

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit

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## THE MAIN MATTER

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A Sermon

Delivered by

**C. H. SPURGEON**

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*“Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through His name.” — John 20: 30,31*

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The public life of our most blessed Lord Jesus Christ was brief; few suppose it to have exceeded three and a half years; but yet what a full life it was. It had in it not only enough to compose the four gospels, each one of which contains sufficient to lead men to saving faith, but so much remained over and above that the apostle John makes this remarkable statement: — “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.” Our Lord’s life was as ample as his own festivals; it feeds thousands, and with the fragments that remain many baskets might be filled. A man may complete a great and fruitful life in two or three years, while another may have existed as long as an antediluvian and yet his life may be poor and powerless.

Not only did the Lord Jesus speak and do great things as to number, but there was a world of power in each word and work. He did not display a multitude of feeblenesses, but each individual outcome of his life was grand enough to have been a marvel if considered by itself alone. As was the doer, in whom “dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,” such were the deeds; they also were full of grace and truth. There was a fullness of divine wisdom, grace, and power about each act of Jesus. Hence the apostle here speaks of the Lord’s acts as signs— “many other *signs* truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples.” There was a mass of instruction in all our Lord’s movements; nothing about him was trivial. He preached by his entire life, preached a

marvellous array of truths, and preached them with living freshness. Never is he twice the same, though always the same. When we find him repeating his discourses, as we sometimes do, if the Sermon on the Mount sounds very like the Sermon on the Plain, yet a different drift, and aim, and tone create a singular variety. Each separate act of the Lord is a sign of something beyond itself, and the whole of the acts put together display an ocean of doctrine without bottom or shore. What a Christ was this! Oh that his Spirit may dwell in us, that our lives also may be rich and full; rich to the glory of God, and full to the blessing of our fellow-men.

Yet, dear friends, though the whole of Christ's life has not been written, we perceive in our text that what has been recorded is the most useful part of it, and that it was preserved for our benefit. The inspired record was written with a purpose: the facts were wisely culled and collected out of the entire mass on account of their bearing upon the desired object, and sufficient has been preserved to effect a design which, above all others, is most important to us: "these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name." May our reverence to the inspired gospels lead us to give earnest heed to their design and object, for it would be profane to baffle their purpose by refusing their testimony.

First, this morning, let me speak a little with you upon *the design of all Scripture, which is faith*; secondly, upon *the great object of true faith, which is Jesus the Christ, the Son of God*; and then, thirdly, let us further commune together upon *the true life of the soul which is linked and wrapped up with the name of Jesus Christ*, in whom we are led to believe by the testimony of the things written concerning him.

**I.** First, then, dear friends, **THE DESIGN OF ALL SCRIPTURE IS TO PRODUCE FAITH.** There is no text in the whole Book which was intended to create doubt. Doubt is a seed self-sown, or sown by the devil, and it usually springs up with more than sufficient abundance without our care. The practice of reading sceptical works is a very dangerous one; we have enough tendency to sickness in our own constitutions without going to fever hospitals to test the atmosphere. Holy Scripture is no mother or nurse of doubt; it is the creator of a holy confidence by revealing a sure line of fact and truth. It has been thought by many expositors that John here refers only to the things which Jesus did after his resurrection—"Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples;" but I think there are abundant reasons, with which I need not trouble you just now, to show that John must have referred to the whole of our Saviour's life, and to all the acts of it, and that the book which he speaks of is his own book, the evangel which contains his own *life of Christ*. John includes the whole story of Jesus of Nazareth in the reference of the text. I venture to go much farther, and to say that the statement that John here made, though it must refer to his own gospel, is equally true of the entire Scriptures. We may begin at Genesis and go on to the Book of Revelation, and say of all the holy histories, "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." Though this Bible is a wonderful library of many books,

yet there is such a unity about it that the mass of the people regard it as one book, and they are not in error when they do so: this one book has but one design, and every portion of it works to that one end. Of the whole canon of inspiration we may say, as we read every detail, “These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”

