



Sermons from Job

7. The Substance of True Religion

By C. H. Spurgeon



*“But ye should say, Why persecute
we him, seeing the root of the matter
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Job 19:28.

A scenic landscape featuring a large, snow-capped mountain peak in the background. The foreground is filled with a dense forest of evergreen trees, some with autumn-colored foliage. A calm lake in the middle ground reflects the mountain and the surrounding forest. The sky is a clear, bright blue with a few wispy clouds.

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“But ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?” Job 19:28.

You will always understand a passage of Scripture better if you carefully attend to its connection. The habit of picking out portions from the Bible and separating them from their context may be carried a great deal too far, and in the process the reader may miss the mind of the Spirit, and force upon the words a meaning of his own. If we were to treat men’s books as we do God’s Book we should, probably, be judged to be insane. It is, indeed, a wonderful book to bear such mangling; every sensible person will see that it must always be wise to study the context, for it is likely enough to cast a light upon the passage in hand. Job in the verse before us is answering Bildad the Shuhite. Now, this Bildad on two occasions had described Job as a hypocrite, and accounted for his dire distress by the fact that, though hypocrites may flourish for a time, they will ultimately be destroyed. In the two bitter speeches which he made he described the hypocrite under the figure of a tree which is torn up by the roots, or dig down even to the root. In his first address, in the eighth chapter and the sixteenth verse, he says of the hypocrite, “He is green before the sun, and his branch shooteth forth in his garden. His roots are wrapped about the heap, and seeth the place of stones. If he destroy him from his place, then it shall deny him, saying, I have not seen thee.” Even the very root of the hypocrite was to be pulled up, so that the garden in which he once flourished should not remember that he had ever been there. Being much pleased with his metaphor, Bildad in the eighteenth chapter uses it again. He says in the fourteenth verse of the chapter, “His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors. His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off.” This, then, was his mode of attacking Job: he set forth by the emblem of a tree the state and fate of the false hearted,—they might flourish for a time, but they would wither at last, even down to the very root, dried up and blasted by the justice of God. The

inference he meant to draw was this: you, Job, are utterly dried up, for all your prosperity is gone, and therefore you must be a hypocrite. The assault was very cruel, but the sufferer successfully parried it. No, says Job, I am no hypocrite. I will prove it by your own words, for the root of the matter is still in me, and therefore I am no hypocrite. Though I admit that I have lost branch, and leaf, and fruit, and flower, yet I have not lost the root of the matter, for I hold the essential faith as firmly as ever; and, therefore, by your own argument, I am no hypocrite, and “Ye should say, why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?”

There is, then, dear friends, a something in true religion which is its essential root. It has fundamental matters which cannot be dispensed with under any circumstances. Some things pertain to godliness, are ornamental useful, pleasant, and desirable, yet these may be absent and still there may be the truth of religion in the soul: but there is a something which cannot be absent in any case without its being certain that the man is not a true child of God; there is a something which is vital, without which there is no spiritual life. Of this essential thing we are going to speak this morning as we are enabled by the Holy Spirit.

Job derived comfort from the fact that the root of the matter was in him, whatever his accusers might say, and I trust that others will be encouraged as they, too, shall find that the root of the matter is in them. It will be pleasant to my heart to cheer the fainting, and equally so if I can lead my stronger brethren to deal tenderly with such.

Our first thought will be that **THIS ROOT OF THE MATTER MAY BE CLEARLY DEFINED**. We are not left in the dark as to what the essential point of true religion is: it can be laid down with absolute certainty. True, there has been considerable disputing over the phrase before us, and questions have been raised as to what Job meant by “the root of the matter,” but I conceive that if we read the verse in its own connection, apart from any extraneous suggestion, there will be no doubt about its meaning. Commence at the twenty-fifth verse, and read on as Job spoke, and he tells us plainly what is “the root of the matter.” Here it is: “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see

God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.” This knowledge of the Redeemer is evidently the root of the matter. Come, then, let us look more closely into this choice confession of faith. I shall not attempt to expound this golden utterance, but I shall glance at it with the one object of showing what Job considered to be the essence of true religion.

