

A Night in a Counting-House — Miscalculation.

Luke 12: 13-21; Acts 2: 37.

Night Scenes of Scripture

Seventeen Bible Night Scenes, illustrating and elucidating various truths of the Gospel.

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Chapter 15.

A Night in a Counting-House — Miscalculation.

The scripture in which this passage occurs, which I have now read to you from Luke 12, is a very remarkable and a very blessed one. The Lord has gathered round about Himself a large company, and is unfolding principles of immense value to His own people. He is telling them what would be the effect of His going away. The loss of His presence as a living Messiah here upon the earth would very likely be this, that those who followed Him would get into trouble and persecution. But He encourages them. He warns them against hypocrisy, covetousness, and careflessness. He cures these evils, which are so apt to afflict the heart of man, in a wonderful way.

Hypocrisy He cures by telling them that everything is going to come out. That is the beginning of the chapter. Everything is going to come out, so I had better be transparent now. I may wear a cloak before men, but God will take that cloak off sooner or later. The Lord says here that there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed neither hid, that shall not be known" (ver. 2). Then the Lord passes on to unveil blessings and heavenly principles of the deepest importance to the souls of His followers, but in the midst of His discourse He is suddenly interrupted by one of the company saying to him, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me" (ver. 13). The Lord wanted their hearts and affections, but, beloved friends, man's heart — your heart and mine — unless grace reaches it, is always occupied with earth.

Suddenly this man breaks into the midst of this most earnest discourse, and says, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." The man thought he had not got enough for earth. He had not yet enough of what he would like for time. He did not get his rights, perhaps. To that Jesus replies, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" Did He come to judge? No. Did He come to save? He did. Did He come to divide the things of this earth? No. He came to win the heart for heaven. He came to unfold the love of God. He came to reveal God

— to bring light into the darkness, and life to the dead, and peace to the troubled. He came to bring heavenly riches — true, abiding, eternal riches. Who has them here tonight? Have you?

The Lord's reply here is to be well noted. "Man," He says, "who made me a judge or a divider over you?" And He said unto them, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (ver. 15). I believe that to be a most important, a most salutary word for us all. I mean it is a word we all need, and to which we should all pay heed, The Lord feels the value of it, and says, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness." And what is covetousness? Well, it is the desire to acquire what I have not got — the desire to gather and build up — to gather together round myself. You see it is the principle of the world. It is a danger for the Christian, also, and therefore the Lord says to His own, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness."

It is not the question merely of getting a thing wrongly. No, that is not the point. It is this. In the heart of man there is a sort of determination to acquire. Acquisitiveness belongs naturally to the human heart, which occupies itself with the things of time — the things of sense — the things of this life; and, concerning these things, the Lord says, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

Now, I pray you mark that word, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Well, you say, what does his life consist in? That is a very serious question. What does your life consist in? Is Christ your life? You know what Paul said, "For me to live is Christ." That was life indeed, according to God, for "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," but in having Christ as an object and motive. The Lord reads our hearts very simply. He knows the danger of acquisitiveness to the human heart, whether it be the heart of the unconverted man, or the heart of one of His own people, and in this plain and simple way He unfolds the truth, and we do well to take heed to it.

Using this man's request as a sort of text — for the Lord, in the course of His service here, uses the very interruptions that unbelief and the flesh would intrude into His gracious ministry, as opportunities for unfolding the truth, and for bringing out the light that might meet the conscience, and awaken the soul that was buried in the things of this life — He now speaks a parable to His hearers: "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully." Observe he was a rich man. He was a prosperous man. I suppose he was a man whom we might regard as a gentleman farmer. He was a landed proprietor clearly. As the possessor of his own land, he could pull down his barns, as he proposes to do, and rebuild them. He had undisputed right over that which he was going to reconstruct. He was also a rich man. Most men like to be rich! I do not say all, for some do not care for riches. This man no doubt was well known in the neighbourhood, perhaps looked up to; well known in the market of the neighbouring town, and looked upon as a clever, sagacious, prosperous, and opulent man.

