

BELIEVERS NOT ASHAMED OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST

by: Robert Murray McCheyne — 1813-1843

SERMON 15

So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For the - wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1: 15-18).

THE FIRST THING I DESIRE you to notice, brethren, is the place where Paul was desirous to preach the gospel: 'As much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also' (verse 15). We find Paul mentioning the same thing in the verses before: 'For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established' (verse 11); and then in verse 13: 'Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you ... that I might have fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles! Rome was the mightiest city in the world at that time. Daniel compares it to a great beast which devoured, and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it. We know that Rome was at this time called the 'mistress of the world'. It was at this time the most learned city in the world. It had its buildings and baths, its painters and orators, and philosophers; and it was for this reason that Paul desired so earnestly to preach the gospel to them. But, more than that, it was one of the most wicked cities in the world. One historian calls it 'the place where common sewers meet'; and he that sat on the throne was the wickedest of all, yet Paul desired to preach the gospel there.

The second thing I want you to notice is what Paul wanted to do at Rome. 'I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.' When Paul wanted to go to Rome it was not to see it; many went to Rome to see it, to see its marble baths . its theatres, its palaces, but Paul did not want to see Rome. And it was not to show himself off; all learned men went to Rome to show off their learning, and to publish their works. It was not so with Paul; all that he wanted to do was this - 'I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.'" I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified' (I Corinthians 2:2).

I want you to notice, in the third place, what Paul feelings were in the prospect of going to Rome. 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ...'. These words are very remarkable; there is more meant in them than at first appears. They are like these words, 'He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax' (Isaiah 42:3); which means, that instead of breaking the bruised reed, he will bear it up; and that, instead of quenching the smoking flax, he will fan it into a flame. So, in these words, when Paul says, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ', it means, I glory in the cross of Christ.

This passage is the same in meaning with that in Galatians 6:14, 'But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...'. The meaning of both passages is just this, that the way of righteousness through Christ was what Paul gloried in.

There are two things implied in it. First, he was not ashamed of the gospel before God. Paul rested his eternal salvation on the righteousness of Christ. Like David, he said, 'This is all my salvation and all my desire' (2 Samuel 23:5). He had no other way of access to

God but that; if that failed, all failed. He had no other way of going to God in secret but that, therefore he says, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.'

But again, there is implied in it that he was not ashamed of the gospel before men. Many men are ashamed of the gospel, but Paul was not ashamed of it. Paul wished that he had a voice that could reach throughout the world, that he might proclaim the gospel. Many men would have smiled at him entering Rome with only a few words in his mouth, but Paul was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Ah, brethren, many men would have thought he was a babbler, who told them to be righteous without works, but Paul did not care for that: 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ! And many would have smiled at Paul coming to such a wicked place as Rome with nothing to tell them of but another's righteousness; but ah! he saw that Christ's righteousness was able to cover them. Pray that we may get such a sight of Christ this day.'

Let me show you, from these words: (1) some of the reasons why men are ashamed of the gospel of Christ; (2) some of the reasons why Paul and all like him are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

Some reasons why men are ashamed of the gospel of Christ

1. Unregenerate men are ashamed of the gospel of Christ because it seems foolish way to them. Look at the 1 Corinthians 1:18: 'For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness ...'; 2:14: 'But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him This is the first great reason why unregenerate men are ashamed of the gospel; it appears so foolish that one man should be accounted righteous for the obedience of another. 'The cross of Christ is to them that perish foolishness', and it will be so to the end of time. Do not think you are different from your fathers; you are just the same. To those of you in this congregation who will perish, the cross of Christ is foolishness.

Oh, brethren, if the gospel were by works you could understand it. If you could get into heaven by your works, you would say, That is a good gospel, that is good preaching; but righteousness by another, that is foolishness. Or suppose salvation was in this way -- by God being lenient to the law, that you could understand; or suppose salvation was by your repentance, tears, etc., then you could know its meaning; but that salvation is by the righteousness of another, that is utter foolishness: 'To them that perish, the preaching of the cross is foolishness.'

Ah, brethren, did you never notice that you are ashamed of hearing of the righteousness of another. Many worldly men would not come in at the door of this church, and why? Just because they would hear of the righteousness of another. Are there not many of you who do not like to hear about the righteousness of Christ, that say, when you hear it, O that is one of his rash expressions? And you are ashamed to go to God in this way; to them that perish, this way is foolishness. And you are ashamed to speak about it; you do not tell your children about the white robe - the white linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints and why? Because you do not like it. 'The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.'