Observe, then, *no part of Holy Scripture was written with any wish to magnify the writer of it.* Many human books are evidently intended to let you see how profound are the thoughts of their authors or how striking is their style. Self-consciousness is full often apparent, and the man is seen as well as the fruit of his mind. If some authors can at any time introduce themselves they do not hesitate to do so, even though they have to go out of their way to do it: but you shall never detect the least degree of this in any of the writers of sacred Scripture. True, they did not set that foolish fashion of certain “brethren” in modern times who call attention to their own modesty by placing their initials on their title-pages instead of their names. We have no prophet of the Lord named D.N.J., or M.C.H., and those who bear such initials in these days are by no means veiled writers, but are as well known as if their names were written out in full. The inspired authors freely write David, Job, Isaiah, John, Matthew, and why should they not? Having given their names, how very little of themselves will you ever find in their books. They lose themselves in their theme, and hide themselves behind their Master. A most striking instance of this is found in John’s Gospel. John was a man above all others fitted to write the life of Christ. Did he not know more of Jesus both by observation, by intimate fellowship, and by hearty sympathy with him than any other of the evangelists? and yet he has left out many interesting facts which the others have recorded,—others, mark you, who did not actually see the facts as he did. Speaking after the manner of men, this silence is very wonderful. Can you guess how much this abstinence cost the apostle? The other three evangelists received much at second hand, though, truly, by the Spirit of God; but John literally and personally saw these things, and beheld them with his own eyes, and yet he gives us fewer incidents in the life of Christ than the other evangelists. What self-forgetfulness was this! He is silent because his speech would not serve the end he aimed at. And the most striking point is this, — he omits, as if of set purpose, those places of the history in which he would have shone. He and James and Peter were frequently selected by the Master to be with him when others were excluded but of these occasions he says nothing. At the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus it is said of the disciples, as well as of the relatives and the multitude, that the Lord put them all out, and only suffered the three to be with him. This was a singular honour, but John does not say a word about the raising of the daughter of Jairus. What self-oblivion! I should not have omitted it if I had been writing, nor would you. If we had been writing apart from the inspiration of the Spirit, we should have treasured up those special incidents of favour, and we should not have thought ourselves egotistical either, but should have considered ourselves as specially called to record a miracle which was witnessed by so very few. The Spirit of God in moving John to write, took such full possession of him that he wrote only that

which wrought towards the one great design. No matter how interesting the event, he leaves it unrecorded if he judges it to be aside from his design.

Notice, next, that three only were with our Lord in his Transfiguration, and John was one of them. John does not mention that august event except it be that he says, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," in which there may be a reference to it, but it is by no means clear; at any rate, he does not narrate the circumstance, but leaves it to other pens. This is a moral miracle! What uninspired man could have left out such a vision from his page? Even more striking is the fact that the Master when he took with him the eleven to the garden, left the major part of them at the gate, but he led the three further into the garden, and bade them wait at about a stone's-cast distance, where some of them heard his prayers, and observed his bloody sweat. John, who was one of them, says nothing about it. Had he forgotten it? That was impossible. Did he doubt it? Certainly not; but the omission shows you that these incidents were not written with the view of honouring John, but that the reader may be led to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He leaves out that which would have brought John into the front, in order that he may fill up the whole foreground of his canvas with the portrait of his Lord. Everything is subordinated to the one grand end "that ye should believe that Jesus is the Christ."

What a lesson is all this to us who write or speak for God! Let us labour for this one thing, that we may lead men to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. If any sort of preaching would exalt ourselves, let us choose another, lest we hide the cross of Christ. If we can occupy the space with something more forcible, let us omit the choicest piece of oratory. Let us prune the vine of our speech that all its sap may go to fruit, and let that fruit be the bringing of men to believe that Jesus is the Christ.