Now we reach a point in his career when he is doing uncommonly well as regards his temporal affairs. He had had a beautiful and propitious seed-time. It had passed over, and had been succeeded by a good growing time. Now harvest time had come, and the earth had yielded her increase in a marvellous manner. There had been no biting east winds in the spring, and no late frosts to spoil his crops. Refreshing showers had fallen as they were needed. The sun had

ripened his corn, and the earth had been most prolific, so that as he thinks of the state of his crops, he does not know what to do with the goods with which God has surrounded him.

Clearly from the circumstances described here, he must have been in his counting-house cogitating what he should do. "And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?" You say, What part of the building was his counting-house? I believe it was his bed. That is a splendid place in which to think. There is no better time for thinking than just ere your eyelids close in sleep, or when you awake through the hours of the night.

Friend, will you think, when next you are in your bed, of where you are going to spend your eternity? Ere you close your eyelids in slumber tonight, let me ask you, will you think seriously of where you will spend eternity? What views have you for eternity? How will you spend it? What is your relation to God? If this should be the last night of your life where will you spend eternity? Think on these things. Ponder them. They are worthy of consideration.

But these were not the subjects of grave consideration with the rich man on that night. He thought within himself, saying, "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?" All his barns were crammed to the roof. His storehouses were filled to bursting. He knew not where to put the incoming goods, with which God had so richly blessed him. What a strange thing, you say. Were there no poor round about to whom he might minister? Was there no Lazarus at his door? Were there no needy ones on all hands? Ah, my friends, these things did not disturb him, for the man lived only for himself; and have not you, friend, till now? The centre and pivot round which he circled was self. He was self-surrounded, self-governed, and self-indulgent, I do not doubt.

Now as he says, "What shall I do," a wonderful scheme opens up before his mind. Does it concern the poor and the needy on every hand to whom he could give the surplus? Ah, no, that is not the thought. "And he said, This will I do; I will pull down my barns, and build greater." Before his mind's eye, in the darkness of that night, as he lay there, what does he see? The old barns removed, the old granaries set aside, and the ground cleared. He has fixed upon his architect. He has got the measurements and plans before his mind's eye, and he sees pile after pile of palatial storehouses rise, and into these greater barns he already sees the goods which God was giving him, stored and packed away, for "there," he now says, "I will bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

Now, my friends, tell me, did you ever hear such a soliloquy? Have you ever put yourself beside this man? I daresay many of you have not gone exactly the same road, but you have planned out your future for not a little while. You have determined what you will do next, and next, and so forth. Perhaps some of it has come to pass. God has let you increase in the things of this life, and you have got on, as this man no doubt had got on, and here you are tonight. But stop, what about the salvation of your soul? What about that which is due to the Lord? What about the claims of the Lord? Ah! the Lord has been left out entirely. God has had no place, no part in the plan. God has not been in your thoughts. So it was with this man.

Take a good look at him as he says, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." I think I see him as he closes his eyelids. A smile of placid contentment has come over his face as he says, Soul, I have arranged everything satisfactorily, and have made provision for many years. Think of it! "For many years." Eternity he left out of his calculations entirely. How many are like him? There was a man living last Sunday night, and was arranging for things to go on far into the future; but yesterday he was buried. Many a man has gone into eternity since this night week unprepared — unconverted — unblest — unsaved, because unbelieving and unregenerate.

Look at the folly, the audacity of this worldling, spreading himself out for the future! Sinner, see thyself. See the guilt of this lost soul, as with untouched conscience, and in disregard of God he says, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years;" — "much goods!" — "many years!" — "Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Watch him closely, and note what happens. His eye closes, and he passes into slumber, contented with all, looking forward to a great future of "many years" of carnal enjoyment.

