

Mark Devotionals - C H Spurgeon

These devotionals are from Faith's Checkbook and Morning and evening

Mark 1:17 Fishers Follow Him

ONLY by coming after Jesus can we obtain our heart's desire, and be really useful to our fellow men. Oh, how we long to be successful fishers for Jesus! We would sacrifice our lives to win souls. But we are tempted to try methods which Jesus would never have tried. Shall we yield to this suggestion of the enemy? If so, we may splash the water, but we shall never take the fish. We must follow after Jesus if we would succeed. Sensational methods, entertainments, and so forth—are these coming after Jesus? Can we imagine the Lord Jesus drawing a congregation by such means as are now commonly used? What is the result of such expedients? The result is nothing which Jesus will count up at the last great day.

We must keep to our preaching as our Master did, for by this means, souls are saved. We must preach our Lord's doctrine and proclaim a full and free gospel, for this is the net in which souls are taken. We must preach with His gentleness, boldness, and love; for this is the secret of success with human hearts. We must work under divine anointing, depending upon the sacred Spirit. Thus, coming after Jesus, and not running before Him, nor aside from Him, we shall be fishers of men.

Mark 1:18 Straightway they forsook their nets & followed Him

When they heard the call of Jesus, Simon and Andrew obeyed at once without demur. If we would always, punctually and with resolute zeal, put in practice what we hear upon the spot, or at the first fit occasion, our attendance at the means of grace, and our reading of good books, could not fail to enrich us spiritually. He will not lose his loaf who has taken care at once to eat it, neither can he be deprived of the benefit of the doctrine who has already acted upon it. Most readers and hearers become moved so far as to purpose to amend; but, alas! the proposal is a blossom which has not been knit, and therefore no fruit comes of it; they wait, they waver, and then they forget, till, like the ponds in nights of frost, when the sun shines by day, they are only thawed in time to be frozen again. That fatal to-morrow is blood-red with the murder of fair resolutions; it is the slaughter-house of the innocents. We are very concerned that our little book of "Evening Readings" should not be fruitless, and therefore we pray that readers may not be readers only, but doers, of the word. The practice of truth is the most profitable reading of it. Should the reader be impressed with any duty while perusing these pages, let him hasten to fulfil it before the holy glow has departed from his soul, and let him leave his nets, and all that he has, sooner than be found rebellious to the Master's call. Do not give place to the devil by delay! Haste while opportunity and quickening are in happy conjunction. Do not be caught in your own nets, but break the meshes of worldliness, and away where glory calls you. Happy is the writer who shall meet with readers resolved to carry out his teachings: his harvest shall be a hundredfold, and his Master shall have great honour. Would to God that such might be our reward upon these brief meditations and hurried hints. Grant it, O Lord, unto thy servant!

Mark 1:30 Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever

Very interesting is this little peep into the house of the Apostolic Fisherman. We see at once that household joys and cares are no hindrance to the full exercise of ministry, nay, that since they furnish an opportunity for personally witnessing the Lord's gracious work upon one's own flesh and blood, they may even instruct the teacher better than any other earthly discipline. Papists and other sectaries may decry marriage, but true Christianity and household life agree well together. Peter's house was probably a poor fisherman's hut, but the Lord of Glory entered it, lodged in it, and wrought a miracle in it. Should our little book be read this morning in some very humble cottage, let this fact encourage the inmates to seek the company of King Jesus. God is oftener in little huts than in rich palaces. Jesus is looking round your room now, and is waiting to be gracious to you. Into Simon's house sickness had entered, fever in a deadly form had prostrated his mother-in-law, and as soon as Jesus came they told him of the sad affliction, and he hastened to the patient's bed. Have you any sickness in the house this morning? You will find Jesus by far the best physician, go to him at once and tell him all about the matter. Immediately lay the case before him. It concerns one of his people, and therefore will not be trivial to him. Observe, that at once the Saviour restored the sick woman; none can heal as he does. We may not make sure that the Lord will at once remove all disease from those we love, but we may know that believing prayer for the sick is far more likely to be followed by restoration than anything else in the world; and where this avails not, we must meekly bow to his will by whom life and death are determined. The tender heart

of Jesus waits to hear our griefs, let us pour them into his patient ear.

