

*Minister.*—You evidently ask "*amiss*."

*Sick man.*—I know that I endeavour to ask aright. Am I to understand now that really the VERY FIRST step is to be taught to ask aright, for the Spirit's aid, to savingly believe.

*Minister.*—If you are *properly in earnest* you cannot but ask aright.

*Sick man.*—Is it then the VERY FIRST STEP to be made "*PROPERLY IN EARNEST*?" If I am not, as you appear to think, sufficiently in earnest for the blessings asked, I am *intensely* in earnest to be made adequately in earnest to ask aright for the Holy Spirit's aid in order to savingly believe.

*Minister.*—I cannot, I see, do you any good, so I will bid you good bye.

*Sick man.*—When you were ordained to the ministry, you made a solemn declaration that you were "*called of God*," and "*wo*" to you if you "*preached not the gospel*." This "*good news*" which you were thus commissioned from on high to proclaim, required, of course, attentive hearers in order that the contemplated results might flow from it, hearers who were willing to "*accept*" of the proffered salvation, on the terms offered. I profess to be intensely just such a hearer, and therefore ought not to be thus left by you, until you felt assured that I "*who was once blind*" did "*now see*," or else you should frankly acknowledge that the means at your disposal or the influence under your control were inadequate for the emergency. I know of no minister more able and willing than yourself "*to preach the gospel*" to me, yet the result does not follow. Do not, I pray, keep me in this painful suspense any longer. Am I to give up in despair? If you have not done all that it is in your power to do, you are acting very unkindly towards me. If you accuse me of "*not giving heed*" to the best of my ability, you do me a cruel injustice, and if you say that the reason lies not with God, yourself, or myself, you tantalise me almost beyond endurance. From my inmost soul I repeat my question, "*What must I do to be saved*?"

*Minister.*—I have said and done all I can, and really see nothing for it but that you patiently wait till God shall see fit to "*reveal Himself*" to you by "*shining on you with the light of His reconciled countenance*," which I trust He will soon do.

*Sick man.*—That is just my own view of the case. What else can I think! The words "*strive*" and "*diligently seek*" seem to imply as much. But this is so *diametrically opposite* to your vehement pulpit demands for "*every one*"

"*now*" to believe. "*He that is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever*," say you, "*is waiting to be gracious*." "*To-morrow*" "*may be too late*," "*Enter while there is room*," "*All things are now ready*." Tell me, can you say all this in the pulpit without any mental reservation, and then come into this room and tell me, a dying man, that I must bide God's time? Not only so, but you have often told me that "*unbelief*," in which you appear quite content to leave me for an indefinite period, is the very *essence* of sin, in magnitude swallowing up all other sins.

*Minister.*—In saying what I do in the pulpit I do not go one step beyond my divine commission, any more than the prophet Ezekiel did his, when he prophesied to "*the dry bones*." Were the prophet Ezekiel here, would you dare take him to task for prophesying as he did? He from whom I hold my commission "*cannot lie*," and He has told me to "*preach*" that "*whosoever believeth shall be saved*," and I do so, and I *know* it is true, and would suffer martyrdom sooner than deny it.

*Sick man.*—Oh, how wearied I am in stating and re-stating that I believe as firmly as you possibly can, that all "*believers*" will assuredly be saved. Why do you so repeatedly contend for a truth admitted? *How am I to become such a "believer"?* is the question of questions with me, in fact the ONLY question. Pardon me for saying that I fail to see in this very trite "*dry bone*" illustration either any comfort or applicability. I cannot think that it was "*the mind*" of the "*Holy Spirit*" that from this vision should be learnt the doctrine you have stated, any more than the "*two sticks*" which "*became one*" in the prophet Ezekiel's hands teaches the doctrine that the sinner and Christ become "*one*" immediately on being brought together by the minister.

If the "*dry bones*" are intended to represent the unconverted, and Ezekiel the preacher of the gospel to them, as you state, then the same results should follow the *preaching* as the *prophesying*. If this interpretation is the true one, I contend that the failure must be laid at your door, inasmuch as the "*dry bones*" were *absolutely inanimate*, but those to whom you are commanded to "*preach*" and "*teach*," *animate*. These "*dry bones*" were not commanded to "*believe*" preparatory to their arrayment into the "*exceeding great army*." At the prophet's bidding *EVERY "bone came together, bone to bone."* Had the same results followed the *prophesying* and your *preaching*, a "*few*" only of the bones would have come together, forming a queer army! This is the second time

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