

THE CHRISTIAN'S MOTTO

NO. 1165

A SERMON
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"I always do those things that please Him."
 John 8:29.*

OUR Lord Jesus stood alone as the advocate of right and truth in the days when He dwelt among men. It is true He had a few followers, but they were so slow to learn, and so weak in action that they rather *increased* His difficulties than rendered Him assistance. He was a solitary champion in the midst of armies of foes; those foes were powerful, cunning, cruel and exceedingly active, yet He was calm, unmoved, and faced them without fear. He was never put to the blush by them, and never turned His back in retreat. Our Lord was victorious all through the campaign of His ministry; I may say of Him that He went forth conquering and to conquer—and on the cross He gained His crowning victory! Since you, also, will meet with enemies, would you learn to be as calm as He? Since difficulties must beset your pathway, would you possess the same strength as He? Would you, in fact, live as He lived, and finishing your course, would you enter into His joy? Then study well the records of His sublime career, and you will see that the secret of His power was the presence of His God—"He that sent Me is with Me." And the secret of His comfort was fellowship with Jehovah—"He has not left Me alone." If you would know how you can enjoy the presence and fellowship of the Lord—and all the power and comfort which come thereby, the Savior tells you the secret in the following words—"For I always do those things that please Him." If we would have God with us, we must be agreed with Him. "Shall two walk together unless they are agreed?" Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, "He that has My commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves Me, and he that loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21). To do the things which please God is the way to secure His presence and consequent power and happiness.

I shall, at this time, endeavor to set forth the Savior before you all under two aspects—as *the Mediator*, in which office we delight to trust Him, and as the *model*, in which character we endeavor to imitate Him. May the Holy Spirit so illuminate our minds that under both aspects our souls may be greatly blessed as we gaze upon our Lord.

I. First, then, as THE MEDIATOR. He says of Himself, as God-man, the appointed Redeemer, and the sent Son of God, "I always do those things that please Him." This was and is true of our Lord every way. Of His incarnation we read those memorable words—"Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your law is within My heart." In the same psalm He describes Himself as a servant whose ears had been opened or bored that He might be a servant forever. And in another place He says, "He wakens morning by morning; He wakens My ear to hear as the learned." The Son of God was willing to come to earth to do His Father's will, and His birth at Bethlehem was one of the points in which He pleased the Father. He was also doing the things which pleased the Father during His obscure life as the carpenter's Son. We know but little of it, and it is vain, by pencil or tongue, to attempt to paint what Scripture has left beneath the veil of silence. But we know this much of it, that He was about "His Father's business," and that "He grew in favor with God and man." He was the "Holy Child Jesus," and therefore must have done the things which pleased God. At the end of His retirement, when He came forth at 30 years of age, the Father set the seal upon the past as well as bore Witness to the present when He spoke with an *audible* voice from the excellent glory, and said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

His subjection to His earthly parents and His reverent silence till the hour was come to speak were things which pleased the Father. When He entered upon His public and active service He began well, for

He commenced, by an act of which He said, "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness." It was at His baptism that the Father expressed His pleasure in Him, and the Spirit descended upon Him. His baptism was an emblem and a type of the perfect obedience which He intended to render—it set forth His immersion into depths of suffering, His sinking in death and burial, His rising again from the tomb, and His ascension into heaven for us. Doubtless, all these are to be seen by the *spiritual* eye in the symbolic rite practiced in Jordan's waves. Blessed are they who follow the Lamb where ever He goes! Immediately after this our Lord was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where He was tempted of the devil. His going there and His threefold victory over the tempter were well-pleasing to God. Did not Jehovah send His angels to minister to Him? And what was this but a token that He had pleased God by defeating the arch-enemy? Throughout His life our Lord was always acceptable to God, and fulfilled in very deed that ancient word of the prophet Isaiah, in his 42nd chapter, at the 21st verse, in which he spoke and said, "The Lord is well-pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the law and make it honorable."