Mark 1:41 I will; be thou clean

Primeval darkness heard the Almighty fiat, "light be," and straightway light was, and the word of the Lord Jesus is equal in majesty to that ancient word of power. Redemption like Creation has its word of might. Jesus speaks and it is done. Leprosy yielded to no human remedies, but it fled at once at the Lord's "I will." The disease exhibited no hopeful signs or tokens of recovery, nature contributed nothing to its own healing, but the unaided word effected the entire work on the spot and for ever. The sinner is in a plight more miserable than the leper; let him imitate his example and go to Jesus, "beseeching him and kneeling down to him." Let him exercise what little faith he has, even though it should go no further than "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean"; and there need be no doubt as to the result of the application. Jesus heals all who come, and casts out none. In reading the narrative in which our morning's text occurs, it is worthy of devout notice that Jesus touched the leper. This unclean person had broken through the regulations of the ceremonial law and pressed into the house, but Jesus so far from chiding him broke through the law himself in order to meet him. He made an interchange with the leper, for while he cleansed him, he contracted by that touch a Levitical defilement. Even so Jesus Christ was made sin for us, although in himself he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. O that poor sinners would go to Jesus, believing in the power of his blessed substitutionary work, and they would soon learn the power of his gracious touch. That hand which multiplied the loaves, which saved sinking Peter, which upholds afflicted saints, which crowns believers, that same hand will touch every seeking sinner, and in a moment make him clean. The love of Jesus is the source of salvation. He loves, he looks, he touches us, WE LIVE.

Mark 2:4 They let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay

Faith is full of inventions. The house was full, a crowd blocked up the door, but faith found a way of getting at the Lord and placing the palsied man before him. If we cannot get sinners where Jesus is by ordinary methods we must use extraordinary ones. It seems, according to Luke 5:19, that a tiling had to be removed, which would make dust and cause a measure of danger to those below, but where the case is very urgent we must not mind running some risks and shocking some proprieties. Jesus was there to heal, and therefore fall what might, faith ventured all so that her poor paralysed charge might have his sins forgiven. O that we had more daring faith among us! Cannot we, dear reader, seek it this morning for ourselves and for our fellow-workers, and will we not try to-day to perform some gallant act for the love of souls and the glory of the Lord.

The world is constantly inventing; genius serves all the purposes of human desire: cannot faith invent too, and reach by some new means the outcasts who lie perishing around us? It was the presence of Jesus which excited victorious courage in the four bearers of the palsied man: is not the Lord among us now? Have we seen his face for ourselves this morning? Have we felt his healing power in our own souls? If so, then through door, through window, or through roof, let us, breaking through all impediments, labour to bring poor souls to Jesus. All means are good and decorous when faith and love are truly set on winning souls. If hunger for bread can break through stone walls, surely hunger for souls is not to be hindered in its efforts. O Lord, make us quick to suggest methods of reaching thy poor sin-sick ones, and bold to carry them out at all hazards.

Mark 3:13 They came unto him

Here was sovereignty. Impatient spirits may fret and fume, because they are not called to the highest places in the ministry; but reader be it thine to rejoice that Jesus calleth whom he wills. If he shall leave me to be a doorkeeper in his house, I will cheerfully bless him for his grace in permitting me to do anything in his service. The call of Christ's servants comes from above. Jesus stands on the mountain, evermore above the world in holiness, earnestness, love and power. Those whom he calls must go up the mountain to him, they must seek to rise to his level by living in constant communion with him. They may not be able to mount to classic honours, or attain scholastic eminence, but they must like Moses go up into the mount of God and have familiar intercourse with the unseen God, or they will never be fitted to proclaim the gospel of peace. Jesus went apart to hold high fellowship with the Father, and we must enter into the same divine companionship if we would bless our fellowmen. No wonder that the apostles were clothed with power when they came down fresh from the mountain where Jesus was. This morning we must endeavour to ascend the mount of communion, that there we may be ordained to the lifework for which we are set apart. Let us not see the face of man to-day till we have seen Jesus. Time spent with him is laid out at blessed interest. We too shall cast out devils and work wonders if we go down into the world girded with that divine energy which Christ alone can give. It is of no use going to the Lord's battle till we are armed with heavenly weapons. We must see Jesus, this is

essential. At the mercy-seat we will linger till he shall manifest himself unto us as he doth not unto the world, and until we can truthfully say, "We were with him in the Holy Mount."

Mark 4:36 There were also with him other little ships

Jesus was the Lord High Admiral of the sea that night, and his presence preserved the whole convoy. It is well to sail with Jesus, even though it be in a little ship. When we sail in Christ's company, we may not make sure of fair weather, for great storms may toss the vessel which carries the Lord himself, and we must not expect to find the sea less boisterous around our little boat. If we go with Jesus we must be content to fare as he fares; and when the waves are rough to him, they will be rough to us. It is by tempest and tossing that we shall come to land, as he did before us.

When the storm swept over Galilee's dark lake all faces gathered blackness, and all hearts dreaded shipwreck. When all creature help was useless, the slumbering Saviour arose, and with a word, transformed the riot of the tempest into the deep quiet of a calm; then were the little vessels at rest as well as that which carried the Lord. Jesus is the star of the sea; and though there be sorrow upon the sea, when Jesus is on it there is joy too. May our hearts make Jesus their anchor, their rudder, their lighthouse, their life-boat, and their harbour. His Church is the Admiral's flagship, let us attend her movements, and cheer her officers with our presence. He himself is the great attraction; let us follow ever in his wake, mark his signals, steer by his chart, and never fear while he is within hail. Not one ship in the convoy shall suffer wreck; the great Commodore will steer every barque in safety to the desired haven. By faith we will slip our cable for another day's cruise, and sail forth with Jesus into a sea of tribulation. Winds and waves will not spare us, but they all obey him; and, therefore, whatever squalls may occur without, faith shall feel a blessed calm within. He is ever in the centre of the weather-beaten company: let us rejoice in him. His vessel has reached the haven, and so shall ours.

Mark 7:21, 22 "Out of the heart ... proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications. ..."

It reads like a grim sarcasm, that sinners should be proud. What have such creatures to be proud of? What! Adulteries, murders, thefts, and yet pride? One would have said that such sins would have forbidden pride. What a misalliance! A person infamous, and yet puffed up! Alas, the worse a man becomes, the more is he filled with a sort of vainglory, by the force of which he justifies his own iniquities and refuses to see his own vileness.

Mark 8:38 When he cometh in the glory of his Father

If we have been partakers with Jesus in His shame, we shall also share with Him the luster that surrounds Him when He appears again in glory. Are you in communion with Christ Jesus? Does a vital union bind you to Him? Then you are today with Him in His shame; you have taken up His cross and have gone with Him outside the camp bearing His reproach; you will doubtless be with Him when the cross is exchanged for the crown. But examine yourself this evening; for if you are not with Him in regeneration, you will not be with Him when He comes in His glory. If you run from the dark side of fellowship, you will not understand its bright, happy chapter when the King comes with all His holy angels. What! Are angels with Him? And yet He did not take up angels—He took up the seed of Abraham. Are the holy angels with Him? Come, my soul; if you are indeed His own beloved, you cannot be far from Him. If His friends and His neighbors are called together to see His glory, shall you be distant? Though it be a day of judgment, yet you cannot be far from that heart that, having admitted angels into intimacy, has admitted you into union with Himself. Has He not said to you, O my soul, "I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy"? Has He not declared us to be in union with Him? If the angels, who are but friends and neighbors, shall be with Him, it is abundantly certain that His own beloved in whom is all His delight shall be near to Him and sit at His right hand. Here is a morning star of hope for you, of such exceeding brilliance that it may well light up your darkest and most desolate experience.

Mark 9:15 The people when they beheld Him were greatly amazed

How great the difference between Moses and Jesus! When Moses had been forty days upon the mountain, he under-went a kind of transfiguration, so that his face shone with exceeding brightness, and he put a veil over it because the people were not able to look upon his glory. Not so our Savior. He had been transfigured with a greater glory than that of Moses, and yet we do not read that the people were blinded by the blaze of His countenance, but rather they were amazed and ran to Him and greeted Him. The glory of the law repels, but the greater glory of Jesus attracts. Though Jesus is holy and just, yet blended with His purity there is so much truth and grace that sinners run to Him amazed at His goodness, fascinated by His love; they greet Him,

become His disciples, and take Him to be their Lord and Master. Reader, it may be that just now you are blinded by the dazzling brightness of the law of God. You feel its claims on your conscience, but you cannot keep it in your life. Not that you find fault with the law; on the contrary, it commands your profoundest esteem. Still you are not drawn by it to God; you are rather hardened in heart and tending toward desperation. So turn your eye from Moses with all his repelling splendor, and look to Jesus, resplendent with milder glories. Look upon His flowing wounds and thorn-crowned head! He is the Son of God and greater than Moses, but He is the Lord of love and more tender than the law-giver. He bore the wrath of God and in His death revealed more of God's justice than Sinai displayed, but that justice is now vindicated, and it is the guardian of believers in Jesus. Look, sinner, to the bleeding Savior, and as you feel the attraction of His love, run to His arms, and you will be saved.

Mark 9:19 Bring Him unto me

Despairingly the poor disappointed father turned away from the disciples to their Master. His son was in the worst possible condition, and all means had failed, but the miserable child was soon delivered from the evil one when the parent in faith obeyed the Lord Jesus' word, "Bring him unto me." Children are a precious gift from God, but much anxiety comes with them. They may be a great joy or a great bitterness to their parents; they may be filled with the Spirit of God, or possessed with the spirit of evil. In all cases, the Word of God gives us one receipt for the curing of all their ills, "Bring him unto me." O for more agonizing prayer on their behalf while they are yet babes! Sin is there, let our prayers begin to attack it. Our cries for our offspring should precede those cries which betoken their actual advent into a world of sin. In the days of their youth we shall see sad tokens of that dumb and deaf spirit which will neither pray aright, nor hear the voice of God in the soul, but Jesus still commands, "Bring them unto me." When they are grown up they may wallow in sin and foam with enmity against God; then when our hearts are breaking we should remember the great Physician's words, "Bring them unto me." Never must we cease to pray until they cease to breathe. No case is hopeless while Jesus lives.

The Lord sometimes suffers his people to be driven into a corner that they may experimentally know how necessary he is to them. Ungodly children, when they show us our own powerlessness against the depravity of their hearts, drive us to flee to the strong for strength, and this is a great blessing to us. Whatever our morning's need may be, let it like a strong current bear us to the ocean of divine love. Jesus can soon remove our sorrow, he delights to comfort us. Let us hasten to him while he waits to meet us.

Mark 9:23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe

A certain man had a demoniac son, who was afflicted with a dumb spirit. The father, having seen the futility of the endeavours of the disciples to heal his child, had little or no faith in Christ, and therefore, when he was bidden to bring his son to him, he said to Jesus, "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." Now there was an "if" in the question, but the poor trembling father had put the "if" in the wrong place: Jesus Christ, therefore, without commanding him to retract the "if," kindly puts it in its legitimate position. "Nay, verily," he seemed to say, "there should be no 'if' about my power, nor concerning my willingness, the 'if' lies somewhere else." "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." The man's trust was strengthened, he offered a humble prayer for an increase of faith, and instantly Jesus spoke the word, and the devil was cast out, with an injunction never to return. There is a lesson here which we need to learn. We, like this man, often see that there is an "if" somewhere, but we are perpetually blundering by putting it in the wrong place. "If" Jesus can help me—"if" he can give me grace to overcome temptation—"if" he can give me pardon—"if" he can make me successful? Nay, "if" you can believe, he both can and will. You have misplaced your "if." If you can confidently trust, even as all things are possible to Christ, so shall all things be possible to you. Faith standeth in God's power, and is robed in God's majesty; it weareth the royal apparel, and rideth on the King's horse, for it is the grace which the King delighteth to honour. Girding itself with the glorious might of the all-working Spirit, it becomes, in the omnipotence of God, mighty to do, to dare, and to suffer. All things, without limit, are possible to him that believeth. My soul, canst thou believe thy Lord to-night?

Mark 9:23 The "All" of Belief

OUR unbelief is the greatest hindrance in our way; in fact, there is no other real difficulty as to our spiritual progress and prosperity. The Lord can do everything, but when He makes a rule that according to our faith so shall it be unto us, our unbelief ties the hands of His omnipotence.

