarmed? Let sickness of body, or sorrow of mind, or any providence, however calamitous come upon him, he bears it all with an equanimity which faith alone can beget, because God has done it.

He has perfect peace with God which the tribulations of the world cannot disturb. Between my soul and my God, if I be a believer, there is no breach. Nay, there is friendship, love, union. The bonds which bind me to Him are the bonds of His own immutability and His covenant love. This peace of God must transcend the strife of the elements which surround me, for

***“The hand that may ruffle the evening’s calm,
Bears Calvary’s print on its bleeding palm.”***

So, too, the Christian is at peace with himself. Self is an ugly enemy for a sinner to encounter. It is written in the Bible, “And David’s heart smote him.” Conscience strikes hard blows. A good conscience has a keen edge and severely cuts those who tamper with it. Bad men are sometimes afraid of evil spirits. We have heard of people shutting their doors to keep the devil out of their houses. But as long as the thing called “Conscience” dwells in their breast, they will never be able to shut out a troublesome spirit. He carries a demon with him who has an unsatisfied conscience.

Tell me not of the howling of the wolf, when, in the depths of winter—meager, gaunt and grim—it gets a smell of blood and speeds on in its ravenous career—conscience is infinitely more insatiable. The deep baying of the hounds of conscience is more terrible to a man than any sound except the voice of God.

But the Christian is not afraid of himself. He can sit with himself in the hours of midnight, walk with himself in the lonely road, and talk with himself in the still calm of his meditations. God has enabled him to shake hands with his conscience, and they have become the best of friends.

***“Oh, lost to virtue, lost to manly thought,
Lost to the noble sallies of the soul,
Who think it solitude to be alone.
Our reason, guardian angel, and our God,
Then nearest these when others most remote,
And soon all shall be remote but these.”***

This is a peace which no man can attain unto except the man who hearkens to the commandment, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.” But if you hearken to that commandment and believe in the Son of God, you shall have peace and that peace shall be like a river.

The metaphor is full of beauty and not lacking in instructiveness either, by which peace is compared to a river. What does this mean? I think it may suggest several things. Peace like a river, for *continuance*. Look at it, rising as a little brook among the shingles of that green hill, it comes dashing down a rugged cataract. It flows along that valley yonder, where the red deer wanders and where the child loves to play. It turns the village mill. Harken to its babblings as it flows onward, sometimes leaping adown the wheel, and at other times flinging carelessly its strength to the winds.

Now it becomes broad and deep, and many a large and heavy craft floats upon it. Then it swells its bosom—bridges with noble arches span it, and then it becomes an estuary, like a great arm of the sea, and pours its torrents into old father Ocean. It continues. It is not a thing of today which is gone tomorrow, but it proclaims its own constancy.

*“Men may come, and men may go,
But I flow on for ever.”*

Forever, throughout all generations, the river speeds to its destined place. Such is the peace of the Christian. He is always at peace. He has not peace like a swollen torrent which is dried up under some hot sun of adversity, but his peace is with him at all times.

Do you inquire for the Thames? You shall find it flowing in its own bed in the thick black night, as well as in the clear bright day. You shall discover the Thames when it mirrors the stars or sends back the sheen of the moon, as well as when multitudes of eyes gaze upon it at midday. You shall see the Thames in the hour of tempest by the lightning’s flash, as well as in the day of calm when the sun shines brightly on it. Ever it is there.

And such is the Christian’s peace. Come night, come day, come sickness, come health, come what will, this peace which passes all understanding will keep the Christian’s heart and mind, through Jesus Christ. Like a river it always flows on—no matter what the scenery on its banks, it does not stop. Here is a hill, and there a dale, here the dry and thirsty sand, and there, again, the fat and laughing fields, but the river is still the same.

And so with the Christian. Today he abounds—tomorrow he is empty. One day he walks with manly stride, erect in health—another day he pines and tosses upon the bed of pain. Today men praise him and every man extols him in song. Tomorrow he is the butt of ridicule, and the subject of caricature, pointed at in the streets, and despised.

Today he lives. Tomorrow he dies. But his peace is still the same. Like a river, no matter what the banks which overlook it, or what the weather which overcasts it, still it is the same. Such is the deep calm which pervades the Christian’s spirit. It is a continual thing, a peace with which the world cannot endow, a peace of which the world cannot deprive, but a peace still unto which the Christian is called, and it abides with him evermore. Since the day I learned to wear in my buttonhole the Heart’s-ease plucked from God’s garden, my soul can laugh all men to scorn who find comfort elsewhere.

And this peace is “peace like a river” for *freshness* too. The water which runs down the Thames, say at Maidenhead, never was there before. It is fresh water, fresh from the hills today, and tomorrow it is the same, and the same the next day—always fresh supplies from the heart of old England to keep her glorious river swelling and abounding.

Now the peace which a Christian has is always fresh, always receiving fresh supplies. We found peace at first through the precious blood of Christ. We have sinned since then, but we have gone anew to the fountain, and have washed again and again. We have had doubts and fears. These at first were dispersed by a sight of Christ—we have fresh views of our glorious Savior and His completed work, and so the river goes on receiving fresh supplies.

The Spirit of God was our Comforter ten years ago. Ah! grey-headed man, he was *your* Comforter, perhaps, before I was born. Ere this babbling tongue had touched any man’s conscience, you had rested on the cross of Christ, and the Spirit had said, “Peace be unto thee.” The whole of these forty years you have had fresh anointings, fresh unction from on high, and so your continued peace has been like a river.

Do not suppose, O you who are strangers to these things, do not suppose that the Christian gets a peace like the striking of a match, which goes out in a moment. Oh! no. It is the steady shining of a fixed star, not the blaze of a meteor in an autumn evening, but the shining of the brightest lamp which never goes out, and never goes down. Happy that Christian who has fresh floods of peace, peace like a river for the freshness of its streams.

And you know, brethren, that a river increases in breadth and its waters augment their volume. You can leap across the Thames, say, at Cricklade or Lechlade—it is so tiny a little brook you may almost take it up in a cup. There is a narrow plank across which laughing village girls go tripping over. But who thinks of laying down a plank across the Thames at Southend or at Grays? Who would imagine that at Gravesend it might be crossed by the tripping girls or by the skipping lambs?

No, the river has grown—how deep! At the mouth of it, I suppose, comparable to the sea—how broad! It is a sort of ocean in miniature. There go the ships and that leviathan might play therein. Not behemoth himself, methinks, would have the presumption to suppose that he could sniff up this Jordan at a draught, for it has grown too great for him.

Such is the Christian's peace. Pure and perfect though it is at the first, little temptations seem to mar it. Oftentimes the troubles of this life threaten to choke it. Not that they ever do.

*“Men may come, and men may go,
But it flows on for ever.”*

True, it seems little at the point of its rise. But be not deceived. Wait. When the Christian is ten years older, and has meandered a few more miles along the tortuous course of a gracious experience, his peace will be like a broad river. Wait twenty or thirty years, till he has traversed these rich lowlands of fellowship with Christ in His sufferings, and conformity to His death, then his peace will be like a deep river, for he shall know the peace of God which passes all understanding.

And he will have cast all his care upon God, who cares for him. Thus that peace will go on increasing till it melts into the infinite peace of the beatific vision, where—

*“Not a wave of trouble rolls
Across the peaceful breast.”*

Well, therefore, may our peace be likened to a river for its perpetual increase.

Yet once more, the peace of the Christian is like a river, because of its joyful independence of man. We have heard the story of a simpleton who went to see the reputed source of the Thames, and putting his hand over the little rivulet that came trickling down the ditch, he stopped it, and said, “I wonder what they are doing at London Bridge now that I have stopped the river?”

His idea was that as he had stopped its flow, all the barges were high and dry, the steamers breaking their backs on the sandbanks, and nobody knowing what consequences might ensue, because he had stopped the Thames. But who knew the difference?