Further, notice that *Holy Scripture was not written with the mere view of imparting knowledge to men by presenting them with a complete biography of Jesus Christ*. The one intent of Scripture is that ye may believe on Jesus Christ. It was not the aim of any of the evangelists to present us with a complete life of Jesus Christ. Observe the difference between such a writer as John and an ordinary biographer. Usually when you see a biography advertised it will be your wisdom to save your money, for scarcely ever is there a biography written that is fully worth the money asked for it. I can point you to biographies stuffed full of letters which might just as well have been burned, and commonplaces which might as well have been forgotten. The good man never did anything in his life, except that he married a wife, and took a holiday and travelled through Switzerland, and went to Venice and Rome. Every scrap that he wrote home about the commonest incident of travel is secured, and inserted as if it were a priceless gem. It is just the same that every Tom and John and Mary would have said, and yet it is paraded as something heavenly. The book must be swelled out, and so the biographer gives us every bit of sense or nonsense that he can find. There must have been great searching of drawers, great writing to first cousins, and uncles and aunts, to

know if they have an old letter anywhere of the dear deceased. All manner of small talk is inserted because, to speak the truth, our lives are mostly so little that if we do not blow them up with wind there will not be enough to make a volume for the book-market. How different is the biography of Jesus of Nazareth. The signs and wonders which he did are not written to make a book; they are not even written that you may be informed of all that Jesus did; these are written with an end, an aim, an object,—“that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” Matthew when he writes of “Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham,” leaves out everything that does not bring out Christ in connection with the kingdom: he paints Messiah the Prince, and he will not be taken off from his work. Luke brings forth Jesus as the man, and you see how wondrously he keeps to that one line of things. But when you get to John, and he is about to bring forth the Lord Jesus as the Son of God, he omits numbers of details that show our Lord in other lights and other aspects. Here Jesus is not so much the King in his kingdom—he leaves that to Matthew, he sticks to his own point which is indicated by his opening sentences “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” He desires to set forth our Lord’s glorious Messiahship, and personal Sonship, and Deity, and he adheres to that, and to that alone. The evangelists do not attempt merely to increase our knowledge, but they aim to win our understandings, and to conquer our hearts for Christ.

Notice yet again, dear friends, that *the gospels and the other books of Scripture were not written for the gratification of the most godly and pious curiosity*. Truly, I would have liked to have acted to our Lord as Boswell did to his friend Dr. Johnson. I would have thought it an honour to have noted down every choice word he dropped, and every act he did. I would have recorded the very colour of his hair, and you should have known whether his eyes were blue or hazel: I would have left on record every incident about the very fabric of that hem of his garment which the woman touched. Would not any of you have done so? Do you not love him so much, and prize him so greatly, that you would have thought the smallest trifle about him to be a gem of knowledge. Our love ennobles everything that has to do with our adorable Lord. But the writers inspired of the Holy Spirit were not led astray by this feeling; they knew their object and gave their whole strength to it. The Holy Ghost did not send his servants to gather up interesting details and preserve curious facts. None of them wrote to gratify your curiosity, even about the things which concern your Lord and Master. You shall be told that which shall lead you to believe him to be the Son of God, but you shall be told no more; for had all been written you might have spent all your time in trying to know Christ after the flesh, but now he hath preserved only that which by his blessing shall teach you to know him after the spirit. It is not to gratify curiosity but to beget faith within the soul that the memoirs of our Lord are written by the evangelists.

Again, *the Scriptures are not even written with the view of setting before us a complete example*. I want you to notice that. It is true that the gospels set before us a perfect character, and we are bound to imitate it. It is true that when we read the life of

Christ we may learn how to live, and how to die; but that was not the first and chief design of the writers: they wrote that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, by believing, we might have life through his name. Good works are best promoted, not as the first, but as the second thing. They come as the result of faith, and he that would promote that which is pure and honest and holy, had best promote faith in Jesus Christ, the Saviour. The Scripture does not go in for flowers first, nor even for fruit, but it plants roots, and hence it aims at implanting faith in Jesus Christ, for when we have believed in him, the faith that worketh by love will be sure to produce a sacred imitation of his most beloved and perfect character. Yes, let the truth stand as I have put it, "these are written," first and last, with no other end and object but this, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God."

