

"And his flesh came unto him like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." This is the Gospel. Will you try it? Now after all that we have said to-night, and after all the comings and goings between some of us here and religion, and the preachers of Christ's religion, will you do, my friend, what you never did before? Will you humble yourself simply to believe? The Gospel will never prove its power in anybody as long as he criticizes, and as long as he questions. The Gospel is for believing; the Gospel is for receiving. "Oh, taste and see that God is good: blessed is the man who trusteth in Him." At last Naaman is a sadder and a wiser man. He is kindly spoken to by his servant. Naaman had his good points about him. But after all, you see, there was the leprosy. There was no arguing against that. There was this sentence of death eating into him. So with you, man, you are dying while you are criticizing; hell opens its mouth to receive you while you are criticizing; hell opens its mouth to receive you while you are quibbling and wanting another gospel to suit you. Do not forget that. It does not become beggars to be choosers; and you are an absolute beggar at heaven's gate—an absolute dependant upon God's bounty: and when it is offered to you, it ill becomes you to adopt the sneer or the angry tone which you do adopt. Let us cease to-night from all such superfluity of haughtiness, and in simplicity, like the poor dying lepers that we are, let us receive salvation through Jesus Christ, through His atonement.

That dark, muddy Jordan was not a nice stream. It was really a very poor river from an artistic point of view; but it was in Israel, it was an Israelitish river; and away to it Naaman must go, great man and all as he was. And he went. He swallowed down his pride. He very likely said to himself, "Well, that servant of mine is true; he's right: I am a leper, and of course I am dying, and after all, I may as well try it. It would be a pity to come all this distance, with all these jingling horses and chariots, and go home, and admit that I had come on a fool's errand; and maybe there is something in it." And he went down. He stooped to conquer, and he conquered by stooping; he gave in to God, and he won. For a time he seemed to be no better, only much wetter. But, dipping seven times, when he came up the seventh time he had left his leprosy in the last plunge. The flesh came to him as with that leper in the New Testament to whom Christ said, "Be thou made clean, and immediately he was made whole." As the poet says:

"And the dry palms grew moist,
And the blood coursed with delicious coolness through his veins;
And on his brow the dewy softness of an infant stole,
His leprosy was cleansed, and he fell down—
At Jesus' feet and worshipped Him."

That is the Gospel for lepers, Old Testament or New.

I am sorry, in one way, that my time is up: but I do trust that, although our time is up, we had have had sufficient time to see the cleansing fountain, and that all of us here, ere we go hence, are, in absolute abject simplicity, plunging into it.

"There is a fountain filled with blood."

Not long ago that hymn was severely objected to, and scornfully criticised. It was said that this was a religion of gore and of the shambles, unfit for ears intellectual and polite. Still let me preach it. If it angers you at first, that may be just the road to your salvation.

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

I trust I have read a book or two. I hope I know a little about philosophy. I trust I know a little about science. I went for eight winters to a college and a divinity hall, and I was lectured and taught by the most cultured and eminent men of the day. But if to-morrow I am upon my deathbed, and if you want to come and give me a parting word, come, and I will tell you before you come what you may say. Do not mention this nineteenth century; do not mention these new gospels, which are no gospels. If you have no word, and if you have no text, that old hymn that I have quoted will do, and especially the verse that I am going to quote now:

"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away."

Ah, my lad, you may despise this old Gospel, but your mother died rejoicing in it. So did your father; and if you are ever to see them and meet with them; if you are ever to sit down with the truly refined people, you must be washed in the blood of the Lamb. May the Lord, the Spirit, graciously plead His own cause, and ere we go hence, may all of us come to the simplicity of faith in Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification!