

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION

NO. 804

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out,
when the times of refreshing shall come from the Presence of the Lord.”
Acts 3:19.*

AFTER the notable miracle of healing the lame man, when the wondering people clustered round about Peter and John, they were not at all at a loss for a subject upon which to address them. Those holy men were full to the brim with the Gospel, and therefore they had but to run over spontaneously, speaking of that topic which laid nearest to their hearts. To the Christian minister it should never be difficult to speak of Christ; and in whatever position he may be placed, he should never have to ask himself, “What is an appropriate subject for this people?” for the Gospel is always in season, always appropriate, and if it is but spoken from the heart, it will be sure to work its way. Turning to the assembled multitude, Peter began at once to preach to them the Gospel without a single second’s hesitation. Oh, blessed readiness of a soul on fire with the Spirit! Lord, grant it to us evermore! Observe how earnestly Peter turns aside their attention from himself and his Brother John to the Lord Jesus Christ. “Why look you so earnestly on *us*, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?” The object of the Christian minister should always be to withdraw attention from himself to his subject, so that it should not be said, “How well he spoke!” but, “Upon what weighty matters he treated!” They are priests of Baal, who, with their gaudy dresses, and their pretensions to a mysterious power, would have you look to themselves as the channels of Divine Grace, as though by their priestcraft, if not by their holiness, they could work miracles. But they are true messengers of God who continually say, “Look not on us as though we could do anything; the whole power to bless you lies in Jesus Christ, and in the Gospel of His salvation.”

It is noteworthy that Peter, in addressing this crowd, came at once to the very essence and heart of his message. He did not beat around the bush; he did not shoot his arrow far afield, but he hit the very center of the target. He preached not merely the Gospel of Good News, but Christ, the Person of Christ; Christ Crucified—crucified by them, Christ risen, Christ glorified of His Father. Depend upon it, this is the very strength of the Christian ministry, when it is saturated with the name and Person and Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Take Christ away, and you unchristianize the Gospel, you but pour out husks such as swine eat while the precious kernel is removed, seeing you have taken away the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. If there was ever an occasion when a preacher of the Gospel might have forgotten to speak of Christ, it was surely the occasion on which Peter spoke so boldly of Him, for might it not have been said, “Talk not of Jesus, they have just now nailed Him to death; the people are mad against Him; preach the Truth of God, but do not mention *His* name. Deliver His Doctrine, but withhold the mention of His Person, for you will excite them to madness; you will put your own life in jeopardy; you will scarcely do good while they are so prejudiced, and you may do much mischief”? But, instead of this, let them rage as they would, Peter would tell them about Jesus Christ, and about nothing else but Jesus Christ. He knew this to be the Power of God unto salvation, and he would not flinch from it, so to them, even to them, he delivered the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ with a pungency as well as a simplicity scarcely to be rivaled. Notice how he puts it: “*You*” have slain Him; “*you*” have crucified Him; “*you*” have preferred a murderer. Peter is not afraid of being personal; he does not shirk the touching of men’s consciences; he rather thrusts his hand into their hearts, and makes them feel their sin; he labors to open a window into the darkness of their spirits, to let the Light of the Holy Spirit shine into their souls.

Even thus, my Brothers, when we preach the Gospel, must we do; affectionately but graciously we must deal with men; far from us to be trimming and mincing matters. Accursed let him be who takes away from the Gospel of Jesus Christ that he may win popular applause, or who bates his breath and smoothes his tongue that he may please the unholy throng. Such a man may have for a moment the approbation of fools, but, as the Lord his God lives, he shall be set as a

target for the arrows of vengeance in the day when the Lord comes to judge the nations. Peter, then, boldly and earnestly preached the Gospel—preached the Christ of the Gospel—preached it personally and directly at the crowd who were gathered around him.