A child takes into its hand its cup of water, and blows it, and the whole surface undulates with little waves, but where are the giant lips which could blow the Thames, and cause waves upon its bosom? Steadily, pleasantly, laughingly, the river flows on, gliding beneath the majestic castle of monarchs, and sporting past the bowers of the muses, careless altogether what men of might do or men of intellect think.

A whole Parliament could not make the Thames swell with waves and fifty Parliaments could not lessen the body of its waters. It were well, by the way, if they could preserve its streams from the pollution of those foul and putrid sewers constantly emptied into it. The rivers would be better without the interference of men. Such, then, is the Christian's peace.

I have watched this river as it broke over the stones of adversity. And when the tide of earthly comfort ran low, it has seemed as if the flow of peace were clearer and more transparent than ever. Some of you may have said, “I wonder whether such a brother will be as peaceful when he is lying on his sick bed, as he used to be when he joined our Sabbath services.”

You go and you will find his peace abounds in the hour of need. Perhaps you hardly expected that another dear friend could bear the loss of his situation, and thus come down, as it were, in the world. But to your amazement he tells you how he is just beginning to learn Habakkuk's song—“Although the fig

tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

The devil cannot rob us of the peace which comes from God, neither can the world take it away. O Christian, what a comfort it is for you to think that if all the powers of darkness should be in arms against you, they cannot destroy your peace which is in Christ Jesus the Lord. Only let God be with you and your peace of mind would still be like a river. It would still be like a sea of glass, which is not to be ruffled at all.

Glorious in deed and in truth is the Christian’s independence. Some Christians call themselves “Independents.” I believe we are all very dependent upon God, and therefore we shall never be Independents in that respect. But at the same time, every Christian is so entirely independent of man when he leans upon his God, that we may every one of us be Independents. We can afford to defy the world to do its best or its worst to stay the tide of our joy, when He causes our peace to flow like a river.

What would some of you give to have such a peace as this—that you could go to bed with peace, and not be afraid of sleeping your last, and wake up with peace fearing no ill. That you could go to business not afraid of evil tidings, because your heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord? What would you give to have a great lump of sunshine put into your bosom, which you might break up and sprinkle over all your days and nights? Yet such peace you shall have if you hearken to God’s commands.

That you have it not is our regret tonight. Alas! alas! for you, that you have not listened to His commandment, which is, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” For if you had hearkened to it, then the blessing would be yours, and the sweet enjoyment thereof would tranquilize your minds while it caused a tide of pleasure to stir up every grateful emotion of your heart.

Time flies, and I am still lingering upon the former of the two figures employed. I must pass on to notice the other figure which is used to express those good things which the sinner has missed—“THY RIGHTEOUSNESS AS THE WAVES OF THE SEA!”

Let us pause a moment, and notice how this metaphor surpasses the previous one in dignity, if not in delicacy. Now we can all see a sort of comparison, and yet at the same time a strong contrast between the water of an inland river and the collection of waters which make up the wide expanse of the sea. One for the most part, is tranquil, the other always heaving and surging to and fro.

So, I suppose, as the words were originally addressed to the Jewish nation and referred to their temporal welfare, the river would represent the beauty and happiness of their own land, like the garden of Eden, watered by the river of God’s pleasure, and the sea, with its waves rolling in majestically one after another in unbroken succession, would set forth that progress which is the renown of righteousness. Generation after generation would witness the rising tide of prosperity. Each chapter of their chronicles would lift its crested plume and tell of mighty acts and righteous deeds, till like the roar of the ocean, the righteousness of Israel should proclaim the name of the Lord from the river even to the ends of the earth.

Oh! what did that rebellious seed of Jacob lose by forsaking the Lord! This seems to me to be something like the meaning. But I want to apply this metaphor of the waves of the sea, like I have that of the flowing of the river, to the happiness of the believer.