But that night an unwelcome visitor intrudes on the scene. He does not expect him. No, he is an unexpected, unwanted, unlooked-for visitor; and you say, Who is it? Ah! it is death. He wakes with the dew of death upon his brow; and he hears the voice of God saying to his guilty and godless soul, "Fool." What wakes him? The voice of God. Oh, man, may it wake you tonight! Sinner, may it wake you now! And what does God say to this unsaved, selfish soul, who has got his plans for the future so well laid? "Fool!"

Young man, you have sketched out your life, have you not? Listen. God speaks: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Oh, my friends, what a change that word effects! What amazement takes possession of that man's soul! His eyes are closed, but, as he listens, he hears the voice of God, saying, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" My dear friend, God may so speak to thee this night. But, thank God, you are yet in the land of the living; and if you are only thinking of the future for this life, may God cause you to hear His own blessed voice speaking to your soul, and also cause everything to give way to this momentous question — What is the state of your soul, and where will you spend eternity?

You may have a lease of your house; but you have no lease of your life. Your soul belongs to God, and this night, if God says the word, the soul will go back to God. But what about that soul? Is it still steeped in sin? Is it yet black in iniquity, or is it washed in the blood of the Saviour? Let me inquire most affectionately and earnestly. Let me implore you now to hear the word of God. Do not fall into the devil's trap, as did this poor man. I label this scene MISCALCULATION, because I cannot get any better word to describe what is true of many souls today. It is a scene of downright miscalculation. Why? Because the man was making his plans, and all along he left God out, and nothing came to pass as he had planned. Oh! sinner, you too have left God out. I know you have your plans as to what you are going to do tomorrow. Possibly the new house you are about to build, the new business you are going into, the new situation you have got, wholly engage your attention, and you have made your plans for a good long time to come — "many years," in fact. "Much goods" to be enjoyed, and "many years" to be spent in their enjoyment, was what the rich farmer pictured to himself, and the next thing he

found was that he was in hell. He passed from time into eternity. The last word he heard upon earth, was the word of God addressed to him, "Thou fool! "

What kind of a fool was he? Scripture speaks of many classes of fools. He was the representative of a very large class of fools that live in the world today. They must be called the eternity-neglecting fools. There are many such fools in this town, and some of them are in this hall tonight. I mean you, my friend, *you!* You know it yourself. You are not saved. You are not converted. I suppose the interests of your immortal soul have not given you ten serious moments of consideration all your life. You have occupied all your time with getting on, and enjoying yourself in this world. Your aim has been to get a place in the world. Yes, you say, but we must work. I know that, and I conclude that this man was not born, as men say, with a silver spoon in his mouth. I suppose he had to work hard, and the blessing of the Lord was with him. But what took place then? He did not acknowledge God. He did not turn round to God in thankfulness. He had no sense of the expression of God's love towards him. He had no sense of the goodness of God. He was not rich toward God, as the giver of every good.

Now, you may think it a serious charge that I lay against you. It is not I. I do not lay it. "So is he," says the Lord, "that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." I remember perfectly well a servant of God speaking from this chapter some two and thirty years ago. I shall never forget a little sentence that dropped from his lips, as he came to this part of the chapter. "I suppose, my friends," he said, "there is not one here tonight, but would rather have a ten-pound note than a five-pound note. Yes, and God says, 'Thou fool.'" Weighty words were these, and should speak to you, if you are not content with what the Lord has given you.

But now tell me, What shall a man gain if he lose his own soul? Is your soul saved? That is the question. Have you yet learnt the value of that soul, because "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" It is really the most important part of you. It is the invaluable part of you. You take care of the body. You clothe it, feed it, keep it out of danger, and out of the way of disease. Why, if you thought there was any infectious disease within a house, would you enter it? Ah, no! A lady said to me the other day, "I went up to see So-and-so, but she was ill with influenza." "And did you go in?" I asked. "Oh, no, not for the world would I go in; I might catch it and die." Yes, people take care of the body, but what about your soul, friend? Jesus said, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8: 37;) and this man said to his soul, Soul, you have a good long time yet on earth, many years of enjoyment shall be yours; but that night God said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." And what became of his "much goods," and of his "many years," and, above all, what became of his soul?

