

# IS IT TRUE?

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**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,  
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*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

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“Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?” — Daniel 3:14.

DEAR friends who are not yet decided, if you would become followers of the Lord Jesus Christ it will be well for you to count the cost. It was our Lord's custom to bid men consider what his service might involve. His frequent declaration was, “He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.” He knew and would have us know that it is no child's play to be a soldier of the cross. If we count upon ease in this warfare we shall be grievously disappointed; we must fight if we would reign.

One reason of this is that the world, like Nebuchadnezzar, expects us all to follow its fashions and to obey its rules. The god of this world is the devil, and he claims implicit obedience. Sin in some form or other is the image which Satan sets up and requires us to serve. The tyranny of the world is fierce and cruel, and those who will not worship its image will find that the burning fiery furnace has not yet cooled. If you mean to be a Christian, and therefore intend to cast off the bondage of this present evil world, your resolve must be taken to bear all consequences rather than worship the idol of the hour. The world's flute, harp, sackbut, and psaltery must sound for you in vain. A nobler music must charm your ears and make you bid

defiance to the world's threatenings. The true believer's stand must be taken, and he must determine that he will obey God rather than man. That which commends itself to your conscience as right and pure and true you must follow without reserve; but that which is wrong and foul and false you must quit with fixed resolve. You cannot be Christ's disciple unless you have come to this point and abide by it; for Jesus leads only in the ways of righteousness. He who is a loyal subject of King Jesus will not attempt to live in sin and live in grace too, for he will know that no one can serve two masters. The love of the world and the love of God will no more mix than oil and water. To attempt a fusion of these two is to bring confusion into your heart and life. The prophetic challenge is a wise one — "If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." One or the other you may serve, but not both. Every man who knows the Lord Jesus Christ and has been washed in his blood, and has been made a partaker of the divine nature, will understand that he has done with the friendship of this present evil world. The world may demand that he should yield to its behests; but as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ he will refuse to do so. As Shadrach Meshach, and Abed-nego said to Nebuchadnezzar, so will true believers say to the world: "We will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

Now, if you can refuse to sin, if you can refuse even to parley with iniquity, it is well with you. If you stand out for truth and righteousness, your conscience will approve your position, and this in itself is no small comfort. It will be an ennobling thing for your manhood to have proved its strength, and it will tend to make it stronger. Your course of resolute right will be acceptable with God, and this also is an exceeding great reward. I had rather please the Lord than win the applause of all the angels in heaven and all the princes on earth. In that day, when the blessed and only Potentate shall distribute crowns and palms to the faithful, it will be the height of bliss to hear him say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Peradventure some of you may say, "We will not bow before the gods of the world, but we will worship God only: we will follow Christ, and none beside." This is a brave resolve: you will never regret it if you stand to it even to the end.

We are glad to hear you speak thus; but is it true? "Is it true?" These words I shall take by themselves, and set them on fire. No question can be more necessary or more searching than "Is it true?" It is very well to

profess, but “Is it true?” It is very fine to promise and vow, but “Is it true?” It is a bold thing to talk of defying Nebuchadnezzar and his fiery furnace, but “Is it true?” Sceptics question your declaration with a sarcastic sneer; sinners question it with an open unbelief; and saints question it with deep anxiety to have you sincere. From many sides comes the query, “Is it true?” It must be asked, it will be asked, it ought to be asked, and therefore I ask it, “Is it true?”

### **I.** Follower of Christ, BE READY FOR THE QUESTION, “IS IT TRUE?”

Do not reckon to live unnoticed, for a fierce light beats about every Christian. You will be sure to meet with some one or other whom you respect or fear, who will demand of you, “Is it true?” Nebuchadnezzar was a great personage to these three holy men: he was their despotic lord, their employer, their influential friend. In his hands rested their liberties and their lives. He was, moreover, their benefactor, for he had set them in high office in his empire. All hope of further promotion lay with him, and if they would prosper and rise in the world they must earn his smile. Many young Christians are tried with this temptation. Many worldly advantages may be gained by currying favor with certain ungodly men who are like little Nebuchadnezzars; and this is a great peril. They are bidden to do wrong by one who is their superior, their employer, their patron. Now comes the test. Will they endure the trial hour? They say that they can endure it, but is it true? Let my hearers stand prepared for such an ordeal, for in all probability it will come. Some Nebuchadnezzar will put it to you pretty plainly — “Will you do as I wish you, or will you obey God?” At such a time I pray that you may answer in the right manner without a second thought; and so prove that your love to God is true.