2. Then you are ashamed of its teachers. You are told by the evangelist Mark that Christ's audience said to him, 'Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses, and of Jude and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him' (Mark 6:3). And we are told about the apostles, in Acts 4:13, that the chief priest took notice that they were ignorant and unlearned men. And we are told that when Paul went to Corinth, they said his appearance was weak and his speech contemptible (2 Corinthians 10: 10). Now, Christ has not sent angels, neither has he sent infallible men to preach the gospel: 'We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us' (2 Corinthians 4:7). I do not know

a faithful minister in Scotland that has not some defect either in his appearance, or his speech, or his manner; and will you not say, 'Is not this the carpenter?' 'We have this treasure in earthen vessels.' Will you not say, 'That minister is often angry; that one is rude in his manner'? Ah! you are like flies that fasten on the sore on the horse's back. O foolish men! You stick at the faults, and do not take the blessing.

3. Another reason why you are ashamed of the gospel is, you hate its holiness. This is the main reason; if it were not for this, the other reasons would not stand. If it was a gospel that would let you live in your sins, you would say, 'All hail'; but God gave his Son to bless us, in turning each of us away from our iniquities. The Lord Jesus, when he finds a sinner, clothes him with his righteousness, and then he makes him all glorious within. Christ will not leave a sinner till he sees his Father's image within him. He will not leave a sinner till he has left his own image there -- his own lamb-like image. That is the reason why you despise the gospel. Those of you who are drunkards, say, He would take me from my glass; those of you who are card-players, say, He would take me from my play. Ah, it is a holy gospel. '... from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you...' (Ezekiel 36:25, 26). Ah, brethren, I would say for one, if it were not for the holiness of the gospel, it would not be worth the having; and yet this is the reason why you hate the gospel, and reject the counsel of God against yourselves. O brethren, it will be to your condemnation that light came into the world, and that you loved the darkness rather than the light, because your deeds were evil.

Reasons why Paul and all like him are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ

1. Because of the power there is in it (verse 16). To unregenerate men the gospel appears the most foolish thing in the world. The scheme of salvation, by the obedience of another, is to them foolishness. And then men think there is nothing in it -- there is no power in it. But to us who are saved, it is the power of God, and the wisdom of God; to those who have seen the power of it on others -- to them that believe its power, it is the power of God unto salvation.

My brethren, there is a divine power sleeping in the gospel, if I may be allowed so to speak, which is able to break the hardest heart. That gospel that you despise -- the dogma that you hate, is all powerful. Brethren, it is more powerful than the thunder or lightning, for it converts the soul. Paul once felt its power; once he hated the gospel, and made havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and hailing men and women, committing them to prison. Brethren, what could turn such a heart? You might as well think of turning back a river, as changing such a heart; but God revealed his Son to him, and from that day the river was turned back, and he became a new creature in Christ Jesus. And, brethren, Paul had seen its power on others; he had seen its power on the hearts of multitudes, and, therefore, Paul was not ashamed of the gospel.

Brethren, it is the power of God unto salvation, not to destruction. Paul had seen so much of the power of the gospel when wielded by God - he had seen that, when it was wielded by God, there was not so much as one Jew or Gentile, bond or free, that could resist; it was this that nerved the arm of Paul when he went to Rome to preach the gospel -- he felt he had that which was the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. And oh! brethren, it is this that gives us strength. I am sure, since I came among you, I have felt the hardness of your hearts; but, ah! I know that if God will make use of the gospel, it will bring down the proudest of you all. Awakened sinner! there is a power in the gospel to pardon you, though your sins reach up to heaven.

2. I come now to a second reason why we are not ashamed of the gospel, that is, that the righteousness of God is revealed in it (verse 17). This is a reason that grows out of the other reason: it is the righteousness of God that gives it all its power. The righteousness of

God here spoken of is just the doing and dying of the Lord Jesus. It is called the righteousness of God, because it is that of God himself. You remember when Christ was a child, it is said he was 'the mighty God'; and then it is said that it is the blood of God: 'Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood' (Acts 20:28). The blood that was shed on Calvary was the blood of one who was called God. And then all the sufferings of Christ have got a divine value in them that satisfies the demands of the law in a way which no other can do.