And, first, it is clear that “the root of the matter” is firm faith in the Redeemer; it is to be able to say from the inmost heart, “I know that my Redeemer liveth.” Not I think so, but “I know;” for saving faith is certain, and the true believer is a positivist. Faith abhors conjectures, it will not put its foot down upon fictions, but rests upon matters of fact. Faith never deals in the fancy goods of opinion, theory, speculation, and probability; she searches for the priceless pearl of certainty; she must needs know. Such was the faith of Job, and he expresses it in firm, decided, clear language, saying—“I know that my Redeemer liveth.”

This faith was an appropriating one, so that Job took to himself the Redeemer. “I know that my Redeemer liveth,” laying hold upon the lord to be unto him all that he was meant to be, namely, a Redeemer who would set him at liberty from his misery. He embraced the Redeemer as his own, and believed that he would be raised by him from the pit of corruption. Come, brethren, have we such a faith as this? a faith which knows that there is a Saviour able to redeem and sure to accomplish the work? And do we take him for our own, saying—“my Redeemer?” This is the point—Do we accept him in his ordained office and cast our soul entirely upon him? Are we content to sink or swim with this God’s appointed Saviour? If saved it shall be by him; and at his cross foot are we content to lie and wait the issue? Whatever other redeemers there may be, is the Lord Jesus our Redeemer in whom we trust as able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him? This is the “root of the matter;” a recognition of the redeeming Lord, and a simple dependence upon him for sure salvation.

Look steadily at the passage, and especially gaze into its original meaning, and you will see that in this “root of the matter” there is a recognition of the blessed Christ of God in the peculiar relationship which he has taken up to man. It is, “I know that my goel, or

kinsman, liveth.” You know what the next of kin was among the Jews: it was he who must redeem the inheritance if it had been alienated from the family: he was the guardian of those to whom he was next of kin. If there had been manslaughter committed, it was the goel, the near kinsman, who must take vengeance on behalf of the murdered man. The goel was the patron of the weak ones of the family, and the defender of the whole clan. Boaz was the redeemer of Ruth’s patrimony, because he was her next of kin, after one other had refused to fulfil the office. Beloved, this is a cardinal point of saving faith, that Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God is next of kin to us poor, guilty men. His name is Emmanuel, God with us: not only God from before all worlds, but God with us in our nature. The Word was made flesh: Jesus was born at Bethlehem, and there he was nursed at the breast of a woman. He lived among our race, bearing our infirmities, and tempted in all points like as we are, though without sin. It is most sweet for faith to say he is nearest of kin to me; my goel, my redeemer; bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh

“In ties of blood with sinners one.”

He is the Head, the second Adam of our race, a brother born for adversity, yea, and more than a brother. Because he has deigned to enter into the closest of all relationships with us by taking upon himself our nature, the Lord Jesus has now become our Redeemer, bound to restore to those who are in him the inheritance which was forfeited by the fall. Glory be to his name, he has restored that which he took not away; he has redeemed from the hand of the enemy that which sin and Satan snatched from us by our first parents’ fault. Nor is this all the goel was bound also to avenge the quarrel of his client. Our Lord is now our advocate with the Father, pleading our cause both by the word of his mouth and by the power of his arm. “Thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul,” O Jesus! Thou art my defender, my patron, my shield, and my exceeding great reward.

Brethren, this is the root of the matter, to believe in the incarnate God, to accept his headship, to claim his kinship, and to rely upon his redemption. This is the root of the matter, to call Jesus ours, our kinsman and Redeemer, and then to leave everything in his hands:

to commit to him our cause, our hopes, our fears, our past, our present, and our future, and now and throughout life to fix our entire confidence upon him, because it is his office and prerogative to be the Redeemer of all that are akin to him. This is plain enough, and there is no mist about it, Say, is the Son of God all this to you?

Still look at the text farther, and you perceive that the root of the matter is to believe that this kinsman, this Redeemer lives. We could never find comfort or salvation in one who had ceased to be. We have no lively hope unless we believe that our Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. Job knew that the Redeemer lived in that capacity before he died, and we know that he ever liveth, though he once died and was buried. If it were possible for us to believe in the merit of Christ's death, and to deny his resurrection, our faith would have a fatal flaw in it. "He was delivered for our offenses, but he was raised again for our justification;" and, therefore, we must believe in the resurrection or we are not justified. It is because he ever liveth to make intercession for us that he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him.

