

# A Soldier's Desire.

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*Acts 10, Acts 11: 1-18.*

## **Seekers for Light.**

*Fourteen Addresses to Edinburgh Students.*

by W. T. P. Wolston, M.D.

## **Chapter 9**

### **A Soldier's Desire; or, Prayer and its answer.**

This is rather a long story, perhaps some of my hearers may say tonight, but it is a very interesting one. If it has no interest to you, my friend, it has a very deep interest for me; and for this reason, that the Spirit of God describes to us, in this remarkable narrative, the way in which the gospel of the grace of God first went out to the Gentiles. You must bear in mind that the Jew was nationally in relationship with God, but the Gentile — the heathen, for that is the meaning of the word — had no link with God. It is to such that the apostle Paul says, "Wherefore, remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision, by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2: 11, 12). As Gentiles, they had no link with God, and therefore you will not understand this chapter unless you see clearly, that God was beginning a new work of grace. It was an entirely new departure in the ways of God. He was sending out, and was determined to send out, beyond the limits of Israel, the gospel — the good news of His love. He was going to proclaim that glad tiding to nations who had never heard it before.

I do not know what you feel, but I can say, from the bottom of my heart, Thank God, that He has done so; because, I happen to be one of them, and, I suppose, you are too. If you are a Jew, there is a Saviour for you, but here is the first time that the news is proclaimed, that there is a Saviour, and an eternal salvation for the Gentiles, and we are introduced here to the first company of Gentiles who, as such, heard and received the gospel.

The first trophy of grace among the Gentiles was this remarkable centurion, Cornelius by name. Evidently he was an Italian, for he belonged to the Italian band. He was a Roman centurion, and a man of remarkable character, but then living in Palestine, at Caesarea, which was a most important military post, viewed from the standpoint of the Romans. He was there in charge of a company of soldiers. Somehow or other this man had a great longing to know God's

salvation. He was a man seeking light, and no person can read this scripture without being impressed that this man was in downright, dead earnest; absolutely, red-hot earnest, as I might say. His character was quite unique for a Roman soldier, for he was "a devout man, and one that feared God, with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway" (ver. 2).

Now what about the man that never prays? God can save even that man, but it is interesting to see that this man was prayerful. He was not only prayerful, but it comes out that he was fasting until the ninth hour of the day. The man was, as I said, in downright earnest: he had not broken his fast until three o'clock in the afternoon. What was he about? He had spent his time in looking to God for light. No wonder that man got blessing: he was in such deep, downright earnestness, I repeat, before God. He wanted blessing, and he got it. Do you want blessing? For any sake, be in earnest then!

I see here the value of prayer. It is not that I would tell you, that you must pray in order to be saved: that would be to make salvation depend upon prayer, which it does not. But I find when a man is really awakened by the Spirit of God, and is exercised before God about his soul, that the longings of his heart will come out in prayer. He has not got much light; but he can pray. He wants Christ: he knows there is something to be had, which he does not possess. The centurion was a man, I have no doubt, who at this point was already converted, but had not peace with God. He had been quickened by the Spirit of God, but did not know the gospel. He was not a formalist, a cold Pharisee, dependent upon rites and ceremonies: he was a man whose outward character, I think, would bear very favourable comparison with that of any person in this building tonight. I do not know whether you are known as "a devout person; one that feared God with all his house" (mark that, for it was apparently a pretty big one), "which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always." He was a devout man, a God-fearing man, a benevolent man, and a prayerful man, and yet he was not saved.

But, you say, if that does not save a person, what will? Not all that, nor ten thousand times all that. That does not save. Yet, you say, you said yourself that he was a converted man. Yes, I believe he was: he was a man who had turned to God; but, when I say "saved," I use the word advisedly. I use it, as it is used in the New Testament, and by being a saved man, I mean, a man who is in the liberty of the new creation: a man who knows the liberty of the grace of God, who knows what it is to be brought to God: a man who knows that his sins are forgiven, that he is accepted of God, is His child, and can call Him Father. That is what Cornelius did not know. Oh, you say, could a man be converted, and yet not know that he was saved? There are hundreds of men, who are truly converted, and yet do not know that their sins are forgiven. Possibly, friend, you are one of them: you have had longings after Christ, and light for weeks past: you fear God: you are longing deeply to possess the blessing of God, you have turned your back upon the world, and still you have not peace. Why? You ought to have it. The fact is, you are not simply resting on Christ's finished work, and God's testimony to His satisfaction therein. That alone gives the soul solid peace.