Nor did Peter fail, when he had enunciated the Gospel, to make the personal application by prescribing its peculiar commands. Grown up among us is a school of men who say that they rightly preach the Gospel to sinners when they merely deliver statements of what the Gospel is, and of the result of dying unsaved, but they grow furious and talk of unsoundness if any venture to say to the sinner, “Believe,” or “Repent.” To this school Peter did not belong; into their secret he had never come, and with their assembly, were he alive now, he would not be joined. For, having first told his hearers of Christ, of His life, and death, and Resurrection, he then proceeds to plunge the sword, as it were, up to the very hilt in their consciences by saying, “Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” There, I say, in that promiscuous crowd, gathered together by curiosity, attracted by the miracle which he had worked, Peter felt no hesitation, and asked no question; he preached the same Gospel as he would have preached to us today if he were here, and preached it in the most fervent and earnest style, preached the angles and the corners of it, and then preached the practical part of it, addressing himself with heart, and soul, and energy to everyone in that crowd, and saying, “Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.”

Now there are four remarks which will make up the discourse of this morning, when they are enlarged.

I. And the first is this, that THE APOSTLE BADE MEN REPENT AND BE CONVERTED. Of this our text is proof enough without our going afield for other instances. Repent signifies, in its literal meaning, to change one’s mind. It has been translated, “after-wit,” or, “after-wisdom.” It is the man’s finding out that he was wrong, and rectifying his judgment; but although that is the meaning of the root, the word has come in Scriptural use to mean a great deal more. Perhaps there is no better definition of repentance than that which is given in our little children’s hymnbook—

*“Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve,
By doing so no more.”*

Repentance is a discovery of the evil of sin, a mourning that we have committed it, a resolution to forsake it. It is, in fact, a change of mind of a very deep and practical character which makes the man love what once he hated, and hate what once he loved. Conversion, if translated, means a turning round, a turning from, and a turning to—a turning *from* sin, a turning to *holiness*—a turning from carelessness to thought, from the world to Heaven, from self to Jesus—a complete turning. The word here used, though translated in the English, “Repent and be converted,” is not so in the Greek; it is really, “Repent and convert,” or, rather, “Repent and turn.” It is an active verb, just as the other was. “Repent and turn.” When the demoniac had the devils cast out of him—I may compare that to repentance; but when he put on his garments and was no longer naked and filthy, and was said to be clothed, and in his right mind, I may compare *that* to conversion. When the prodigal was feeding his swine, and all of a sudden began to consider and to come to himself, that was repentance. When he set out and left the far country, and went to his father’s house, that was conversion. Repentance is a part of conversion. It is, perhaps, I may say, the gate or door of it. It is that Jordan through which we pass when we turn from the desert of sin to seek the Canaan of conversion. Regeneration is the implanting of a new nature, and one of the earliest signs of that is a faith in Christ, and a repentance of sin, and a consequent conversion from that which is evil to that which is good.

The Apostle Peter, addressing the crowd, said to them, “Change your minds; be sorry for what you have done; forsake your old ways; be turned; become new men.” That was his message as I have now put it into other words.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, it has been said, and said most truly, that repentance and conversion are the work of the Holy Spirit of God. You do not need that I should stop to prove that Doctrine; we have preached it to you a thousand times, and we are prepared to prove that if anything is taught in Scripture, that is. There never was any genuine repentance in this world which was not the work of the Holy Spirit. For this purpose our Lord Jesus has gone on high: “He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins.” All true conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit. You may rightly pray in the words of the Prophet, “Turn us, and we shall be turned,” for until God turns us, turn we never shall, and unless He converts us, our conversion is but a mistake. Hear it as a Gospel summons—

“True belief and true repentance,

*Every Grace which brings us nigh;
Without money
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”*

