SINNERS UNWILLING
TO COME TO CHRIST

By
Richard Cameron

FORMALITY NOT
CHRISTIANITY

By
Robert Murray McCheyne
"And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."—John 5:40.

There were many of the Jews, as ye may see from the preceding part of this chapter, that came to Christ in the external ordinances, following the gospel, and yet the ends they had before them were not good. Therefore He upbraids them with this, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Now, I would ask you this question, What went you out to see? Came ye out to see a man, "a reed shaken with the wind?" Or came ye out to see a multitude gathered together? Or came ye out to see a minister’s deportment? Or came ye out to betray us? Well, whatever way, our Lord knows your ends, and the greatest sinner here, for ought I know, shall be welcome to come to Jesus.
Christ. He is saying, "Ye in the parish of Crawford-John, will ye come into me? Ye in the parish of Douglas, will ye come into me? Ye in the parish of Auchinleck, will ye come into me, that ye may have life? Now our Lord knows every one of your ends in coming here this day. In the words read, there are these two things observable—first, That one is a great unwillingness in Scotland this day to come to Christ. The king will not come; the council will not come; the prelates will not come, and the indulged with their favour will not come. Christ says they will not come, and the devil says they shall not come. Secondly, I observe, that they that come to Christ get life: "that ye might have life." They get a life that is worth the having. We think much of the natural life, but this life will avail us when the other is gone. Now, in speaking unto the first of these observations, I shall show you that there is a great unwillingness in sinners to come to Jesus Christ, and to make out that ye may say "What is it to come unto Christ?" Now (as I was hinting at in the lecture) as to coming unto Christ, if He were coming in pomp or grandeur as a king in a bodily shape, we would stoop down and take Him by the hand. Come, then! Oh, will ye come in a believing way to Him? In a word, will ye believe the doctrine? It is more plainly to believe and rest upon Him as He is offered to you in the gospel. I wot well, they are great fools that will not set their seal to what our Lord here says: "How long shall I stretch out my hand to a gainsaying.
people? How long shall I say unto you, Behold me! behold me!" Many a time ye have been called upon at preaching days, and on fast-days; but are there not many of you as ignorant as those that never heard of Him? In clearness of which I shall offer you these few particulars. And

(1.) **There is a great unwillingness.** Consider how great a work it is to bring men to make use of the means, yea, of the outward or external means. It is true there are very few of the sons of men but make use of some sort or form of worship, but for the powerful and effectual means that God has appointed, it is not easy to bring folk to these; it is not easy to bring people out to hear the persecuted gospel this day. There are not many free to hear preaching in the open fields. It is not easy to bring folk to read the word. I trow, the Bible is a slighted book by many. And

(2.) **There are some that are brought to the use of means; but how unconcerned are they, whether they profit by these means** or not! Folk that give way to sleep, give evidence that they are not much concerned about coming unto Christ. The clapping, or rather raking, of their eyes, says to me that they are not seriously insisting for a meeting with Christ.

(3.) **It is very hard to convince men of sin.** Many come to hear preaching and read the Bible, but those that are not convinced of sin have never come to Christ. They cannot hear them that are free in telling them their faults. It is true they will hear of sin in general, but how hard it is to get folk to particularise their sins! There is not a man amongst a thousand that will take freely and fully with sin; and to all such our Lord is saying, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life."

(4.) **Let us consider how hard a thing it is to bring a man to grief for and hatred of sin.** Some are brought to ordinances, and some to read the word, and some even to conviction of sin; but will they quit it? It is true ye may be grieved for sin; but have
ye grieved and hated yourself for your sin? Oh, if ye got but a view of the saints on Mount Zion, clothed with righteousness, even that of Christ, and a sight of the terror of God, ye would know that it is a bitter thing to depart from the living God; ye would abhor nothing like sin! Where there is so little hatred of sin it is an evidence that ye will not come to Him who is the propitiation for sin; even Him who came to be a propitiation for those that are sick and diseased with sin.

