

THE VISITOR'S PULPIT.

"Now Then Do It."

FROM A SERMON BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you; now then do it. For the Lord hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies." -2 SAM. 3: 17, 18.

RECALL FORMER IMPULSES.

I. First, then, my business this morning is to remind undecided persons of former impulses. I would personally address each hesitating hearer, and call up the memories of his life. You are not a Christian, but many times you have been upon the verge of it, for you have even gone the length of seeking, after a fashion, to have Jesus for your King.

Of course the character and frequency of those impulses have varied greatly in different individuals. Each man has had his own amount of drawings and inclinations toward God. I cannot so speak as to describe all at once, and therefore I must go into particulars. Many of you have been tutored in the ways and manners of the godly from your youth up. The very first song you heard your mother sing as she hushed you to sleep was sweetened with the name of Jesus. Probably you cannot recollect a time when there were not some holy agencies at work upon your heart; and you recollect the effect they had upon you, even at the very beginning, when even as a child your little prayer at night grew fervent, and you sobbed yourself to sleep with grief for having done wrong. When the sweetness and beauty of Christ, and the happiness of believers were set before you in your youth you often felt drawn to the cross. Nor was it in childhood alone, for as you grew older agencies adapted for your growth were prepared by infinite love. Some of you fell into the hands of sincere Christian men and women, who did not cease to instruct you and to warn you; and sometimes, as you must remember, if you will but try to do so, you were, like Agrippa of old, "almost persuaded to be a Christian." You promised, you resolved, you began even to pray, but, alas! your goodness was as the morning cloud, as the early dew, and soon passed away; but yet you do remember, do you not, that it was there? Since then, though you have been immersed in business cares, you have not been altogether without some thoughts toward Jesus the Saviour. An earnest sermon has driven you home to your knees; affliction has frequently compelled you solemnly to consider; the death of others has made you pause, and forced you to hopeful resolves. Can you count up the many times in which you have come to a dead halt, and have raised the question, "Shall I go further or shall I turn?" Your soul has been half constrained to say within herself, "Things shall be altered. I will be no longer an ungrateful child to my good God, but I will arise and go unto my Father." Ye sought for David to be king over you in times past, some of you, but, alas! ye have not crowned Him yet.

There are others among you who have not been so highly favored with religious advantages. Some of you, perhaps, come of an ungodly household, and your bringing up has been apart from the things of God. I grieve to say that this is getting daily more frequent, especially in our great cities. Children nowadays are not trained to the observance of the Sabbath as they were, and multitudes in this great city seldom tread the floor of God's house at all. Still I can scarcely imagine that there is one present but what has at times enjoyed holy impulses, right convictions, and pure desires. Conscience, though not enlightened as we could have wished, has not been entirely quiet with you. You have felt uneasy in your unconverted state, and you are uneasy now. You have been forced sometimes to think, and when a man who is without God and without Christ begins to think his thoughts must trouble him, and, being troubled, he is likely to desire the way of peace. I cannot but believe that you who are thoughtful have sometimes had intense desires to be Christians; you have longed to be pardoned, renewed, and sanctified. Would you not give all that you have for a sure hope of heaven? You know that occasionally at least pure aspirations have come over you, and I wish that I could by any means so revive your recollections that you would all confess that ye sought for Jesus in times past to be King over you. If you do remember these things, I beg you also to consider that your responsibilities have been increased in proportion to those impulses, for every time you have checked conscience, or have held yourself back when you were moved toward right,

you have not only incurred a present sin, but you have rendered all your future life the more censurable. None are so blamable for ignorance as those who refuse to learn, and none so guilty in their sins as those who resist better impulses, and do violence to themselves in order to indulge their iniquities. The case varies, however, as we have already seen.

MOVED BY SPECIAL OCCASIONS.

These impulses have been usual in you at certain times, and these find a parallel in the case of Israel. The tribes desired David for king on certain occasions. For instance, whenever Saul was more than ordinarily oppressive, they sighed for the son of Jesse, who was of a gentler mould. Whenever sin begins to be oppressive to a man, he has for the present some wish to escape from its tyranny. Sin is a very hard task-master, especially some forms of it. Let a man pursue the sin of drunkenness, and "who hath woe? who hath redness of eyes" like to him? Let a man follow the lusts of the flesh, and his very body soon begins to smart beneath the lash of his despotic vices. Even now the earnest of sin's wages is something dreadful for a man to receive. Have ye never seen a spendthrift brought to beggary and rags? Do you wonder that when his hungry belly accuses him he promises better things, and in a measure is sincere in his good resolves? Selfishness itself calls upon men to quit their evil ways which are ruining them body and soul, and it is not at all wonderful that so loud and near a voice should for a time be heard. Some of you know well when it has been so, when your sin has lost its pleasurable, when the beaded bubbles of frothy joy have disappeared from the cup of sin, and it has become stale and flat, then you have seen the hollowness of the world and cried, "I would fain be a Christian."