He magnified the *ceremonial* law by coming under it, and observing it until the time when it passed away. He magnified the *moral* law, for He obeyed every precept—both of the first and of the second table—and could say to all His accusers, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" He was perfect in all His ways! There is not one action upon which a question can be raised by any candid observer as to the exactness of its justice, and its full conformity to the perfect law of right and love. He always did the things which pleased God, and He had God's attestation of this—for though the splendor of His Godhead was veiled when He dwelt here, yet gleams of it burst forth here and there; as if the Father would let men know that the lowly Mediator was still great with God! See Him on Tabor where He was transfigured, and you see how the Father loved Him! It was the man Christ Jesus who there talked with Moses and Elijah, while Peter, James and John were eyewitnesses of His Majesty, of which Peter has written—"For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with Him in the holy mount." It is clear, then, that the glory of our Lord was looked upon by the apostles as a token of the Father's love to Him. Listen, also, to that voice which answered Him out of heaven when He prayed, "Father, glorify Your name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

The miracles also proved His acceptableness with God, for they were not only evidences of His own power, but tokens of His Father's good pleasure. And therefore, Peter, in his famous sermon spoke in this fashion, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know." Everywhere the Father gave forth signs that He had not left Him alone, but was with Him, because He did His will. As a servant, for our sakes, He pleased not Himself, but allowed the zeal of His Father's house to eat Him up; from the first day in which He spoke to John at the Jordan, to the day in which He was taken up into His glory, He always did the things that pleased God. His death, which was His own voluntary act, was the most pleasing of all, if there could be degrees where all was perfect. He was, indeed, all-pleasing to the Father when rising up from supper He said, "Let us go hence," and He went without a murmur to be "obedient to death, even the death of the cross." That bloody sweat in Gethsemane, when He conquered nature's fears, and took the cup of trembling, saying, "Not as I will, but as You will"—was not that the doing of the things which pleased God? Do you not remember that notable saying of the prophet, "It pleased the Father to bruise Him"? There was a divine satisfaction given to the Father in the willing, the submissive, the believing, and the triumphant pangs of Jesus!

On Calvary He was pressed with grief beyond measure, yet He did not fail to bear all the pleasure of the Lord in silent submission—a submission which must have greatly pleased the Lord. On the cross He was tried as gold in the furnace, but no dross was found in Him. On the accursed tree the stress of the world's sin lay on Him, and yet He did not wish to depart from the enterprise which He had undertaken till He had been obedient to the Father and accomplished all His will, even to the endurance of death itself! He always did the things which pleased God. Having already made the text encompass parts of our Lord's work which were subsequent to the time when He uttered it, I shall push on yet further, for I have facts beneath my feet, and I would remind you that our Lord still always does those things that please God. It pleased God that He should ascend and sit at His right hand; it pleased God that there He should

be our forerunner, preparing our heavenly mansions for us. He is accepted, we know, for we also are "accepted in the beloved." It is the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom, and therefore it is His pleasure that our divine representative should take the kingdom on our behalf. The intercession of Jesus is always sweet with God. The Father always hears Him—and hears us, also, when we plead His name!

And when He shall, "so come in like manner as He went up to heaven"; when He shall, "take to Himself His great power and reign"; and when on the clouds of heaven He shall appear to judge the quick and dead, He will still always do the things which please God! Yes, let me say it joyfully, the saving works of Jesus are lovely in the Father's eyes! Whenever our Lord Jesus says to a sinner, "I absolve you," it pleases God; whenever the Savior calls a wanderer to Himself, and draws Him to holiness by the attractions of His love, it pleases God. What else is meant by the passage, "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied"? It is the pleasure of God that sinners should find a complete Savior in Jesus. The Father has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but had rather that he should turn unto Him and live, but there is joy in the heart of God Himself over sinners that repent! Sheep brought back to the fold are rejoiced over by Him of whom we sing, "We are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand." Prodigals leaving their riotous living are pressed to the Father's bosom and cause pleasure to the soul of the benign deity. Oh, returning sinners, you have not to ask Christ to appease the Father, for the Father, Himself, loves you, and your salvation gives Him joy! As for the benefit which Christ bestows upon saints, the matchless blessings which He has received as "gifts for men," and scatters among His people—these all please the Father. It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell and it pleases Him when of His fullness we receive grace for grace. Oh, brothers and sisters, if you are rich in divine grace, you are not rich with gifts which the Father grudges! And if you shall ask for more, it is your Father's good pleasure that you should have them! Receive them freely, for He freely gives! Delight yourself in them, for the Father delights to see you partaking of His Son's abundance! Be of good courage, sinners, when you come with empty hands, and be of good courage, you impoverished saints, when you come with hungry mouths, for Jesus Christ, in giving freely, will only do what pleases the Father!