Now Cornelius was a man who had never heard the gospel. You must not compare Cornelius with the men of Edinburgh; because the centurion was a man who had no right, or rather, felt that he had no right to salvation. He knew God was the God of the Jews, and he knew

that salvation was of the Jews, and he no doubt said, I am a Gentile, and therefore have no right to it. You see, his very uprightness and honesty were the source of his distress. Look then how God loves to meet this anxious man! Look how He desires to meet the man who is in earnest He takes all this trouble, if I may so speak, in order to bring liberty, and blessedness, and peace to this troubled man. My friends, I would that you knew the deep interest God takes in man's salvation. Oh! worldly man, you who think little of the Lord, if you only knew the love of His heart, and the infinite interest He takes in you, your heart would be captured by Him right away.

Look at this chapter! He sends an angel to the troubled man, and sends a vision to His praying servant, Peter.

In this chapter you have Cornelius on the one hand, praying at Caesarea, and another man praying forty miles away, on the house-top. Both are being prepared by God for each other. He sends to the anxious man an angel, and says, so to speak, I know what you want, Cornelius; you will get what you want. And He says, by the vision, to Peter on the house-top, I want you to get rid of all your old Jewish ideas; you must get all your old ideas and prejudices knocked out of your head, and you must go and do what I bid you. "Thus He prepares the servant, ere he comes in contact with the poor troubled Gentile, to whom he is to carry the gospel news.

Now a man may be turned to God, and his soul be quickened by the Spirit of God, he can have holy desires, and he may fear God, and yet he may never really know what the gospel is. You may say to me, "What is the gospel?" I think this chapter will unfold it; but, in brief, let me tell you what I mean by the gospel. The gospel that comes from God now is the fruit and result of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and, by His grace now upon earth, there is the ministry of the Spirit of God, come down from heaven, a true and blessed witness who tells of forgiveness, and of redemption, and assures you that, if believing in the Lord Jesus, you are saved, that your sins are forgiven, and that you are a child of God. You, as a child of God, receive the Holy Ghost, who brings you into the joy, and the satisfaction that is provided by Christianity.

My idea of a Christian is that of a man who is brimful of joy from one year's end to another. You say, I do not meet many of that stamp. I admit that; but you have not got the right stamp before you. Look at Paul: you find him full of joy and peace. But you say, he was an apostle. I know that, but it was not his apostleship that filled him with joy; it was the knowledge of Christ dwelling in him. And what will fill your heart with joy? What has filled my heart with joy during these seven-and-thirty years? Christ! Aye, and He will fill your heart with joy: He will forgive your sins, where you sit, and He will save you, and will let you know you are saved through the work He has accomplished for you.

Let us see how Cornelius received blessing. He was in prayer, and evidently saw a vision, about three o'clock in the afternoon, of "an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius" (ver. 3). He was frightened; so is every man when God gets near to him. Sinner, you will get frightened when you have the sense that God draws near to you. Jacob was afraid when God drew near that night on which he was left alone by the river's side. The shepherds were afraid when the angels were sent to tell them of the birth of the Saviour. Cornelius was afraid.

There never was a man yet who was not afraid when the Lord drew near, because conscience tells him — just what conscience told me — that a sinner in his sins is not fit for God.

The angel addresses Cornelius, and says to him, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God" (ver. 4). Cornelius says, "What is it, Lord?" He is evidently surprised that God should visit him. The greatest surprise that ever I got in my life was when the Lord saved me. I never had such a surprise all my days as on the night the Lord saved me; and I believe if you get God's salvation now that it will be a most wonderful surprise to you, that He in His great and infinite goodness should save a wretched, ruined sinner like you.