In the Romish church her images are the image of her faith. What Christ is that which we see portrayed in places of worship of the papal order? We see there times without number Jesus as a child in his mother's arms, feeble, dependent, insignificant; well setting forth how the worship of Christ is overshadowed by that of the Virgin, and how his blood and righteousness are forgotten amid the imaginary glories of Mary. How else do you see the Saviour in papal churches? Why, everywhere he is represented as dead, as nailed to a cross, or wrapt in winding-sheets. So far, so good, for we also believe in Christ who died, though we set not up his image or picture; I but Jesus is not now dead, neither is he here among the tombs, for he has risen. It is testified of Jesus that he liveth; but in the church of Rome it is the priest that lives and sets, and does all things, while the Christ of God is virtually excluded, and made of no avail apart from sacraments and ceremonies. Our Saviour is still living and active in the midst of his people, and this is one of the vital points of our holy faith. We address ourselves at once to the living Redeemer, and his present power to save is the groundwork of our expectation of eternal life and resurrection. Oh, if it were not for this we might all despair: we should be the ministers of a dead

Christ, and you would be believers in a lifeless Saviour: the cross would be a powerless doctrine, and the gospel a lifeless message, and under it men would still lie dead in their trespasses and sins. Our Redeemer liveth in fullness of power to bless us by his everlasting priesthood. Say, then, dear souls, do you believe in Jesus Christ, your kinsman? Do you believe that he hath redeemed both your persons and your inheritance? And do you believe that he liveth, having gone up into the glory to prepare a place for you? This is the “root of the matter:” a living faith in a living Redeemer, who by his death has ransomed his people.

Still there was more than this: Job believed in this next of kin of his who still lived, that he would surely save him, seeing he trusted in him. He expected that he would right all things, however wrong they might be, and clear the character of his servant. Job felt that though his accusers might condemn him, and his appeal to God might not win him a vindication, so that he might go down to his grave under a cloud of reproach, and lie there and rot with a dishonoured memory, yet he would be cleared one day. Though the worms might devour his body till no rag or relic of him remained, yet his living kinsman would never rest till he had cleared him, and enabled him to see God without fear. This is the grandeur of faith to feel that whatever God may do with me, if I am in Christ and behave myself as his faithful servant, he will preserve me from all harm. My cause may seem so utterly dead that it is only fit for worms’ meat, but the Christ of God will bring forth judgment unto victory. This is the work of faith to cast my soul on Christ my next of kin, whose business it is to redeem me, and though I cannot see the way by which I am to be saved, yet to be sure that I shall be. If my hopes perish and my soul sinks down into the dust of death, yet to the uttermost Christ can save me, and he will, and I am sure of it; and when at last the death frost strikes cold at my heart and I can help myself no more, and human helpers fail me, I will commit my spirit into the dear hands of him who is nearest and dearest, and I shall feel in that last fainting hour that his presence is my stay. Yea, and I shall see my God again, and even my poor failing body, full of aches and pains and weakness, after resting in the grave a little, shall rise again in beauty and power. The grave is a refining pot wherein the bodies of the saints are purified and made fit to dwell

with the pure and holy God for ever. Faith has no question about the resurrection; she has not a mere hope, but a firmly assured belief, so that she cries, "I know that in my flesh, through Christ my Redeemer, I shall see my God without fear." Every man in a certain sense will see God, for every eye shall behold the King upon the throne of judgment; but that expectation would not be a ground of comfort, and therefore more is here meant by seeing God. Job evidently expected to see God with acceptance and with delight, and this he felt quite sure about, though the corruption of his body looked like an effectual barrier to the realization of such a hope. All his friends may condemn him, and treat him as an alien and a stranger, but he so trusts himself with his Redeemer that he is quite sure of justification before God and men. Those who have a divine advocate must be cleared in the judgment. Now, soul, answer this question, dost thou commit thyself wholly and entirely to the Mediator, the Incarnate God, the Kinsman of humanity? Say, dost thou look alone to thy living Advocate, in life, in death, and in eternity? Is Christ thine all in all, thy sole and solid hope? Oh, then, rest thou assured that "the root of the matter is found in thee."

It is clear that the essence of true religion can be clearly defined: Job has defined it, and there it is. Judge ye yourselves as to whether ye possess it or no.

Secondly, let us spend a few minutes in remarking that in our text **THIS FUNDAMENTAL MATTER IS MOST INSTRUCTIVELY DESCRIBED** by the words which I have so constantly repeated—"the root of the matter." What does this mean?