Open his gospel and see how John all through keeps to his design. It would be worth while to spend the whole morning, and a half a dozen other mornings, in showing you that John never takes his eye from this one point. You will soon perceive that his Book contains a series of testimonies borne by persons led to faith in Jesus as the Christ. John in the first chapter teaches the truth which he was about to prove; read the seventeenth and eighteenth verses, "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ": here you see that Jesus is the Christ. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." There is "the only begotten Son," and the two verses show us that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. John had been convinced of this at our Lord's baptism by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him; and therefore he bore this witness at the commencement. Almost immediately after follows the conversion of Andrew, and what does Andrew witness? He says to his brother Simon, "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." Close on the heels of that comes Nathanael's testimony, and he says, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." Directly after follows the changing of the water into wine at the marriage of Cana in Galilee, one of the seven miracles which John mentions, and he never mentions any more than that seven, and of this, the first of the seven, he says, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him." The miracle was intended to produce faith, and did produce it. At the end of each record of a miracle, John tells us that some believed in him, and generally that they came to believe that he was the Christ, the Son of God. That memorable third chapter concerning Nicodemus, shows us how that enquiring master of Israel came to believe in him; and how the Lord was revealed to Nicodemus as both the sent one and the Son, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." In the fourth chapter you get to the well at Sychar, where the Lord manifests himself to a poor fallen woman, and she is convinced, and hastens to tell her friends, and they by-and-by know that this is indeed the Christ the Saviour of the world. In the case of the raising up of the nobleman's son in the same chapter, you are reminded by John that the father was led to faith in Jesus, and the natural inference

is that you ought to be led to display alike confidence. In the fifth chapter the healing of the impotent man at the pool is narrated in order to introduce the statement “But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.” When five thousand had been fed, we read, “Those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, ‘This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world’.” In the sixty-ninth verse of the sixth chapter you find Simon Peter saying, “We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God,” and so in the seventh chapter, “others said this is the Christ,” being convinced by that which he had spoken. To the man born blind Jesus said, “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” and the man’s practical answer was an avowal of faith and an immediate act of worship. But I am afraid you would soon grow weary if I were to dwell upon every incident which would prove my point. The whole Book is made up of modes of reasonings by which men have been led to believe in Jesus: it might have been written for the sake of the Unitarians of our own time. It contains repeated declarations that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and a series of testimonies, of persons brought to see this by the signs that Jesus wrought amongst them. Study John’s gospel with that view, and you will see how the Lord brings one to believe on him by a call which came with divine authority, a second by unveiling the secrets of her life, another by answering his prayers, another by enlightening his mind. Of the whole of his disciples our Lord gives the secret reason of their discipleship in his matchless prayer, “For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.” Throughout the whole book the strain is the same, for it begins with Andrew’s confession, “We have found the Messiah,” and ends with Thomas, to whom Jesus said, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands.” Thomas cries in ecstasy, “My Lord and my God,” and this is almost the topstone of the confessions and achievements of faith, but not quite, for here is the crown of all, “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

You Bible readers, who have never believed in Jesus as the Christ, have read in vain: you have read to your own condemnation, but not to your salvation. Oh, you that are afraid that you may not be allowed to believe in Jesus, dismiss that foolish fear, for this holy book is written on purpose that you may believe, and therefore it is clear that you have full liberty to do so. Every time John dipped his pen into the ink he breathed the prayer, “Lord, bring men to believe in Jesus by that which I have written,” and he closed his gospel by declaring the innermost longing of his living soul, “These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” My dear hearer, your immediate conversion to faith in the Lord Jesus is the object of this book. God grant it may be fulfilled in you!

**II.** We turn, in the second place, to a subject which is a step further on — **THE GREAT OBJECT OF TRUE FAITH IS CHRIST JESUS.** The text does not say, “These are written that ye might believe the Nicene creed,” for, good as that creed is, it was not then

composed, and is not the chief object of faith. It does not say, “These are written that ye might believe the Athanasian creed;” a very good creed, but rather savage, and also not then devised. No, no: “These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.” That is to say, the faith which brings life to the soul is faith in the person, offices, nature, and work of Jesus; and though you may be in the dark about a thousand things, and may make mistakes about ten thousand more, yet if you believe in the Messiah, the Son of God, you have eternal life.