What a frightful upset to all his plans, and all his schemes, was God's "Thou fool." Do you not see your own case, my friend, in this man's history? Ah, you say, I have not yet gone into eternity. Thank God, you have not! If you were a wise man tonight you would get down on your knees in this hall, and thank God that you are yet among the living. "O God," you would say, "I thank Thee that I am living yet. Lord, save me; Lord, bless me; Lord, save my soul. I have thought of my body, and my comfort; thought of my banker's account, and of my house. I have thought about everything, in fact, except my soul, and Thee. Lord, pardon, and save me!"

Ah, my beloved friend, God give you tonight to be awakened, and from this hour to turn round to Himself. God give you to know the importance and value of your priceless, immortal soul. Say, where wilt thou spend eternity, when God speaks the word that will snap the slender cord of thy life here? Where wilt thou spend that eternity? Dost thou know God? Dost thou know the Saviour? Dost thou know forgiveness? Hast thou the heavenly riches? Hast thou possessed thyself of Him, whom to know is life eternal? If you have only got what this poor man had, some of the goods of this life, which he could not take with him, then you are a poor man indeed. Some people think it a great thing to get in amongst the rich — "the poor rich" an earnest Christian lady once called them. That is a strange expression, "the poor rich," yet it is oftentimes true. The Lord said, "The poor have the gospel preached unto them," but "how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." And we also read that "the common people heard him gladly."

This rich man was intensely poor. Why? Because his riches came in between him and God. It was the same with the rich young man, who came to the Lord, and who was love,] by the Lord. "If thou wilt be perfect," said Christ to him, "go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful." Why? Because "he had great possessions" (Matt. 19: 21, 22). He put Christ in one of the balances, and his wealth in the other, and which was the heavier? His money. He put eternal life in the one scale, so to speak, and the things of this life in the other. The Lord said, Which wilt thou have? And he went away sorrowful. He really loved his money better than the Saviour. That man's follower is in this hall tonight. I will not name you, my friend. God knows you, and your conscience corrects you. Oh, may God help you to seek, and to find the true riches.

I wish I heard you saying from the depths of your conscience, What shall I do to be saved? Listen to this rich man as he said, "What shall I do?" To get eternal life? No! "What shall I do?" in order that I may enjoy life here — make myself secure of it down here upon earth. Oh, if you have seen the awful folly of this man, may you from this night go forth on a different track altogether. Depend upon it, he died that night. He lost his riches and his soul in the same hour. What a beacon is He to every unsaved soul!

I read just now a few verses out of the second of Acts, and I will now ask you to turn to them. There is a similar question put there to that which this rich man puts in the twelfth of Luke. The apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost was preaching to those, whom he addresses as "Men of Israel," the marvellous tidings of Jesus, God's own blessed Son. He told them how He had been in this world; how the world had refused and slain Him; and how God had raised Him from the dead. He says, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; 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 ye yourselves also know: him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up" (Acts 2: 22). He brought out in plain language the folly of their course. They had miscalculated as much as the rich man of Luke 12. They had calculated without God. They did not want Christ. They did not love Him. They did not desire Him. His light was too bright — too strong for them. He came not to be a judge or a divider; but He came to be a Saviour. They did not know their need of Him as such, and the result was they put Him on the cross — they refused Him. But He

is the One, says Peter, "whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." How utterly wrong was their calculation. They thought they could get rid of the Lord by putting Him to death. That was to be the end of Him, but God raised Him up. God brought Him out from among the dead. They had left God out of their calculations.