And, in the same manner, the obedience of Christ was the obedience of one who was God; and when he obeyed his parents, it was the obedience of one who was God; and when he obeyed the law, it was the obedience of one who was God. Then the obedience and suffering of Christ when he stood in the room of many, is called the righteousness of God, and it is offered to you as such in the gospel. Ah! my brethren, this was the reason why Paul was not ashamed of the gospel. Paul knew that, suppose he came to Rome, and met in with the chief of sinners, he could tell him a way to be forgiven.

I know that those of you who hate the gospel despise this way, but that will never make me hate the gospel. Brethren, in the gospel there is the righteousness of one who is God offered to the chief of sinners - yet you despise it; yet this does not, so to speak, prick a hole in it. Those of you who are awakened sinners, here is a righteousness that can cover you; behold, for each of your crimson sins, here is a stripe of one who is God. And, brethren, more than that, here are acts of holy obedience to cover your naked soul, here are holy words to cover your unholy words, here are holy deeds to cover your unholy deeds. O brethren! here is a lifetime of obedience to cover your soul.

You know, brethren, at the time of the deluge, it covered the highest mountains to the height of fifteen cubits. Now, suppose you had been above the world and looked down, you would not have seen one mountain. So it is with you; if you have on this righteousness you will be covered, and when God looks down, he will see nothing but the glassy sea of his Son's obedience. O brethren! this is the only way of being saved; if there were another way, I would let you alone to choose your own way; but there is not another way, 'There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved' (Acts 4:12), but the name of Jesus Christ. God give you to choose this day the righteousness of Christ.

In conclusion, I would just mention a reason why you should now choose Christ: 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men' (verse 18). When Paul approached the gates of Rome, when he looked at its marble baths, when he saw the multitudes flocking to the theatre, and when he saw the crowds bowing down to the statue of Jupiter or Minerva, the heart of Paul was touched, and why? Because the wrath of God was revealed from heaven against them, and he knew that he had in his hand that which could cover every sinner. O, said Paul, if I could get them to put on this righteousness! O my brethren! it is this that saves you! It is this that nerves me to preach! For I know if you do accept it you will be saved, but if not, you will be lost. Brethren, I tell you that you must either put on this righteousness, or the wrath of God will be revealed against you.

Oh! my brethren, learn the folly of those of you who reject the gospel of Christ; you think that you have all the wisdom in the world, and that it will perish with you; you think that we are mad, but we will see when we stand that day, when the wrath of God will be revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. O happy are those of you who are clothed in this righteousness! 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins' (Isaiah 43:25). It is like casting a stone into the deep; it sinks, and it is not seen. It is like the water at the deluge,

which covered the loftiest mountains. 'Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back' (Isaiah 38:17). Amen.

ADDRESS AT FENCING THE TABLES

I would now, as was the custom of our fathers, put a fence around the Lord's table; and in doing so, permit me to read to you Luke 14:33: 'So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.' My dear friends, you are this day about to perform one of the most solemn acts in your life. Those of you who are coming for the first time to the Lord's table are professing before men, and angels, and devils, that you do choose Christ to be your righteousness and strength. Those of you who have often sat down at the Lord's table are coming to renew your engagement to be the Lord's; and you say, 'So surely as I take this bread and wine, so surely do I take Christ as my righteousness.' When you take the bread and wine you say, 'I do feed on Christ.' And those of you who are coming for the last time, make the declaration of Mary, that you have chosen that good part that shall never be taken away from you. All I ask of you at this moment is that you count the cost. 'Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.'

First of all, in the name of my Master, I ask you, Have you forsaken all your own righteousness? You have heard that salvation is not of works. Have you forsaken your own righteousness? It is written, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteousness man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon' (Isaiah 55:7). Tell me, brethren, have you forsaken your own way of righteousness? Have you put away yourself for righteousness? Do you look upon yourself as a condemned sinner? Do you say, looking fully at your life from the cradle to the grave, 'Enter not into judgment with me, for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified' (Psalm 143:2). Are you completely divorced from your own righteousness? and have you laid hold on gospel righteousness? Then welcome to the Lord's table, welcome to the bread and wine; and when you take it, look up to heaven, and say, Father, I forsake all for Christ.