Nebuchadnezzar spoke in peremptory tones, as if he could not believe that any mortal upon the earth could have the presumption to dispute his will. He cannot conceive that one employed under his patronage will dare to resist his bidding: he demands indignantly, “Is it true?” He will not believe it! He must have been misinformed! Can there exist a being in all his wide dominions who can have the impudence to think for himself, or the audacity to insinuate that it can be wrong to do what Nebuchadnezzar commands? He will not believe it. It is condescension on his part even to ask, “Is it true?” You will meet with persons so accustomed to be obeyed that they think it hard that you do not hasten to carry out their wishes. The infidel father says to his boy, “John, is it true that you go to a place of

worship against my wishes? How dare you set up to be better than your father and mother?" Often ungodly men profess that they do not believe in the conversion of their fellow workmen. Is it true, John, that you have become religious? A pretty fellow! Why, you used to sing a jolly song as well as other people, and now you whine out a psalm like other canting hypocrites. Is it true? Why, you could empty a glass and follow pretty games, like the rest of us; and now you profess to be afraid of doing wrong. Is it true? Are you really such a fool? You seem almost afraid to put one foot before another for fear you should be hauled over the coals. Are you really the same fellow who could once drink and swear? "Is it true?" They insinuate that you are off your head, that your wits have gone wool-gathering, and that you are the dupe of fanatics. I do not see the sense of such suggestions, but I suppose they do. In one form or other they put to you the question, "Is it true? Can you really be of this opinion, and do you really intend to carry it out?" Beloved brethren and sisters, I want you to be ready for this assault, and ready to answer without hesitation: "It is most certainly true."

You will not be able to go through life without being discovered: a lighted candle cannot be hid. There is a feeling among some good people that it will be wise to be very reticent, and hide their light under a bushel. They intend to lie low all the war time, and come out when the palms are being distributed. They hope to travel to heaven by the back lanes, and skulk into glory in disguise. Ah me, what a degenerate set! How was it Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came up to the front when the king's command was given? They could not consistently keep back. They were public men, set over provinces, and it was needful that they should set an example. They had been summoned with the rest of the rulers to attend the great ceremony, and their course of action upon this public occasion would be a guide to all other Jews in the Babylonian dominions. It would not have been enough for them to stop at home and send in the excuse that they were not well, or were called elsewhere upon urgent business. Others might do this and not be blamed, but these leaders could not shun the conflict. They must try the question between the living God and the golden idol. They must not only abstain from idolatry, but they must bear their public protest against it, or else they would be unfaithful to their Lord. Rest assured, my fellow Christians, that at some period or other, in the most quiet lives, there will come a moment for open decision. Days will come when we must speak out or prove traitors to our Lord and to his

truth. Perhaps you have fallen among godly people, and so you have gone on quietly for a time; but look for storms. If you live with worldlings, perhaps they have not yet suspected you, because of your exceeding closeness of disposition; but your secret will be discovered. You cannot long hold fire in the hollow of your hand, or keep a candle under the bed. Godliness, like murder, will out. You will not always be able to travel to heaven incog. In every house there comes a time when each person of the family has to take sides, and acknowledge to whom he belongs. The most timid wife, or the most unassuming child, will be compelled to say, "I also am Christ's disciple." Be ready at once to answer the question, "Is it true?"