The man in the twelfth of Luke left God out of his calculations, and that night he was met by the word of God, practically in judgment. But in the second of Acts it is the opening of the day of grace, and on this day of Pentecost what takes place? First, Peter impresses upon the people the folly of their course, and their sin in having put the Lord to death. He then brings out this wonderful truth, that God had stepped in, and raised from the dead the One whom they had refused and slain. "This Jesus," said Peter, "hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

It was a wonderful moment. Just ten days before the Lord Jesus had passed up into glory. Forty days He had moved about upon earth after His resurrection. His work of atonement was done. He came not to be a judge, nor a divider, but a Saviour. He came to glorify God, to save man, and to annul death. Forty days had passed since His resurrection, then He went up into glory; and ten days after that the Holy Ghost came down. It was the day of Pentecost when the Holy Ghost fell upon the hundred and twenty disciples, and when Peter stood up, and, told this startling news to His murderers, that He, whom they had slain, was alive again, and was exalted at the right hand of God. They had thought to put an end to Jesus by putting Him to death, but God had raised and exalted Him, and said to Him, "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool." And what will the next thing be? He will leave God's right hand, and His foes will then be His footstool. Thank God, I am not going to be His footstool. Do not you be either, my friend.

Oh! but, you say, I have been His foe. True, solemnly true, but you may yet be His friend. He has a wonderful way of making friends of His foes. There is no one like Jesus for turning a foe into a friend. Jesus has a deep interest in you, and He desires to turn His foes into His friends now. What is He doing now? I will tell you. He is calling out His bodyguard. Who will go in for it? Will you? What do you mean? you ask. Why, I mean the souls that delight in Him are really His bodyguard. You know that the Queen when she comes to Scotland has a little corps, armed only with bow and arrow, who are formed into the bodyguard of the royal person. It is a very high honour to be of the bodyguard. Now you know what I mean. Christ gives you the privilege of being of His bodyguard. Believers in Him are no longer His foes, but His friends. He won three thousand hearts on the day of Pentecost. Shall He not win some tonight? He is looking for recruits tonight. Will you not join the ranks of the bodyguard tonight? You had better. If you are a wise man you will.

Peter told the house of Israel, and I can say to you now, that assuredly "God has made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." God has exalted Him. He is the One whom God thinks much of. He is the One whom God honours. What is the effect of that upon you? See what effect it had when Peter proclaimed it: "Now, when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart." What a joy it is when a sinner is pricked in his heart. I wish I were only

certain that you were pricked in your heart. You say, What do you mean? I mean their consciences were aroused. They were awakened. They were convicted sinners. They had gone on the wrong line, but they judged themselves. That is the object of the gospel. It leads men to judge themselves. It leads them to see where they really are before God.

"Now, when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, *what shall we do?*" I like that question. It is not at all like that of the poor wretched man in Luke 12. His question was, "What shall I do?" so as to be able to bestow the increase of his goods for his own exclusive benefit. What is the question these people ask? They turn and inquire, What shall we do? We are convinced of our sins. We are convinced of the error of our ways. We acknowledge we were wrong. We were opposed to Jesus, and if God has exalted Him, we are now in a wrong case entirely. It is a wonderful thing when a man gets awakened. Were you ever an aroused sinner? Have you ever been convicted of your sins? Have you ever been a self-condemned, self-judged, humbled sinner? God awaken you if you have not!

"What shall we do?" they cried. They did not know what to do. They did not say, "What shall we do to be saved?" That was rather too far for them to go at that moment. Salvation seemed out of the question. Perfect amazement was on their brow. Fear took possession of their hearts. Consternation possessed them, and conscience was smiting them. They knew very well that the judgment of God hung over them. They had been guilty of the murder, and rejection of His Son, and they thought that God would draw the sword of His righteous vengeance from its scabbard, and deal with them according to their guilt, and they cried to the servants of God, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Then Peter said unto them, "Repent" — a good word — "and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Repent! What is repentance? It is judging yourself. Man, have you ever repented? You must either repent, or be damned. You must change your attitude towards the Lord Jesus Christ. You must change your mind towards Him, and accept Him in simple faith, coupled with self-judgment, or depend upon it there is nothing but the eternal judgment of God before you. If you are not Christ's friend, you are His foe. "Repent, and be baptized," rung in their ears that day. Why be baptized? That would test the reality of their repentance, if it existed. Go, and as publicly own His name, in the waters of baptism, as seven weeks ago, in Pilate's hall, your voice was heard crying, "Away with him, crucify him." Seven weeks ago you clamoured for His blood; now, Peter says, own His name, confess His name. I glory to confess that name. Do you not? It is the joy of the heart of the Christian to confess that name. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ." Public confession of Christ was what Peter meant.