Brethren, is there a man here who is a legalist, who is looking for righteousness from his life? -- you are not welcome to the Lord's table, for in laying hold of the bread and wine you say you have renounced yourself for righteousness.

Secondly, have you forsaken the esteem of all the world for Christ? If you will be justified by the word of Christ, the world will despise you. Have you determined to forsake the esteem of the world for Christ, even though it should be a dear world -- though a wife or a husband? Do you count their favour all dung compared with Christ shining into your soul? Then you are welcome to the table; you have made Moses' choice, you esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. You are welcome to the Lord's table. We are a poor and afflicted people, but we have got the favour of the Lord -- cast in your lot among us. Welcome are you, brother, welcome are you, sister. Christ welcomes you; the Father welcomes you. In the name of my Master, I say, All welcome. Brethren, I believe the most of you are not willing to leave the world for Christ -- you are not willing to be hated of all men for the name of Christ. Ah! then, you cannot be his; you may put your hand on the table, but remember, it is a Judas' hand -- it is the hand of a betrayer.

Thirdly, have you forsaken all your sins for Christ? I have no doubt many of you will say, Yes, yes, to the first two questions, that will shrink from this one. Have you forsaken your idols? Have you forsaken the pleasure of the flesh for the mind of the Lord Jesus? 'Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.' 'If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are becoming new' (2 Corinthians 5:17). Remember, do not mistake me, I do not say that all who are come to Christ are perfectly holy; you need not stumble at that stone except you like; but they hate all sin, they have forsaken heart and life sin. Oh! brethren,

'Whatsoever is born of God doth not commit sin' (I John 3:9). If we are born of God all that is divine in us will be against sin.

I tell you, brethren, if there is a man or woman here who is coming to the Lord's table, who is not seeking deliverance from all sin, then you have no right to come to this table; you are like Judas, who was a thief and kept the bag, and kept what was put in it. 'Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.'

But oh! brethren, if there be any one here who is seeking a warrant to come to the table, I would just mention what is my own warrant. If there is any one who feels that they are all sin, and if you are willing to be righteous in the righteousness of another, then you are welcome. Again, if you feel that your old heart is all for sin, and that your new heart is all for righteousness -- if you feel that it will be your present heaven to be holy, then you are welcome to the Lord's table. I seek no other warrant for myself to come. Fellow-sinner, come, come cleaving to Christ; come pleading that the Holy Ghost may change us, that we may serve him as we have never done before, that the world may take notice of us that we have been with Jesus.' Amen.

TABLE SERVICE BEFORE COMMUNICATING

My dear brethren, this table is spread for those of you who are followers of the Lamb. These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. If you are rightly seated at the Lord's table, you are following the Lamb for justification. If you are rightly coming to the Lord's table you will look to none other righteousness to cover your naked soul, but that of the Lamb. You will follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. And then you will follow the Lamb in his sufferings: 'If we suffer, we shall also reign with him' (2 Timothy 2:12). Remember we will be like Christ in his sufferings, if we would be like him in his glory. And, brethren, if you are really followers of the Lamb, you will follow him for sanctification; he will follow you as the water of the rock followed the Israelites in the wilderness. Brethren, why do you follow the Lamb? Is it because he has washed you?

Another reason why you follow the Lamb is, you love the Lamb: 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha' (I Corinthians 16:22).

And, brethren, if you follow the Lamb, you will have the peace of the Lamb: 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you' (John 14:27). It is not the peace of an angel, but that of the Lamb.

And, brethren, another advantage is, you will be made like the Lamb: 'Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory' (2 Corinthians 3:18).

And, brethren, another advantage of following the Lamb is, we will follow the Lamb to all eternity. 'And God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes' (Revelation 21:4).

My dear brethren, I hope you are rightly come to the Lord's table, for it is the place where his blessing is: 'In all places where I record my name, I will come and bless you' (Exodus 20:24). Where does Christ record his name but at the table. Those of you who are not Christ's, are betrayers at the table. But if you are Christ's you may bless the day that ever you were born, and you may bless the day of your death, for it will be your third birthday - your birthday into glory.