To be fully prepared to answer the enquiry of opposers, act upon sound reasons. Be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. Be able to show why you are a believer in God, why you worship the Lord Jesus Christ, why you trust in his atoning sacrifice, and why you make him the regulator of your life. Show why you cannot do what others do: why, being a child of God, your nature is changed, and you have no wish to do that which you once delighted to do in the days of your unregeneracy. Ask the Lord to help you to go to work with Bible reasons at your fingers' ends; for these are the best of reasons, and bear a high authority about them; so that when the question is put to you, "Is it true?" you may be able to say, "Yes, it is true, and this is why it is true. At such a time God revealed himself to me in his grace, and opened my blind eyes to see things in a true light. He renewed my nature when he delivered me from the burden of sin; he made me to be a child of God when I found peace through his name; and because of all this I cannot grieve my loving Lord by living in sin. I am not my own, I am bought with a price, and therefore I must do the will of him that redeemed me with his own blood." I am sure that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego would never have stood out against the imperious monarch as they did, if they had not known their bearings and well understood why it was that Jehovah alone is to be worshipped as God. When the mind is established, the heart is more likely to be firm. Know your duty and the arguments for it, and you are the more likely to be steadfast in the hour of temptation. These three men were instructed men, well trained in the law of the Lord, and therefore they stood fast where the more ignorant and uninstructed yielded at once.

Next, take care that you always proceed with deep sincerity. Superficial profession soon ends in thorough apostasy. Only heart-work will stand the fire. Never let your speech outrun your heart. Do not profess to be more

than you really are. Remember, all your professions will have to be tested, and the question will be made a burning one for you: "Is it true?" Mind that it is true, all true, thoroughly true. Alas! my friends, how much there is of praying, and singing, and teaching, and preaching, which is not real work! How much there is of Christian thought — ay, and what we call "experience," which is not true to the person who talks of having thought and experienced it! How much of external religion is fiction, fluff, form, foam! What is needed is solid reality. We want a religion which will bear us up under the heaviest burdens, and make us patient under the sharpest pains. We need a religion which we can die with. It is a most blessed thing to be able to face death every day like the apostle who said, "I die daily;" by this daily education we shall learn how to die gloriously at the last. Put yourself through your paces, and do not believe that your religion is worth a penny unless it will bear death, judgment, and the eternal world.

God grant us to be true in our first repentance, and very thorough in it; and as we begin so may we go on, not borrowing our religion and using it at second-hand, but with personal sincerity making every truth our own. We need that the revelation of God should be a revelation to us: that repentance, faith, hope, love, holiness should be our own private possessions, our own inheritance. Then when the question comes, "Is it true?" we shall promptly answer before the living God, "It is true. O thou heart-searching Lord, thou knowest that I love thee!"

This being done, accustom yourself to act with solemn determination before God on every matter which concerns morals and religion. Many very decent people are not self-contained, but are dependent upon the assistance of others. They are like the houses which our London builders run up so quickly in long rows: if they did not help to keep each other up they would all tumble down at once, for no one of them could stand alone. How much there is of joint-stock-company religion, wherein hypocrites and formalists keep each other in countenance. Where things are not quite so bad as this, yet there is too little personal establishment in the faith. So many people have a "lean-to" religion. If their minister, or some other leading person were taken away, their back wall would be gone, and they would come to the ground. In some cases the wife and mother, or the husband and father, or the friend and teacher, constitute the main support of the individual's religion: he leans upon others, and if these fail him there is an end of his hope. Friends, this sort of religion will not do: you cannot all your life long have these good people to be your supporters, and if you

could have them in life they must be separated from you by death. It is a safe thing for every Christian man to be habituated to judge for himself as to what is right, and then to adhere to it whether others do so or not. We have need nowadays to set our face as a flint against sin and error. We must purpose in our own heart what we will do, and then stand to our purpose. Happy he who dares to be in the right with two or three. Happier still is he who will stand in the right, even if the choice two or three should quit it. He who can stand alone is a man indeed: every man of God should be such. Athanasius contra mundum is a grand figure. Against the whole world Athanasius proclaimed the godhead of Christ, and he won the day. If you will not go to the world, the world will have one day to come to you.