Why does Peter put these together? The people's rejection of Christ had been public, and God demanded that there should be as downright, and public a confession, as seven weeks before, when they had demanded His death, and chosen Barabbas in His stead. The gospel comes to us rather differently from the way in which it was presented to the Jews, for, to Cornelius, Peter said, "To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10: 43). The principle is the same, however. You believe in Him, and take your stand for the Lord. They repented and took their stand for the

Lord. I do not believe that there is any real genuine conversion unless it comes to the surface. Some people say, We do not believe in talking much about these things. I will tell you why. You have nothing to talk about. If Christ filled your heart, you could not confess Him enough. Somebody meets you with the wonderful news that your uncle has died, and left you £1,000,000. You would not be ashamed to confess that. If a paragraph appeared in the *Times* announcing the fact about you, you would not hesitate to admit that you were the person in question.

Yes, my friend, yet unsaved, you are ashamed of Christ. You have never boldly owned His blessed name. If you henceforth are to be His, let all know that you are for Christ. "Repent, and be baptized, *every one of you*." It was not to be national, congregational, or all coming in a crowd. It was individually — "every one of you." Damnation is individual. Salvation is individual. Confession of Christ is individual. We cannot pass into God's kingdom all in a company. The man who says, "We are all Christians," is, I am pretty certain, not one himself.

But, you say, I go to church. Yes, but do not forget that you may go from church to hell. But I am in the membership of the church, you reply. There is no better decoy-duck to eternal ruin at the present day than profession without the possession of Christ. It is that which lures and leads men on to destruction. I have been preaching the gospel for thirty-five years, and, of those above fifteen or sixteen years of age, whom I have seen the grace of God reach and save, ninety-five per cent were "church members," and yet, by their own confession, till then unsaved.

Miscalculation as to this point has ruined hosts of precious souls. Profession is not possession, and a terrible day of awakening awaits all mere professors. If that awakening occur in eternity, it will be none too long for the Christless professor to deplore his earthly folly. "A fool is known by his folly," says God, whether that folly be profane or religious. What I want you to see is, that if you are a church member without Christ, it is high time you got converted. May God convert you tonight. Ah, you will join that wretched fool of Luke 12 if you do not take care. Repent, every one of you, and confess His name, for "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10: 9).

And now, mark what Peter proclaims: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Yes, there is remission of sins. I, too, am here to tell you tonight that there is remission of sins. You have been a sinner, a downright sinner, but if you believe in, and confess the Lord Jesus Christ, God will forgive you even the sin of rejecting Him. "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." So witnesses every prophet. Hear another witness: "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13: 38, 39). But there is yet deeper blessing to the simple believer, for he is told, "And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

There comes in the full blessing of the gospel. God is a forgiving God, and a giving God. He forgives my sins on the ground of the work of Christ, and He gives me the Holy Ghost to bring me into the enjoyment of all that is mine in Christ. God give to you, my friend, the enjoyment of the heavenly riches which belong to faith. These are worth having. I much prefer

these two blessings, "the remission of sins" and "the gift of the Holy Ghost," to the "much goods" and "many years" of that poor wretch, whom God called a fool. His much prized riches did not last out the night, but our joys are eternal, as Christians. Thank God, our sins are forgiven, we have life eternal, and the Holy Ghost dwells in us to shed God's love abroad in our hearts (Rom. 5: 5), and to witness to us that we are the children of God. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father" (Gal. 4: 6). Such is the effect of receiving the Holy Ghost, and He loves to make the child of God know that he is a child, for "the Spirit itself beareth witness unto our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8: 16).