I understand the man's feelings as he expresses them in these words, "Lord, what is it?" And what is God's answer? This, if I may put it into other language, I am going to bless you, Cornelius. He says: "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: he lodgeth with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (vers. 4-6).

And when Simon does come to the troubled soul, do you observe what he does tell him to do? "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (ver. 43). What the messenger says to the troubled soul, when he gets into his presence, is, Believe in God's Son: believe in the One, whom the world has refused, and whom God has taken into glory. He tells him, that all the prophets bear witness to this blessed truth, that from Christ he will obtain forgiveness of his sins, and all he has "to do" is to believe in Him.

Well, what do I find the man does? The angel departs, and Cornelius, now in downright earnestness of soul, immediately calls "two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually, and when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa" (vers. 7, 8). Not tomorrow — no! that same day, clearly. They went off that day. Cornelius was not like a great many lazy sinners nowadays, who put off the salvation of their souls until tomorrow. I met a young man of this sort some time ago, perhaps he is here tonight A fortnight ago a friend of his died, and after he came home from the funeral, he said to a Christian: "That young man was converted on his death-bed. Do you believe in death-bed repentance?" "Yes," said the Christian. "Oh! then," said the young fellow, "that is capital, it will do." "What will do?" asked his friend. "I will put off being a Christian till my death-bed." Awful folly!

Friend, I suppose you mean to be converted some day? Do not put it off: no, no, do not put it off till your death-bed. There is only one death-bed repentance given us in Scripture, that no man may presume; but there is one, that none may despair. I have little faith in them. Rowland Hill called them not death-bed conversions, but death-bed fear of hell and damnation. He was not far wrong.

Oh! you say, I believe in the goodness of God. Yes, He is good, and infinitely better than you dream of, but is that a reason for you to refuse His grace, and put off your soul's eternal salvation till the moment of your death-bed? If so, you are like another foolish man I have heard

of, and he was like you. He procrastinated, and he meant to come to Christ in the future, for he believed in the goodness of God. He was surrounded by Christian friends, and they often pleaded with him to come to the Lord. But he was like you — he loved the world, and he would do anything for the world. His world was pretty much wrapped up in the hunting-field: he did not care for anything but hunting. When his friends pressed on him to turn to God he replied: "Would not God bless me if I went to Him on my death-bed? I believe so in His goodness that if I were to turn to Him on my deathbed, the Lord would have mercy upon me; and then I will do it." So he calmed his soul, if troubled somewhat by the words that were spoken to him. One day he was hunting: he was on the back of an exceedingly fine horse, and, to make up to the hounds, he had to take a hedge. His horse sprang through the brushwood, but on the other side was a flock of sheep, which were frightened as he came over. They scampered right and left, and the horse was startled. It stumbled, and threw its rider. As he fell he was heard to say — not "God have mercy upon me" — not a bit of it! what he said was, "Devil take ye." He broke his neck, and died on the spot. Oh! procrastinating sinner! remember the last words of this man — so like you — were not, "God have mercy upon me," but, "Devil take ye." The devil did not take the sheep, but he took the godless rider that day. Take care, that he does not take you, my friend.

Now, Cornelius may well teach us a lesson here. He sends at once, when he learns that there is one who can tell him the way of salvation. That is what he wanted, and immediately he despatches his servants on their journey of about forty miles, for that was the distance between Caesarea and Joppa.

"On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the house-top to pray, about the sixth hour." It is interesting to see how the Lord prepares His servant, in this chapter. He let him fall into a trance: he was not asleep; he was in a trance. God was going to teach Peter a wonderful lesson, and he sees this remarkable sheet coming down from heaven. Mark, it says, "And saw heaven opened." We find heaven opened four times in the New Testament.

