

George Whitefield

Sermon 9

The Folly and Danger of Being Not Righteous Enough

Ecclesiastes 7:16, "Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thyself over-wise: why shouldst thou destroy thyself?"

Nothing is more frequent, than while people are living in a course of sin, and after the fashion and manner of the world, there is not notice taken of them; neither are their ways displeasing to their companions and carnal relations: but if they set their faces Zion-ward, and begin to feel the power of God on their hearts; they then are surrounded with temptations from their friends, who thus act the devil's part. The enemies, the greatest enemies a young convert meets with, my dear brethren, are those of his own house. They that will be godly, must suffer persecution; so it was in Christ's time, and so it was in the Apostles time too; for our Lord came not to send peace, but a sword. Our relations would not have us sit in the scorner's chair; they would not have us be prodigals, consuming our substance upon harlots; neither would they have us rakes (a dissolute [loose in morals or conduct] person) or libertines, but they would have us be contented with an almost Christianity. To keep up our reputation by going to church, and adhering to the outward forms of religion, saying our prayers, reading the word of God, and taking the sacraments; this, they imagine, is all that is necessary for to be Christians indeed; and when we go one step farther than this, their mouths are open against us, as Peter's was to Christ: "Spare thyself, do thyself no harm."

And of this nature are the words of the text. They are not the words of Solomon himself, but the words of an infidel speaking to him, whom he introduces in several parts of this book; for Solomon had been showing the misfortunes which attended the truly good, as in the verse before our text.

Upon this the infidel says, "Be not righteous over-much, neither be thou over-wise; why shouldst thou destroy thyself?" i.e. Why shouldst thou bring these misfortunes upon thyself, by being over strict? Be not righteous over-much; eat, drink, and be merry, live as the world lives, and then you will avoid those misfortunes which may attend you, by being righteous over-much.

This text has another meaning; but take it which way you will, by brethren, it was spoken by an unbeliever; therefore it was no credit for the person who lately preached upon this text, to take it for granted, that these were the words of Solomon: the words of an infidel was not a proper text to a Christian congregation. But as David came out against Goliath, not armed as the champion was, with sword and spear, but with a sling and stone, and then cut off his head with his own sword; so I come out against these letter-learned men, in the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ; and, my dear brethren, I trust he will direct me to use my sling, so that our enemies may not gainsay us; and by the sword of God's word, cut off the heads of our Redeemer's enemies.

But though they are not the words of Solomon, yet we will take them in the same manner the late writer did; and, from the words, shall,

FIRST, Show you what it is, not to be righteous over-much, that we may not destroy ourselves.

SECONDLY, I shall let you see what it is to be righteous over-much. And then,

THIRDLY, Conclude with an exhortation to all of you, high and low, rich and poor, one with another, to come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

FIRST, The first thing proposed, is to show you what it is not to be righteous over-much. And here,

It is by no means to be righteous over-much, to affirm we must have the same Spirit of God as the first Apostles had, and must feel that Spirit upon our hearts.

By receiving the Spirit of God, is not to be understood, that we are to be inspired to show outward signs and wonders, to raise dead bodies, to cure leprous persons, or to give sight to the blind: these miracles were only of use in the first ages of the church; and therefore Christians (nominal Christians, for we have little else but the name) may have all the gifts of the Spirit, and yet none of the graces of it. Thou, O man, mayest be enabled by faith to remove mountains; thou, by the power of God, mayest cast out devils; thou, by that power, mayest speak with the tongues of men and angels; yes, thou mayest, by that power, hold up thy finger and stop the sun in the firmament; and if all these are unsanctified by the Spirit of God, they would be of no service to thee, but would hurry thee to hell with the greater solemnity. Saul received the spirit of prophesying, and had another heart, yet Saul was probably a cast-away. We must receive the Spirit of God in its sanctifying graces upon our souls; for Christ says, "Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." We are all by nature born in sin, and at as great a distance from God, as the devils themselves. I have told you often, and now tell you again, that you are by nature a motley mixture of the beast and devil, and we cannot recover ourselves from the state wherein we have fallen, therefore must be renewed by the Holy Ghost. By the Holy Ghost, I mean, the third Person of the ever blessed Trinity, co-equal, co-essential, co-eternal, and consubstantial with the Father and the Son; and therefore, when we are baptized, it is into the nature of the Father, into the nature of the Son, and into the nature of the Holy Ghost: and we are not true Christians, till we are sanctified by the Spirit of God.