Yes, the confederacies of evil shall be scattered if we can but believe. Despised truth shall lift its head if we will but have confidence in the God of truth. We can bear our load of trouble or pass uninjured through the waves

of distress, if we can gird our loins with the girdle of peace, that girdle which is buckled on by the hands of trust.

What can we not believe? Is everything possible except believing in God? Yet He is always true; why do we not believe Him? He is always faithful to His word; why can we not trust Him? When we are in a right state of heart, faith costs no effort: it is then as natural for us to rely upon God as for a child to trust its father.

The worst of it is that we can believe God about everything except the present pressing trial. This is folly. Come, my soul, shake off such sinfulness, and trust thy God with the load, the labor, the longing of this present. This done, all is done.

Mark 9:23 All things are possible to him that believeth

Many professed Christians are always doubting and fearing, and they forlornly think that this is the necessary state of believers. This is a mistake, for "all things are possible to him that believeth"; and it is possible for us to mount into a state in which a doubt or a fear shall be but as a bird of passage flitting across the soul, but never lingering there. When you read of the high and sweet communions enjoyed by favoured saints, you sigh and murmur in the chamber of your heart, "Alas! these are not for me." O climber, if thou hast but faith, thou shalt yet stand upon the sunny pinnacle of the temple, for "all things are possible to him that believeth." You hear of exploits which holy men have done for Jesus; what they have enjoyed of him; how much they have been like him; how they have been able to endure great persecutions for his sake; and you say, "Ah! as for me, I am but a worm; I can never attain to this." But there is nothing which one saint was, that you may not be. There is no elevation of grace, no attainment of spirituality, no clearness of assurance, no post of duty, which is not open to you if you have but the power to believe. Lay aside your sackcloth and ashes, and rise to the dignity of your true position; you are little in Israel because you will be so, not because there is any necessity for it. It is not meet that thou shouldst grovel in the dust, O child of a King. Ascend! The golden throne of assurance is waiting for you! The crown of communion with Jesus is ready to bedeck your brow. Wrap yourself in scarlet and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day; for if thou believest, thou mayst eat the fat of kidneys of wheat; thy land shall flow with milk and honey, and thy soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. Gather golden sheaves of grace, for they await thee in the fields of faith. "All things are possible to him that believeth."

Mark 10:21 Take up the cross, and follow Me

You have not the making of your own cross, although unbelief is a master carpenter at cross-making; neither are you permitted to choose your own cross, although self-will would fain be lord and master; but your cross is prepared and appointed for you by divine love, and you are cheerfully to accept it; you are to take up the cross as your chosen badge and burden, and not to stand cavilling at it. This night Jesus bids you submit your shoulder to his easy yoke. Do not kick at it in petulance, or trample on it in vain-glory, or fall under it in despair, or run away from it in fear, but take it up like a true follower of Jesus. Jesus was a cross-bearer; he leads the way in the path of sorrow. Surely you could not desire a better guide! And if he carried a cross, what nobler burden would you desire? The *Via Crucis* is the way of safety; fear not to tread its thorny paths.

Beloved, the cross is not made of feathers, or lined with velvet, it is heavy and galling to disobedient shoulders; but it is not an iron cross, though your fears have painted it with iron colours, it is a wooden cross, and a man can carry it, for the Man of sorrows tried the load. Take up your cross, and by the power of the Spirit of God you will soon be so in love with it, that like Moses, you would not exchange the reproach of Christ for all the treasures of Egypt. Remember that Jesus carried it, and it will smell sweetly; remember that it will soon be followed by the crown, and the thought of the coming weight of glory will greatly lighten the present heaviness of trouble. The Lord help you to bow your spirit in submission to the divine will ere you fall asleep this night, that waking with to-morrow's sun, you may go forth to the day's cross with the holy and submissive spirit which becomes a follower of the Crucified.

Mark 10:21 "Take up the cross—and follow Me." The cross is not made of soft feathers!