Look, dear friends, at this precious doctrine of the Gospel through the glass of that Old Testament symbol. The man who believes in Jesus Christ has the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, that is to say, the obedience of Christ is considered by God as his obedience. So, if I believe in Christ, I am as much beloved and as much accepted as if I had been perfect in a rectitude of my own, for the righteousness of Christ becomes mine. But how is this righteousness like the waves of the sea?

Well, first it is like the waves of the sea for *multitude*. You cannot count the waves of the sea, do what you will. And so is it with the righteousness of Christ, you cannot count its different forms and fashions. Let us tell you of some of these waves. I was born in sin and shapen in iniquity, but Christ is called “that holy thing” which is born of the Virgin and the holiness of Christ’s birth takes away the unholiness of my nativity.

I have committed sins in my childhood, sins against my parents. But Jesus Christ was a child full of the Spirit, and grew in wisdom and in stature, and in favor both with God and man—so Christ's childish perfection is imputed to me and hides my childish sins. I have to mourn over sins of thought because the imaginations and thoughts of my heart are evil. But Christ can say, "Thy law is my delight," and the thoughts of Christ's mind cover my thoughts.

Sins of the tongue you have all had to lament—but grace is poured into *His* lips, and the graciousness of Christ's speech covers the gracelessness of yours. You have had heart-sins, but Christ has had heart-virtues. Your heart is hard, but He could say, "Reproach hath broken my heart." Your heart was cold, but His fervor was constant, till He could say, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."

Your heart was proud, high, and lofty, but Christ was humble and meek. He endured shame and spitting. You have had sins in worship, but Christ purged the temple, and served the Father in perfection, ay, both in Spirit and in truth.

We have sins in private prayer, but the cold mountaintops witnessed the fervor of His supplications. We have sinned against our fellow men, but He loved His neighbor better than Himself. We have many sins against God, but Christ loved the Lord His God with all His heart, and it was His delight to do His Father's business.

Keep on, brethren, keep on. Let the list of your sins be long, but the list of Christ's righteousness will be longer still, for it is like the waves of the sea. What are you—a servant? Well, if you have the sins of a servant, Christ has the virtues of a servant. Are you a master? Your sins as a master are covered by Christ's righteousness as a Master. I am a minister. I feel my imperfection, but my Lord was a perfect shepherd of the flock—as He was a perfect teacher, the perfection of His teachership belongs to me, and I am covered with it.

Oh! what a righteousness is this! It is like the waves of the sea, manifold. All that the Christian can want to satisfy the claims of the divine law is found in the righteousness of Christ. There is a moral grandeur in the picture here—"Righteousness like the waves of the sea."

The righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ is also like the waves of the sea for *majesty*. What an illustration of overwhelming power! There comes the rushing wave. The tide has determined to rise to such and such a point—who can keep it back?

And ask now, beloved, "Who can withstand the power of Christ's righteousness? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Whom Christ hath justified, who shall condemn?" Rise, mighty tide of righteousness, rise on, for none can stay you in your course.

Then it is majestic, because it is *profound*. Who can plumb the depth of the righteousness of Christ?—deep as the demands of the law, deep as the miseries of hell, deep as the thoughts of God. It is majestic, too, because of its ceaseless energy. Sit in the boat, and see the waves as they go rolling by, following each other in endless succession. Never will the sea stop—it boils like a pot.

Now, the righteousness of Christ has a *ceaseless energy*. Wave upon wave, it breaks upon the eternal shore of divine justice, fulfilling the counsels of God, while it covers all the sins of His people. Beloved, that righteousness pleads tonight for every sinner who is resting on it, and it brings to you and to me the countless mercies which we are privileged to enjoy. For majesty, then, the righteousness of Christ is like the waves of the sea.

And the analogy may be traced still further if you reflect on the *sufficiency* of the one and the other. All over the world, at low water, you will find certain muddy creeks, bays, and coves. How are all these to be covered? How will that swamp once more be made to look like a seabed? Who can do it? God can. And there is water enough in the sea to cover every cove and creek. And there is not a river which will have to say "We had no tide today."