Though our modern preachers do not actually deny the Spirit of God, yet they say, "Christians must not feel him;" which is in effect to deny him. When Nicodemus came to Christ, and the Lord Jesus was instructing him, concerning the new birth, says he to our Lord, "How can these things be?" Nicodemus, though a master of Israel, acts just as our learned Rabbi's do now. The answer that Christ gave him should stop the mouths of our letter-learned Pharisees: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth." Now till the Spirit of God is felt on our souls as the wind on our bodies, indeed, my dear brethren, you have no interest in him: religion consists not in external performance, it must be in the heart, or else it is only a name, which cannot profit us, a name to live whilst we are dead.

A late preacher upon this text, seems to laugh at us, for talking of the Spirit in a sensible manner, and talks to us as the Jews did to Christ: They said, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So he asks, "What sign or proof do we give of it?" We do not imagine, that God must appear to us, and give it us: no; but there may be, and is, a frequent receiving, when no seeing of it; and it is as plainly felt in the soul, as any impression is, or can be, upon the body. To what a damnable condition should we bring poor sinners, if they could not be sensible of the Spirit of God; namely, a reprobate mind and past feeling?

"What proof do they give?" says the writer. What sign would they have? Do they expect us to raise the dead, to give sight to the blind, to cure lepers, to make the lame to walk, and the deaf to hear? If these are what they expect, I speak with humility, God, by us, hath done greater things than these: many, who were dead in sin, are raised to scripture-life: those, who were leprous by nature, are cleansed by the Spirit of God; those, who were lame in duty, not run in God's commands; those, who were deaf, their ears are unstopped to hear his discipline, and hearken to his advice; and the poor have the gospel preached to them. No wonder people talk at this rate, when they can tell us, "That the Spirit of God, is a good conscience, consequent thereupon." My dear brethren, Seneca, Cicera,

Plato, or any of the heathen philosophers, would have given as good a definition as this. It means no more, than reflecting that we have done well. This, this is only Deism refined: Deists laugh at us, when we pretend to be against notions, and yet these men use no other reason for our differing from them, than what is agreeable to Deists principles.

This writer tell us, "It is against common-sense to talk of the feeling of the Spirit of God." Common-sense, my brethren, was never allowed to be a judge; yea, it is above its comprehension, neither are, nor can the ways of God be known by common-sense. We should never have known the things of God at all by our common sense: no; it is the revelation of God which is to be our judge; it is that we appeal to, and not to our weak and shallow conceptions of things. Thus we may see, it is by no means to be righteous over-much, to affirm we must have the Spirit of God as the Apostles had. Nor,

SECONDLY, Is it to be righteous over-much to frequent religious assemblies.

The preacher, upon this text, aims at putting aside all the religious societies that are in the kingdom: Indeed, he says, "You may go to church as often as opportunity serves, and on Sundays; say your prayers, read the word of God; and, in his opinion, every thing else had better be let alone: and as for the Spirit of God upon your souls, you are to look upon it as useless and unnecessary." If this, my brethren, is the doctrine we have now preached, Christianity is at a low ebb indeed; but God forbid you should thus learn Jesus Christ. Do you not forbear the frequenting of religious assemblies; for as nothing helps to build up the devil's kingdom more than the societies of wicked men, nothing would be more for pulling of it down, than the people of God meeting to strengthen each others hands; and as the devil has so many friends, will none of you be friends to the blessed Jesus? Yes, I hope many of you will be of the Lord's side, and build each other up in Christian love and fellowship. This is what the primitive Christians delighted in; and shall not we follow so excellent an example? My brethren, till Christian conversation is more agreeable to us, we cannot expect to see the gospel of Christ run and be glorified. Thus it is by no means to be righteous over-much, to frequent religious assemblies. Nor,

THIRDLY, Is it to be righteous over-much, to abstain from the diversions and entertainments of the age.