Do you know that heaven is opened just now. It was once opened for the Father to look down upon Jesus on earth; to see the man in whom God delighted (Matt. 3: 16). In the seventh of Acts it is opened for faith to look up, and see Jesus there. Stephen says, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7: 56). Here Peter "saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him," and he says in the eleventh chapter, when he tells the story to the Church at Jerusalem, "And it came even to me" (Acts 11: 5). It was a lesson to him; and there comes a lesson from heaven to you tonight, that Jesus is willing to save you where you are in this hall. "And it came even to me" — what was the lesson? That there was no limit to the grace of God. Peter(' saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet, knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air" (vers. 11, 12). I do not doubt but that God here presents man as he is in his natural characteristics, but saved by grace, and taken to heaven. The fourth time heaven is seen opened is in the Book of Revelation, when the King of kings comes to reign, and all His saints with Him (Rev. 19: 11).

But Peter says presently, "The vessel was received up again into heaven." God takes it back again, and that is just what one would expect; nothing goes into heaven but what comes out of it. And how, you ask me, do you expect to get to heaven? I will tell you. My Saviour came for me: He bled and died for my sins, and put them away, and the Spirit of God has begun His work of grace in my soul. Were it not so, I could not go to heaven. There is nothing in either you or me that fits us for heaven. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," the third of John tells us; that is to say, man as such cannot go into heaven; he must be born again; there must be a work of God's Spirit in his soul, as well as a work wrought for him by the Son of God on the cross. The contents of the vessel just show us that there is no limit to the grace of God. His grace meets and saves the most unlikely, and the apparently most unsuited.

God's grace prepares Peter for the work before him, but he does not learn his lesson very quickly. He finds out, however, that the goodness of God is going to override all his former ideas, and that the blessed gospel is going into other spheres than the Judaism, of which he had thought so much. This lesson he does not learn immediately, for he "doubted in himself what this vision that he had seen should mean" (ver. 17). But "while Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee." Observe "the Spirit said," — it is not an angel who speaks. When it is a question of dealing with the soul, and carrying the truth to the soul, the Spirit speaks. The Holy Ghost whispers to Peter, and what does He say? "Behold, three men seek thee. Arise, therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them" (vers. 19, 20). Immediately Peter goes down. There are the men at the door. They have found out the place where Simon lives: they are in search of the Evangelist, and meantime the Evangelist has been prepared by God to carry His message to an anxious soul.

Ah! friend, are you anxious tonight? Good! it is a sweet message I have for you — Pardon, Peace, Salvation! Nothing is so charming as preaching the gospel. Why do you preach? I have been asked. Well! I tell you honestly, I cannot say that I was bred, trained, or authorised by man to preach, but I have the sense of God's love to me, and I want you to share it, that is why I have asked you to come here tonight. Immediately you know what the grace of God is, you want others to have that knowledge too: you want others to have the same joy as yourself. Even Cornelius illustrates this, for when he knew he was to hear the way of salvation, he "called together his kinsmen and near friends" (ver. 24) to share the blessed news with them.

But let us follow Peter down from the house-top. He goes to the door and asks the men, "What is the cause wherefore ye are come?" (ver. 21.) Peter greatly interests me: although he is so slow at his work. He had not fully realised this new departure in the ways of God. To this interrogation the three men reply: "Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and *to hear words of thee*" (ver. 22).

The ways of God with souls as presented in Scripture are beautiful, and you who are Christians, I think, will enjoy what I am now going to speak about, if you have not noticed it before. When God was going to send the gospel of His grace to the Gentiles, whom does He select as the first vessel, if I may so speak, into which He will put His treasure? It is not a scandalous man: it is not a blasphemer, or a cursing man. That would have been to awaken Jewish opposition. He selects a man, concerning whom the Jews had already issued a "good

report," since he was a "devout man." Ah! said God, you go and tell that devout man the gospel, Peter! That is the man whom God selects here. If we be spared till another Lord's Day evening, we will see how His grace will go out to a man, who has not one single thing to commend him.