(5.) Consider how few are prevailed with to resolve and endeavour to forsake sin. There are many folk will be convinced of sin and grieved for it, but they cannot quit it. Many a man that has even paid that wicked cess will acknowledge it an evil and a sin. "Woe's me," says he, "I would they had taken thrice as much." But say to them, Will ye pay it again? They are at a stand there. And likewise they will acknowledge the indulgence is a sin, but they must not leave it. It is so sweet a cup ye must not take it from your heads, but ye must drink it if it should be your death. Many have been leprous with that, and they will become loathsome to the people of God. This says that ye are not content to come to Christ, for it is he that forsaketh sin that obtains mercy. But ye that resolve not to quit with all sin, ye but deceive yourselves. They that take not Christ to be their Prophet, Priest and King, will but put a cheat upon themselves. There are many that will say that they will take Him in all His three offices, and yet retain secret and public sins; such are a hating and loathing to themselves. Woe's me for Scotland this day, for its public sins! woe's me for ministers and professors, that are a bad example to poor ignorant people! how few in this generation will go to heaven! And woe's me to see you a generation of vipers! This was spoken by John Baptist when he saw them coming out unto the ordinances, when they had no mind to quit their old carnal
ways. Therefore he says, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" But the man that resolves to come to Christ resolves to quit houses, lands, wife, children, yea, and his own life also, if Christ call for it this day. The days were in this land when men had much zeal for Christ. They thought themselves happy to be zealous for God's name; and now we have the same opportunity that our fathers had, who put all in hazard for the doctrine, worship, discipline, and form of government of the house of God. They put themselves into the state of the quarrel to get the gospel in its purity transmitted to posterity in succeeding generations. But oh, how few men now will quit anything for Christ! Will ye not do as much as quit these things? I tell you that ere long you and these things shall be for ever parted asunder. 

(6.) *Let us consider that it is a very hard matter to bring people to quit their own right*

eousness. Any of you who have seen your own ruined and polluted estate by nature, you run to duties to get some ease; but found ye it? And yet ye have run away to another duty, thinking to find it there. There are many who think that religion consists in setting about duties, and so they have their duties for their Saviour. But I will tell you what your duties may do: they may gain you the testimony of ministers and professors, but they will never take you to heaven. They will not take you by the pit of destruction, for many will say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and done many wonderful things?" And He will say, "Depart from me, I know you not." Many will say, "Have we not preached, have we not heard, and have we not suffered many things in thy name?" But our Lord will say, "Ye trusted too much to these duties, and never saw your own righteousness to be but as filthy rags; ye took Me not for justification, sanctification, righteousness,
and all things." O Sirs, beware of your souls, and save yourselves from this untorward generation. If ye will not come to Christ, we shall be free of your blood, and if ye perish we shall not perish with you. If. We shall show unto you how it is that sinners are so unwilling to come unto Christ. "Ye will not come unto me."

(1) This proceeds or flows from blindness of mind. The understanding is darkened and the eyes and ears of the soul are stopped. Indeed, there fell a strange darkness upon man immediately after the fall, so that man could not see since that time, for the mind, the will, the understanding, the conscience, and all is gone wrong. Man then became a deaf, blind, frail creature; hence the cross of Christ is burdensome unto him, and he sits the call, and lets Christ stand still knocking at the door of the heart, until "his head be wet with the dew, and his locks with the drops of the night."

(2) It flows from the stubbornness of will. Sometimes the mind may be enlightened, but the devil draws back th' again. The Lord tells the man that must quit his sins, but the devil "Hath God said ye shall die? Ye not surely die." Oh, knew ye ever it was to have the Lord, as it were, draw at the one arm, and the devil draw at the other, so that ye were like to be in pieces betwixt the two? The man hath come to Christ hath been thus riven between the flesh and the spirit; butrow "the strong man keeps the hou and he will be saying, "I will go out of man today, but I will leave somewhat, I will return unto my house again," when he comes he brings seven of spirits worse than himself. Oh, that Lord would come this day and knock the door of your hearts. But the do perhaps may say, "You and I shall part so soon." But when Christ gives irresistible knock he must come out.
authority; He can command him immediately to come forth.

(3.) This unwillingness to come to Christ flows from the affections and desires that are all wrong directed. Oh, it is much to get a man's affections off the world! We may say to you as David said, "How long will ye love vanity and seek after leaping? Selah." How long will ye love the world which promiseth fair things, but payeth or performeth nothing but troubles and vexation of spirit?