AFTER COMMUNICATING

'I will come and heal him' (Matthew 8:7). 'I will, be thou clean' (Matthew 8:3). 'Be of good cheer, thy faith hath made thee whole' (Matthew 9:22). 'O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt' (Matthew 15:28). 'I am the way, the truth and the life' (John 14:6). 'These things have I spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace: in

the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world' (John 16:33).

Remember that one Scripture, beloved, 'Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed to it' (Romans 12:2). Brethren, you are not of this world, why should you be like the world? You are 'born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God' (John 1: 13) Why, then, should you be like the world? Christ said of you and me, 'They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world' (John 17:16). Could there have been a more unearthly being than Christ was? Now he says we are no more of the world than he. Why then should you be like the world? The world are not going to the same place -- the world are going to hell, we to the many mansion house. Why then should we be like the world?

Brethren, let me speak to you plainly. Be not like the world in secret. The world in secret plot mischief on their bed. Let there be the most complete friendship between you and God. And then, be not like the world in your family. You know the worldly do not govern their house right. O brethren! if there is one thing I long for more in this place than another it is to see you governing your own house well, bringing up your family for heaven, and not for the world. And, brethren, do not be like the world in not praying. Remember it is written in Jeremiah, 'Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on they name'(10:25).

Be not conformed to this world in the company you keep. Publicans seek publicans; sinners, sinners; 'Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed to it'. If you are Christ's, you will not invite worldly company to your house. It is not possible for you to keep your house as the temple of God if you invite worldly company. Be not like the world in your joy. The world have their joy in a newspaper or in a novel. Remember you have got the cup of the Lord, and you should not drink the cup of devils -- make your company those that love Christ -- you broke bread with them just now.

Be not like the world in their sorrow, they have got angry sorrow. Be not like them. Remember, though ye be poor ye are known by Christ. And do not be like the world in their troubles. Remember you must have a holy carefulness: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you' (Matthew 6:33). Dear brethren, some of you will say, How is it possible? Do not I live in an ungodly family? Do I not live in Sodom? But, dear brethren, here is the secret. If you will not be like the world, be transformed to it. God is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. God is able to enlarge your heart so that you will run and not weary in God's ways. Then be of good courage, for there is enough in Christ to satisfy you. Do you want to be holy? Then God wishes to make you holy. Then God's will and yours are one. Say, then, 'Make me holy, I want to be holy.' Holiness is the brightest attribute of Jehovah.

Ah! I fear we are not living up to what is in Christ, or we would not live as we do. How much useless talk and conversation is there? Oh! the time of our life is more than sufficient to have wrought the will of the flesh. Let us now live to him. Let us give ourselves away to Christ -- solemnly to him; give your wills and affections to him for time and for eternity. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with your spirit. Amen.

ADDRESS AFTER THE DAY'S SERVICE

Suffer me now, brethren, to send you away with a few words of exhortation from Revelation 3:4. There is a voice comes to us this night, saying, 'Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments Thou hast; these words are addressed to the angel - the minister, the star which God set over the Church. Now, to the angel, God says, 'Thou hast a few names even in Sardis that have not defiled their garments.' There is

a strange connection between a minister and a saved soul - the connection is not between all the people, but with a few.

I never feel as I do on a communion Sabbath. Those of you of whose conversion I have been the means, are my children. And the union between a pastor and the souls he has gotten is eternal. The union of a father and his children is not eternal, but this union is eternal. The union between a pastor and each saved soul is spoken of in many parts of Scripture. Paul, in writing to Timothy, says, 'Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith' (1 Timothy 1:2). And again, 'I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds' (Philemon 10). And, brethren, those of you who have been really converted under my ministry, we are united for ever. You will be my joy, 'My brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved' (Philippians 4: 1). For what is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing but this? And, brethren, let the same link that has united us today be acknowledged with thankfulness to God. 'Not unto us, O LORD), not unto us, but unto thy name give glory' (Psalm 115: 1). Ah, remember when Herod refused to give God the glory, he eaten up of worms, and if we do not give him the glory, such will be our condemnation.

