

FREE GRACE
NO. 233

A SERMON
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AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS

*“Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you:
be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.”
Ezekiel 36:32*

THERE are two sins of man that are bred in the bone, and that continually come out in the flesh. One is self-dependence and the other is self-exaltation. It is very hard, even for the best of men, to keep themselves from the first error. The holiest of Christians and those who understand best the Gospel of Christ, find in themselves a constant inclination to look to the power of the creature instead of looking to the power of God and the power of God alone.

Over and over again Holy Scripture has to remind us of that which we never ought to forget, that salvation is God’s work from first to last, and is not of man, neither by man. But so it is, this old error—that we are to save ourselves, or that we are to do something in the matter of salvation—always rises up, and we find ourselves continually tempted by it to step aside from the simplicity of our faith in the power of the Lord our God.

Why, even Abraham himself was not free from the great error of relying upon his own strength. God had promised to him that He would give him a son—Isaac, the child of promise. Abraham believed it, but at last, weary with waiting, he adopted the carnal expedient of taking to himself Hagar to wife, and he fancied that Ishmael would most certainly be the fulfillment of God’s promise, but instead of Ishmael’s helping to fulfill the promise, he brought sorrow unto Abraham’s heart, for God would not have it that Ishmael should dwell with Isaac. “Cast out,” said the Scripture, “the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman.”

Now we, in the matter of salvation, are apt to think that God is tarrying long in the fulfillment of His promise, and we set to work ourselves to do something and what do we do?—Sink ourselves deeper in the mire and pile up for ourselves a store of future troubles and trials. Do we not read that it grieved Abraham’s heart to send Ishmael away? Ah! and many a Christian has been grieved by those works of nature which he accomplished with the design of helping the God of grace.

Oh, beloved, we shall find ourselves very frequently attempting the foolish task of assisting Omnipotence, and teaching the Omniscient One. Instead of looking to grace alone to sanctify us, we find ourselves adopting philosophic rules and principles which we think will effect the divine work. We shall but mar it, we bring grief into our own spirits. But if, instead thereof, we in every work look up to the God of our salvation for help, and strength, and grace, and succor, then our work will proceed to our own joy and comfort, and to God’s glory.

That error then, I say is in our bone and will always dwell with us, and hence it is that the words of the text are put as an antidote against that error. It is distinctly stated in our text that salvation is of God. “Not for your sakes do I this.” He says nothing about what we have done or can do. All the preceding and all the succeeding verses speak of what God does. “I will take you from among the heathen.” “I will sprinkle clean water upon you.” “I will give you a new heart.” “I will put my Spirit within you.” It is all of God, therefore, again recall to our recollection this doctrine, and give up all dependence upon our own strength and power.

The other error to which man is very prone, is that of relying upon his own merit. Though there is no righteousness in any man, yet in every man there is a proneness to truth in some fancied merit. Strange

that it should be so, but the most reprobate characters have yet some virtue as they imagine, upon which they rely.

You will find the most abandoned drunkard pride himself that he is not a swearer. You will find the blaspheming drunkard pride himself that at least he is honest. You will find men with no other virtue in the world, exalt what they imagine to be a virtue—the fact that they do not profess to have any, and they think themselves to be extremely excellent because they have honesty or rather impudence enough to confess that they are utterly vile.

Somehow the human mind clings to human merit, it always will hold to it, and when you take away every thing upon which you think it could rely, in less than a moment it fashions some other ground for confidence out of itself. Human nature with regard to its own merit, is like the spider, it bears its support in its own bowels, and it seems as if it would keep spinning on to all eternity. You may brush down one web, but it soon forms another, you may take the thread from one place, and you find it clinging to your finger, and when you seek to brush it down with one hand you find it clinging to the other. It is hard to get rid of, it is always ready to spin its web and bind itself to some false ground of trust.

It is against all human merit that I am this morning going to speak, and I feel that I shall offend a great many people here. I am about to preach a doctrine that is gall and vinegar to flesh and blood, one that will make righteous moralists gnash their teeth, and make others go away and declare that I am an Antinomian, and perhaps scarcely fit to live. However, that consequence is one which I shall not greatly deplore, if connected with it there should be in other hearts a yielding to this glorious truth, and a giving up to the power and grace of God, who will never save us unless we are prepared to let Him have all the glory.