You have not the liberty of making of your own cross; although unbelief is a master carpenter at cross-making. Neither are you permitted to choose your own cross; although self-will would gladly be lord and master. Your cross is prepared and appointed for you by divine love—and you are cheerfully to accept it. You are to take up the cross as your chosen portion, and not to stand caviling at it. Jesus bids you to submit your shoulder to His easy yoke. Do not . . . kick at it in petulance, or trample on it in vain-glory, or fall under it in despair, or run away from it in fear. Take it up like a true follower of Jesus. Jesus was a cross-bearer; He leads the way in the path of sorrow. Surely you could not desire a better guide! And if He carried a cross—what nobler

burden would you desire?

Mark 11:22 Have faith in God

Faith is the foot of the soul by which it can march along the road of the commandments. Love can make the feet move more swiftly; but faith is the foot which carries the soul. Faith is the oil enabling the wheels of holy devotion and of earnest piety to move well; and without faith the wheels are taken from the chariot, and we drag heavily. With faith I can do all things; without faith I shall neither have the inclination nor the power to do anything in the service of God. If you would find the men who serve God the best, you must look for the men of the most faith. Little faith will save a man, but little faith cannot do great things for God. Poor Little-faith could not have fought "Apollyon;" it needed "Christian" to do that. Poor Little-faith could not have slain "Giant Despair;" it required "Great-heart's" arm to knock that monster down. Little faith will go to heaven most certainly, but it often has to hide itself in a nut-shell, and it frequently loses all but its jewels. Little-faith says, "It is a rough road, beset with sharp thorns, and full of dangers; I am afraid to go;" but Great-faith remembers the promise, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; as thy days, so shall thy strength be:" and so she boldly ventures. Little-faith stands desponding, mingling her tears with the flood; but Great-faith sings, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee:" and she fords the stream at once. Would you be comfortable and happy? Would you enjoy religion? Would you have the religion of cheerfulness and not that of gloom? Then "have faith in God." If you love darkness, and are satisfied to dwell in gloom and misery, then be content with little faith; but if you love the sunshine, and would sing songs of rejoicing, covet earnestly this best gift, "great faith."

Mark 14:14 "Where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples?"

Jerusalem at the time of the passover was one great inn; each householder had invited his own friends, but no one had invited the Saviour, and he had no dwelling of his own. It was by his own supernatural power that he found himself an upper room in which to keep the feast. It is so even to this day—Jesus is not received among the sons of men save only where by his supernatural power and grace he makes the heart anew. All doors are open enough to the prince of darkness, but Jesus must clear a way for himself or lodge in the streets. It was through the mysterious power exerted by our Lord that the householder raised no question, but at once cheerfully and joyfully opened his guestchamber. Who he was, and what he was, we do not know, but he readily accepted the honour which the Redeemer proposed to confer upon him. In like manner it is still discovered who are the Lord's chosen, and who are not; for when the gospel comes to some, they fight against it, and will not have it, but where men receive it, welcoming it, this is a sure indication that there is a secret work going on in the soul, and that God has chosen them unto eternal life. Are you willing, dear reader, to receive Christ? then there is no difficulty in the way; Christ will be your guest; his own power is working with you, making you willing. What an honour to entertain the Son of God! The heaven of heavens cannot contain him, and yet he condescends to find a house within our hearts! We are not worthy that he should come under our roof, but what an unutterable privilege when he condescends to enter! for then he makes a feast, and causes us to feast with him upon royal dainties, we sit at a banquet where the viands are immortal, and give immortality to those who feed thereon. Blessed among the sons of Adam is he who entertains the angels' Lord.

Mark 14:72 He wept

It has been thought by some that as long as Peter lived, the fountain of his tears began to flow whenever he remembered his denying his Lord. It is not unlikely that it was so, for his sin was very great, and grace in him had afterwards a perfect work. This same experience is common to all the redeemed family according to the degree in which the Spirit of God has removed the natural heart of stone. We, like Peter, remember our boastful promise: "Though all men shall forsake thee, yet will not I." We eat our own words with the bitter herbs of repentance. When we think of what we vowed we would be, and of what we have been, we may weep whole showers of grief. He thought on his denying his Lord. The place in which he did it, the little cause which led him into such heinous sin, the oaths and blasphemies with which he sought to confirm his falsehood, and the dreadful hardness of heart which drove him to do so again and yet again. Can we, when we are reminded of our sins, and their exceeding sinfulness, remain stolid and stubborn? Will we not make our house a Bochim, and cry unto the Lord for renewed assurances of pardoning love? May we never take a dry-eyed look at sin, lest ere long we have a tongue parched in the flames of hell. Peter also thought upon his Master's look of love. The Lord followed up the cock's warning voice with an admonitory look of sorrow, pity, and love. That glance was never out of Peter's mind so long as he lived. It was far more effectual than ten thousand sermons would have been without the Spirit. The penitent apostle would be sure to weep when he recollected the Saviour's

