

Minister.—Notwithstanding what you have said, I must bid you remember, that if you believe not what God has said of His Son, you do “*make him a liar.*”

Sick man.—I am most painfully conscious that it does appear as if I were endeavoring to “*make out a case against God.*” This makes me more reluctant to open my mind to *man* than to *God*, because He knows that it is as true that I am *without* “spiritual discernment.” As Hagar did not see “*a well of water*” until “*God opened her eyes;*” and had the child died, she could have said truthfully, “*I saw not the water whereby to save the child’s life.*” God is an “answerer of prayer;” still Paul truthfully states that he “sought the Lord thrice,” and his prayer was not answered. Was Paul by this making God a liar?

Minister.—Well, what do you want to prove by all this?

Sick man.—First, that it is not wrong or sinful to make a *truthful* statement of my feelings, notwithstanding it *appears* to clash with God’s word; and secondly, that I may be instructed by you how all these erroneous views may be thoroughly eradicated, and scriptural and proper views substituted therefor.

Minister.—How can I, when you *will not* love God or believe His word? As one has said:—

“If not saved, the blame will be on your own head. You will not believe! You will not come to Christ that He may give you life!”

Sick man.—Please, sir, do not say *will not*, for I yet again solemnly declare to you that I *cannot*. Allow me to quote Spurgeon again:

“I do not hesitate to affirm, that one of the HARDEST things for a sinner to understand is the way of salvation. It seems the plainest thing in the world. Nothing appears more easy than ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved!’ But when the sinner is led to feel himself a sinner, he finds it not so easy to understand as he thought.”

You see what bodily pain I am in now; do you think I would hesitate a moment in taking any medicine that would relieve me from it?

Minister.—No, I cannot think you would.

Sick man.—Now I again declare to you, that my anguish of soul causes far more real suffering than my pain of body.

“I desire so to be saved *from sin*, that I would give all I am and all I have, to say I am a child of God. Sir, God is my witness, I speak now what I mean, and the tear is in my eye while I say it,—If I had the whole world I would cheerfully give it up, if I might but

know I am a child of God. Yes, I would live on bread and water, and be willing to be shut in a loathsome cell till death seized my frame, if I could but call Him mine. I should have but one desire,—‘Give me Christ, or else I die.’ But if once I could say ‘My sins are forgiven,’—if I could but once say, ‘He has loved me and given Himself for me,’—I think the joy would be almost too great for my poor heart, and I should die with excess of bliss.”—*Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.*

And yet you tantalize me by saying, I *will not* relieve myself of the greater pain! It is cruel of you.

Minister.—It is out of my power to help you out of your difficulties. I cannot *make* you believe.

Sick man.—I will not stop to take objection to the word “*make.*” How *very* different is your preaching in that *chair* from what it is in the *pulpit*. In the *pulpit*, “*it is so very simple, it is only look and live,*” “*now,*” etc.; but in the *chair*, it is “*too difficult,*” “*like the wind,*” “*incomprehensible,*” etc. In the *pulpit*, it is all *persuading* to induce your hearers to become “*willing;*” in the *chair*, *willingness* is really nothing.

Minister.—Perhaps after all you are not as willing as you imagine yourself to be.

Sick man.—Supposing it were possible for me to be deceived in this respect, I am *sure* that I desire to be made willing, even if against my will. How I am perplexed to be sure! Who will deliver me from this prison-house?

Minister.—Here is a promise just suited to your case, as you have just stated it. Isaiah lxi. 1: “He hath sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”

Sick man.—I acknowledge that the “prison door” is wide open, and I would fain, with others, go out thereat into the “liberty where-with Christ makes his people free,” but I feel myself *chained to the floor of the prison*. I eagerly listen to the many kind invitations to “Come out from among them;” “Why will ye die?” etc.; and I feel confident that *I am included* in the general pressing invitation, as well as those who I see obeying it, that I for the moment forget my chains, and imagine that I have nothing to do but to walk out, when I am painfully reminded how fast I am chained to the floor! To extricate myself, I at times almost involuntarily struggle as a party who finds himself buried alive might be supposed to do, but all to no purpose. A Job’s comforter occasionally tells me that it’s

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