The Israelites, no doubt, often wished that David had been king when they saw their enemies gradually encroaching upon their territory, and threatening to subdue them. They sighed and said, "O, for an hour of David with his sling and his stone. In the name of the Lord he brought down the haughty Philistine. O, that he were to the front again." Have not you also, when you have seen the strength of your growing sins, and contemplated the ruin which they will bring upon you, longed for a deliverer? When you have perceived what sin will surely bring upon you by-and-by, in another world, and how even now it holds you in bondage, have you not wished for a Saviour, ay, wished for the Christ of God to come and smite your sins and overthrow Satan and set you free? I am sure you must have had such wishes when sickness has made death appear to be approaching, when judgment has begun to be realized, and the terrors of wrath to come. Ye thought of Jesus in times past to be King over you.

And have you not also, like Israel, often longed for your true King that you might at length find rest? The civil war must have inflicted much misery upon the nation, and therefore the people wished the strife to be ended, through David's being made king. So, too, you wish that your heart were peaceful and quiet, for now you are ill at ease. You love your pleasurable sins, but you are not easy in them; the bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself upon it, and you know this! You wish that you enjoyed the solid peace, the confidence, and satisfaction which believers possess; but you know that you cannot have it apart from Christ, and this reflection has sometimes made you seek to Christ, after your fashion, though alas, it has not lasted long enough to produce real allegiance to Him.

These seekings after David were sometimes with the Israelites vivid and strong; and so, too, impulses with undecided people are occasionally very powerful. Though they do not actually lay hold on eternal life, they yet have strong desires to do so. They go beyond empty wishes, and seriously sigh for an interest in Jesus, and yet they pause there and go no further. The bud becomes a tiny fruit, and then withers from the tree. I have known unconverted people to feel great terror at the thought of remaining unsaved, and under this influence they have gone to their knees and begun to pray, they have gone to their Bibles and begun to read, they have attended the house of God with great regularity, and listened with very solemn attention, and they have even gone the length of mending their ways in many points. They have begun to frequent prayer-meetings, and for awhile it did seem as if Jesus would be King over them; indeed, we hoped that they were already the servants of the Lord, but, alas, our hopes were disappointed, they turned, and walked no more with us. OF

tentimes the impulses which are put aside and stamped out by half-awakened men are exceedingly difficult to overcome. Some of you have had to exert yourselves fearfully to remain as you are; you have needed help of the world, the flesh, and the devil to overpower the force which held you awhile in its grasp. Some men battle for damnation with a greater force than others strive after eternal life. The way of transgressors is sometimes hard, in this sense, that they find it difficult to continue as they are; they are so persecuted by the persuasions, warnings, and entreaties of good men, and their conscience is so alarmed as to give them little or no rest. Alas, their neck is as an iron sinew, and they are set on mischief, and despite the inward calls which bid them seek Jesus for their King, they turn a deaf ear to the tenderest wooings, and continue as they were; but not without an awful increase of guilt.

Listen to me, ye who are described in the language I have used; listen and learn wisdom. Nothing has come of all the seekings of your youth and your after days. Ye sought for David in times past to be King over you, but nothing has come of it! Nothing has come of it even to this day. You saw that religion was right, you did not argue to the contrary, you admitted all its reasons, you so far yielded your understanding that you would even defend the truth against opponents; but what of all that? To admit a thing to be right is but a small part of the matter, if you practically deny it by your indifference. You have wished that you were a Christian; you have wished it hundreds of times, but this also is vanity, if carried no further. "If wishes were horses beggars would ride," and so, if wishes were graces the careless would be saved. You know, too, that you went beyond wishing. You regretted that you were not already decided, you felt very much ashamed of yourself for having resisted so long. If anybody had told you that you would be hesitating now, you would not have believed it. But it is even worse, for now you do not feel half so much as you once did. You were more impressive years ago than you are now, and, speaking after the manner of men, you are now far less likely to be saved. You know it is so, and yet you did at that time, after a fashion, pray, and, after a sort, you were in earnest. But what of all that? Nothing has come of it. Still you are in darkness, still under the dominion of Satan, still the slave of sin, and so you will be in ten years' more time, I fear; and so you will be to the end of life, and so forever and forever! May God grant that my words may not be prophetic concerning any one of you, but that you may this very day be moved by the Eternal Spirit to take decided action through His grace. "Now then do it."