It is beautiful to see how the Lord sends His messenger to one whose outward character was blameless: even the Jews bear record of him, that he was a just man, and one that feared God, notwithstanding the fact that he was a Gentile, and a Roman, and very likely oppressing them in the execution of the laws of his master, the Emperor of Rome, — still the whole nation said he was a just man. He had not the gospel, it is true; but he was now to get it

Peter lodges the strangers over-night, "and on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him" (ver. 23). His action in taking them was remarkable, for I should not have said that caution was Peter's leading feature; but on this occasion for manifest reasons he does not like to go into the business alone. Three men come to ask for the truth, Peter takes with him six brethren to be witnesses of what was going on. I have often said I should have liked to have been the seventh man to go down with Peter that day, and see the wonderful tide of blessing that was about to roll into the house of Cornelius. If any one here is bound on a gospel mission, and you are sure you are going to a household of downright anxious souls, if you will invite me, I will go with you. I do not know anything more charming than the scene I get in this chapter, as Peter goes down to this household of anxious souls: it is a most lovely sight.

It was clearly a two days' journey from Joppa to Caesarea, and four days had elapsed from the time the men were sent off for Peter, until he returned with them to Caesarea. "And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him" (vers. 24, 25). A wonderful thing that for a Roman to do: they would scarcely even salute a stranger, that is a well-known fact. But here, Cornelius actually falls at the feet of this messenger, who, he knew, was the messenger of God to his soul: this only shows how earnest the man was. "But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up: I myself also am a man" (ver. 26). You are a man, and so am I: we are on the same level. "And as he talked with him, he went in, and found *many that were come together*" (ver. 27). You will always find it so: when a person is interested in the truth, about which they are not clear, they want some one else to come and hear about it too. I should not be surprised if there are men in this hall, who though not clear themselves as to the gospel, have said to others, Come along with us: we will go and hear what this preacher has to say. That was exactly Cornelius' position: he had not got the light himself, but he could say, I know I am going to get it: I have had a message from God, and light is coming, so he fills his house with his friends and kinsmen.

Peter "found many that were come together." I have seen many audiences, and I have seen many a multitude; but, to tell the truth, the one multitude that chains my eye, and charms my heart, is a multitude of men and women that want to hear about Christ. People have often said to me, "Have you been to the picture gallery this year yet, doctor?" "No!" "Why not?" "Because, I should not see the pictures I want to see." "And what are you looking for?" "I will tell you the pictures I want, — one is a company of happy saints enjoying Christ, and desirous to hear more

of Him, and the other is a company of anxious sinners, longing to find Him. If you can show me these pictures I will come."

Here we have this beautiful picture, — a company of anxious souls, waiting to hear about Jesus, and in comes the preacher. He begins with a word of explanation: "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you, without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?" (vers. 28, 29.) I must say that I never quite understood that question. I cannot understand a man, who knows the grace of God, and is in the presence of anxious people, asking, "For what intent ye have sent for me?" I think, if I got into such a gathering, I should know, and I would say, I know what you want; you want the gospel: the Lord help me to give it to you.

Cornelius stands up, and tells his story. He merely says, An angel came to me while I fasted, and prayed, and told me what to do, and immediately I did it, Perhaps, some of you thought I was going beyond Scripture when I said, Cornelius sent his servants off immediately; but I was not, for I read: "Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God" (I wonder if these words can be applied to the company here tonight) "to hear all things that are commanded of thee of God" (ver. 33). He had the sense that they were to hear from God, and that this servant of God had to declare His message.

"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, *preaching peace by Jesus Christ*: (he is Lord of all:) that word, I say, ye know" (vers. 34, 35). Peter was evidently perfectly conversant with what had taken place: that Cornelius and his household had heard some of the truth in regard to Israel; but, as I said before, whatever blessing or inheritance was Israel's, Cornelius, being a Gentile, in his uprightness of character, knew did not belong to him. He longed for peace, but thought only the Jew could get it. But what does the gospel bring to all now? Peace! When the Saviour was born, on that very day, the heavenly messengers proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace." What a priceless boon to weary sin-burdened souls! Peace! Let me ask you, Have you peace? Do you possess peace? Are your sins forgiven? Are you clear with God? Are you clear that you have escaped judgment? Answer these questions.