We are commanded to "abstain from the appearance of evil," and that "whatsoever we do, whether we eat or drink, we shall do all to the glory of God." The writer upon this text tells us, "That it will be accounted unlawful to smell to a rose:" no, my dear brethren, you may smell to a pink and rose too if you please, but take care to avoid the appearance of sin. They talk of innocent diversions and recreations; for my part, I know of no diversion, but that of doing good: if you can find any diversion which is not contrary to your baptismal vow, of renouncing the pomps and vanities of this wicked world; if you can find any diversion which tends to the glory of God; if you can find any diversion, which you would be willing to be found at by the Lord Jesus Christ, I give you free license to go to them and welcome; but if, on the contrary, they are found to keep sinners from coming to the Lord Jesus Christ; if they are a means to harden the heart, and such as you would not willingly be found in when you come to die, then, my dear brethren, keep from them: for, indeed, the diversions of this age are contrary to Christianity. Many of you may think I have gone too far, but I shall go a great deal farther yet: I will attack the devil in his strongest holds, and bear my testimony against our fashionable and polite entertainments. What satisfaction can it be, what pleasure is there in spending several hours at cards? Strange! That even people who are grown old, can spend whole nights in this diversion: perhaps many of you will cry out, "What harm is there in it?" My dear brethren, whatsoever is not of faith, or for the glory of God, is a sin. Now does cards tend to promote this? Is it not mispending your precious time, which should be employed in working out your salvation with fear and trembling? Do play-houses, horse-racing, balls and assemblies, tend to promote the glory of God? Would you be willing to have your soul demanded of you, while you are at one of those places? Many of these are, (I must speak, I cannot forbear to speak against these entertainments;

come what will, I will declare against them) many, I say, of these are kept up by public authority; the play-houses are supported by a public fund, and our newspapers are full of horse-races all through the kingdom: these things are sinful; indeed they are exceeding sinful. What good can come from a horse-race; from abusing God Almighty's creatures, and putting them to that use he never designed for them: the play-houses, are they not nurseries of debauchery in the age? And the supporters and patrons of them, are encouragers and promoters of all the evil that is done by them; they are the bane of the age, and will be the destruction of those who frequent them. Is it not high time for the true ministers of Jesus Christ, who have been partakers of the heavenly gift, to lift up their voices as a trumpet, and cry aloud against these diversions of the age? Are they not earthly, sensual, devilish? If you have tasted of the love of God, and have felt his power upon your souls, you would no more go to a play, than you would run your head into a furnace.

And what occasions these place to be so much frequented, is the clergy's making no scruple to be at these polite places: they frequent play-houses, they go to horse-races, they go to balls and assemblies, they frequent taverns, and follow all the entertainments that the age affords; and yet these are the persons who should advise their hearers to refrain from them; but instead thereof, they encourage them by their example. Persons are too apt to rely upon, and believe their pastors, rather than the scriptures; they think that there is no crime in going to plays or horse-races, to balls and assemblies; for if there were, they think those persons, who are their ministers, would not frequent them: but, my dear brethren, observe they always go disguised, the ministers are afraid of being seen in their gowns and cassocks; the reason thereof is plain, their consciences inform them, that it is not an example fit for the ministers of the gospel to set; thus, they are the means of giving that offense to the people of God, which I would not for ten thousand worlds: they lay a stumbling-block in the way of their weak brethren, which they will not remove, though it is a stumbling-block of offense. "Woe unto the world because of offenses, but woe unto that man by whom the offense cometh." The polite gentlemen of the age, spend their time in following those diversions, because the love of God is not in their hearts; they are void of Christ, and destitute of the Spirit of God; and not being acquainted with the delight there is in God and his ways, being strangers to these things, they run to the devil for diversions, and are pleased and delighted with the silly ones he shows them.