First, does it not mean that which is essential? "The root of the matter." To a tree a root is absolutely essential; it is a mere pole or piece of timber if there be no root. It can be a tree of a certain sort without branches, and at certain seasons without leaves, but not without a root. Look at the trees in the winter. Their substance is in them when they lose their leaves; the foliage has all fallen, but the bare boughs and stem still make a tree, because a root is there. You may call it a tree even though only the trunk remains rooted to the soil. But it is not a tree if you have taken the root away and set it up in the hedge—it is mere dead timber for the scaffold or the fire. So, if a man hath faith in the Redeemer, though he may be destitute of a thousand other most needful things, yet the essential point is settled:

he that believeth in Christ Jesus hath everlasting life. If he has faith he has the substance of things hoped for, and hope will turn to experience as he grows in grace; but if he has no faith in the Redeemer he may make a towering profession, he may possess vast knowledge, he may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and he may outstrip all his companions in zeal, but he is not a plant of the Lord's right hand planting, for he has no root in himself, and will ere long wither away.

The root, again, is not only that which is vital to the tree, it is from the root that the life-force proceeds by which the trunk and the branches are nourished and sustained. There is hope of a tree if it be cut down that it shall sprout again, at the scent of water it shall bud; so long as there is a root there is more or less of vitality and power to grow, and so faith in Christ is the vital point of religion; he that believeth liveth. If thou dost not know the living Redeemer thou dost not know life. Without trust in the work of Jesus a man may attempt to follow the moral teachings of Jesus, but he will miss salvation, since no morals which do not begin, with faith in God can be acceptable to the Most High. The practical teaching of our holy religion is admirable, and we must obey it or be lost; but the root of holy living is faith in Christ, neither can it be produced otherwise. I would not say a word against the right exercise of the emotions, or the education of the understanding, or the regulation of the passions, for all these are good as branches of the tree; but the root, the living part of godliness, is our union to Christ by faith, our laying hold upon the incarnate Son of God as dying and rising again on our behalf.

Again, it is called the "root of the matter" because it comprehends all the rest; for everything is in the root. You walked your garden in the winter, and many plants were entirely invisible; there was not the slightest token of their presence in the soil: now they are above ground, they are flowering, they are proceeding to fruit. Where was the plant? It was all in the root. Leaf, branch, fruit, seed—all were there. Even so, all the elements of a perfect character lie hidden in faith in Christ. The holiness of heaven is packed away in the faith of a penitent sinner. Look at the crocus bulb; it is a poor, mean, unpromising sort of thing, and yet wrapped up within that brown package there lies a golden cup, which in the early spring will be

filled with sunshine: you cannot see that wondrous chalice within the bulb; but he who put it there knows where he has concealed his treasure. The showers and the sun shall unwrap the enfoldings, and forth shall come that dainty cup to be set upon God's great table of nature, as an intimation that the feast of summer is soon to come. The highest saintship on earth is hidden within the simplicity of a sinner's faith, like a flower within a seed: yea, the perfect character of those that are without fault before the throne of God is all in embryo within that first look of faith which links the soul with the atoning merits of the great Redeemer. My brother, a young heaven sleeps within thy childlike confidence in Christ: it will only want the culture of the Holy Spirit to develop thy new life into the perfect image of Christ Jesus thy Lord. Faith is the essence, the vitality, the sum of true godliness, and hence it is called "the root of the matter."

So I come, thirdly, to dwell upon a further remark:—THIS ROOT OF THE MATTER MAY BE PERSONALLY DISCERNED, AS BEING IN A MAN'S OWN POSSESSION. Job says to his teasing friends, "Ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?" Notice the curious change of pronouns. "Ye should say, why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in him?" that is how the words would naturally run. But Job is so earnest to clear himself from Bildad's insinuation that he is a hypocrite that he will not speak of himself in the third person, but plainly declares, "The root of the matter is found in me." Job seems to say, "The vital part of the matter may or may not be in you, but it is in me, I know. You may not believe me, but I know it is so, and I tell you, to your faces that no argument of yours can rob me of this confidence; for as I know that my Redeemer liveth, I know that the root of the matter is found in me." Many Christian people are afraid to speak in that fashion. They say, "I humbly hope it is so, and I trust it is so." That sounds prettily; but is it right? Is that the way in which men speak about their houses and lands? Do you possess a little freehold? Did I hear you answer, "I humbly hope that my house and garden are my own?" What, then, are your title-deeds so questionable that you do not know? Is this the way in which you speak of your wages at the end of the week? "I sometimes have a hope that these shillings are mine." Is that the way you talk about your wife? Is that the manner in which you speak of your own life?