Once more, dear friends, when your determination is formed act in the light of eternity. Do not judge the situation by the king's threat and by the heat of the burning fiery furnace, but by the everlasting God and the eternal life which awaits you. Let not flute, harp, and sackbut fascinate you, but hearken to the music of the glorified. Men frown at you, but you can see God smiling on you, and so you are not moved. It may be that you will be unable to grow rich in your trade if you are honest; but in the light of eternity you will gladly forego the luxuries of wealth to keep a clear conscience. It may be that you will be discharged from your situation unless you can wink at wrong and be the instrument of injustice. Be content to lose place rather than to lose peace. These three holy men took the burning fiery furnace into their account, and yet they cast the balance in favor of fidelity to God. Brethren, have an eye for the endless future. Never forget heaven and hell, and that sublime gathering around the great white throne when you and I shall be of the company.

Now I am sure that these good men believed in immortality, or they would never have dared the violence of the flames. The martyrs, when they went to the stake, were great fools unless they believed that they should live for ever, and that in the great hereafter they would find a divine recompense for the torments they were about to suffer. If in this life only they had hope they were certainly poor economists. Believing in the glory of that word, "Well done, good and faithful servants," and weighing eternity as against time, and life at the right hand of God as against a cruel death, the martyrs felt that the eternal was by far the weightier matter, and so they went to prison and to death without a question. These brave men dared the rage of an infuriated tyrant because they saw him who is invisible, and had respect unto the recompense of the reward. You also must come to live a great

deal in the future, or else you will miss the chief fountain of holy strength. If you are living for this life you will soon sell your souls for so many pieces of silver: but if you project yourselves into eternity and live the life eternal, no bribe will lure you from the ways of righteousness. If your ears can hear by anticipation the thunder of that sentence, "Depart, ye cursed," you will not dare to incur it. If that sweeter sound, "Come, ye blessed," charms your ear, you will be strong in your resolve to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Yes, with eternity before you and around you, your determination will be fixed; and you will, with dauntless spirit, meet the challenge, "Is it true?"

God make us champions of his holy cause! Heroism can only be wrought in us by the Holy Ghost. Humbly yielding your whole nature to the power of the divine Sanctifier, you will be true to your Lord even to the end. At the cross-foot, with your eyes upon those blessed wounds, and your whole soul trusting in him that liveth and was dead, you will not be ashamed of your Lord, nor afraid of the consequences of obeying him.

This much upon this first head of our discourse — be ready to answer the question, "Is it true?"

**II.** But now, secondly, IF YOU CANNOT SAY THAT IT IS TRUE, WHAT THEN? If, standing before the heart-searching God at this time, you cannot say, "It is true," how should you act? If you cannot say that you take Christ's cross, and are willing to follow him at all hazards, then hearken to me and learn the truth.

Do not make a profession at all. Do not talk about baptism or the Lord's Supper, nor of joining a church, nor of being a Christian; for if you do, you will lie against your own soul. If it be not true that you renounce the world's idols, do not profess that it is so. It is unnecessary that a man should profess to be what he is not; it is a sin of supererogation, a superfluity of naughtiness. If you cannot be true to Christ, if your coward heart is recreant to your Lord, do not profess to be his disciple, I beseech you. He that is married to the world, or flinthearted, had better return to his house, for he is of no service in this war.

If you have made a profession, and yet it is not true, be honest enough to quit it; for it can never be right to keep up a fraud. A false profession is a crime, and to persevere in it is a presumptuous sin. Whatever you are, or are not, do be transparent, sincere, truthful. If there be any man here who

says in his heart, "No, I cannot suffer for truth's sake. I will follow Christ as far as it is good walking, and costs nothing; but I will not go through the mire for him;" well, then, turn back at once, for you are no true pilgrim. If you are determined not to press onward even though the way should lie through the Slough of Despond, you had better make the best of your way home to the City of Destruction; for you are not a man that God has called into this kingdom. "Strange advice," say you. Yes, but prudent advice, too. Listen to me. If any of you are ashamed of Christ, afraid of man, unwilling to be abused for Christ's sake, then, like the faint-hearted men with Gideon, it will be well for you to go home, and no longer encumber the little band of the true-hearted.