I feel greatly comforted by this text when I think that whatever Christ has done and is doing pleases God. The gospel, which is the sum and substance of the doings of Jesus, is always acceptable with God. It is a sweet savor unto God in every place; it delights the Father that Jesus Christ should be preached. I have often thought when I have been extolling my Lord and Master, "Well, if not a soul in the place yields itself to Jesus, nevertheless, thanks be unto God who always causes us triumph in every place, for we are unto God a sweet savor, as well in them that perish as in them that are saved!" If Christ is preached, a sweet oblation is presented—sweeter than the incense of Araby, and it delights the Most High more than costly frankincense! As of old He smelled a "sweet savor of rest" when Noah brought the victim and laid it on the altar, so when Christ is lifted up, God takes pleasure in Him, and delights when men glorify His Son.

Thus I have spoken very feebly about our Lord Jesus as the Mediator. Neither man nor angel can fitly set Him forth—He is too fair, too perfect for description! Earth cannot show His rival or heaven His equal! He is good and only good! All glory to His name! He has glorified the Father, and He can say to the fullest, "I always do those things that please Him."

II. Now, brothers and sisters, we have stern work to do. We have not merely to look, but we have to be *transformed* as we look. We are now to behold our Lord as THE MODEL and to copy His example. Truly we shall need the Spirit of God to hold our hand or we shall never write according to such a copy as He has set us! It is the business of every Christian to be able to say, "I always do those things which please Him." Come, believers, and lovingly muse upon our Lord Jesus as our model! Here at the outset let me remind you that this will imply that we are rendered pleasing to God. Remember that as long as a man, himself, is obnoxious to God, everything he does is also obnoxious; from a sinner comes nothing but sin—an evil tree brings forth evil fruit; a foul fountain pours forth polluted waters. It is vain, therefore, to think, any one of you that you can do anything that is pleasing to God till, first of all, you, yourselves, are reconciled unto Him! The way of reconciliation is only by Jesus Christ. When your persons are pleasing, your works will be pleasing, but until you are personally acceptable to God through Jesus Christ everything that you do is displeasing—and even those things which you *think* to be virtues are

only, as Augustine called them—"splendid sins," mere glittering dross, lacking the essential purity and preciousness of the pure gold of love.

Paul says, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." And again He says, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him"—impossible—whatever is thought, attempted, or done by you! Even acts of *religion* are only pretentious forms of sin until the nature is renewed, the heart changed, and the man, himself, washed in the blood of Christ, and covered with His righteousness. Therefore, I shall have to speak entirely and only to those who have been, by the redemption and righteousness of Christ, made pleasing to God. And I hope that they, having obtained the major blessing of personal acceptance, will press forward for the further blessing of sanctification, that they may always do the things which please their gracious God. In pleasing God there is implied an avoiding of all things which would displease Him. We cannot say we, "always do the things which please Him" unless we earnestly renounce the follies which vex His Holy Spirit. Now, you know what the works of the flesh are, and those, as defiled garments, are to be put off that we may go in unto the wedding in the new garment. Like leaven they are to be swept out of the house that we may keep the paschal feast; we must put off and lay aside all pride, whether it is the pride of talent, the pride of self-righteousness, the pride of wealth, the pride of dress, the pride of rank, or the pride of spiritual attainments, for even a haughty *word* is detestable with God! Among the things which the Lord hates we find prominently mentioned a proud look; if a proud *look* is His abomination, what must pride, itself, be?