First, I am to believe in Jesus that *he is the Christ*, that he is the promised Messiah, anointed of God to deliver the human race. I must believe that this is he whom God promised at the gate of Eden, when he said, “The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” This is the sent One, who is come to seek and to save that which is lost: in him we are to believe, for it is written, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”

Next we are to believe that *he is the Son of God* — not in the sense in which men are sons of God, but in that higher sense in which he is the only-begotten Son of God, one with the Father, eternally and indissolubly one. “The Word was with God; “but more than that, “the Word was God.” Now, this is to be believed if we would live unto God. “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.” “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” A Jesus who is not divine could give us no power to overcome the world; but in his Godhead we find our strength.

Put the two together, that he, the divine One, became man, and was sent into the world to redeem us, and we have the right idea of Immanuel, God with us. Will this belief save us? Assuredly it will, but, listen while I explain.

First, *believe this to be a matter of fact*. Having believed it to be a matter of fact, go on to look into the record concerning him till you are undoubtedly sure of it; for these are written that ye might believe with the fullest confidence that Jesus is God and Saviour. When you are sure of the fact, the next thing is to *accept it for yourself*: agree that Jesus shall be your anointed, through whom you will get the anointing which comes upon him as the Head, and descends to you as the skirts of his garment. At the same time unfeignedly consent that he shall be your God, and cry with Thomas, “My Lord and my God.” You are getting on now to complete faith; go one step further. *Yield yourself up to the grand truth which you have received*, for that is saving faith, the submission of yourself to the truth. Acting upon the conviction of its truth, I must say,—since Jesus is now my Saviour he shall save me. Since he is the Christ anointed for me I will trust him, and share his anointing. Since Christ is the Son of God I will rest in him, that I also may become in him a child of God. That is the point. “He that hath the Son hath life: and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” Accept Jesus as he is set forth, for to “as many as received him, to them gave he power to become

the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” The faith which receives Christ as he is revealed as the Messiah, and as the Son of God, is the faith which hath eternal life, and the Scriptures are written that you may have this faith.

I want you to notice one thing more, and that is, we are to receive Jesus of Nazareth as being the Christ and the Son of God on the ground of the written word. See—“these are written that ye might believe”; from this it is clear that the ground of acceptable faith is the written word of God, and it is vain to look for any other. “Oh,” says one brother, “I could believe, but I do not feel as I ought.” What have your feelings to do with the truth of the statement that Jesus is the Messiah the Son of God? I read in the newspaper such and such a statement about affairs in Europe. I may have sufficient cause for doubting the news, but it certainly would not be a good reason if I were to say, “I do not believe the telegram because I do not *feel* that it is true.” How can our feelings affect matters of fact? They are either true or not, altogether apart, from the condition of the hearer. Now, here is a testimony concerning Jesus borne by John and three other evangelists. If these things are true, then they *are* true whether your heart dances for joy or sinks in despair. Whatever becomes of our changeful feelings, facts are stubborn things, and alter not. Experience cannot make a thing true; and frames and feelings cannot make a thing to be a lie which is in itself true. Over the head, then, of all the storms, and turmoils, and changes of my poor, weak, silly nature, there rises a rock that is higher than I, higher than all things, a rock which cannot be moved, let the storm rage as long as it will—Christ Jesus, the anointed Son of God died in the room, place, and stead of all who trust in him; I trust in him, and I am saved. If he be indeed commissioned of God to save believers, and if he be himself God, pledged to save believers, then I, as a believer, am as safe as the throne of God, or the presence-angels which surround it. Whatever I feel or do not feel, I am a saved man since I heartily believe that which the Book was written to teach me, namely, God’s gospel to men, embodied in Jesus Christ, who, being the Son of God, is anointed of the Lord to save his people.