There are but two classes in this hall tonight. You are either a glory-bound saint, through faith in Christ, or you are a hell-bound sinner, through being occupied with the things of this life. Among which class are you? Ah! you say, I do not like the line to be drawn as tight as that. It is time the line was drawn tight, just to show you where you are — just to show you that you are on the wrong side of the line — and if you find yourself there and are wise, you will cross that line to Christ's side without delay. Many of Peter's hearers did, as we shall see, as he passed on to say to them: "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Thank God! He called me, and He called you, dear brother; and we heard His voice. Thank God, dear sister, that He called you, and you heard His voice. Let us together say, Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! The Lord has blessed and saved me, and just because He has called and saved me, I want you, my dear friend, to take His blessing too, and to join the choir of those who sing in the congregation of the Lord's redeemed and saved ones.

Depend upon it, the downright Christian is the happiest man on earth. I have Peter's example for exhorting you thus, for I read, "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Yes, every man, in this sense, has to save himself. Now, says Peter to his hearers, come out clearly and distinctly, and let all Israel know that you are on the Lord's side. Let all your friends and relatives know that you are on the Lord's side, I would say to you. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls." What a beautiful haul of fish for the gospel net in one day! And Peter was the fisherman! About three thousand souls! That is like the grace of God, and a good sample of what the gospel does. People ask me, Do you always expect people to be converted when the gospel is preached? Certainly, what else is it to be preached for? I am disappointed when there are none converted, and we should not be surprised at many conversions taking place, for Christ is worthy thereof, and glorified thereby. You must either be converted or damned, and I should strongly urge you to join these three thousand.

This second of Acts shows us a wonderful scene, and what a contrast to the day when the law was given and broken. That was Moses' day, you know, and then three thousand men died (Ex. 32: 28). On the day when Peter unfolded the truth as to the ascended Saviour, three thousand men were saved. I call this Jesus' day.

When he saw the effect of his preaching, I am sure the devil was sorry that he did not leave Peter alone on that night in the high priest's palace. Seven weeks before this, Peter had cursed

and sworn, and said, "I know not the Man." Here now he was confessing, and speaking of Christ most blessedly, and was the means of the conversion of three thousand souls through one preaching. I am afraid it takes three thousand sermons to convert one soul now. That is the order nowadays. The whole thing is inverted. But what a wonderful moment was that for Peter, and what a wonderful moment for the grace of Christ. The breaking of Peter was really the making of Peter. In the high priest's hall Peter was full of self-confidence. Here, in Acts 2, he is full of the Holy Ghost, and showers of blessing fall.

And now let me ask, Have you received God's blessing? Thank God, if you are the Lord's now; and having made up your mind, my friend, you are on the right side from this night forth. Your experience will be that of a young man who spoke to me in London a month ago tonight, after I had been preaching. I said, "Are you decided for Christ?" "Thank God, I am, doctor," he replied. "And when were you decided?" "Tonight, I could not hold out any longer. I am happy now." So will you be, for joy in the Holy Ghost is the portion of every decided soul. And I trust you will do what the young converts did on the day of Pentecost. Of them it is written, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." That was much better than delusive plans of "much goods" for "many years." Do you not think so?

Count the gold and silver blossoms
Spring has scattered o'er the lea
Count the softly sounding ripples
Sparkling o'er the summer sea;
Count the lightly flickering shadows
In the autumn forest-glade;
Count the falling feathery snowflakes,
Icy gems by winter made;
Count the myriad blades that glitter
Early in the morning dew;
Count the desert sand that stretches
Under noontide's vault of blue;
Count the notes that wood-birds warble
In the evening's fading light;

Count the stars that gleam and twinkle

O'er the firmament by night.

* * * * *

When thy counting all is done,

Scarce ETERNITY'S begun;

Pause and know — "Where wilt thou be

During God's ETERNITY?"