III. The third thing I proposed was some short use of the doctrine. And

(1.) Do ye know anything of this unwillingness to come to Christ? Are there any of you here saying, "This doctrine is true that ye are telling us; ye have told me the thoughts of my heart, for there is great unwillingness in me to come to Christ?" There are some that think it as easy to believe as to take a piece of bread in their hands, or a drink out of a man's hand. Alas! ye came easily by your religion in the west of Scotland, and so comes of it. Ye have taken it up at your feet. Ye have been born with it. Others say that they have been sanctified from the womb. Indeed, John Baptist was so, but there are not many such at this day, for he was a singular and an exercised man. Ye may think of yourselves as ye will, but if ye have not some kind of a law work within you, ye will no more come to heaven than devils will do. There are some of you that have been elders, that know nothing of this law work within you. Ye are ignorant, and so cannot be tender of the glory of God and His cause. We told you of it this day fifteen days, that the Lord was in earnest with you: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me"—and ye were somewhat moved. We say that this is good indeed to be moved, but it does no good without some law work. Oh, sad to think upon the west of Scot-
or "No?" What think ye of the offer? And what fault find ye in Him? There may be some saying, "If I get or take Him, I shall get a cross also." Well, that is true, but ye will get a sweet cross. Thus we offer Him unto you in the parishes of Auchinleck, Douglas, Crawford-John, and all ye that live there about. And what say ye? Will ye take Him? Tell us what ye say, for we take instruments before these hills and mountains around us that we have offered Him unto you this day. Ye that are free of cess-pyeing, will ye take Him? Ye that are free of the bond, now tendered by the enemies, will ye accept of Him this day, when the old professors are taking offence at His way and cross? Oh, will ye cast your eyes upon Him? Angels are wondering at this offer; they stand beholding with admiration that our Lord is giving you such an offer this day. Nay, those that have gone to hell many years ago, who are now crying out in the agonies of torment may be saying, "Oh, that we had such an offer as yonder parish of Auchinleck!" Oh, come, come then unto Him, and there shall never be more of your by-pass sins; they shall be buried. But if ye will not come unto Him, "it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah" than for you. Now what say ye to me, and what shall I say to Him that sent me unto you? Shall I say, "Lord, there are some yonder saying, 'I am content to give Christ my heart, hand, house, lands, and all I have for His cause'"? Now, if ye can make a better bargain then do it. Look over to the Shawhead and these hills, and take a look of them, for they are all witnesses now and when ye are dying they shall all come before your face. We take every one of you witness against another; and will not that aggravate your sorrow when they come into your mind and conscience, saying, "We heard you invited and obtested to take Christ, and we were witnesses, and yet ye would not. And now we come in here as witnesses against you."
He is saying to you as He said to the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" And we may say with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? for thou hast the words of eternal life." Continue with Him that ye may get that which is spoken of in Luke 22:28-29: "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed me. And ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." It is true, ye that have come have many sitting on your assize today. But the time is coming that Charles Stuart and our noblemen, counsellors and persecutors, shall be brought in like those goats on His left hand. And Christ shall say, "Did ye not persecute us? Did you not spoil and plunder us? Did you not kill and banish us?" And they will be constrained to say, "Yea, Lord." "Well," says He, "go away to everlasting burning." And ye shall consent to go away from them for evermore. They laugh at you now, but ye

will in no wise cast you out. Poor vile drunkard, take Him. Swearer, adulterer, and liar, be what ye will, we give you the call and warning to come and take Him. Up-sitten professor, it is such as you He is seeking after. Our Lord cannot get entertainment amongst the Scribes and Pharisees. Well, poor thing that hast neither skill nor religion, are ye content to take Him? He speaks peace to you. "Go and sin no more." And let us not return again unto folly, and study to redeem the time because the days are evil.

(3.) First, To them that have come to Him before this time, He will have you come to Him, and draw nearer to Him than ever hitherto ye have done. Secondly, Ye that have taken Him now, do not doubt if ye will be willing and in earnest—if ye can believe, "all things are possible to him that believeth; and he that believeth not is condemned already." But we would most gladly have you believe. Thirdly, Have ye come to Him? See then that ye continue with Him.
shall laugh at them then, when His people shall “overcome them by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.” And “they loved not their lives unto the death.” Ye that have come to Him, and got anything from Him, keep it for your own good; for if it be wanting, it is not easily gotten again.