Beware of a false peace: I cannot deny that there are many men living in this city today, who have a false peace, for "when a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace" (Luke 11: 21). What does our Lord mean by these words? I think I understand. That palace is the world, and the strong man, who has his goods in peace, is the devil: he keeps his goods in peace. Young man, were you never troubled about your soul? Certainly not; why should I be? Your answer just illustrates this scripture, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace." The devil, let me tell you, has an uncommonly good, a very diversified, a splendid armoury. He does not hold every one with the same suit, if I may say so. He knows how to meet every one. He will give you what you want.

He will hold some with the wine-cup; others, he will snare with a pack of cards; others, he will entangle with the theatre, or, it may be, with the novel, or the love of gold, or the power of lust, or the charms of knowledge, or something of that sort. You have never perhaps felt sorrow for your sins; nor will you if he can keep you from thinking of these sins, and of the serious fact that you are a sinner. He will try all he can to keep you from being awakened to the fact that you are a guilty man, and by all means in his power rob you of the blessing of being born again, and brought to God. For many a long day a man may go on in false peace, thinking all is right, when all is wrong, for mark," When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, *his goods are in peace.*" That is a false peace; the devil's lullaby for souls deceived by sin, and oft-times helped hell-ward by a Christless religion. Thank God! if you are troubled now about your sins and your lost estate. Better far is it for a man to be in soul-trouble now, and thus get the peace which God gives, than to go on through life in the delusive peace which the devil ministers, only to wake up in eternity to the awful discovery that the peace was a fraud, and that God's judgment of sin is everlasting.

What we have before us in this scripture, is God's peace — peace by Jesus Christ — the peace of the weary — the peace of the troubled — the peace that God alone can give. And what is that? The knowledge that He has nothing against me, and that there is nothing between Him and me; that the claims of His infinitely holy throne have all been met in regard to myself, and my sins, and I can look at that throne with the sense, I am perfectly fit for it; — I am ready to stand before it You say, How? Because He is pleased with what I have done? No! But because of the finished work of Christ. The knowledge of that work has let me see that there is not a single thing left between the infinitely holy God, and the infinitely sinful man, whose sin has been divinely and definitively met by the atoning death of the blessed Son of God. Christ took my place in death and judgment, that God might give me His in life and glory. When that knowledge enters the heart, peace, like a river, surges through the soul; and that is the peace I have got.

But you say, Have you never any doubts? Doubts! What should I have doubts about? I do not doubt that by nature I am a guilty, godless, hell-deserving sinner, and till Christ met me I was bound there: I have not a doubt about that. Have you, as regards yourself? But since grace met and saved me, by the work of Another, why should I have a doubt? Have you any doubts, my friend? If so, I hope the Lord will dispel them tonight If not saved you are on your road to hell; there can be no doubt as to that surely. If grace does not deliver you from the grip of Satan and the power of sin, you will spend eternity there. Oh, you say, I do not believe in such a place. You will have to believe it yet, mark that, my friends. You will be converted some day, on that point, depend upon it. See to it that it be not too late.

That is a fine stratagem of the devil to tell you that there is no judgment — no hell — no punishment hereafter. The pathway of Christ refuted that folly. Jesus, the Son of God, came down from heaven to earth, and died to deliver men like you and me from hell. He agonised on the cross that He might rescue me from the consequences of my sin, and blessed be His name, He has rescued me! Why do you not allow Him to rescue you tonight? "He is Lord of all." Not merely of the Jew, but of the Gentile as well. "He is Lord of all." Lovely word! He is my Lord: the time was when I was under another master, and I served him faithfully, but now my master is changed. Time was when I had a bad master, and he had a very good servant. But now, I have an infinitely blessed Master, and He has a poor servant Thank God! He is my Lord. Can you say the same? Do not be ashamed to say it.