Will you, then, go back to your old ways? I am sure you will if you cannot answer the question of my text; but remember, that in so doing you will have to belie your consciences. Many of you who are not firm in your resolves yet know the right. You will never be able to get that light out of your eyes which was shone into them from God's word. You can never again sin so cheaply as others; it will be wilfulness and obstinacy in your case. I am sure that many of you will have desperate work to go to hell. You will have to ride steeple-chase over hedge and ditch to reach perdition; for the Lord has put that within you which will never let you rest in sin, or be easy in ungodliness. The Lord has taught you too much to let you be comfortable slaves of ignorance and vice. You who have tasted of the powers of the world to come are spoiled for this world; and if you are such cowards that you will not press forward for the next, you are of all men most miserable. Your consciences will dog you, and haunt you, and torment you. Dare you run the risk of being pursued by such a foe, compared with which the furies of classic fable were gentle beings?

Remember also that by yielding to the fear of man you are demeaning yourself. There shall come a day when the man that was ashamed of Christ will himself be ashamed: he will wonder where he can hide his guilty head. Look at him! There he is! The traitor who denied his Lord! The Christ was spat upon and nailed to the cross, and this man was afraid to own him. To win the smile of a silly maid, to escape the jest of a coarse fellow, to win a few pieces of silver, to stand respectable among his fellow-men, he turned his back upon his Redeemer and sold his Lord; and now what can be said for him? Who can excuse him? The angels shun him as a man who was ashamed of the Lord of glory. He is clothed with shame and everlasting contempt. Even the lost in hell get away from him, for many of them were

more honest than he. Is there such a man as this before me? I summon him in the name of the living God to answer for his cowardice! Let him come forth and own his crime, and humbly seek forgiveness at the hands of the gracious Savior.

If your avowal of faith in Jesus and opposition to sin is not true you had better withdraw it and be silent; for by a groundless presence you will dishonor the cause of God, and cause the enemy to take up a reproach against his people. If Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego had stood before Nebuchadnezzar and had made a compromise, it would have dishonored the name of the Lord. Suppose they had said, "O king, we believe in Jehovah, but we hardly know what to do in our peculiar circumstances. We desire to please thee, and we also dread the thought of the burning fiery furnace, and therefore we must yield, though it greatly grieves us." Why, they would have cast shame upon the name of Israel. O brethren, do not talk about principle, and then pocket your principles because they are unfashionable, or will cost you loss and disrepute. If you do this you will be the enemies of the King of kings. God commanded his people not to bow before graven images; but the king of Babylon commanded them to do so at once or die. Which would they obey? To whom would they render the most honor? There was the point. It would have been idle to say that they would only do it once, that it would be only a mere form, and so on; for had they bowed the knee to the graven image, they would have set Nebuchadnezzar before Jehovah. They might have pleaded that to refuse the great king was virtually to commit suicide; but they kept from such crooked reasonings. They might have argued that it was wise to save their lives, because they could be so very useful to the Israelites, and to the cause of true religion. How often have I heard this plea for remaining in an erring church, and professing to believe what is not believed! Men do evil that good may come, and after bowing in the house of Rimmon, wash their hands, and pray, "The Lord pardon thy servants in this thing." I am glad that the three holy children were not "careful to answer," or they might have fallen upon some crooked policy or lame excuse for compromise. What have we to do with consequences? It is ours to do the right, and leave results with the Lord. To do wrong cannot under any circumstances be right. For the Lord's servants to be false to their conviction is always an evil thing, a root that beareth wormwood. Yes, these men would just have cast a slur upon the living God, and upon their nation, and upon themselves had they flinched in the moment of trial. Thousands of men and women are

doing this continually. Shame upon them! They plead their own necessities, their large families, their position, their hopes of usefulness, and the examples of others: but none of these things can excuse cowardice towards God. If by doing a little wrong we could effect a great, deal of good, we should not thereby be excused. This is a common way of drugging conscience, and I beseech you be upon your guard against it; for it comes to this, that you are a better judge of what you ought to do than God is, and your judgment is superior to the law of God. Is not this high presumption? Does it not also suggest itself to you that some would serve God if it did not pay better to serve the devil? And is not this Judas Iscariot over again, the son of perdition reproduced?