And ye that have not been willing, and ye that have not come to Him, and ye that have not been content to be made willing, ye have not come to enlist with Him. Come, however, and no more faults shall be remembered. We shall close with that word: “As ye therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”

So ye that have taken Him walk worthy of Him, and when our Lord returns to the land, they shall be the persons that shall be most eminent that abide by Him now, yea, they shall be most eminent about the throne. I doubt not but it is said in heaven this day of our late sufferers, “These are they that came through great tribulations, and have washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb.” If we had not this to look unto, oh, we might be sad, but this may bear us up in all our difficulties, distresses and afflictions. Amen.
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By Robert Murray McCheyne

"He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." Romans 2:28-29.

Formality is, perhaps, the most besetting sin of the human mind. It is found in every bosom and in every clime; it reigns triumphant in every natural mind; and it constantly tries to re-usurp the throne in the heart of every child of God. If we were to seek for proof that fallen man is "without understanding"—that he has altogether fallen from his primitive clearness and dignity of intelligence, that he has utterly lost the image of God, in knowledge, after which he was created—we would point to this one strange, irrational conceit by which more than one half the world are befooled to their eternal undoing: that God may be pleased with mere bodily prostrations and services, that it is possible to worship God with the lips, when the heart is far from him. It is against this error, the besetting error of humanity, and pre-eminently the besetting error of the Jewish mind, that Paul directs the words before us; and it is very noticeable, that he does not condescend to argue the matter. He speaks with all the decisiveness and with all the authority of one who was not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles, and he lays it down as a kind of first principle to which every man of ordinary intelligence, provided only he will soberly consider the matter, must yield his immediate assent, that "he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the
letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

In the following discourse I shall show very briefly, First, That external observances are of no avail to justify the sinner; and, Second, That external observances can never stand in the stead of sanctification to the believer.

1. External observances are of no avail to justify the sinner.

There are several refuges of lies to which the awakened soul will run, before he can be persuaded to betake himself to the righteousness of God; and in every one of them we see that he that compasses himself about with sparks of his own kindling receives only this of God's hand: to lie down in sorrow. First of all, the soul generally contents himself with slight views of the divine law, and says: "All these have I kept from my youth up;" then, when the spirituality of the law is revealed, he tries to escape by undermining the whole fabric of the law; when that will not do, he flies to his past virtues to balance accounts with his sins; and then, when that will not do either, he begins a work of self-reformation, in order to buy off the follies of youth by the sobrieties of age. Alas! how vain are all such contrivances, invented by a blinded heart, urged on by the malignant enemy of souls.

But there is another refuge of lies to which the awakened mind often betakes itself with avidity, to find peace from the whips of conscience and the scorpions of God's law; and that is, a form of godliness. He will become a religious man, and surely that will save him. His whole course of life is now changed. Before, it may be, he neglected the outward ordinances of religion. He used not to kneel by his bedside; he never used to gather his children and servants around him to pray, he never used to read the Word in secret, or in the family; he seldom went to the house of God in company with the multitude that kept holy day; he did not
eat of that bread which, to the believer, is meat indeed, nor drink of that cup which is drink indeed.

But now his whole usages are reversed, his whole course is changed. He kneels to pray even when alone; he reads the Word with periodical regularity; he even raises an altar for morning and evening sacrifice in his family; his sobered countenance is never wanting in his wonted position in the house of prayer. He looks back now to his baptism with a soothing complacency, and sits down to eat the children's bread at the table of the Lord. His friends and neighbors all observe the change. Some make a jest of it, and some make it a subject of rejoicing; but one thing is obvious, that he is an altered man; and yet it is far from obvious that he is a new man, or a justified man. All this routine of bodily exercise, if it be entered on before the man has put on the divine righteousness, is just another way of going about to establish his own righteousness, that he may not be constrained to submit to put on the righteousness of God. Nay, so utterly perverted is the understanding of the unconverted, that many men are found to persevere in such a course of bodily worship of God, while, at the same time, they persevere as diligently in some course of open or secret iniquity. Such men seem to regard external observances not only as an atonement for sins that are past, but as a price paid to purchase a license to sin in time to come. Now Paul sweeps away this refuge of lies from every soul, in these decisive words: "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

Is there any of you whom God has awakened out of the deadly slumber of the natural mind? Has he drawn aside the curtains, and made the light of truth to
fall upon your heart, revealing the true condition of your soul? Has he made you start to your feet alarmed, that you might go, and weep as you go, to seek the Lord your God? Has he made you exchange the careless smile of gaiety for the tears of anxiety, the loud laugh of folly for the cry of bitter distress about your soul? Are you asking the way to Zion with your face directed thitherward? Then take heed, I beseech you, of sitting down contented in this refuge of lies. Remember, he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; remember, no outward observances, no prayers, or church-going, or Bible-reading, can ever justify you in the sight of God.