CALL FOR ACTION.

II. I therefore pass on to the second part, to recommend decided action. "Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you, now then do it." No longer stand thinking, questioning, hesitating, halting, but now then do it. Do one thing or another; if God be God, serve Him; if Baal be God or the devil be God, serve Him. Do not sit down for ever in this absurd condition of believing a thing to be right and yet neglecting it, of feeling yourself to be in danger and not seeking to escape by the way which you admit to be safe and fitting. Come now to something like honest dealing with yourself and with your Lord.

Note the business on hand—it is that Jesus should be king over you. It was needful that David should become king, or else he could not rescue Israel from the Philistines, and in your case Jesus must be king or He cannot be your Saviour. Thousands of people are quite willing to be saved by Christ, but when it comes to the very first step, namely, that Jesus must be accepted as ruler, lawgiver, master, king, and Lord, then they start back and reject eternal life.

The whole question of your being saved or lost will turn on this: if Jesus be not your king, then the devil will remain enthroned in your heart, and you will remain a lost soul; but if your heart will yield itself up to the supreme authority of King Jesus, then the work of salvation has already commenced, and Jesus will take care to purge your nature of all His enemies, until you shall be an empire in which He alone shall reign in holiness and peace, Jesus must be king! What say you, sir, shall it be so? Do you hesitate about it? He must be your Lord and Master, His will must be your will, His commands must be law to you, and His example must henceforth be the model of your life. Do you demur, or will you yield at once?

And here is the point, if Jesus is to reign the old king must go down. It is of no use trying to have Ishbosheth and David on the

throne at the same time. It is impossible to serve sin and to serve Christ. Favorite and constitutional sins must be relinquished. I know many persons who say that they are under concern of soul whose sincerity I more than question, because they continue in known sin, and yet they complain that they cannot find peace. How can they? If you meet with a person who drinks upon the sly, and is frequently half intoxicated, if your hear him say that he cannot find rest in Christ, do you wonder? Do you not feel that he is a hypocrite? How can men and women continually fuddle themselves with drink, and yet hope to be children of God? Give up your abominable tipping. Do you think Christ is going to save sots, and let them continue to make beasts of themselves? To prate about being saved and in secret worship the bottle, is clear lying, and next door to blasphemy. Talk about having a Saviour, and continue to get drunk: I marvel that you do not perish like Ananias and Sapphira. Another man is carrying on his trade in a way which is dishonest, and yet he whines and cants about not finding peace with God. Do not his own words condemn him? What has he to do with peace? How can he continue in sin and yet be saved from sin? O, sirs, be not deceived; your sins and you must part, or Jesus will have nothing to do with you. Do you think so badly of my Lord as to dream that He will pander to your passions by giving you liberty to live in sin and yet go to heaven? For shame! Has Christ come to play the lackey to your lusts, and let you do the work of Satan, and then receive the wages of the godly? O no, there must be a clean sweep of the false to make room for the true; we must have no Ishbosheth if David is to be king. Though you may not attain perfection, yet in your desires you must be perfect; you must from your heart put away every single sin, be it of what shape it may, however pleasurable or painful it may appear. Off must come the right arms, and out must go the right eyes. It were better for you to enter into life maimed and blind than that you should perish in your transgressions.

The main point, however, is to do it: really and at once to make Christ Jesus King. And to this end we must believe in Him or trust Him. It is this trusting Jesus Christ which is the essential point, for out of it grows the repentance which renounces every false way. When a man fully and honestly trusts Christ with his soul, he is enabled from that time forward to hate the sin which he once loved, and so he wins the mastery over it. He finds a joy in submitting to the holy reign of Jesus, because he has already trusted Him, and believes that he is saved. But, alas! many of you do not believe. Indeed, you would not be persuaded to believe, though one rose from the dead. How many times have I spoken from this platform to some of you about this matter! How many times have you wished, and resolved, and all that! We have had enough of this trifling; this morning I would push you on to decision, and address you in these words, "Now then do it! Now then do it!" You reply that you wish; away with your wishes—"Now then do it!" "But," say you—"out upon your buts, do it!" "But, sir"—I say again, no more of your "but, sirs;" do it, do it, and do it now. The blessed and eternal Spirit who has brought you to this point this morning, and who urges me to press this question upon you, waits to help you. When your whole soul wills to do it, He will be with you, and you will do it, and Christ shall be enthroned in your hearts to reign there forever.