First, I shall endeavor to *expound at large the doctrine contained in this text*, in the next place I shall endeavor to *show its force and truthfulness*, and then in the third place I shall seek God's Holy Spirit to *apply the useful practical lessons which are to be drawn from it*.

I. I shall endeavor to EXPOUND THIS TEXT.

“Not for your sakes do I this saith the Lord GOD.” The motive for the salvation of the human race is to be found in the breast of God, and not in the character or condition of man. Two races have revolted against God—the one angelic, the other human. When a part of this angelic race revolted against the Most High, justice speedily overtook them, they were swept from their starry seats in heaven, and henceforth they have been reserved in darkness unto the great day of the wrath of God. No mercy was ever presented to them, no sacrifice ever offered for them, but they were without hope and mercy, forever consigned to the pit of eternal torment.

The human race, far inferior in order of intelligence, sinned also, and as I believe sinned as atrociously, at any rate, if the sins of manhood that we have heard of be put together and rightly weighed, I can scarcely understand how even the sins of devils could be much blacker than the sins of mankind. However, the God who in His infinite justice passed over angels, and suffered them forever to expiate their offenses in the fires of hell, was pleased to look down on man. Here was election on a grand scale, the election of manhood, and the reprobation of fallen angelhood.

What was the reason for it? The reason was in God's mind, an inscrutable reason which we do not know, and even which if we knew probably we could not understand. Had you and I been put upon the choice of which should have been spared, I do think it probable we should have chosen that fallen angels should have been saved. Are they not the brightest? have they not the greatest mental strength? If they had been redeemed would it not have glorified God more, as we judge, than the salvation of worms like ourselves?

Those bright beings—Lucifer, son of the morning, and those stars that walked in his train—if they had been washed in His redeeming blood, if they had been saved by sovereign mercy, what a song would they have lifted up to the Most High and everlasting God! But God, who does as He wills with His own, and gives no account of His matters, but who deals with His creatures as the potter deals with his clay, took not upon Him the nature of angels, but took upon Him the seed of Abraham, and chose

men to be the vessels of His mercy. This fact we know, but where is its reason? certainly not in man. “Not for your sakes do I this. O house of Israel, be ashamed and be confounded for your own ways.”

Here, very few men object. We notice that if we talk about the election of men and the non-election of fallen angels, there is not a cavil for a moment. Every man approves of Calvinism till he feels that he is the loser by it, but when it begins to touch his own bone and his own flesh then he kicks against it.

Come then, we must go further. The only reason why one man is saved, and not another, lies not, in any sense, in the man saved, but in God’s bosom. The reason why this day the Gospel is preached to you and not to the heathen far away, is not because as a race we are superior to the heathen, it is not because we deserve more at God’s hands, His choice of Britain, in the election of outward privilege, is not caused by the excellency of the British nation, but entirely because of His own mercy and His own love.

There is no reason in us why we should have the Gospel preached to us more than any other nation. Today some of us have received the Gospel, and have been changed by it, and have become the heirs of light and immortality, whereas others are left still to be the heirs of wrath. But there is no reason *in us* why we should have been taken and others left.

*“There was nothing in us to merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight.
'Twas ‘Even so, Father!’ We ever must sing,
‘Because it seem’d good in Thy sight.’”*

And now, let us review this doctrine at length. We are taught in Holy Scripture that long before this world was made, God foreknew and foresaw all the creatures He intended to fashion, and there and then He foreseeing that the human race would fall into sin, and deserve His anger, determined in His own sovereign mind, that an immense portion of the human race should be His children and should be brought to heaven. As to the rest, He left them to their own deserts, to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind, to scatter crime and inherit punishment.

Now, in the great decree of election, the only reason why God selected the vessels of mercy must have been because He would do it. There was nothing in any one of them which caused God to choose them. We all were alike, all lost, all ruined by the fall, all without the slightest claim upon His mercy, all, in fact, deserving His utmost vengeance. His choice of any one, and His choice of all His people, was causeless, so far as anything in them was concerned. It was the effect of His sovereign will, and of nothing which they did, could do, or even would do, for thus saith the text, “Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel!”

As for the fruit of our election, in due time Christ came into this world and purchased with His blood all those whom the Father has chosen. Now come you to the cross of Christ, bring this doctrine with you, and remember that the only reason why Christ gave up His life to be a ransom for His sheep was because He loved His people, but there was nothing in His people that made Him die for them.