It is written, "The Lord resists the proud." This implies that their views and designs are contrary to His own, and He sets Himself to oppose them; He carries on continual war with Pharaohs and Senacheribs; the moment He sees a man great in his own esteem, He resolves to bring him down, as He did the boastful monarch of Babylon. He lifts up those that are bowed down, but He casts down the mighty from their seats! If we are proud, we cannot do that which pleases God; in fact, we cannot please Him at all! Sloth is another vice which the Lord abhors. He calls the idle servant in the parable, "You wicked and slothful servant." "He that knows his master's will and does it not, the same shall be beaten with many stripes." "He that knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin." God is not pleased with those who are idle, wasters of their talents and their time; even though they may plead that they are gentle folks and have no need to labor. An idle nobleman is as much to be blamed as an idle farmer! Christians, if you always do the things that please God, you must be diligent servants—He takes no delight in sluggards and those who are lovers of ease. God is not pleased with unwatchfulness, careless walking, indifference to His commands, or neglect of cleansing the heart. Those virgins, who were not thoughtful, forgot to take oil in their vessels with their lamps, and in consequence, their lamps went out and they could not enter the marriage feast with the bride. Beloved, you must walk carefully, earnestly, zealously with God, or you cannot please Him. He is a jealous God, and we must jealously watch even our *thoughts*, or we shall soon offend Him!

Neither is He pleased with anger, which is not only, as far as we are concerned, a temporary insanity, but as God judges it, it is murder! He that is of a quick and hasty spirit; he that bears ill will against another; he that seeks revenge is not acceptable with God. To a God of love, malice is abominable! He would have us do good as He does, and spread happiness all around as He does. Cross, crabbed, morose natures do not please the Lord! Unkind husbands, fractious wives, rebellious children, and domineering parents are far from pleasing Him. God cannot smile upon oppression, craftiness, greed, or the grinding of the poor. Neither is "covetousness, which is idolatry," pleasing with God. He that is covetous, angers the great giver of all good, whose liberal soul cannot endure churls and misers. The same is true of all worldliness; the lust of the eyes; the lust of the flesh; the pride of life—these are things which God condemns! In them He has no pleasure whatever! O you believers, I pray you purge yourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit! And as for the deeds of darkness, have no fellowship with them, but rather reprove them! Come out from among them, be you separate, touch not the unclean thing, and then you will please your heavenly Father. God is equally displeased with unbelief; doubts of His power, His love, His faithfulness. Trembling lest He should not keep His promise, lest, after all, His word should fail—this is not pleasing in His sight! Neither is it pleasing to Him that good men should be cumbered with much serving and should complain of the labor of His service—He would not have His servants think Him a hard Master! Brothers and sisters, He would have us serve Him with joyfulness; free from

care because we cast our care upon Him; free from fear because we wholly confide in Him. Above all, He would have us free from murmuring—"Neither murmur you as they also murmured, who were destroyed of the destroyer." His dear Son was free from everything of this kind, and as He was, so are you, also, in this world—therefore closely copy Him, and lay aside all these evil things by the help of His Holy Spirit.

Here is the place to say that it should be our intent and earnest design to please the Lord. We shall not do this by accident—we must give our whole souls to the work and labor mightily. No arrow reaches this target if the bow is drawn at a venture—the heart must aim with earnest intent and vehement desire. May the Holy Spirit work in us to will after this fashion—and then in due time we shall be sure that He will work in us, also, to do of His good pleasure! We will continue the same strain but touch another key. Note attentively that the text does not deal with negatives, though it implies them. Christ did not say, "I do *not* the things which *displease* Him," but He said, "I *always do* those things that please Him." The sentence is positive and practical, relating to actual deeds, and not to negatives. We must copy our Master in all the practical virtues—and what a model He is! What a pattern He has set before us! Brethren, what was the most conspicuous thing in the life of Christ? I cannot tell you—*everything* is so conspicuously admirable! There is a harmony, a blending of every virtue in the life of Christ so that you can scarcely put your finger upon one thing, and say, "This was superior to the rest." But if there *is* some excellent things more marked than others, one of them is prayerfulness! How continually do we read, "As He was praying," or, "As He was praying in a certain place," or, "Every man went to his own home, and Jesus went to the Mount of Olives." We are told that He spent whole nights in prayer upon the mountainside—He was always in communion with God! God speaking out of heaven to Him was not a strange thing, for Christ was always speaking up into heaven to His Father! Do you the same! It cannot please the great Father for His child not to speak to Him by the hour together, and to be indifferent to Him—to give Him no word, either of request or of thanksgiving! Alas, I fear some professors seldom speak with their heavenly Father in spirit and in truth! If we fail here, we certainly fail in one of the things which please Him.