Are you afraid even to call your soul your own? No, no; we demand certainties in reference to things of value, and so it ought to be with regard to Christ and eternity; we cannot put up with mere hopes and surmises in reference to them. Believers should aim at certainty about eternal things, and learn to say, like Job, “I know that my Redeemer liveth,” and, “The root of the matter is found in me.”

Note well that sometimes this root needs to be searched for. Job says “the root of the matter is found in me,” as if he had looked for it, and made a discovery of what else had been hidden. Roots generally lie underground and out of sight, and so may our faith in the Redeemer. His interest in the Redeemer may have been a question for self-examination with Job when first his griefs came thick and heavy; it may be a matter of search with us, too.

***“He that never doubted of his state,
He may—perhaps he may, too late.”***

I can understand a Christian doubting whether he is saved or not, but I cannot understand his being happy while he continues to doubt about it, nor happy at all till he is sure of it. Job had made his personal condition the subject of investigation; he had dugged beneath the surface, and had seen within his heart. You cannot always find roots in winter time, unless you use a spade and turn over the soil: there are winter times with us when we cannot tell whether we have real faith in Christ or not till we examine ourselves whether we be in the faith. After searching, Job found the treasure, and said, “the root of the matter is found in me.”

And note again, the root of the matter in Job was an inward thing. “The root of the matter is found in me.” He did not say, “I wear the outward garb of a religious man;” no, but, “the root of the matter is found in me.” If you, my hearers, are in the possession of the essence of true Christianity, it does not lie in your outward profession, your baptism, your church membership, or your reception of the Lord’s Supper; but it lies within your heart and mind. Faith, which is the evidence of the inner life, is altogether spiritual and inward; its abode is within the vitals of the spiritual being, in the very core of the renewed heart. True godliness is not separable from the godly man; it is woven into him just as a thread enters into the essence and substance of the fabric.

When grace is found in us, and we do really believe in our Redeemer, we ought to avow it; for Job says, "The root of the matter is found in me. I know that my Redeemer liveth." Are there not some among you who have never said as much as that? Some of you who are believers have never yet owned our Lord. What did I call some of you the other day? I think I compared cowardly believers to rats behind the wainscot that come out of a night to eat a crumb or two, and then run in again. The rat is a poor creature to be compared with: it is a domestic animal, I suppose, for it lives in the house; but it is not a beautiful object to be likened to, and so I will not compare you to it, although there might be more untruthful comparisons. I pray you try and alter before I am driven to the simile, and never be ashamed of Christ, or if you ever are so, be more ashamed of yourselves. There ought to be an open declaration of our faith whenever it is needful, for it is written, "Be ye always ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and, fear."

The fact of our having the root of the matter in us will be a great comfort to us. "Alas," saith Job, "my servant will not come when I call him, my wife is strange to me, my kinsfolk fail me, but I know that my Redeemer liveth. Bildad and Zophar, and others of them, all condemn me, but my conscience acquits me, for I know that the root of the matter is in me." It is a blessed thing to be able to hear the harsh speeches of men as though we heard them not. What matters it after what others judge of me if I know what I do know, and am sure in my own soul that I am right with God? What if men find fault with our eyes does it signify if we can say, "One thing I know, whereas I was once blind now I see." Critics may find fault with our experience, and they may call our earnest utterances rant, but this will not affect the truth of our conversion, or the acceptableness of our testimony for Jesus. If the little bird within our bosom sings sweetly it is of small consequence if all the owls in the world hoot at us.

There is more real comfort in the possession of simple faith than in the fond persuasion that you are in a high state of grace. When we proudly think, "Oh, I need not look at the root of the matter, for my flowers and fruits are evidence more than sufficient," we are getting dangerously elevated. That man is in a perilous plight who

glories in himself, saying, "How useful I am! how gifted! how influential! How highly my brethren think of me!" All this will turn out to be unsubstantial comfort in the hour of trial, but the root of the matter yields the sweetest and surest consolation at all times. If your Redeemer lives you shall have a candle lighted for you in the darkest shades.