I want you to remember also that if you renounce Christ, if you quit him in obedience to the world's commands, you are renouncing eternal life and everlasting bliss. You may think little of that to-night, because of your present madness; but you will think differently before long. Soon you may lie on a sick bed gazing into eternity, and then your estimate of most things will undergo a great change. I know what that solemn outlook means, for I have been called several times to lie in spirit upon the brink of eternity, and I can assure you it is no child's play. The solemn article, the judgment, the declaration of destiny, these are not little. It requires all the faith a man can summon to enable him to look forward, calmly and intelligently, to that great day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. Come, my hearers, look to the eternity which awaits you. I charge you, remember that if you take the mess of pottage and barter away your birthright, you will bemoan yourselves at the last. In your dying hours you may find no place for repentance though you seek it carefully with tears. In another world there will be no hope of reformation or of escape from the result of sin. In eternity you will look up from under the fierce wrath of God and see no way of escape; for you will then be too wedded to evil to be able to escape from it. In that day which shall burn as an oven, what will you say to yourself for having sold your Lord? Oh, do not for the sake of a man's frown or a woman's smile forego eternal life! If God go, all is gone. To lose your Savior is to be lost yourself. Oh, my beloved, take the roughest road rather than part company with your best friend.

The question is a very solemn one, — “Is it true?” and if it is not true, I still stick to my advice; do not say that it is so, do not add to all your other sins a lying profession, but act in all honesty as you stand before God.

**III.** But now, thirdly, let us consider what follows IF IT BE TRUE. I hope that many here can lay their hands upon their hearts, and quietly say, “Yes, it is true; we are determined not to bow before sin, come what may.” Well, then, if it is true, I have this much to say to you: dear brother, state this when it is demanded of you. Declare your resolve. This will strengthen it in yourself and be the means of supporting it in others. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego spoke out in the presence of the furious king. Perhaps they might have taken means to hide themselves from the ordeal; but they judged it to be their duty to come forward and take the consequences, and there they were. This word is meant for certain Christian people who come in and out of this house, and join with us in public worship, but have never openly avowed themselves to be disciples of the Lord Jesus. Whenever we gather to the remembrance of our dying Lord, they either take their seats among the onlookers, or else they go home. This raises many anxious thoughts in our minds. Specially we are exercised with this question — these people have a faith which they refuse to acknowledge, will such a faith save them? Scripture evidently lays great stress upon obedience to the Lord, and taking up his cross and following him. Will Jesus save those who will not come out and bear his reproach? He claims of all his followers that they follow him in the daylight. It is written: “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” He bade us preach this as his gospel: “He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.” These are not words of mine, but of the Lord Jesus himself: take heed unto yourselves that ye do not slight them. I dare not leave out part of his gospel command when I am preaching it. If you believe in the Lord Jesus stand forth on his side. Why are you slow to do so? I compared on the other day to a rat behind the wainscot, which only comes out at night when the candles are put out, and there are crumbs to be picked up. Too many Christians attempt to live in that style. Dare I call them Christians? Do not be such miserable creatures, but quit yourselves like men. Tremble lest ye perish among “the fearful and unbelieving.” Join with me, I pray you, in singing: —

*“I’m not ashamed to own my Lord,  
Or to defend his cause;  
Maintain the honor of his word,  
The glory of his cross.”*

There are many dear children in this place, both boys and girls, who have not been ashamed in their early days to come forward and confess the Lord Jesus Christ. God bless the dear children! I rejoice in them. I am sure that the church will never have to be ashamed of having admitted them. They, at least, show no cowardice: they take a solemn delight in being numbered with the people of God, and count it an honor to be associated with Christ and his church. Shame on you older ones who still hold back! What ails you, that babes and sucklings are braver than you? By the love you bear to Christ, I charge you — come forth and confess his name among this evil and perverse generation.