Next in Christ's life, one of the more prominent qualities, was His love—His love to God. We ought to love God with all our hearts, and spend and be spent for His glory. It must be our meat and drink to do the will of Him that sent us, and to finish His work if we are to do the things which please Him. But our great exemplar also showed the warmest love to *men*. How He pitied the fallen! With what tenderness He spoke to sinners! How gently did He warn! How sweetly did He woo! Brethren, we must be gentle, too. That which is hard and domineering savors more of the princes of the Gentiles than of the lowly Lamb—we must put it away! Like our Master and Lord, we must wash the disciples' feet, and bear one another's burdens. Gently, kindly, tenderly, we must labor for the good of all, and not consider ourselves. This is to do the things which please God. If we would follow Christ, we must practice self-denial, for He "pleased not Himself." It should be said of us as of Him, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." Did you ever, in anything, find Christ making provision for Himself? Can you discern a speck of selfishness in His nature? There is a crown before Him, but He will not have it—yet He longs to see *us* crowned! What does He care about being made a king? His joy is that the Lord reigns! He felt it better to obey His Father than to sit on a throne! Oh that we might catch His spirit! The life of Christ is peculiar, too, from its separateness from sinners. He was *with* sinners—He ate and drank with them; he went to their marriage feasts, and sat at their banquets; but He was as distinct from them as the sun from the ash-heap upon which it shines! He was outside the camp in *Spirit*, even when He was *in* it in person; He bore reproach all His life, and last of all bore it up to Calvary. We, too, must be different from other men—not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds.

It is folly to be singular except when to be singular is to be right—and then we must be bravely singular for Christ's sake! And in the lonely path of holy nonconformity we shall find Jesus more near than ever we knew Him to be in the whole course of our lives! I cannot enlarge here. The picture is so beautiful that merely to dwell upon a touch or two of the pencil is to give you no idea of the matchless perfection of the work. *Be as He was!* Copy Him as disciples should copy their Master! Furthermore, my dear brothers and sisters, if you want to know what things please God, let me refer you to one or two passages of Scripture. David says in the 69th P^{salm}, the 30th verse, "I will praise the name of God with a song,

and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. This, also, shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that has horns and hoofs." The apostle says in Hebrews 13:16, "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased." Let us, then, constantly praise God! Let us have hymns in store for moments when we can sing, and thoughts in store for moments when the tongue must be silent—but when the heart may yet sing aloud unto the Most High. Bless the Lord, for whoever offers praise glorifies Him! A thankful spirit is always pleasing to God; therefore cultivate it and shake off, as you would shake off a viper from your hand, the spirit of murmuring against the Most High! Yonder thankful, humble, poor woman may please God better than the most talented minister who is evermore complaining of the dispensations of God!

John tells us in his first Epistle, 3rd chapter and 22nd verse that we are to "do those things that are pleasing in His sight," and he adds, "This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another." Faith, therefore, is one of the pleasing graces. We read of Enoch that, "before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him." Love to the brethren is another of the graces which please God. He would have us love His people, care for the poor, relieve those that are sick, and cheer those who are cast down. Brothers and sisters, if you would please the Lord, put aside all petty jealousies, and labor to prevent disunion, for brotherly love is one of the most pleasing sights which the Father of Mercies sees. It is as the dew of Hermon, as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore! Read, furthermore, in Colossians the 1st chapter, from the 10th verse, a long list of excellences. "That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." So you see, you sufferers, your resignation to the divine will, your patience under a smarting rod—these are all well-pleasing to God! And these and all the other graces of the Spirit are the things, which, through Jesus Christ, are pleasing in His sight!