My dear brethren, I speak of these things, these innocent diversions, as the polite part of the world calls them, by experience; perhaps none, for my age, hath read or seen more plays than I have: I took delight in, and was pleased with them. It is true, I went to church frequently, received the sacrament, and was diligent in the use of the forms of religion, but I was all this while ignorant of the power of God on my heart, and unacquainted with the work of grace; but when God was pleased to shine with power upon my soul, I could no longer be contented to feed on husks, or what the swine die eat; the Bible then was my food; there, and there only I took delight: and till you feel this same power, you will not abstain from the earthly delights of this age, you will take no comfort in God's ways, nor receive any comfort from him; for you are void of the love of God, having only the form of godliness, while you are denying the power of it; you are nominal Christians, when you have not the power of Christianity.

The polite gentlemen say, "Are we to be always upon our knees? Would you have us be always at prayer, and reading or hearing the word of God?"

My dear brethren, the fashionable ones, who take delight in hunting, are not tired of being continually on horseback after their hounds; and when once you are renewed by the Spirit of God, it will be a continua pleasure to be walking with, and talking of God, and telling what great things Jesus Christ hath done for your souls; and till you can find as much pleasure in conversing with God, as these men do of their hounds, you have no share in him; but when you have tasted how good the Lord is, you will show forth his praise; out of the abundance of your heart your mouth will speak.

This brings me to the second thing proposed, which is an extreme that very seldom happens:

SECONDLY, To show what it is to be righteous over-much, And here,

FIRST, When we confine the Spirit of God to this or that particular church; and are not willing to converse with any but those of the same communion; this is to be righteous over-much with a witness: and so it is, to confine our communion within church-walls, and to think that Jesus could not preach in a field as well as on consecrated ground; this is judaism, this is bigotry: this is like Peter, who would not go to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, till he had a vision from God: and when his conduct was blamed by the disciples, he could not satisfy them till he had acquainted them with the vision he had seen. And, therefore, we may justly infer, the Spirit of God is the center of unity; and wherever I see the image of my Master, I never inquire of them their opinions; I ask them not what they are, so they love Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, but embrace them as my brother, my sister, and my spouse: and this is the spirit of Christianity. Many persons, who are bigots to this or that opinion, when one of a different way of thinking hath come where they were, have left the room or place on the account: this is the spirit of the devil; and if it was possible that these persons could be admitted into heaven with such tempers, that very place would be hell to them. Christianity will never flourish, till we are all of one heart and of one mind; and this would be the only means of seeing the gospel of Jesus to flourish, more than ever it will by persecuting those who differ from us.

This may be esteemed as enthusiasm and madness, and as a design to undermine the established church: No; God is my judge, I should rejoice to see all the world adhere to her articles; I should rejoice to see the ministers of the Church of England, preach up those very articles they have subscribed to; but those ministers who do preach up the articles, are esteemed as madmen, enthusiasts, schismatics, and underminers of the established church: and though they say these things of me, blessed be God, they are without foundation. My dear brethren, I am a friend to her articles, I am a friend to her homilies, I am a friend to her liturgy; and, if they did not thrust me out of their churches, I would read them every day; but I do not confine the Spirit of God there; for I say it again, I love all that love the Lord Jesus Christ, and esteem him my brother, my friend, my spouse; aye, my very soul is knit to that person. The spirit of persecution will never, indeed it will never make any to love Jesus Christ. The Pharisees make this to be madness, so much as to mention persecution in a Christian country; but there is as much of the spirit of persecution now in the world, as ever there was; their will is as great, but blessed be God, they want the power; otherwise, how soon would they send me to prison, make my feet fast in the stocks, yea, would think they did God service in killing me, and would rejoice to take away my life.