A young woman came to me the other day, and said, "Four and a half years ago I was converted through your preaching, but I was ashamed to confess Jesus." "Ashamed of Jesus! Ashamed of the Lord! And what are you ashamed of now?" I asked. "Oh," said she, "I am ashamed now to confess that I ever was ashamed to own Him." Are you, my friend, ashamed of Jesus: ashamed to own your Lord: ashamed to own the Son of God? Wake up! wake up! There is an immense privilege open to you, to be on the Lord's side. "But," says somebody, "I am such a sinner." Never mind that: the deepest-dyed sinner may be saved by Jesus' grace. Let Him save you, and deliver you, and send you through this world as a witness of what grace can do.

People sometimes think it a poor thing to be a Christian. I think it a paltry thing not to be one: that is my decided conviction, and I advise every young man without any further delay to yield himself up to Him this evening, and be on His side, out-and-out I do not like half and half work — a backboneless kind of Christian is no good at all. Such are like the salt the Lord speaks of; they are of no use for the field, and of no use for the dunghill (Luke 14: 34, 35). There are a good many of this kind in the professing Church. They do not do the Church any good, and they do the worldling much harm, for their inconsistency and apathy encourage men in unbelief; in fact, they are stumbling-blocks over which sinners stumble into hell. They have too much of the world to really enjoy Christ, and witness for Him, and their consciences will not let them go the whole way in the world. A young convert said to me this morning, "I like to see the people of the world downright." "So do I," I replied, "and you can tell them that hell is the end of their journey." "And, sir," said he, "I like to see a Christian out-and-out." That is just exactly what I like. I want it for myself, and I want you to be out-and-out too.

Having announced Him as "Lord of all," Peter goes on to tell the history of Jesus, and unfolds three great truths — God with us; God for us; and God in us. First of all, you find the truth of God with us: "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem: whom they slew and hanged on a tree" (vers. 38, 39). There you see the fulfilment of the scripture, "A virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is God with us" (Matt. 1: 23).

Then Peter, from verse 40 to verse 43, brings out the truth, "God for us," while verse 44 gives us the truth, "God in us." "God for us" is shown in the death of Christ, and all the consequences of blessing which accrue to us from it. As the Holy Ghost falls upon all this assembly (ver. 44), we see the truth of "God in us." You must not forget that the Christian is a man in whose body the Holy Ghost dwells; and therefore it is a very solemn thing to be a Christian.

Just a word or two then, as to verse 40 and onwards. "Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly." In the moment of His death Christ wrought atonement, when He bore the sinner's sins, and was made sin that we might escape its consequences. He sacrificed Himself, and thus infinitely glorified God; and what was the result? God raised Him up. I can tell you therefore of a risen, triumphant, victorious Saviour. That is the Saviour I know. He triumphed over sin, Satan, death, the grave, and the power of darkness; and as the risen man He lives before God. "Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto

witnesses chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead." There was unmistakable evidence of the reality of His Person. "And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he, which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead."

Observe, my friend, if you do not let Him save you, He will have to judge you. And you say, Will He not judge you too? No! blessed be His name, never! Why? Because He is my Saviour; that is the whole point. Judgment will not be a mockery. I quite admit, I shall have to give account of my walk and ways as a Christian; but, when you talk about judgment, that raises the question of the imputation of guilt; and do you think He is going to impute guilt to those for whom He died? Let Scripture answer: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8: 33, 34). I have no fear of judgment; — fear is gone out of my heart, because Christ is my Saviour. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? is the challenge. Let Satan accuse; the devil will do it if he can, but God will justify the believer, and He will silence the accuser. Christ died, and He died for me that I might be delivered, and saved; and, what He died to do, blessed be His name, He has done. He died for me that He might be my Saviour, and He has saved me, for I trust Him. Do you not trust Him? If so, you are saved by Him, as the fruit of His perfect love, and finished work. Well wrote Steele —

"He took the guilty culprit's place,

And suffered in his stead;

For man (Oh miracle of grace!)

For man, the Saviour bled."