But notice, further, thou hast a few names -- not all. There have been many names in this place today, but then only a few that have not defiled their garments. So it was with Enoch. So it was with Noah; he had only eight names. So it was with Abraham; he had but few names. So it was with Lot; he had his own name and none other. And so when our Lord came into the world, he said, 'Fear not, little flock' (Luke 12:32). And so it is now, we have a few names; but oh, let us not be discouraged, for one soul is worth all the material universe; for when the sun grows dim with age, that soul will still live; oh! brethren, it is worth the universe. And had this church been built, and I sent, and no more saved than what have been saved, it would have been worth it all. When our Lord went across the lake in a storm, it was to save one soul. Christ loves single souls, Christ died for single souls. Ah! brethren, one single soul is precious to Christ, therefore precious to me.

'Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis.' Brethren, Sardis had a fair outside, but no more. It is the same with our town, but what is the life? It is nothing. 'But thou hast a few names even in Sardis.' Even in Sardis, Christ could keep a few names alive. Dear brethren, I believe that open formality is a greater snare than open wickedness. I believe there is less difficulty in walking in Sodom than in Sardis. I remember of one person who, I have no doubt, was a child of God; she said, 'Ah, sir, I went to a town, and went into a family where family worship was kept without the power of godliness - they were not saved'; this was the reason why she had backslidden. These seem to be the days that are coming; 'Men shall be lovers of themselves ... having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof' (2 Timothy 3:2-5). Many of you live in Sardis; but ah, my brethren, remember that God can keep you in Sardis, even in the midst of lifeless professors -- even he can keep your soul alive.

But further, 'Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, that have not defiled their garments'. My dear brethren, I would have YOU to go away from the Lord's Table with this prayer: 'Lord, keep me from defiling my garments.' It does not mean that they have never defiled their garments, neither does it mean that they had no inward corruption. The meaning is that their garments were washed. But some may ask, How will I keep my garments?

1. Never forget that you had defiled your garment -- never forget that. 'Then thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done' (Ezekiel 16:63). My brethren, if you would keep your garments clean, walk softly, and you should never forget what an enemy to God you have been.

2. Get a deep acquaintance with your own heart. It is fearful to think how little young believers know of their own heart. Pray to get a deep sight of the desperate wickedness of

your heart. I believe that it is ignorance that is the cause of many of your falls. Ignorance is at the bottom of them.

3. Be constantly washing in the fountain open for sin. Remember pardon is not one act, and then over -- it must be continually repeated. Remember to go to the fountain, this is the only way to walk with clean garments.

4. Pray for the Holy Spirit to uphold you. My dear brethren, if sensible of your weakness, then lean upon this proved Comforter. Pray much for the Comforter that he may enlighten your mind, that he may fill your hearts. O pray for the Spirit of God! for there is no other way of walking to heaven but by the Spirit. Let him lead you. 'Thy Spirit is good: lead me into the land of uprightness' (Psalm 143: 10). My dear brethren, in this way, and in this way alone, will you not defile your garments.

5. Last of all, remember the promise: 'They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.' I believe that there are many who have sat with us who are walking with Christ in white, and many who have sat this day will be with him before another Communion Sabbath: 'I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory' (John 17:24). Christ wants you to be with him, and were it not that he has purposes to serve with us, he would pluck us from the table to glory.

Never forget, dear brethren, that you are to walk with Christ. This walk expresses the most near intimacy with him. You know it is a mark of near intimacy to admit one to walk with us in our solitary rambles. So will Christ: 'Ye shall walk with me.' And remember, brethren, you are to walk with Christ 'in white' -- clothed with Christ's robe. Brethren, it is heaven's wear. I believe that the very angels will know us by our robe; for it is written, he is coming 'to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe' (2 Thessalonians 1: 10).

Dear brethren, remember, since you are to walk with Christ, not to walk with his enemies. 'Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers ...' (2 Corinthians 6:14f.). Why should we walk with the world, when we are to talk with Christ amid the bowers of Paradise? When the world tempts you to join its dance and its pleasures, you should remember that you are to walk with Christ: 'They shall walk with me.'

Brethren, it may be next week - it may be in a few hours. O walk with him now! Walk here with him, and you shall soon put your head where John put his.

Last of all, prize the white robe; it is what they will wear in heaven; it is the robe that Christ giveth to him that overcometh. 'I will not blot his name out of the book of life...' (Revelation 3:5). Oh! brethren, remember it is white as the light -- broad as the law; wear it, and we shall soon walk with him in heaven, being found worthy. The Lord bless you, and bring the few names in Dundee to walk with him in white. Amen.