This fact also will be your defence against opposers. Thus may you answer them in Job's fashion, "You. ought not to condemn me; for, though I am not what I ought to be, or what I want to be, or what I shall be, yet still the root of the matter is found in me. Be kind to me, therefore." Carefully observe this, my dear young friends. You have been lately converted, and if you fall in with those who are very stern and censorious you must not be surprised. Some venerable professors have not so much grown ripe as sour, and they show their sourness by censuring their younger brethren. It does not occur to them to say, "Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is in him?" But you may defend yourself against their hard speeches by declaring that you believe in the Saviour even as they do. Say to them, "I do not know as much about the Lord Jesus as you do, but I most heartily trust him. He is as much my Redeemer as he is yours. Do not, therefore, drive me from your company, but deal gently with me, as with a lamb of the flock." I hope that you who are now young and timid will become strong in the Lord ere long, and be no longer in danger from severe judgments, and when that comes about I hope that you will have by experience to be very gentle with those who are weak in the faith. If our friends are sincere in their attachment to the Redeemer let us treat them as our brethren in Christ.

Thus much on our third point.

Now we come to the fourth subject of discourse, which is a practical lesson from the text for those believers in Christ who have passed beyond the root stage into a further development.

Notice, then, that **THIS ROOT OF THE MATTER IS TO BE TENDERLY RESPECTED BY ALL WHO SEE IT.** "Ye should say, why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?"

What a rebuke this is to the persecutions which have been carried on by nominal Christians against each other, sect against sect!

Romanists have fiercely persecuted Protestants, and Protestants have persecuted one another. If they had but listened to their gracious Lord and Saviour they would have heard him whisper, "Ye should say, wherefore persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?" How can those who trust in the same Saviour rend and devour each other? In many of the islands of the South Seas our missionaries have been the means of converting the people to the faith. In one of these the shaven crowns of Rome began to put in their appearance, with the view of turning away the people from the faith to the errors of Rome. Among their cunning instruments of conversion was a picture representing the tree of the church. Certain twigs were represented as rotten; they were out off, and were falling into the fire: these were such persons as Luther, Calvin, and other famous teachers of the gospel. The Protestant missionaries, too, were dead twigs, and were all to be removed from the tree. The natives were not quite sure about this, and made more enquiries. Certain other branches were green and vigorous; these were the priests of the Catholic church, and the larger boughs were bishops and cardinals of the same community: the natives were not quite clear about that, and passed on to examine the trunk. This of course consisted of an array of popes, of whom the islanders had never heard. They passed on, hoping to come to something presently; and so they did, for at the bottom was the name of our Lord Jesus. The enquiring islanders said, "And what is this at the bottom, marked with the name of Jesus?" "That is the root," said the priest. "Well, then," shouted the natives, "we have the root! The new teachers say we have the root, and so we are all right; our missionaries have told us the truth." There was philosophy in that. Let us see to it that "we have the root." Friend, dost thou believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God? If so, thou hast the root. I shall be very sorry if you belong to the Church of Rome, for she teaches much error; but if you rest wholly in Christ Jesus you will be saved. Do you believe in the once crucified but now living Christ? Well, my brother, I am sorry you should be a high-churchman, or anything else which is not according to Scripture, but your faith has saved you. I pray you think the same of me, if I too am a believer in the one Redeemer. If I believe, and rest my soul on the one salvation which God has provided in Christ Jesus, have charity

towards me, for this rock will bear both thee and me. This should end all religious persecutions.