This is not the Spirit of Christ, my dear brethren; I had not come to have thus preached; I had not come into the highways and hedges; I had not exposed myself to the ill treatment of these letter-learned men, but for the sake of your souls: indeed, I had no other reason, but your salvation; and for that (I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not) I would be content to go to prison; yea, I would rejoice to die for you, so I could but be a means to bring some of you to Jesus: I could not bear to see so many in the highway to destruction, and not show them their danger: I could not bear, my brethren, to see you more willing to learn, than the teachers are to instruct you: and if any of them were to come and preach to you, I should not envy them, I should not call them enthusiasts or madmen; I should rejoice to hear they had ten thousand times more success than I have met with; I would give them the right hand of fellowship; I would advise them to go on; I would wish them good luck in the name of the Lord, and say as Christ did, when the disciples informed him of some casting out devils in his name, and were for rebuking of them, "Forbid them not, for they that are not against us are for us;" or as St. Paul says, "Some preach Christ of envy, and some of good-will; notwithstanding, so Christ is but preached, I rejoice; yea, and will rejoice." The gospel of Jesus, is the gospel of peace. Thus you may see, that to be righteous over-much, is to be uncharitable, censorious, and to persecute persons for differing from us in religion.

SECONDLY, Persons are righteous over-much, when they spend so much time in religious assemblies, as to neglect their families. There is no license given by the blessed Jesus, for idleness;

for in the very infancy of the world, idleness was not allowed of. In paradise, Adam and Eve dressed the garden, Cain was a tiller of the ground, and Abel was a keeper of sheep; and there is a proverb amongst the Jews, "That he who brings his son up without a business, brings him up to be a thief:" and therefore our Savior was a carpenter; "Is not this the carpenter's son," said the Jews: and St. Paul, though brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, was a tent-maker. Labor, my brethren, is imposed on all mankind as part of the divine curse; and you are called to be useful in the society to which you belong: take care first for the kingdom of God, and all things necessary shall be added. To labor for the meat that perisheth, is your duty; only take care, that you do not neglect getting the meat for the soul: that is the greatest consequence, for this plain reason, the things of this life are temporal, but those of the next are eternal. I would have rich men to work as well as poor; it is owing to their idleness, that the devil hurries them to his diversions; they can be in their beds all the morning, and spend the afternoon and evening in dressing, visiting, and at balls, plays, or assemblies, when they should be working out their salvation with fear and trembling. Such a life as this, occasions a spiritual numbness in the soul; and if Jesus Christ was not to stop those who thus spend their time, they would be hurried into eternity, without once thinking of their immortal souls. But Jesus Christ has compassion upon many of them, and while they are in their blood, he bids them "live." And though I preach this doctrine to you, yet I do not bid you be idle; no, they that do not work should not eat. You have two callings, a general one, and a special one: as we are to regard the one in respect of our bodies, so we are to regard the other on account of our souls. Take heed, my brethren, I beseech you, take heed, lest you labor so for the meat that perisheth, as to forget that meat which endureth for ever. Seek the things of God first; look well to obtain oil in your lamps, grace in your hearts. I am not persuading you to take no care about the things of the world, but only not to be encumbered with them, so as to neglect your duty towards God, and a proper concern for your souls. It is meet, it is right, it is your bounden duty, to mind the calling wherein God hath placed you; and you may be said to be righteous over-much not to regard them. This brings me,

THIRDLY, To give you another sign of being righteous over-much; and that is, when we fast and use corporal authorities, so as to unfit us for the service of God.