“And yet,” you say, “and yet the Apostle Peter actually says to us, ‘Repent, and be converted!’ That is, you tell us with one breath that these things are the gift of the Holy Spirit, and then with the next breath you read the text, ‘Repent, and be converted.’” Yes, I do, I do, and thank God I have learned to do so. But you will say, “How do you reconcile these two things?” I answer, it is no part of my commission to reconcile my Master’s words—my commission is to preach the Truth of God as I find it, to deliver it to you fresh from His hand; I not only *believe* these things to be agreeable to one another, but I think I see in which they do agree, but I utterly desire of making the most of what is written in Scripture, and to accept it all, whether I can see the agreement of the two sets of Truths or not—to accept them both because they are both revealed. With this hand I hold as firmly as any man living, that repentance and conversion are the work of the Holy Spirit, but I would sooner lose this hand, and both, than I would give up preaching that it is the duty of men to repent and to believe, and the duty of Christian ministers to say to them, “Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” If men will not receive the Truth of God till they understand it, there are many things which they will never receive. Yes, there are many facts, common facts in Nature, which nobody would deny but a fool, which yet must be denied if we will not believe them till we understand them. There is a fish fresh taken from the sea—you take it to the cook to serve it on the table. You eat salt with it, do you? What for? You will have it dried and salted, but what for? Did not it always live in the salt sea? Why then is it not salt? It is as fresh as though it had lived in the purling brooks of the upland country—not a particle of salt about it, yet it has lived wholly in the salt sea! Do you understand that? No, you cannot. But there it is, a fresh fish in a salt sea!

And yonder are an ox and a sheep, and they are eating in the same meadow, feeding precisely on the same food. But the grass in one case turns to beef, in the other case to mutton, and on one animal there is hair and on the other wool. How is that? Do you understand it? So there may be two great Truths in Scripture, which are both Truths of God, and yet all the wise men in the world might be confused to bring those two Truths together. I do not understand, I must confess, why Moses was told to cut down a tree and put it in the bitter waters of Marah. I cannot see any connection between a tree and the water, so that the tree should make it sweet, but yet I do believe that when Moses put the tree into the water the bitterness of Marah departed, and the stream was sweet. I do not know why it is that Elisha, when he went to Jericho, and found the water nauseous, said, “Bring me a cruse of salt.” I do not know why his putting the salt into the stream should make it sweet—it looks to me as if it would operate the other way, but I believe the miracle, namely, that the salt was put in, and that it was sweetened. So I do not understand how it is that my bidding impenitent sinners to repent should in any way be likely to make them do so, but I know it does—I see it every day. I do not know why a poor weak creature saying to his fellow men, “Believe,” should lead them to believe, but it does so—and the Holy Spirit blesses it, and they do believe and are saved; and if we cannot see how, if we see the fact, we will be content and bless God for it! Perhaps you may be aware that an attempt has been made by ingenious expositors to get rid of the force of this text. Some of our Hyper-Calvinist friends, who are so earnest against anything like exhortations and invitations, have tried by some means to disembowel this text if they could; they have tried to take something out, and put something else in—they have said that the repentance to which men are here exhorted is but an outward repentance. But how is it so, when it is added, “Repent and be converted, *that your sins may be blotted out*”? Does a merely outward repentance bring with it the blotting out of sin? Assuredly not!

The repentance to which men are here exhorted is a repentance which brings with it complete pardon—“that your sins may be blotted out.” And, moreover, it seems to me to be a shocking thing to suppose that Peter and John went about preaching up a hollow, outward repentance which would not save men. My Brothers who make that remark would themselves be ashamed to preach up outward repentance; I am sure they would think they were not ministers of God at all if they preached up any merely outward virtue; it shows to what shifts they must be driven when they twist the Scriptures so horribly with so little reason. Brothers and Sisters, it was a soul-saving repentance, and nothing less than that, which Peter commanded of these men. Now, let us come to the point. We tell men to repent and believe, not because we rely on any power in *them* to do so, for we know them to be dead in trespasses and sins; not because we depend upon any power in our earnestness or in our speech to make them do so, for we understand that our preaching is less than