full forgiveness, which restored him to his former place. To think that we have offended so kind and good a Lord is more than sufficient reason for being constant weepers. Lord, smite our rocky hearts, and make the waters flow.

Mark 15:23 They gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh

A golden truth is couched in the fact that the Saviour put the myrrhed wine-cup from his lips. On the heights of heaven the Son of God stood of old, and as he looked down upon our globe he measured the long descent to the utmost depths of human misery; he cast up the sum total of all the agonies which expiation would require, and abated not a jot. He solemnly determined that to offer a sufficient atoning sacrifice he must go the whole way, from the highest to the lowest, from the throne of highest glory to the cross of deepest woe. This myrrhed cup, with its soporific influence, would have stayed him within a little of the utmost limit of misery, therefore he refused it. He would not stop short of all he had undertaken to suffer for his people. Ah, how many of us have pined after reliefs to our grief which would have been injurious to us! Reader, did you never pray for a discharge from hard service or suffering with a petulant and wilful eagerness? Providence has taken from you the desire of your eyes with a stroke. Say, Christian, if it had been said, "If you so desire it, that loved one of yours shall live, but God will be dishonoured," could you have put away the temptation, and said, "Thy will be done"? Oh, it is sweet to be able to say, "My Lord, if for other reasons I need not suffer, yet if I can honour thee more by suffering, and if the loss of my earthly all will bring thee glory, then so let it be. I refuse the comfort, if it comes in the way of thine honour." O that we thus walked more in the footsteps of our Lord, cheerfully enduring trial for his sake, promptly and willingly putting away the thought of self and comfort when it would interfere with our finishing the work which he has given us to do. Great grace is needed, but great grace is provided.

Mark 16:7 Always First in Fellowship

WHERE He appointed to meet His disciples, there He would be in due time. Jesus keeps His tryst. If He promises to meet us at the mercy seat, or in public worship, or in the ordinances, we may depend upon it that He will be there. We may wickedly stay away from the appointed meeting place, but He never does. He says, "Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I"; He says not, "There will I be," but, "I am there already."

Jesus is always first in fellowship: "He goeth before you." His heart is with His people, His delight is in them, He is never slow to meet them. In all fellowship He goeth before us.

But he reveals Himself to those who come after Him: "There shall ye see him." Joyful sight! We care not to see the greatest of mere men, but to see Him is to be filled with joy and peace. And we shall see Him, for He promises to come to those who believe in Him and to manifest Himself to them. Rest assured that it will be so, for He does everything according to His word of promise: "As he said unto you." Catch at those last words, and be assured that to the end He will do for you "as he said unto you."

Mark 16:9 Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils

Mary of Magdala was the victim of a fearful evil. She was possessed by not one devil only, but seven. These dreadful inmates caused much pain and pollution to the poor frame in which they had found a lodging. Hers was a hopeless, horrible case. She could not help herself, neither could any human succour avail. But Jesus passed that way, and unsought, and probably even resisted by the poor demoniac, he uttered the word of power, and Mary of Magdala became a trophy of the healing power of Jesus. All the seven demons left her, left her never to return, forcibly ejected by the Lord of all. What a blessed deliverance! What a happy change! From delirium to delight, from despair to peace, from hell to heaven! Straightway she became a constant follower of Jesus, catching his every word, following his devious steps, sharing his toilsome life; and withal she became his generous helper, first among that band of healed and grateful women who ministered unto him of their substance. When Jesus was lifted up in crucifixion, Mary remained the sharer of his shame: we find her first beholding from afar, and then drawing near to the foot of the cross. She could not die on the cross with Jesus, but she stood as near it as she could, and when his blessed body was taken down, she watched to see how and where it was laid. She was the faithful and watchful believer, last at the sepulchre where Jesus slept, first at the grave whence he arose. Her holy fidelity made her a favoured beholder of her beloved Rabboni, who deigned to call her by her name, and to make her his messenger of good news to the trembling disciples and Peter. Thus grace found her a maniac and made her a minister, cast out devils and gave her to behold angels, delivered her from Satan, and united her for ever to the Lord Jesus. May I also be such a miracle of

grace!