**III.** So I come to the third point, which is this, that **THE TRUE LIFE OF A SOUL LIES IN CHRIST JESUS AND COMES TO THAT SOUL THROUGH FAITH IN HIM.** I understand by the life of a soul only one thing, and yet for the sake of clearing it we must divide it a little.

First, when a man has been found guilty of death, if by any means that sentence is removed from him, he may be said to obtain life, *life in its judicial form*. Suppose that a person who is condemned to die is by some just and lawful means acquitted; in that fact he finds life. That is the first form of life that every man has who believes that Jesus is indeed the Christ. He is acquitted, pardoned, justified, and therefore he lives. Through the righteousness of Jesus Christ he is made just in the sight of God; and being covered with perfect righteousness he lives, and must live for ever. He is absolved, for he hath believed in Christ Jesus, and by that act he has accepted the

righteousness of God and escaped from death. The guilt has been removed, and therefore the penalty cannot be inflicted.

This judicial life is attended with *an imparted life*. God the Holy Spirit is with believers, breathing into them a new, holy, heavenly life. They are dead to the world, as we said last Sunday morning, and buried with Christ, but they live unto God, never more to be slain by sin. The life of Christ is infused into them by the Spirit of the living God, even as the Lord Jesus hath testified. “Verily, verily, I say unto you he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

Observe that this life grows. It continues to gather strength, and as it increases it is spoken of by John as life “more abundantly.” That life never dies; it is impossible that it should ever be destroyed; it is a living and incorruptible seed which abideth for ever. The life of saints on earth is, in fact, the same life as that of saints in heaven. There is no change in the substance of the new life when we enter glory, only it grows and develops and reaches perfection in heaven. The believer’s life on earth is Christ; his life in heaven is the same. As far as our spiritual nature is concerned we have undergone the resurrection, and are raised from the dead, and the life that we here live is the resurrection life; yet the resurrection has not passed already; for as to the body, it, must be changed, and if it dies and is buried it shall be raised again at the sounding of the last trump. We are waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body from the power of death, waiting in the full assurance of hope. The soul even now lives in newness of life, for we are quickened by the Spirit of God.

The new life enters the soul in and through believing, and is the same life which we shall exercise for ever at the right hand of God, even as Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”

I want to enlarge a little upon the fact, that this life comes with believing, because I want it to be noticed that it really comes with believing, apart from any other necessary circumstances. One person complains to me, “Sir, I cannot tell exactly when I was converted, and this causes me great anxiety.” Dear friend, this is a needless fear. Turn your enquiries in another direction, — Are you alive unto God by faith? Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? Are you resting and trusting in him? “Yes,” say you, “with all my heart.” Well, never mind about *when* you were converted; the fact is before you, and its date is a small matter. If a person were to say to you, “You are not alive,” how would you prove that you are alive? A good plan would be gently to tread on his toe, or do something to make him feel that you possess life. I do not think it could be necessary for you to find your certificate of birth, because if you held it in your hand and said, “That document is conclusive,” it would not be half so convincing a proof of life as some distinct act of life. If I thought that I knew the very moment in which I was born again I might be mistaken; indeed little reliance can be placed upon our judgement or our memories. I would sooner believe today than be

quite sure that I began to believe thirty years ago. Perhaps very few of you know the exact minute at which the sun rose this morning; and yet you do not doubt that he has risen, for at this present moment you are enjoying his light. Some mornings you can tell the instant of the sun's rising, but frequently it is so cloudy that the sun is up before you know it. A man would be an absolute lunatic who should say, "I do not believe that it is daylight, for I do not know when the sun rose." Date is a very small, and unimportant matter compared with certainty and fact. Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Then you are alive unto God, and life is the evidence of birth.

"Well," says another, "but I hardly know *how* I was converted." That, again, is another minor matter. Some of us can trace the way in which the Lord led us to himself, and we are very grateful to the instrument by whom we were brought to a knowledge of the truth; but our text does not state that the Bible was written that you and I might trace our faith in Christ to John, or to anyone else. No, it was written that we might believe in Jesus Christ as the result of testimony: and I care not one farthing by what testifying agent you were brought to do it, so long as you do but believe because of the witness of the word of God. I am sure whatever the outward means of your faith the Spirit of God must have wrought it, for there is no living faith apart from his sacred working upon the mind. If you believe sincerely, the mode in which you gained your faith need not be enquired into.