As the righteous outcome of His finished work, Peter now declares: "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (ver. 43). That is the very thing I wanted; and the very thing you need — Every prophet bears witness that the one who trusts Jesus has forgiveness of his or her sins. Are these not sweet words? "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name *whosoever* believeth in him *shall receive* remission of sins." And what did the listeners to that lovely gospel do? They were dear, simple people, and they believed the gospel, for "while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word." This was the fulness of grace indeed. The triumph of grace is seen here.

There is nowhere in the ways of God with man, in which His grace sparkles with greater brilliancy, than in this scene, where the Gentile who had no claim on, and no link with Him, hears the gospel, in all its fulness, and the Holy Ghost falls on the believer, without either baptism, as in the case of the Jew (Acts 2: 38), prayer, as in the case of the Samaritans (Acts 8: 15), or laying on of hands, as in the case of the Jewish proselytes at Ephesus (Acts 19: 6). The hearing of faith secured the blessing when the "words" Peter spake fell from his lips.

"Send men to Joppa and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter, who shall tell *thee words*, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11: 13, 14), was the command Cornelius received, and the obedience of faith soon heard the words of life. I sometimes say that the little letter K is responsible for a good deal of mischief WORDS and WORKS differ only in one letter. Knock out the D, and put in the K, and there is all the difference possible. WORDS were what Cornelius was to hear. He was not told to do any WORKS. Have you thought you had to do some WORKS, to obtain salvation? Not so, my friend. What you need is to hear words. You must knock that letter K out of your religion, or you will never be saved. But I hear some one say, Must I do nothing? Nothing, Christ has done everything; that is the whole point "Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved," is God's way of salvation. When saved you are careful to "maintain good works," not in order to salvation, but just because you possess it.

Peter told them lovely words. What were the words? Listen! "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him *shall receive remission of sins.*" The forgiveness of sins, through the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the present possession of every soul, man or woman, that receives Him, and the Holy Ghost seals the faith of the believing one — He comes, and indwells all such. Peter's address was very short; but it had no sooner fallen from his lips, than the "Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word."

The Holy Ghost always seals the faith of a soul that trusts in Jesus. How then does a man get the Holy Ghost? By believing. He not only gets the forgiveness of his sins, but the Holy Ghost comes down and seals his faith. If I were you, I would not go away from this place without having the knowledge in your soul, that your sins were forgiven, and that you had received the Holy Ghost It is your portion if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Hear what Paul says, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1: 13). When a man buys sheep, he is only wise to put his own mark upon them: but observe, the mark does not make the sheep his: the purchase-money makes them his. He puts his mark upon them, to show that the sheep do belong to him, and so God marks every one of His children by giving them the Holy Ghost He has put His mark on every one in this hall that really believes in Jesus.

And you, my friend, can soon find out if you have His mark upon you; if you truly know that Jesus loved you, and died for you, and you simply trust in Him, I believe you have the Holy Ghost sealing the forgiveness of your sins. And now, I want you to join the choir tonight. What choir? The choir of the ransomed. People sometimes say, We have been asked to join the choir. Are you converted? I ask. If not, you cannot be in the choir of the redeemed, and that is the choir I want you to sing in. Every one who really believes in the name of Jesus, let him join in singing

"Come sing, my soul, and praise the Lord,  
Who hath redeemed thee by His blood;  
Delivered thee from chains that bound,  
And brought thee to redemption ground.

Redemption ground, the ground of peace!

Redemption ground, oh, wondrous grace!

Here let our praise to God abound,

Who saves us on redemption ground!

Once from my God I wandered far,

And with His holy will made war;

But now my songs to God abound;

I'm standing on redemption ground.

Oh, joyous hour when God to me

A vision gave of Calvary:

My bonds were loosed, my soul unbound;

I sang upon redemption ground.

No works of merit now I plead,

But Jesus take for all my need;

No righteousness in me is found,

Except upon redemption ground.

Come, weary soul, and here find rest;

Accept redemption, and be blest:

The Christ who died, by God is crowned

To pardon on redemption ground."