Now, note particularly this, that these things must be actually done. "I DO," says Christ, "those things which are pleasing." It will not suffice to *talk* about them, or to even *pray* about them; they must be done. Do not merely feel charmed with a virtue, and fascinated with a duty—but go and actually carry it out! Let not the purpose be strangled in its birth, but let it be born into actual being. There is a word in the text which is a hard one to put in practice—"always"—"I always do those things that please Him." It will not suffice to say, "I do the things that please God when I go out to worship." I hope you do, but the Christian must aim to say, "I *always* do." At home, husband, there must be such a discharge of your relationship, that as a husband and as a father you please God. My good sister, it must be as a wife and a mother that you please God. In all those relationships, at all times, you must act as in His sight; true religion is perhaps better tested at the fireside than anywhere else. What a man is at home, that he is, and though he is a saint abroad, if he is a devil at *home*—you may depend upon it that the last is his real character! At the same time, we must not think that our religion ends at home; I do not suppose we shall, but if we do we are mistaken—we must *always* do the things that please the Lord! There must not be, at any moment about our Christian career, anything we should not like God to see, for He *does* see! Neither must we be where we would not like Christ to find us; neither must we even *think* as we would not have Jesus know that we think! This is a high standard, but our Lord Jesus Christ sets it before us, and it is not for us to alter the pattern which He has given—"I always do," He says—"the things that please Him." Are there not many things, dear friends, which you have done in former times which you will not do again, now that you have been reminded of your failings? There are many things which certain Christian people leave undone, which they will attend to at once if they realize the full meaning of this text—"I always do the things that please Him." *Always!*

I have known some persons take a holiday from Christ's service sometimes. They say, "Once a year, surely, one may indulge." What would you do if you might be indulged? Because whatever you would do if you had your own way is the best test of your heart. If holiness is slavery, then depend upon it, you are the slave of sin! When I have heard of Christian men attending doubtful amusements as an occasional treat, I have seen at once which way their hearts went—they evidently loved the pleasures of sense

better than spiritual joys! Where either a man's pleasure or treasure is, there his *heart* is—and whatever gives you the most pleasure is really your god! To be flattered is the greatest delight of many—their god is themselves! “To make money is my greatest delight,” says one. Then the golden calf is your god! Whatever is your greatest joy and treasure, that is your heaven and your God—and if you do not find the greatest pleasure in the things of God, then you do not know what the new life means—and neither will you ever know the pleasures which are at God's right hand!

Dear brothers and sisters, I beseech all of you to notice that by always doing the things which please God, the Holy Spirit enabling us to do so, we shall enjoy and retain the presence of the Father. “He that sent Me is with Me, He has not left Me alone, for I always do those things which please Him.” Do you complain that you do not enjoy fellowship with God? Do you tell me that the joys of religion have not been yours for many a day? Do you come with long faces, and complain that you find the way to heaven very rough? God has a controversy with your souls; there is some hidden evil within, or some evil habit which does not please Him! Is not that hint of mine enough for you without my pressing it? Does not your tender conscience say, “I will examine myself; I will ask God to search me, and I will solemnly promise to Him—

*‘The dearest idol I have known,
Whate’er that idol be,
Shall now be dashed from off its throne
That I may come to Thee.’”*

Let no pleasurable sin become an image of jealousy to provoke the Lord our God! As you love the Lord, and I know you do; as you would not grieve your crucified Master, ask Him to search you, and see if there is any evil way in you, *and deliver you from it*—that you may always do the things which are pleasing in His sight! Furthermore, by so doing, we shall not only have communion with God, but we shall be girded with His strength. “He that sent Me is with Me.”