The sooner it is done the better. Until the deed is done, remember you are undone; till Christ is accepted, by you as king, till sin is hated and Jesus is trusted, you are under another king. Whatever you may think of it, the devil is your master. You say you do not like him, but he is your master and lord for all that, since he leads captive at his will. Till Jesus reigns in your heart, you are also in the utmost danger,—in danger of death and eternal punishment. Let your breath go the wrong way, or let your heart cease beating just for a little, and you will be in hell. My friends, you will be in hell. You who sought for Jesus in times past, you who felt those good desires, you, the beloved child of Christian parents, the earnest hearer at the house of God, you who are fond of sermons, but are, I fear, sermon-hardened; you, even you, will sink down to hell, with all those privileges like millstones about your neck. "Well, sir, I will think of it." Under cover of that promise there lurks delay, and that is exactly what I am afraid of. Do not so much think as act. "Now then do it." I beseech you to make serious and immediate business of it. Perhaps if it is not done at this moment, it

never will be done. For all these long years nothing has been actually done, though so much has been proposed, and this mainly because of your perpetual delays.

All this while Jesus is being rejected.—We do not sufficiently think of the dishonor done to Jesus by base delays. All the while that Israel did not accept David as king, David was being badly treated. He who fought the Philistines for them, he whose valor was Israel's right arm, whose band of men was the sword and shield of the nation against the Philistines, was being kept away from his rightful throne; his merits forgotten, his claims ignored. Soul, by refusing Him His throne, you are treating Jesus ill. Think of your previous impulses, and as you consider them answer me this question—were they wrong ones? When in your childhood you felt such strong desires after Christ, were they not commendable desires? Why, then, do you not carry them out? If you were wrong in checking them, then why should you continue to act so unwisely? If they are returning now, why not entertain them heartily? Remember, moreover, that though you had these holy impulses, they passed away; have you any reason to hope that they will continue with you now? Will they not again melt in thin air? Unless God, the almighty Spirit, at this time shall lead you to take decided steps, you will resolve again to-day, and re-resolve, but continue still the same. Of all things the most pitiable sight to my mind is a man who has light enough to know he is wrong, but not grace enough to forsake the evil. It is terrible to see a soul under impulses which urge it toward the right, and yet remaining a captive to that accursed free-will which enslaves it to the last degree. Alas, how many put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, and therefore will not come unto Christ that they might have life. Such is the state of man: such is the state of some of you. May God have mercy on you for Christ's sake! It is mine, however, to return distinctly to the charge of my text and say, "Now then do it." O, sirs, I wish you would do as one did a little while ago. I was preaching, and I said that if any man sincerely went to God confessing his sin, and just trusted Christ to save him, if He did not save him I wished he would write me a note to let me know it, for I had been so accustomed to declare that He would not cast out any that came to Him that I should like to know if I was laboring under an error. There was one in my audience who went deliberately home, and kneeling at his bedside, he said, with all his heart, "I confess my guiltiness before thee, O God, and I do now trust myself with Christ that He may save me. Lord, cast me not away, for I believe in thy Son." He found peace immediately, and continued to feel the love of God shed abroad in his soul; and he therefore thought it right to tell me the good news. It greatly cheered me. Instead of being rejected he was welcomed by the God of mercy, and found immediate acceptance in Christ Jesus. "Now then do it." Dream not of believing to-morrow or next year, nor even in half an hour's time; but cast your guilty soul on Christ at once. Now then do it. While now the Spirit of God pervades this assembly, yield yourself to the silver sceptre which is held in the pierced hand of the once crucified King, and you shall live.

Well Paid.

It seems strange to me now, that I ever could have been so blind, as to think and talk as many good Christian people do now about our communion. One of these blinded ones said the other day, "Don't you consider the communion table to be the Lord's table?" "Certainly," said I, "we are willing to consider it so." "Then what business have you," said she almost indignantly, "to exclude any of the Lord's children from it?" I replied, "Do you not consider your church the Lord's church?" "Why, yes, certainly we do," she answered. "Then what business have you to exclude any of the Lord's children from it, though they may differ in faith, etc.?" Suffice it to say this question remained unanswered, and I left, praying that God would open her eyes to see the gospel truth respecting church fellowship and communion—Zion's Advocate.

Spend, if possible, one hour each day in reading some good and great book. The number of such books is not too many to overwhelm you. Every one who reflects on the former years of his education can lay his finger on half a dozen, perhaps even fewer, that have made a lasting impression upon his mind. Treasure up these. It is not only the benefits which you yourself derive from them—it is the impression which they leave upon you of the lasting power of that which is spiritual and immaterial.