O careless hearer, what shall I say to you to commend this righteousness of Christ? You may be the vilest sinner out of hell, but there is enough righteousness in Christ to cover you. For every creek of sin, for every bay of blasphemy, for every cove of infamy, here is a flood which will cover them all. The

high-water mark of complete salvation shall be gained by every child of God. You cannot measure the all-sufficiency of the wave of the sea, much less can you find a gauge by which to estimate the all-sufficiency of the merit of Christ.

Only once more, to make four points here, as we did in interpreting the river. The righteousness of Christ is like the waves of the sea for *origin*. Who is the father of those waves? Out of whose womb came that mighty company? Who is the joyous sire to whom these children may lift up their voices and say, “Here we are”?

“God,” let the torrents roar. “He hath made us, and not we ourselves. The holy hands of God poured us into the channels which He had digged, and here we are, sometimes as a glass, that He may mirror His awful face in tempest, but ever His willing servants and His obedient sons.”

Now the righteousness of Christ comes not from man. No one adds a jot or tittle to it, but it is of the Lord, and the Lord alone. JEHOVAH-tsidkenu bared His mighty arm and stretched it to the work, and with Him there was no man. When He wrought out the salvation of His people, He stood alone without a helper.

“O” says one, “I wish I had that righteousness to cover all my sins and to waft me to heaven!” If you had hearkened to God’s commands, you would have had it. Yes, sinner, if you had believed in Christ, your peace would have been as a river and your righteousness as the waves of the sea. That you have it not is owing to this—that you have not hearkened to God.

I will put it to you very affectionately, but with the utmost faithfulness. When the Gospel has been preached, have you listened attentively? Do you say, “Yes”? We will go farther, then. Have you hearkened in solemn earnestness, desiring that the Word might be blessed to you? Have you hearkened in prayerfulness, crying, “God be merciful to me, a sinner”?

Have you hearkened with willingness, being willing to be obedient? Have you hearkened with resolve, determining to do what was commanded you? Have you hearkened with humility, feeling your own inability, and beseeching the Lord, to help you? Have you hearkened with all the powers of your mind, calling upon your entire being, and saying—“Now, Lord, here is my ear, speak, Lord, for Your servant hears”?

O my friends, you have, many of you, listened to me, but you do not listen to my Master, and even my poor word goes in at one ear and out at the other. You will go chatting home tonight, and you will seek after your amusements tomorrow, and all that the Word might have done will be thrown away upon you. I know how some of you hear—it is always with procrastination. You mean to hear, but you do not give heed with a present anxiety. You do not hear as that clock would bid you, for every tick of it seems to say, “Now, now, now.”

Do any of you remember the loss of that vessel they called the “Central America”? I suppose some of you do. She was in a bad state, she had sprung a leak, and was going down, and she hoisted a signal of distress. A ship came close to her, the captain of which asked, through the trumpet, “What is amiss?” “We are in bad repair, and are going down. Lie by till morning,” was the answer.

But the captain on board the rescue ship said, “Let me take your passengers on board now.” “Lie by till morning!” was the message which came back. Once again, the captain cried, “You had better let me take your passengers on board now.” “Lie by till morning,” was the hoarse reply which came through the tempest.

About an hour and-a-half later, the lights were missing, and though no sound was heard, she and all on board had gone down to the fathomless abyss. Do not say, sinner, “Lie by till morning!” For God’s sake, do not say, “Lie by till morning!” Tonight, even tonight, hear you the voice of God!

O that the Spirit of my God might come upon you and open your ears to hearken to His commandment, for “Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” This is the commandment—“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

To believe, as you know, is to trust. It is, as it were, to fall flat down upon Christ—to let Him carry you to heaven—to put yourself out of your own hands into Christ's hands, to have done with saving yourself, and to believe that He who died upon the cross has perfected your salvation. Trust Him, and if you hearken to His commandment, then your peace shall be as a river and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.

The Lord grant that it may be so, for His name's sake. Amen.

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