What is the reason why some workers for God do not succeed? They cannot succeed—it is not possible—for they are in an evil case! Here is a man trying to build a wall with a broken arm; he makes slow progress, for he can hardly lift a brick into its place. Here is another man trying to run a race while he is lame in his feet—he will be far behind when the winner passes the goal. Here is a man trying to leap whose every muscle is weak—he would be more at home in an infirmary! Personal *spiritual health* is essential to vigorous, successful, Christian effort! And that health depends upon our living near to God. If we do that which is pleasing in God's sight, the Lord will be with us in our work—but only if we strive to always do what pleases Him! Suppose a minister to have been living through the week a careless, prayerless life—he may preach his best, but as he is not a vessel fit for the Master's use, he may not reckon upon being used by the Lord. If the Sunday school teacher goes to her class after indulging in light conversation, or in an angry temper—is there any wonder that souls are not converted by her teaching? If the city missionary does not find souls blessed in his district, need he wonder, when upon looking within he sees a cold heart, and upon looking without he sees a negligent life? A mother wonders that her children are not saved, and yet it would be a far greater wonder if they were, when her general conduct and spirit are taken into consideration! A father has been astonished that his boys have not turned out Christians, while everyone except himself can see that it would have been a thousand miracles if they had become religious, for their father's religion is of that sour, melancholy, rigid, frigid, unlovely type that you could not suppose anybody could like unless they had a partiality for sour grapes and bitter aloes! We must get rid of the things that displease God if we are to be useful! And when that is done, *then* shall we be able to say, “He that sent Me is with Me; the Father has not left Me alone.”

Now I close, and closing I ask you—is this too high a model for you? Would you prefer an example which would let you abide content in a measure of sin? I hear many say, “I love Christ,” but their love does not make them imitate the Lord! I fear that they do not know Him, and if they did, they would not love Him, but would think Him a deal too precise and self-denying! There is such a thing as loving a Christ of our *imagination*—not the Christ of the New Testament whose character is absolute perfection! Do you love the *holy* Jesus? If you do, then I am sure you do not think His character too elevated, or His example too pure. No, you say, “Lord, I love this holy living; I only wish I could, in all things, copy it. Oh, for more holiness! Grant it to me!” Do you think it is impossible to act as Jesus did? Then I must

ask you another question: Do you think the Holy Spirit has not yet come, or do you conceive that the Holy Spirit is deficient in power; so that He can only lead men up to a certain point and must, there, necessarily cease working? Do you not believe that all things are possible with Him? Do you not believe that all things are possible to him that believes? I grant you that men do not live as my text requires, and that the most of professors do not even *try* to do so—but the fault is in themselves, not in the Holy Spirit! He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think!

Somebody asked me the other day whether I thought Christians could be quite perfect, and, I have no doubt, expected a long pompous speech from me! But I cut him short, for my secret thought was, “Well, you are a fine fellow to be asking such a question, for there is no danger of *your* coming anywhere near that condition!” That question from most men is about as consistent as if a beggar should come to my door for bread, and then request to see me. I go to the door, and he says, “Sir, I have a very difficult question to put to you; do you think every man in England might make his fortune and be worth a million of money?” What a question for a man in rags to agitate! Surely he might put off that inquiry till he is worth two pence, himself, and can pay for his night’s lodging! I say to him, “My good fellow, you are not at all in danger of becoming too rich, and have no need to raise questions about millions. Get out of your rags, and make yourself commonly decent before you puzzle your head over that.” It is too early for most professors to be discussing the higher life and entire sanctification. They are like babies taking the measure of giants. I am sick of seeing a set of beggarly professors, whose poverty of divine grace is manifest to everybody but themselves, shaking their heads at those good brothers who preach up a high standard of grace! They need be under no alarm about growing too devout, too prayerful, or too holy! They may go a long way before they will be mistaken for perfect! I do not believe in a great deal which our modern perfectionists say about themselves—and I should think a deal more of them if they thought less of themselves—but at the same time I labor under no dread as to any of them becoming too good! Nor dare I set up a lower object of sanctified aspiration than that which Jesus has set before us in the command, “Be you perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Have you failed to do as the text says? Then grieve over it! Do you wish to do as Jesus did? Then He will help you, for He works mightily with us! commit yourself unto His teaching; give yourself up to the purifying power of His Spirit, and He will bear you up to heights of divine grace and glories of character which you have never thought you could reach—but which, when you reach them, will not puff you up, for you will feel compelled to cry, “Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name give praise!” If we have done all, we are unprofitable servants—we have only done that which it was our *duty* to have done—and therefore unto grace shall be the praise through the precious blood of Christ, forever and ever! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 14.

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