Mark 16:9 He appeared first to Mary Magdalene

Jesus “appeared first to Mary Magdalene,” probably not only on account of her great love and persevering seeking, but because, as the context intimates, she had been a special trophy of Christ’s delivering power. Learn from this that the greatness of our sin before conversion should not make us imagine that we may not be specially favored with the very highest grade of fellowship. She was one who had left all to become a constant attendant on the Savior. He was her first, her chief, object. Many who were on Christ’s side did not take up Christ’s cross; she did. She spent her substance in relieving His wants. If we would see much of Christ, let us serve Him. Tell me who they are who sit most often under the banner of His love and drink the deepest from the cup of communion, and I am sure they will be those who give most, who serve best, and who abide closest to the bleeding heart of their dear Lord. But notice how Christ revealed Himself to this sorrowing one—by a word: “Mary.”¹ It needed but one word in His voice, and at once she knew Him. Her heart expressed allegiance by another word, but her heart was too full to say more. That one word would naturally be the most fitting for the occasion. It implies obedience. She said, “Master” [KJV]. There is no state of mind in which this confession of allegiance will be too cold. When your spirit glows most with the heavenly fire, then you will say, “I am your servant. . . . You have loosed my bonds.”² If you can say, “Master,” if you feel that His will is your will, then you stand in a happy, holy place. He must have said, “Mary,” or else you could not have said, “Rabboni,” “Master.” See, then, from all this how Christ honors those who honor Him, how love draws our Beloved, how it needs but one word of His to turn our weeping to rejoicing, how His presence makes the heart’s sunshine.

Mark 16:9 He appeared first to Mary Magdalene.

If we would see much of Christ, let us serve Him. Tell me who they are that sit most often under the banner of His love and drink deepest draughts from the cup of communion, and I am sure they will be those who give most, who serve best, and who abide closest to the bleeding heart of their dear Lord. But notice how Christ revealed Himself to this sorrowing one—by a word, “Mary.” She needed but one word in His voice, and at once she knew Him. Her heart admitted allegiance by another word. Her heart was too full to say more. That one word most fitting implies obedience. She said, “Master.” (See John 20:16.)

Mark 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved

Mr. MacDonald asked the inhabitants of the island of St. Kilda how a man must be saved. An old man replied, “We shall be saved if we repent, and forsake our sins, and turn to God.” “Yes,” said a middle-aged female, “and with a true heart too.” “Aye,” rejoined a third, “and with prayer”; and, added a fourth, “It must be the prayer of the heart.” “And we must be diligent too,” said a fifth, “in keeping the commandments.” Thus, each having contributed his mite, feeling that a very decent creed had been made up, they all looked and listened for the preacher’s approbation, but they had aroused his deepest pity. The carnal mind always maps out for itself a way in which self can work and become great, but the Lord’s way is quite the reverse. Believing and being baptized are no matters of merit to be gloried in—they are so simple that boasting is excluded, and free grace bears the palm. It may be that the reader is unsaved—what is the reason? Do you think the way of salvation as laid down in the text to be dubious? How can that be when God has pledged his own word for its certainty? Do you think it too easy? Why, then, do you not attend to it? Its ease leaves those without excuse who neglect it. To believe is simply to trust, to depend, to rely upon Christ Jesus. To be baptized is to submit to the ordinance which our Lord fulfilled at Jordan, to which the converted ones submitted at Pentecost, to which the jailer yielded obedience the very night of his conversion. The outward sign saves not, but it sets forth to us our death, burial, and resurrection with Jesus, and, like the Lord’s Supper, is not to be neglected. Reader, do you believe in Jesus? Then, dear friend, dismiss your fears, you shall be saved. Are you still an unbeliever, then remember there is but one door, and if you will not enter by it you will perish in your sins.