This, my brethren, you may think there is no occasion at all to caution you against, and indeed there is not a great necessity for it; however, many persons, upon their first being awakened to a sense of their sin, are tempted to use authorities to that excess which is sinful. It is our duty to fast, it is our duty to fast often, and it is what we are directed to by Jesus Christ himself; but then we are to take care to do it in a proper manner: to bring our bodies under for the service of God, is that which we are commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The late preacher upon this text, runs into great extremes, and charges us with saying and acting things of which we never thought; but I do not regard what he said of me: I do not mind his bitter invectives against my ministry; I do not mind his despising my youth, and calling me novice and enthusiast; I forgive him from my very heart: but when he reflects on my Master; when he speaks against my Redeemer; when Jesus Christ is spoken against, I must speak, (I must speak indeed, or I should burst:) when he gives liberty to persons to take a cheerful glass, and alledges Christ for an example, as in the marriage-feast, saying, "Christ turned water into wine, when it is plain there had been more drank than was necessary before;" what is this, but to charge Christ with encouraging drunkenness? It is true, the Governor says, "Every man in the beginning sets forth good wine, and when men have well drank, that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now:" but it does not at all follow, that it was not necessary, or that there had been a sufficient quantity before: I would not speak thus slightly of one of my Master's miracles, for the whole world. And we may observe, that as Christ chiefly visited poor people, they might not have wherewithal to buy a sufficient quantity of wine; for having more guests than were expected, the wine was expended sooner than they thought; then the Mother of Jesus tells him, "They have no wine;" he answers, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? My hour is not yet come." After this he commanded them to fill the water-pots with water, and they filled them to the brim, and this water he turned into wine:

now it does not follow, that there was more drank than was necessary; neither would the Lord Jesus Christ have continued in the house if there had. But we have an excellent lesson to learn from this miracle: by the water-pots being empty, we may understand, the heart of man being by nature destitute of his grace, his speaking and commanding to fill them, shows, that when Christ speaks, the heart that was empty of grace before, shall be filled; and the water pots being filled to the brim, shows, that Christ will fill believers hearts brim full of the Holy Ghost: and from the Governor's observing, that the last wine was the best, learn, that a believer's best comforts, shall be the last and greatest, for they shall come with the greatest power upon the soul, and continue longest there: this, this my dear brethren, is the lesson we may learn from this miracle.

But one great inconsistency I cannot avoid taking notice of in this late learned preacher. In the beginning of his sermon, he charges us with "laying heavy burdens upon people, which they are not able to bear;" in the latter part he charges us with being Antinomians, whose tenets are, "So you say you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you may live the life of devils." Now, he charges us with being too strict, and by and by with being too loose. Which side, my brethren, will you take? Thus you see, when persons forsake Christ, they make strange mistakes; for here can be no greater opposition of sentiments than this letter-learned writer has made: as opposite as light and darkness, good and evil, sweet and bitter. And, on this account, to find out these lettered-learned gentlemen's notions of the new-birth, I put a paragraph in my Journal; and, blessed be God, I have obtained my desires, and have plainly perceived, that the persons who have lately written concerning the new-birth, know no more of it than a blind man does of colors, nor can they have any more notion of it, (by all their learning, falsely so called) than the blind man, who was to give an account what the sun was, and, after a considerable time allowed for study, he said, "It was like the sound of a trumpet." And till they are taught of God, they will be unacquainted with the new-birth; therefore, if you have a mind to know what the devil has to say against us, read Dr. Trapp's sermons.

It is with grief I speak these things, and were not the welfare of your souls, and my Redeemer's honor at stake, I would not now open my mouth, yes I would willingly die (God is my judge) for the person who wrote such bitter things against me, so it would be a means of saving his soul. If he had only spoken against me, I would not have answered him; but, on his making my Redeemer a pattern of vice, if I was not to speak, the very stones would cry out; therefore, the honor of my Redeemer, and love to you, constrains me to speak. It is of necessity that I speak, when the divinity of Jesus Christ is spoken against, it is the duty of ministers to cry aloud, and spare not. I cannot forbear, come what will; for I know not what kind of divinity we have not among us: we must have a righteousness of our own, and do our best endeavors, and then Christ will make up the deficiency; that is, you must be your own Savior, in part. This is not the doctrine of the gospel; this not the doctrine of Jesus: no; Christ is all in all; Jesus Christ must be your whole wisdom; Jesus Christ must be your whole righteousness. Jesus Christ must be your whole sanctification; or Jesus Christ will never be your eternal redemption and sanctification. Inward holiness is looked on, by some, as the effect of enthusiasm and madness; and preachers of the necessity of the new-birth, are esteemed as persons fit for Bedlam. Our polite and fashionable doctrine, is, "That there is a fitness in man, and that God, seeing you a good creature, bestows upon you his grace." God forbid, my dear brethren, you should thus learn Jesus Christ!