But next it ought to be the end of all ungenerous denunciations. If I know that a man is really believing in Jesus Christ, I may not treat him as an enemy. If I perceive that he holds a great many wrong notions, I am to be grieved at his mistakes, and to labour for his instruction, but I ought not to feel rancour towards him. It is my duty, especially if I am a public instructor, to expose and refute his errors; but as for the man himself, if he trusts in the atoning blood, I am not to treat him as a reprobate. Does he believe in Jesus Christ alone? Does he hold vital, fundamental truth, then I am not to make him an offender for a word, and twist his language into a meaning what he never intended by it. I am too near akin to every believer in Jesus to take down bell, book, and candle and excommunicate him for not being so well-instructed as he might be. If the Redeemer is next of kin to me and next of kin to him, why then we are near of kin to one another, and it is unseemly for us to strive together being brethren. For the faith and against all errors we are bound to contend, but anything like personal animosity must be far from us. O for more Christian love! If the root of the matter is in any man, do not let us persecute him, but encourage him. "Well, but I could not enter into any Christian work with him, nor enjoy fellowship with him, for he does not see with me." Is it indeed so? The Lord have pity upon you. I should not wonder but what you are the worse man of the two: he may be wrong in head, but you are certainly wrong in heart. Very frequently it happens that the man who has most of the spirit of love is also the man who is nearest to the truth, and I generally assume that he who is the least sour is the most sound. The party who most needs to be questioned as to whether the root of the matter is in him is the brother who has no love. He whose spirit is perfumed with love to others, not only has the root but something of branch too, for love is the fair outgrowth of faith. Death to error, death to sin, but salvation to the sinner and life to the believer, notwithstanding all his mistakes. Let denunciations and exclusiveness, be ended for ever, and let us own our kinship with all who are in Christ.

Further than this, the question is, "Why persecute we him?" We can do that by a cold mistrust. I have seen chill suspicion exercised

by good solid substantial Christians, who have had a chronic fear and trembling lest new converts should not be true converts. The young man seems to be very earnest; he is evidently much impressed; he forsakes his sin, and there is a great change in him; he boldly declares his faith in Jesus Christ; but the jealous guardian of the purity of the church objects, for the young man was converted in an irregular way; he did not go among the Presbyterians or Baptists, or Congregationalists, or Evangelical Church people and get saved in a respectable manner, but he went out in the street and he heard a mere ranter, or a salvation army captain, and therefore it is feared that it cannot be a genuine work of grace. The cautious brother does not say much, but he draws himself into himself and retires from the person whom he suspects, just as a snail draws in his horns and hides himself in his shell. The elder brother is angry and will not go in; and in that way he persecutes the returning prodigal. Why, some of these icy critics will cause the very marrow of a poor fellow's bones to freeze while he looks at him. Do not let us stand off in holy isolation from any who have the root of the matter in them. Wherefore should we persecute such? Let us encourage them, and give them information upon the points in which they are deficient. Some people appear to think that every convert ought to be born a fully developed man in Christ Jesus, even as, according to mythology, Minerva sprang from the brain of Jove, a full length woman, fully armed, shield and spear and all. I do not see people born again in this fashion. I believe that some of God's men who are to be leaders are born with beards, and very early exhibit a knowledge far beyond their years, which sets them in the front from the first; but for the most part God's children are little when they are born, even as ours are. When my sons first came to my house they were by no means the young men they are now. I should think it likely that the same may be said of your children; what wonder, then, that it is so in God's house! Little children cannot run alone, and cannot even speak plain. Besides, they make strange noises, and by their cries they become a nuisance to those who have no sympathy with babes; and so it is with newborn Christians, they cannot run as we could wish them to, and they cannot tell out the doctrines of grace as we could desire, or pray as we should like them to pray. Well, but they are little children. They are alive,

however. Do not let us bury them, but let us nurse them. It is one of the duties of mature Christian life to take this child and nurse it for God, for he will give us our wages.

Dear brothers and sisters, I beg you to be on the look out in this congregation for those who have just received the root of the matter, those that have just had the seed dropped into the soul. It has hardly begun to sprout yet, but you can see it is there. They can just say

***“We are poor sinners, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is our all in all.”***

Do not frighten them, do not distress them, do not chill them like a sharp frost. Cheer and encourage them, and say, “I, too, was once as you are: Ay, and I, too, often am as you are. Ay, and I, too, sometimes wish I were as you are, for I would still keep on my knees, keep humbly dependent upon Christ. Come, if elder brethren will not receive you, I will, and I will cheer you and encourage you for Jesus’ sake.” Well, try and do that this morning, if you can, before you leave the Tabernacle. There may be somebody sitting next to you who just wants a word. Try it. I know some will be quite frightened at your venturing to speak to them. Very well, frighten them a little, it will not hurt them. Try the power of courteous personal appeal. It may be if you frighten one or two you will be the means of blessing to many more that if those who are frightened do not forgive you they will not break your heart. God himself will not, because there will be nothing to forgive. He will commend you for what you have done, and I pray you, therefore, do it for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