nothing apart from God, but because the Gospel is the mysterious engine by which God converts the hearts of men, and we find that, if we speak in faith, God the Holy Spirit operates with us, and while we bid the dry bones live, the Spirit makes them live—while we tell the lame man to stand on his feet, the mysterious Energy of the Holy Spirit makes his ankle bones to receive strength—while we tell the impotent man to stretch out his hand, a Divine Power goes with the command, and the hand is stretched out, and the man is restored. The power lies not in the sinner, not in the preacher, but in the Holy Spirit, which works effectually with the Gospel by Divine decree, so that where the Truth of God is preached, the Elect of God are quickened by it, souls are saved, and God is glorified. Go on, my dear Brothers, preaching the Gospel boldly, and be not afraid of the result, for, however little may be your strength, and though your eloquence may be as nothing, yet God has promised to make His Gospel the Power to save, and so it shall be down to the world's end.

See then, you who are unsaved, before I leave this point, see what it is we are bound to require of *you* this morning. It is that you repent *and be* converted. We are not satisfied with having your ear, nor your eyes; we are not content with having you gathered in the house of worship—it is all in vain that you have come here unless you repent and be converted. We have not come to tell you that you must reform a little, and mend your ways in some degree—unless you put your trust in Christ, forsake your old way of life, and become new creatures in Christ Jesus, you will perish. This—nothing short of this—is the Gospel requirement. No church-going, no chapel-going will save you; no bowing of the knee, no outward form of worship, no pretensions and professions to godliness—you **MUST** repent of your sins and forsake them, and if you don't do this, neither shall your sins be blotted out! Thus much, then, on the first point—the Apostle commanded men to repent and be converted.

II. In the second place, THERE WAS GOOD REASON FOR THIS COMMAND.

The text says, “Repent you *therefore*.” The Apostle was logical—he had a reason for his exhortation. It was not mere declamation but sound reasoning. “Repent you therefore.” What, then, was the argument? Why, first, because you, like the Jews, have put Jesus Christ to death! This was literally true of the people to whom he spoke—they had had a share in Christ's execution. And this is spiritually true of you to whom I speak this morning; every sin in the essence of it is a killing of God; do you understand me? Every time you do what God would not have you do, you do in effect, as far as you can, take God off of His throne, and disown the authority which belongs to His Godhead; you do in intent, as far as you can, kill God. That is the drift of sin—sin is a God-killing thing; every violation of the Law of God is treason in its essence—it is rebellion against the Lawgiver. When our Lord Jesus Christ was nailed to the tree by sinners, sin only did then literally and openly what all sin really does in a spiritual sense. Do you understand me? Those offenses of yours which you have thought so little of, have been really a stabbing at the Deity. Will you not repent, if it is so? While you thought your sins to be mere trifles, light things to be laughed at, you would not repent; but now I have shown you (and I think your conscience will bear me out) that every sin is really an attempt to thrust God out of the world, and that every sin is saying, “Let there be no God.” Oh, then there is cause enough to repent of it! Come here and reason with me, you who have broken God's Law. Suppose the principle of your disobedience were carried out to the fullest, would not all laws be disregarded, and moral government subverted? And why not, since what one may do, another has clearly the same right to do. What, then, if the Authority of God should be no more acknowledged in the universe—where should we all be?

What a Hell above ground would this world become! What a moral chaos and den of beasts! Do you not see what a mischievous thing, then, your iniquity has been? Repent and turn from it. If you can really believe this morning that though you did not nail Christ to the Cross, nor plait the crown of thorns, and put it on His head, nor stand and mock Him there, yet that every sin is a real Crucifixion of Christ, and a mockery of Christ, and a slaughter of Christ, then, truly, there is abundant reason why you should repent and turn from it.