This is not the doctrine I preach to you: I say, salvation is the free gift of God. It is God's free grace, I preach unto you, not of works, lest any one should boast. Jesus Christ justifies the ungodly; Jesus Christ passed by, and saw you polluted with your blood, and bid you live. It is not of works, it is of faith: we are not justified for our faith, for faith is the instrument, but by your faith, the active as well as the passive obedience of Christ, must be applied to you. Jesus Christ hath fulfilled the law, he hath made it honorable; Jesus Christ hath made satisfaction to his Father's justice, full satisfaction; and it is as complete as it is full, and God will not demand it again. Jesus Christ is the way; Jesus Christ is the truth; and Jesus Christ is the life. The righteousness of Jesus Christ, my brethren, must be imputed to you, or you can never have any interest in the blood of Jesus; your own works are but

as filthy rags, for you are justified before God, without any respect to your works past, present, or to come. This doctrine is denied by the learned rabbi's; but if they deny these truths of the gospel, they must not offend, though a child dare speak to a doctor; and, in vindication of the cause of Jesus Christ, a child, a boy, by the Spirit of God, can speak to the learned clergy of this age.

If I had a voice so great, and could speak so loud, as that the whole world could hear me, I would cry, "Be not righteous over-much," by bringing your righteousness to Christ, and by being righteous in your own eyes. Man must be abased, that God may be exalted.

The imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ is a comfortable doctrine to all real Christians; and you sinners, who ask what you must do to be saved? How uncomfortable would it be, to tell you by good works, when, perhaps, you have never done one good work in all your life: this would be driving you to despair, indeed: no; "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved:" therefore none of you need go away despairing. Come to the Lord Jesus by faith, and he shall receive you. You have no righteousness of your own to depend on. If you are saved, it is by the righteousness of Christ, through his atonement, his making a sacrifice for sin: his righteousness must be imputed to you, otherwise you cannot be saved. There is no difference between you, by nature, and the greatest malefactor that ever was executed at Tyburn: the difference made, is all owing to the free, the rich, the undeserved grace of God; this has made the difference. It is true, talking at this rate, will offend the Pharisees, who do not like this leveling doctrine, (as they call it); but if ever you are brought to Jesus Christ by faith, you will experience the truth of it. Come by faith to Jesus Christ; do not come, Pharisee-like, telling God what you have done, how often you have gone to church, how often you have received the sacrament, fasted, prayed, or the like: no; come to Christ as poor, lost, undone, damned sinners; come to him in this manner, and he will accept of you: do not be rich in spirit, proud and exalted, for there is no blessing attends such; but be ye poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God; they shall be made members of his mystical body here, and shall be so of the church triumphant hereafter. Acknowledge yourselves as nothing at all, and when you have done all, say, "You are unprofitable servants." There is no salvation but by Jesus Christ; there is no other name given under heaven amongst men, whereby we may be saved, but that of the Lord Jesus. God, out of Christ, is a consuming fire; therefore strive for an interest in his Son the Lord Jesus Christ; take him on the terms offered to you in the gospel; accept of him in God's own way, lay hold on him by faith.

