

AROUND
the
WICKET GATE

CHARLES SPURGEON



WHITAKER
HOUSE

All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

AROUND THE WICKET GATE

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Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.

—Mark 12:34

PREFACE

Millions of people are in outlying regions, far from God and peace. For these we pray, and to these we give warning. However, just now we have to deal with a smaller company who are not far from the kingdom, but have come right up to the wicket gate which stands at the entrance to the way of life. One would think that they would hasten to enter. A free and open invitation is placed over the entrance, the porter waits to welcome them, and there is but this one way to eternal life. He that is most burdened seems the most likely to pass in and begin the heavenward journey, but what ails the other men?

This is what I want to find out. Poor fellows! They have come a long way already to get where they are. The King's highway, which they seek, is right before them. Why do they not take to the Pilgrim Road at once?

Alas! They have a great many reasons. Foolish as those reasons are, it needs a very wise man to answer them all. I cannot pretend to do so. Only the Lord Himself can remove the folly which is bound up in their hearts and lead them to take the great decisive step. Yet the Lord works by means. I have prepared this little book in the earnest hope that He may work by it to the blessed end of leading seekers to an immediate, simple trust in the Lord Jesus.

He who does not take the step of faith and so enter upon the road to heaven will perish. It will be an awful thing to die just outside the gate of life. Almost saved, but altogether lost! This is the most terrible of positions. A man just outside Noah's ark would have been drowned. A manslayer close to the wall of the city of refuge, but yet outside of it, would be slain. The man who is within a yard of Christ, and yet has not trusted Him, will be just as surely lost.

Therefore, am I in terrible earnest to get my hesitating friends over the threshold. "Come in! Come in!" is my pressing entreaty. "*Wherefore standest thou without?*" (Genesis 22:17) is my solemn question. May the Holy Spirit render my pleadings effective with many who will glance at these pages! May He cause His own Almighty power to create faith in the soul at once!

My reader, if God blesses this book to you, do the writer this favor—either lend your own copy to one who is lingering at the gate, or buy another and give it away. My great desire is that this little volume should be of service to many thousands of souls.

To God this book is dedicated, for without His grace nothing will come of anything that is written.

—*C. H. Spurgeon*

CHAPTER 1

AWAKENINGS

Great numbers of persons have no concern about eternal things. They care more about their cats and dogs than about their souls. It is a great mercy to be forced to think about ourselves, and how we stand in relationship to God and the eternal world. This is often a sign that salvation is coming to us. By nature we do not like the anxiety which spiritual concern causes us, and we try, like sluggards, to sleep again. This is great foolishness. For it is at our peril that we trifle when death is so near and judgment is so sure.

If the Lord has chosen us for eternal life, He will not let us return to our slumber. If we are sensible, we will pray that our anxiety about our souls may never come to an end until we are really and truly saved. Let us say from our hearts:

“He that suffered in my stead,
Shall my Physician be
I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comfort me.”

It would be an awful thing to go dreaming down to hell, and there to lift up our eyes with a great gulf fixed between us and heaven. It will be equally terrible to be aroused to escape from the

wrath to come, and then to shake off the warning influence and go back to our insensibility. I notice that those who overcome their convictions and continue in their sins are not so easily moved the next time. Every awakening which is thrown away leaves the soul more drowsy than before and less likely to be again stirred to holy feeling. Therefore, our hearts should be greatly troubled at the thought of getting rid of its distress in any other than the right way.

A person who had the gout was cured of it by a quack medicine, which drove the disease within, and the patient died. To be cured of distress of mind by a false hope would be a terrible business. The remedy would be worse than the disease. Better far that our tenderness of conscience should cause us long years of anguish, than that we should lose it and perish in the hardness of our hearts.

Yet awakening is not a thing to rest in, or to desire to have lengthened out month after month. If I start in a fright and find my house on fire, I do not sit down at the edge of the bed, and say to myself, "I hope I am truly awake! Indeed, I am deeply grateful that I was not left to sleep on!" No, I want to escape from threatened death, and so I hasten to the door or to the window, so that I may get out and may not perish where I am. It would be a questionable blessing to be aroused and yet not to escape from the danger.