Is it true? Then joyfully accept the trial which comes of it. Shrink not from the flames. Settle it in your minds that, by divine grace, no loss, nor cross, nor shame, nor suffering, shall make you play the coward. Say, like the holy children, “We are not careful to answer thee in this matter.” They did not cringe before the king, and cry, “We beseech thee, do not throw us into the fiery furnace. Let us have a consultation with thee, O king, that we may arrange terms. There may be some method by which we can please thee, and yet keep our religion.” No; they said, “We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” Dear friends, let us be ready to suffer for Christ’s sake. Some will say, “Do not be imprudent.” It is always prudent to do your duty. We have not enough nowadays of the virtue nicknamed imprudence. I would like to see a display of old-fashioned imprudence in these cold, calculating, selfish days. Oh for the days of zeal, the days when men counted not their lives dear to them that they might win Christ! Men sit down and reckon up what it will cost them to do right, and weigh their conduct as a matter of profit and loss, and then they call such wicked calculations prudence. It is sheer selfishness. Do right, if it cost you your life. Where would England have been if the men who won our liberties in former ages had chaffered with the world for gain? If they had saved their skins they would have lost their souls, and ruined the cause of God in England. He loves not Christ who does not love him more than all things. Oh for men of principle, who know no loss but loss of faith, and desire no gain save the glory of God! Be this your cry —

*“Through floods or flames, if Jesus lead,  
I’ll follow where he goes.”*

You may lose a great deal for Christ, but you will never lose anything by Christ. You may lose for time, but you will gain for eternity: the loss is transient, but the gain is everlasting. You will be a gainer by Christ, even if you have to go to heaven by the way of persecution poverty, and slander. Never mind the way: the end will make full amends. The treasures of Egypt are mere dross compared with the riches of endless bliss.

If it be true that you are willing thus to follow Christ, reckon upon deliverance. Nebuchadnezzar may put you into the fire, but he cannot keep you there, nor can he make the fire burn you. The enemy casts you in bound, but the fire will loosen your bonds, and you will walk at liberty amid the glowing coals. You shall gain by your losses, you shall rise by your down-castings. Many prosperous men owe their present position to the fact that they were faithful when they were in humble employments. They were honest, and for the moment they displeased their employers, and in the end earned their esteem. When Adam Clarke was put out apprentice, and his master showed him how to stretch the cloth when it was a little short, Adam could not find in his heart to do it. Such a fool of a boy must be sent home to his mother; and his godly mother was glad that her boy was such a fool that he could not stoop to a dishonest trick. You know what he became. He might have missed his way in life if he had not been true to his principles in his youth. Your first loss may be a lifelong gain. Dear young fellow, you may be turned out of your situation, but the Lord will turn the curse into a blessing. If all should go softly with you, you might decline in character, and by doing a little wrong learn to do yet more and more, and so lose your integrity, and with it all hope of ever lifting your nose from the grindstone. Do right for Christ’s sake, without considering any consequences, and the consequences will be right enough. If you take care of God’s cause God will take care of you. Rest assured that uprightness will be your preservation, and not your destruction. It will be your highest wisdom to let all things go, that you may hold fast your integrity, and honor the name of the Lord.

Lastly — and this is a consideration not to be forgotten — if you will stand up for Jesus, and the right, and the true, and the pure, and the temperate, and the good, not only will you be delivered, but you will do great good. This Nebuchadnezzar was a poor piece of goods; yet he was compelled to

acknowledge the power of these three decided and holy men. They were thrown into the furnace, and they came out of it; and what said Nebuchadnezzar? Just now it was, "The image that I have set up," and now he declares that no man shall speak a word against the God of Israel on pain of being cut in pieces. There is no having influence over the great men, or the little men of this age, except by being firm in your principles, and decided in what you do. If you yield an inch you are beaten; but if you will not yield — no, not the splitting of a hair — they will respect you. The man who can hide his principles, and conceal his beliefs, and do a little wrong, is a nobody. He is a chip in the porridge: he will flavour nothing. But he who does what he believes to be right, and cannot be driven from it — that is the man. You cannot shake the world if you let the world shake you; but when the world finds that you have grit in you, they will let you alone. Nebuchadnezzar was obliged to feel the influence of these men, and even so, the most wicked and the most proud feel the force of the true-hearted, the brave, and the good. For this let us pray God to give us new hearts and right spirits. For this let us cling to the blessed cross of Christ, and yield ourselves up to the power of the blood and water which flowed from his wounded side. So shall our lives be powerful: if not illustrious in the eyes of men, they shall be acceptable in the eyes of God.