"Well," says one, "but I want to know that I am alive unto God by my feelings. I feel often so sad and full of pain." Listen: is not pain as good a proof of life as pleasure? If anybody said to me, "I know I am alive because I feel so well," I should reply, "And I sometimes know that I am alive because I feel so ill." Rheumatic pain is as sure a proof of life as a thrill of delight; and so anxiety about your state, and hatred of sin, and grief over your imperfection are just as sure signs of spiritual life as the highest joy or the liveliest energy. Do not worry yourself, therefore, about that; if you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and are resting *in* him, it is well with you.

"*But,*" saith one, "I change so much. I feel sometimes as if I must be a Christian; at other times I feel as if it was out of the question that I could be saved." Yes, and do you not change a great deal as to your bodily life? I do, I know. Why, this heavy, damp, thick atmosphere half poisons me. Lift me up a few thousand feet on a mountain side, with a good stiff breeze blowing, and I feel quite another man. Are these changes reasons for questioning my being alive? Nay, nay. Quite the reverse. The reason why I feel these changes is because I am alive, for I reckon that if I were a broomstick or a brick wall the atmosphere would not matter much. If you have no spiritual life you will know few changes, but because you are alive these variations must and will occur to you. I make you smile; I wish I could smile away some of those fears which hang like a nightmare over certain of the best of you.

“But I have such conflicts within,” cries one. Ah, dear friend, there are no conflicts in dead men; there would be no warfare between faith and unbelief if you were not on the Lord’s side. If our whole being remained in its natural death there would be no inward fighting, but inasmuch as there are two minds within you, depend upon it one of those minds is the mind of God. This inward conflict should not cause you to doubt, but rather lead you to cling the more tenaciously to your conviction that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of men.

Faith in Jesus begets life, and this life will flourish or decay very much in proportion to our faith. Believe firmly, and your life shall be vigorous; believe tremblingly, and your life will be faint.

Yet all depends upon “*the name.*” Is not that a blessed word, “that believing you might have life *through his name.*” The name means the whole character of Christ,—all his offices and relationships, all the work he has done and is doing,— we “have life through his name.” We have no life anywhere else but in that name. Jesus Christ said to Lazarus, “Lazarus, come forth,” and why did he come forth? Why, because at the back of the word which called him there was *the name* of Christ, who quickeneth the dead. Why were demoniacs cured? Was it not because unclean spirits knew the name and trembled at it? The devil and death, sin and despair all yield to that name. When some began to exorcise in another name, the devil leaped upon them, and cried, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye? ” That name hath power in heaven, hath power on earth, hath power in hell, hath power everywhere; and if we trust in that name, and live to the glory of that name, we have life through that name.

I come back to my beginning, and there I close: the one thing, the main thing, the only thing is that we do hold on to Jesus Christ through thick and thin, through foul and fair, up hill and down dale, in the night and in the day, in life and in death, in time and in eternity; that we do steadfastly believe that Jesus of Nazareth who died upon the cross is the Messiah of God, yea, the Son of God, sent to cleanse away iniquity and bring in perfect righteousness. Whether we see him on his cross or on his throne, all our hope, all our trust must be fixed in him, and so we shall live when time shall be no more. Verily, I say unto you, those who thus trust him shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hands, for he hath said it, “I give unto my sheep eternal life.” Stay yon there, O true believers, and let none entice you from your steadfastness! If any of you have never exerted this faith, may the Lord bring you to Jesus at once. This sacred Book was written on purpose to make you believe; the Spirit is given to lead you to believe; the object of every preaching of the gospel is that you may believe; therefore come and welcome, and at this hour believe on the one saving name, and live thereby. God grant it for his name’s sake. Amen.