The Apostle also used another argument, namely, that He whom they had slain was a most blessed Person—One so blessed that God the Father had exalted Him. Jesus Christ came not into this world with any selfish motive, but entirely out of philanthropy, full of Love to men. And yet men put Him to death! Every sin is an insult against the good and kind God; God does not deserve that we should rebel against Him; if He were a great tyrant domineering over us, putting us to misery, there might be some excuse for our sin, but when He acts like a tender father to us, supplying our needs day by day, and forgiving our offenses, it is a shame, a cruel shame, that we should live in daily revolt against Him. You who

have not believed in Christ, have mighty cause for repenting that you have not believed in Him, seeing He is so good and kind. What hurt has He ever done you that you should curse at Him? What injury has Jesus done to any one of you that you should despise Him? You deny His Deity, perhaps, or, at any rate, you despise the great salvation which He came into this world to work out. Does He deserve this of you? Prince of Life and Glory, King of angels, the adored of seraphs, are You despised of men for whom Your blood was shed? Oh, what an accursed thing, then, sin must be, since it treats so badly so kind and blessed a Person! This ought to make us melt! This should make us shed drops of pity and of grief! We ought, indeed, to turn from our idle and evil ways when against Jesus we have so offended.

Moreover, Peter used another plea, that while they had rejected the blessed Christ, they had chosen a murderer. Sinner, you have despised Christ, and what is it you have chosen? Has it been the drunkard's cup? Oh, what a bestial thing to prefer to Christ! Or has it been your lust? What a devilish thing to set in the place of Christ! Man, what have your sins done to you that you should prefer them to Jesus Christ? Have you lived in them for years? Then what wages have you had? What profit have you had? Tell me now, you who have gone the farthest in sin, tell me now, are you satisfied with the service? Would you wish to go over again the days you have lived, and to reap in your own bodies the fruit of your misdeeds? No, and you serve a hard master—a murderer from the beginning is that devil to whom you surrendered your lives. Oh, then, this is a thing to be repented of—that you have cast Christ away, and have chosen a murderer! “Not this Man,” you say, “but Barabbas.” You will take this murderous world, this killing sin, but the blessed Savior, you let Him go! Is not there good argument here for repentance and conversion? Surely there is.

Peter clenches his reasoning with another argument, bringing down, if I may so say, the big hammer this time upon the head of the nail. It is this, that the Lord Christ, whom you have up to now despised, is able to do great things for you. “His name through faith in His name has made this man strong, whom you see and know.” Christ then, by faith in Him, is able to do for you all that you need; if you will trust Jesus today, all your iniquities shall be blotted out; the past shall not be remembered; the present shall be rendered safe, and the future blessed. If you trust in Christ, there is no sin which He will not forgive you, no evil habit the power of which He will not break, no foul propensity the weight of which He cannot remove; believing in Him, He can make you blessed beyond a dream. And is not this cause for repentance, that you should have slighted One who can do you so much good? With hands loaded with Love, He stands outside the door of your heart! Is not this good reason for opening the door, and letting the heavenly Stranger in, when He can bless you to such a vast extent of benediction? What, will you reject your own mercies? Will you despise the Heaven which shall be yours if you will have my Master? Will you choose the doom from which none but He can rescue you, and let go the Glory to which none but He can admit you? When I think of the usefulness of Christ to perishing sinners, there is indeed abundant cause for repentance that you should not have closed with Him long ago, and accepted Him to be your All in All. Thus you see the Apostle argued with them by that word, “Therefore.”