I was thinking as I came here this morning, if any man should imagine that the love of God to us was caused by anything in us, it would be as if a man should look into a well to find the springs of the ocean, or dig into an anthill to find an Alp. The love of God is so immense, so boundless and so infinite, that you cannot conceive for a moment that it could have been caused by anything in us.

The little good that is in us—the no good that is in us—for there is none, could not have caused the boundless, bottomless, shoreless, summitless love, which God manifests to His people. Stand at the foot of the cross, you merit-mongers, you that delight in your own works, and answer this question. Do you think that the Lord of life and glory could have been brought down from heaven, could have been fashioned like a man, and have been led to die through any merit of yours? Shall these sacred veins be opened with any lancet less sharp than His own infinite love?

Do you conceive that your poor merits, such as they are, could be so efficacious as to nail the Redeemer to the tree, and make Him bend His shoulders beneath the enormous load of the world’s guilt?

You cannot imagine it. The consequence is so great compared with what you suppose to be the case, that your logic fails in a moment.

You may conceive that a coral insect rears a rock by its multitude, and by its many years of working, but you cannot conceive that all the accumulated merits of manhood, if there were such things, could have brought the Eternal from the throne of His majesty, and bowed Him to the death of the cross, that is a thing as clearly impossible to any thoughtful mind, as impossibility can be. No, from the cross comes the cry—"Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel."

After Christ's death, there comes in the next place, the work of the Holy Spirit. Those whom the Father has chosen, and whom the Son has redeemed, in due time the Holy Spirit calls "out of darkness into marvelous light."

Now, the calling of the Holy Spirit is without any regard to any merit in us. If this day the Holy Spirit shall call out of this congregation a hundred men, and bring them out of their estate of sin into a state of righteousness, you shall bring these hundred men and let them march in review, and if you could read their hearts, you would be compelled to say, "I see no reason why the Spirit of God should have operated upon these. I see nothing whatever that could have merited such grace as this—nothing that could have caused the operations and motions of the Spirit to work in these men."

For look you here. By nature, men are said to be dead in sin. If the Holy Spirit quickens, it cannot be because of any power in the dead men, or any merit in them, for they are dead, corrupt and rotten in the grave of their sin. If then, the Holy Spirit says, "Come forth and live," it is not because of anything in the dry bones, it must be for some reason in His own mind, but not in us.

Therefore, know you this, brethren, that we all stand upon a level. We have none of us, anything that can recommend us to God, and if the Spirit shall choose to operate in our hearts unto salvation, He must be moved to do it by His own supreme love, for He cannot be moved to do it by any good will, good desire, or good deed, that dwell in us by nature.

To go a little further, this truth, which holds good so far, holds good all the way. God's people, after they are called by grace, are preserved in Christ Jesus, they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," they are not suffered to sin away their eternal inheritance, but as temptations arise they have strength given with which to encounter them, and as sin blackens them they are washed afresh, and again cleansed.

But mark, the reason why God keeps His people is the same as that which made them His people—His own free sovereign grace. If, my brother, you have been delivered in the hour of temptation, pause and remember that you were not delivered for your own sake. There was nothing in you that deserved the deliverance. If you have been fed and supplied in your hour of need, it is not because you have been a faithful servant of God, or because you have been a prayerful Christian, it is simply and only because of God's mercy.

He is not moved to anything He does for you by anything that you do for Him, His motive for blessing you lies wholly and entirely in the depths of His own bosom. Blessed be God, His people shall be kept.

*"Nor death, nor hell shall e'er remove
His favorites from His breast;
In the dear bosom of His love
They must forever rest."*

But why? Because they are holy? Because they are sanctified? Because they serve God with good works? No, but because He in His sovereign grace has loved them, does love them, and will love them, even to the end.

And to conclude my exposition of this Text. This shall hold good in heaven itself. The day is coming when every blood-bought, blood-washed child of God shall walk the golden streets arrayed in white.

Our hands shall soon bear the palm, our ears shall be delighted with celestial melodies, and our eyes filled with the transporting visions of God's glory.

But mark, the only reason why God shall bring us to heaven shall be His own love, and not because we deserved it. We must fight the fight, but we do not win the victory because we fight it, we must labor, but the wage at the days' end shall be a wage of grace and not a debt. We must honor God here, looking for the recompense of the reward, but that recompense will not be given on a legal ground because we merited it, but given to us entirely because God had loved us, for no reason that was in us.