I am quite aware that when anxiety for the soul enters in, then anxiety to attend ordinances will also enter in. Like as the stricken deer goes apart from the herd to bleed and weep alone, so the sin-stricken soul goes aside from his merry companions, to weep, and read, and pray, alone. He will desire the preached Word, and press after it more and more; but remember, he finds no peace in this change that is wrought in himself. When a man goes thirsty to the well, his thirst is not allayed merely by going there. On the contrary, it is increased every step he goes. It is by what he draws out of the well that his thirst is satisfied. And just so it is not by the mere bodily exercise of waiting on ordinances that you will ever come to peace; but by tasting Jesus in the ordinances, whose flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed.

If ever, then, you are tempted to think that you are surely safe for eternity, because you have been brought to change your treatment of the outward ordinances of religion, remember, I beseech you, the parable of the marriage feast, where many were called, many were invited to come in, but few, few were found having on the wedding garment. Many are brought within the pale of ordinances, and read and hear, it may be, with considerable
interest and anxiety about the "all things that are ready," the things of the kingdom of God; but of these many, few are persuaded to abhor their own filthy rags, and to put on the wedding garment of the Redeemer's righteousness. And these few alone shall sit still to partake of the feast, the joy of their Lord; the rest shall stand speechless, and be cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. You may read your Bible, and pray over it till you die; you, may wait on the preached Word every Sabbath-day, and sit down at every sacrament till you die; yet, if you do not find Christ in the ordinances, if he do not reveal himself to your soul in the preached Word, in the broken bread and poured-out wine, if you are not brought to cleave to him, to look to him, to believe in him, to cry out with inward adoration: "My Lord, and my God,"—"How great is his goodness! how great is his beauty!"—then the outward observance of the ordinances is all in vain to you. You have come to the well of salvation, but have gone away with the pitcher empty; and however proud and boastful you may now be of your bodily exercise, you will find in that day that it profits little, and that you will stand speechless before the King.

2. External observances can never stand in the stead of sanctification to the believer.

If it be a common thing for awakened minds to seek for peace in their external observances, to make a Christ of them, and rest in them as their means of acceptance with God, it is also a common thing for those who have been brought into Christ, and enjoy the peace of believing, to place mere external observances in the stead of growth in holiness. Every believer among you knows how fain the old heart within you would substitute the hearing of sermons, and the repeating of prayers, in the place of that faith which worketh by love, and which overcometh the world. Now, the great reason why
the believer is often tempted to do this, is, that he loves the ordinances. Unconverted souls seldom take delight in the ordinances of Christ. They see no beauty in Jesus, they see no form nor comeliness in him, they hide their faces from him. Why should you wonder, then, that they take no delight in praying to him continually, in praising him daily, in calling him blessed? Why should you wonder that the preaching of the cross is foolishness to them, that his tabernacles are not amiable in their eyes, that they forsake the assembling of themselves together? They never knew the Savior, they never loved him; how, then, should they love the memorials which he has left behind him?

When you are weeping by the chiselled monument of a departed friend, you do not wonder that the careless crowd passes by without a tear. They did not know the virtues of your departed friend; they do not know the fragrance of his memory. Just so the world cares not for the house of prayer, the sprinkled water, the broken bread, the poured-out wine; for they never knew the excellency of Jesus. But with believers it is far otherwise. You have been divinely taught your need of Jesus; and therefore you delight to hear Christ preached. You have seen the beauty of Christ crucified; and therefore you love the place where he is evidently set forth. You love the very name of Jesus; it is as ointment poured forth; therefore you could join for ever in the melody of his praises. The Sabbath-day, of which you once said: "What a weariness is it!" and "When will it be over, that we may set forth corn?" is now a "delight" and "honorable", the sweetest day of all the seven. The ordinances, which were once a dull and sickening routine, are now green pastures and waters of stillness to your soul; and surely this is a blessed change. But still you are in the body; heaven is not yet gained; Satan is hovering
near: and since he cannot destroy the work of God in your soul, therefore he tries all the more to spoil it. He cannot stem the current; therefore he tries to turn it aside. He cannot drive back God's arrow; therefore he tries to turn it wrong, and spend its strength in vain.