Remember, **awakening is not salvation**. A man may know that he is lost, and yet he may never be saved. He may be made thoughtful, and yet he may die in his sins. If you find out that you are a bankrupt, the consideration of your debts will not pay them. A man may examine his wounds all year round, and they will be none the nearer being healed because he feels their sting and notes their number. It is one trick of the devil to tempt a man to be satisfied with a sense of sin, and another trick of the same deceiver to insinuate that the sinner may not be content to trust Christ, unless he can bring a certain measure of despair to add to the Savior's finished work.

Our awakenings are not to help the Savior, but to help us to the Savior. To imagine that my feeling of sin is to assist in the removal of the sin is absurd. It is as though I said that water could not cleanse my face unless I had stared longer in the mirror and had counted the smudges on my forehead. A sense of need of salvation by grace is a very healthful sign, but one needs wisdom to use it rightly and not to make an idol of it.

Some seem as if they had fallen in love with their doubts, fears, and distresses. You cannot get them away from their terrors—they seem wedded to them. It is said that the worst trouble with horses when their stables are on fire is that you cannot get them to come out of their stalls. If they would only follow your lead, they might escape the flames. But they seem to be paralyzed with fear. **The fear of the fire prevents their escaping the fire.** Reader, will your very fear of the wrath to come prevent your escaping from it? We hope not.

One who had been long in prison was not willing to come out. The door was open, but he pleaded even with tears to be allowed to stay where he had been for so long. Fond of prison? Wedded to the iron bolts and the prison fare? Surely the prisoner must have been a little touched in the head!

Are you willing to remain an awakened one and nothing more? Are you not eager to be at once forgiven? If you would tarry in anguish and dread, surely you, too, must be a little out of your mind! If peace is to be had, have it at once! Why tarry in the darkness of the pit, where your feet sink in the miry clay? There is light to be had—marvelous and heavenly light. Why lie in the gloom and die in anguish? **You do not know how near salvation is to you.** If you did, you would surely stretch out your hand and take it, for there it is.

Do not believe that great feelings of despair would better fit you for mercy. When the pilgrim, on his way to the Wicket Gate,

tumbled into the Slough of Despond, do you think that, when the foul mire of that bog stuck to his garments, it was a recommendation for him to gain him easier admission at the head of the way? It is not so. The pilgrim did not think so by any means; neither may you. **It is not what you feel that will save you, but what Jesus felt.** Even if there were some healing value in feelings, they would have to be good ones. The feeling which makes us doubt the power of Christ to save, and prevents our finding salvation in Him, is by no means a good one, but a cruel vilification of the love of Jesus.

A friend has come to see us, having traveled through crowded London by rail, tram, or omnibus. All of a sudden, he turns pale. We ask him what is the matter, and he answers, "I have lost my wallet, and it contained all the money I have in the world." He goes over the amount to a penny, and describes the checks, bills, notes, and coins. We tell him that it must be a great consolation to him to know so accurately the extent of his loss. He does not seem to see the worth of our consolation. We assure him that he ought to be grateful that he has so clear a sense of his loss, for many persons might have lost their wallets and have been quite unable to compute their losses. Our friend is not, however, cheered in the least. "No," says he, "to know my loss does not help me to recover it. Tell me where I can find my property, and you will have done me real service. But merely to know my loss is no comfort whatever."

Just so, to believe that you have sinned and that your soul is forfeited to the justice of God is a very proper thing, but it will not save. **Salvation is not by our knowing our own ruin, but by fully grasping the deliverance provided in Christ Jesus.**

A person who refuses to look to the Lord Jesus, but persists in dwelling upon his sin and ruin, reminds us of a boy who dropped a shilling down an open grating of a London sewer and lingered there for hours, finding comfort in saying, "It rolled in right there, just between those two iron bars! I saw it go right down." Poor

soul! Long might he remember the details of his loss before he would in this way get back a single penny into his pocket, with which to buy himself a piece of bread.

Now that you see the meaning of the parable, profit by it.