There was one other plea which he used, which I would employ this morning. He said, “Brethren, I know that through ignorance you did it.” As if he would say, “Now that you have more of the Light of God, repent of what you did in the dark.” So might I say to some here present. You had not heard the Gospel, you did not know that sin was so bad a thing, you did not understand that Jesus Christ was able to save to the uttermost them who came unto God by Him. Well, now you do understand it. The times of your ignorance God winks at, but now, “commands all men everywhere to repent.” Greater Light brings greater responsibility. Do not go back to your sin, lest it become tenfold sin to you; if you do in the Light of God what once you did in the darkness, He who winked at you when you knew no better, may lift His hand and swear that you shall never enter into His rest, because you sinned presumptuously, and did despite to the Spirit of His Divine Grace. I charge every unconverted man and woman here to mind what they do in the future. If you did not know that Jesus was able to save you before, you know it now! If you were in the dark till this morning, you are not in the dark any longer! “Now you have no cloak for your sin.” Therefore, because the cloak is pulled away, and you sin against the Light of God, I say as Peter did, “Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.”

III. But now, our third remark shall be given with brevity, and it is this, **THAT WITHOUT REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION, SIN CANNOT BE PARDONED.**

The expression used in the text, “blotted out,” in the original may be better explained in this way. Many Oriental merchants kept their accounts on little tablets of wax. On these tablets of wax, they indented marks which recorded the debts, and when these debts were paid, they took the blunt end of the stylus or pencil, and just flattened down the wax,

and the account entirely disappeared. That was the form of “blotting out” in those days. Now, he who repents and is pardoned, is, through the precious blood of Christ, so entirely forgiven that there is no record of his sin left. It is as though the stylus had leveled the marks in the wax, and there was no record left. What a beautiful picture of the forgiveness of sin! It is all gone, not a trace left! If we blot out an account from our books, there is the blot—the record is gone but there is the blot; but on the wax tablet there was no blot—it was all gone and the wax was smooth. So is it with the sin of God’s people when removed by Jesus’ blood—it is all gone and gone forever. But rest assured it cannot be removed unless there is repentance and conversion as the result of faith in Jesus. This must be so, for this is most seemly. Would you expect a great king to forgive an erring courtier unless the offender first confessed his fault? Where is the honor and dignity of the Throne of God if men are to be pardoned while as yet they will not confess their sin?

In the next place, it would not be moral—it would be pulling up the very sluices of immorality to tell men that they could be pardoned while they went on in their sins and loved them. What, a thief pardoned and continue to steal! A harlot forgiven and remain unchaste! The drunkard forgiven and yet delight in his tankards! Truly, then, the Gospel would be the servant of unrighteousness, and against us who preach it morality would make a law. But it is not so, impenitent sinners shall be damned, let them boast what they will about Divine Grace. My Hearer, you must hate your sin or God will hate you! You must turn or burn! You cannot have your sins and go to Heaven. Which shall it be? Will you leave your sins and go to Heaven, or hold your sins and go to Hell? Which shall it be, for it must be one or the other; there must be a divorce between us and sin, or there cannot be a marriage between us and Christ. Does not conscience tell us this? There is not a conscience here that will say to a man, “You can hope to be saved, and yet live as you like.” Some have said this—I question if any have believed it. No, no, no, blind as conscience is, and though its voice is often very feeble, yet there is enough of sight about conscience to see that continuance in sin and pardon cannot coexist, and there must be a forsaking of iniquity if there is to be a forgiving of it. But, my Hearer, whether your conscience shall say so or not, God says it; “He who confesses and forsakes his sin shall find mercy,” but there is no promise for the unrepentant. God declares that he who repents shall be forgiven. “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word.”

But for haughty Pharaoh, who says, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him?” there is nothing but eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord. He who goes on in his iniquity, and hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. Ah, I have no pardons to preach to you who settle your minds to continue in sin; I have no gentle notes of love at all, nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation. But ah, if you loathe your sins—if God’s Holy Spirit has made you hate your past lives, if you are anxious to be made new men in Christ Jesus, I have nothing but notes of love for you. Believe in Jesus, cast yourself on Him, for He has said, “He who comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” The door is shut and fast bolted to every man who will keep his sin, but it is wide open, even to the biggest sinner out of Hell, if he will leave his sin and lay hold of Jesus and put his trust in Him.