When he finds that you love the ordinances, and it is in vain to tempt you to forsake them, he lets you love them; ay, he helps you to love them more and more. He becomes an angel of light, he helps in the decoration of the house of God, he throws around its services a fascinating beauty, hurries you on from one house of God to another, from prayer-meetings to sermon-hearing, from sermons to sacraments. And why does he do all this? He does all this just that he may make this the whole of your sanctification, that outward ordinances may be the all in all of your religion, that in your anxiety to preserve the shell, you may let fall the kernel.

If there be one of you, then, in whose heart God has wrought the amazing change of turning you from loathing to loving his ordinances, let me beseech you to be jealous over your heart with godly jealousy. Pause, this hour, and see if, in your haste and anxious pursuit of the ordinances, you have not left the pursuit of that holiness without which the ordinances are sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. I have a message from God unto you. It is written: "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of man, but of God." He is not a Christian which is one outwardly, neither is that baptism which is merely the outward washing of the body; but he is a Christian which is one inwardly, and true baptism is that of the heart, when the heart is washed from all filthiness of the flesh and of the
spirit; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Remember, I beseech you, that the ordinances are means to an end: they are stepping-stones, by which you may arrive at a landing-place. Is your soul sitting down in the ordinances, and saying, It is enough? Are you so satisfied that you can enjoy the ordinances of Christ, that you desire no higher attainments? Remember the word that is written: "This is not your rest." Would you not say he was a foolish traveler, who should take every inn he came to for his home, who should take up his settled rest, and instead of preparing himself for a hard journeying on the morrow, should begin to take the ease and enjoyment of the house as his all? Take heed that you be not this foolish traveler. The ordinances are intended by God to be but the inns and refectories where the traveler Zion-ward, weary in well-doing, and faint in faith, may betake himself to tarry for a night, that, being refreshed with bread and wine, he may, with new alacrity, press forward on his journey home as upon eagles' wings.

Take, then, this one rule of life along with you, founded on these blessed words: "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly"—that if your outward religion is helping on your inward religion, if your hearing of Christ on the Sabbath-day makes you grow more like Christ through all the week; if the words of grace and joy which you drink in at the house of God lead your heart to love more, and your hand to do more—then, and then only, are you using the ordinances of God aright.

There is not a more miserable deceived soul in the world than that soul among you who, like Herod, hears the preached Gospel gladly, and yet, like Herod, lives in sin. You love the Sabbath-day, you love the house of God, you love to hear Christ preached in all his freeness and in all his fulness; yes, you think you could listen for ever if only Christ be the theme.
you love to sit down at sacraments, and to commemorate the death of your Lord. And is this all—is this all your holiness? Does your religion end here? Is this all that believing in Jesus has done for you? Remember, I beseech you, that the ordinances of Christ are not means of enjoyment, but means of grace; and though it is said that the travelers in the Valley of Baca dig up wells, which are filled with the rain from on high, yet it is also said: “They go from strength to strength.” Awake, then, my friends, and let it no more be said of us, that our religion is confined to the house of God and to the Sabbath-day. Let us draw water with joy from these wells, just in order that we may travel the wilderness with joy and strength, and love and hope, blessed in ourselves, and a blessing to all about us. And if we speak thus to those of you whose religion seems to go no farther than the ordinances, what shall we say to those of you who contradict the very use and end of the ordinances in your lives? Is it possible you can delight in worldliness, and vanity, and covetousness, and pride, and luxury? Is it possible that the very lips which are so ready to sing praises, or to join in prayers, are also ready to speak the words of guile, of malice, of envy, of bitterness? Awake, we beseech you; we are not ignorant of Satan’s devices. To you he has made himself an angel of light. Remember it is written: “If any among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain. Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God!”