Do not think you are Christians; do not flatter yourselves with being righteous enough, and good enough, because you lead moral decent lives, do no one any harm, go to church, and attend upon the outward means of grace; no, my brethren, you may do this, and a great deal more, and yet be very far from having a saving, experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Beg of Christ to strike home upon your hearts, that you may feel the power of religion. Indeed, you must feel the power of God here, or the wrath of God hereafter. These are truths of the utmost consequence; therefore, do not go contradicting, do not go blaspheming away. Blessed be God, you are not such cowards to run away for a little rain. I hope good things of you; I hope you have felt the power of God; and if God should bring any of you to himself through this foolishness of preaching, you will have no reason to complain it was done by a youth, by a child; no; if I could be made an instrument to bring you to God, they may call me novice, enthusiast, or what they please, I should rejoice; yea, and I would rejoice.

O that some sinner might be brought to Jesus Christ! Do not say I preach despair; I despair of no one, when I consider God had mercy on such a wretch as I, who was running in a full career to hell: I was hastening thither, but Jesus Christ passed by and stopped me; Jesus Christ passed by me while I was in my blood, when I was polluted with filth; he passed by me, and bid me live. Thus I am a monument of God's free grace; and therefore, my brethren, I despair of none of you, when I consider, I say, what a wretch I was. I am not speaking now out of a false humility, a pretended

sanctity, as the Pharisees call it: no, the truth in Christ I speak, and therefore, men and devils do your worst; I have a gracious Master will protect me; it is his work I am engaged in, and Jesus Christ will carry me above their rage.

Those who are come here this night out of curiosity to hear what the babbler says; those who come to spend an idle hour to find something for an evening-conversation at a coffee-house; or you who have stopped in your coaches as you passed by, remember that you have had Jesus Christ offered to you; I offer Jesus Christ to every one of you: perhaps you may not regard it because it is in a field. But Jesus Christ is wherever his people meet in sincerity and truth to worship him: he is not confined to church walls: he has met us here; many, very many of you know he has; and therefore you may believe on him with greater confidence.

Can you bear to think of a bleeding, panting, dying Jesus, offering himself up for sinners, and you will not accept of him? Do not say, you are poor, and therefore are ashamed to go to church, for God has sent the gospel out unto you. Do not harden your hearts: oppose not the will of Jesus.

O that I could speak to your hearts, that my words would center there. My heart is full of love to you. I would speak, till I could speak no more, so I could but bring you to Christ. I may never meet you all, perhaps, any more. The cloud of God's providence seems to be moving. God calls me by his providence away from you, for a while. God knows whether we shall ever see each other in the flesh. At the day of judgment we shall all meet again. I earnestly desire your prayers. Pray that I may not only begin, John-like, I the spirit, but that I may continue in it. Pray that I may not fall away, that I may not decline suffering for you, if I should be called to it. Be earnest, O be earnest with God in my behalf, that while I am preaching to others, I may not be a cast-away. Put up your prayers for me, I beseech you. Go not to the throne of grace, without carrying me upon your heart; for you know not what influence your prayers may have. As for you, my dear brethren, God knows my heart. I continually bear you on my mind, when I go in and out before the Lord; and it is my earnest desire, you may not perish for lack of knowledge, but that he would send out more ministers to water what his own right-hand hath planted. May the Ancient of Days come forth upon his white horse, and may all opposition fall to the ground. As we have begun to bruise the serpent's head, we must expect he will bruise our heel. The devil will not let his kingdom fall without raging horribly. He will not suffer the ministers of Christ to go on, without bringing his power to stop them. But fear not, my dear brethren, David, though a stripling, encountered the great Goliath; and if we pray, God will give us strength against all our spiritual enemies. Show your faith by your works. Give the world the lye. Press forward. Do not stop, do not linger in your journey, but strive for the mark set before you. Fight the good fight of faith, and God will give you spiritual mercies. I hope we shall all meet at the right-hand of God. Strive, strive to enter in at the strait gate, that we may be born to Abraham's bosom, where sin and sorrow shall cease. No scoffer will be there, but we shall see Jesus, who died for us; and not only see him, but live with him forever.

Which God, of his infinite mercy, &c.