IV. The last remark is this—**REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION WILL BE REGARDED AS PECULIARLY PRECIOUS IN THE FUTURE**, for my text says, “That your sins may be blotted out, *when the times of refreshing shall come from the Presence of the Lord.*”

A very difficult passage, indeed. Its meaning is scarcely known. Three or four meanings have been attached to it. In the first place, I think it means this—he who repents and is converted, shall enjoy the blotting out of sin in that season of sweet peace which always follows pardon. After a man has been thoroughly broken down on account of sin, God deals with him very tenderly. Among the very happiest parts of human life are the hours immediately after conversion. You know how we sing—

*“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?”*

When the broken bone begins to heal, David puts it, “You make the bones which You have broken to rejoice.” When the prisoner first gets out of prison; when the fetters for the first time clank music as they fall broken to the ground; when the sick man leaves the sick chamber of his convictions to breathe the air of liberty, and to feel the health of a pardoned sinner! Oh, if you did but know what a bliss it is to be forgiven, you would never stay away from Christ! But you do not know, and cannot tell how sweet it is to be washed in the precious blood, and wrapped about with the fair white linen,

and to have the kiss of the heavenly Father on your cheek! O “repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the Presence of the Lord.”

Perhaps these “times of refreshing” may also relate to times of revival in the Christian Church. The only way in which you, dear Friends, can share in the refreshment of a revival, is by your own repenting and being converted. A revival is a great refreshment to the Church; I pray that a mighty wave may sweep over Great Britain, for much we need it. But of what use is a revival to an unpardoned sinner? It is like the soft south wind blowing upon a corpse—it can bring no genial warmth. If you repent, and are converted, then, amidst the general joy of the revival, you shall have this joy, that your sins have been blotted out. What a mournful cry is that, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!” I think I hear that cry from some in the Tabernacle this morning. Oh, that blessed month of February and the beginning of March! It was to us like a harvest and a summer! What prayers, what tears, what cries! How full this house was to pray! How all day long from before the daystar shone, until long after sunset we continued in prayer! But you are still not saved, some of you. The harvest and the summer is ended, and you are not saved! Ah, I have been praying to God that you may yet be saved now. I am unable to achieve a purpose which has been hot upon my heart—to go and preach to a greater congregation in the Agricultural Hall during the next month. I find myself restrained by the Master’s hand. Ill health has returned to me, and most probably there are months of weariness and pain awaiting me, but I have prayed that if I may not cast the net in the greater place, I may have the more of you *here*. We cannot have a larger congregation, but I would gladly have more conversions. It is hard preaching, it is dull working, unless there are results. We must have conversions. As that woman of old said, “Give me children or I die,” so is it with the preacher—he must have sinners saved, or he prays to die. Dear Hearer, if these times of refreshing may come, our prayer is that you may repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, and so may partake to the full in the priceless blessings of the season.

Once more, the text means, according to the context, the Second Advent. Jesus is yet to come a second time, and like a mighty shower flooding a desert shall His coming be. His Church shall revive and be refreshed; she shall once again lift up her head from her lethargy, and her body from her sepulcher; but woe unto you who are not saved when Christ comes, for the Day of the Lord will be darkness and not light to you. When Christ comes to the unconverted, “the day shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yes, and all who do wickedly, shall be stubble.” “But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi.” Oh, if you repent and are converted, you shall stand fully absolved in the day of His Coming, when Heaven and earth will reel, when the solid rock begins to melt, and the stars, like withered fig leaves, fall from the tree, when the trumpet sounds exceedingly loud and long, “Awake, you dead and come to judgment,” when the Grand Assize is sitting, and the Judge shall be there—the Judge of the quick and the dead, to separate the righteous from the wicked. The Lord have mercy upon you in that day, and so He shall if His Grace shall make you obedient to the words of our text, “Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when times of refreshing shall come from the Presence of the Lord.”

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ACTS 3.

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