When you and I and each of us shall enter heaven, our song shall be, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory," and that shall be true, it shall not be a mere exaggeration of gratitude. It shall be true, we shall be compelled to sing it because we could not sing anything else. We shall feel that we did nothing, and that we were nothing, but that God did it all—that we had nothing in us to be the motive of His doing it, but that His motive lay in Himself, therefore unto Him shall be every particle of the honor forever and forever.

Now this, I take it, is the meaning of the text, distasteful it is to the great majority, even of professing Christians in this age. It is a doctrine that requires a great deal of salt, or else few people will receive it. It is very unsavory to them. However, there it stands. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." His truth we must preach, and this we must proclaim. Salvation is "not of men, neither by man; not of the will of the flesh, nor of blood," nor of birth, but of the sovereign will of God, and God alone.

II. And now, in the second place, I have to ILLUSTRATE AND ENFORCE THIS TEXT.

Consider a moment man's character. It will humble us, and it will tend to confirm this truth in our minds. Let me take an illustration. I will consider man as a criminal. He certainly is such in the sight of God, and I shall not slander him. Suppose now that some great criminal is at last overtaken in his sin, and shut up in Newgate. He has committed high treason, murder, rebellion, and every possible iniquity. He has broken all the laws of the realm—every one of them.

The public cry is everywhere—"This man must die, the laws cannot be maintained unless he shall be made an example of their rigor. He who bears not the sword in vain must this time let the sword taste blood. The man must die, he richly deserves it!"

You look through his character, you cannot see one solitary redeeming trait. He is an old offender, he has so long persevered in his iniquity that you are compelled to say, "The case is hopeless with this man, his crimes have such aggravation we cannot make an apology for him, even should we try. Not Jesuitical cunning itself could devise any pretense of excuse, or any hope of a plea for this abandoned wretch, let him die!"

Now, if Her Majesty the Queen, having in her hands the sovereign power of life and death, chooses that this man shall not die, but that he shall be spared, do you not see as plain as daylight that the only reason that can move her to spare that man must be her own love, her own compassion? For as I have supposed already that there is nothing in that man's character that can be a plea for mercy, but that, contrariwise, his whole character cries aloud for vengeance against his sin. Whether we like it or not, this is just the truth concerning ourselves. This is just our character and position before God.

Ah! my hearer, you may turn upon your heel, disgusted and offended, but there are some here who feel it to be solemnly true in their own experience, and they will therefore drink in the doctrine, for it is the only way whereby they can be saved.

My hearer, your conscience perhaps is telling you this morning that you have sinned so heinously that there is not an inlet for a solitary ray of hope in your character. You have added to your sins this great one, that you have rebelled against the Most High wantonly and wickedly. If you have not committed all the sins in the calendar of crime, it has been because providence has stayed your hand. Your heart has been black enough for it all. You feel the vileness of your imagination, and desires has achieved the consummation of human guilt, and further you could not go. Your sins have prevailed against you, and have gone over your head.

Now man, the only ground upon which God can save you is His own love. He cannot save you because you deserve it, for you do not deserve it, because there is no excuse that might be made for your sin. No, you are without any excuse, and you feel it. Oh! bless His dear name, that He has devised this way whereby He can save you upon the basis of His own sovereign love and unbounded grace, without anything in you.

I want you to go back again to Newgate and this criminal. We suppose now that this criminal is visited by Her Majesty in person. She goes to him and she says to him, “Rebel, traitor, murderer, I have in my heart compassion for you, you deserve it not, but I am come this day to you, to tell you that if you repent you shall have mercy at my hands.”

Suppose this man, springing up, should curse her—curse this angel of mercy to her face, spit upon her, and utter blasphemies, and imprecate curses upon her head. She retires, she is gone, but so great is her compassion that the next day she sends a messenger, and days, and weeks, and months, and years, she continually sends messengers, and these go to him and they say—“If you will repent of your transgressions you shall have mercy, not because you deserve it, but because Her Majesty is compassionate, and out of her gracious soul she desires your salvation. Will you repent?”

Suppose this man should curse at the messenger, stop his ears against the message, spit upon him, and tell him he does not care for him at all. Or to suppose a better case—suppose he turns round upon his seat and says, “I don’t care whether I am hanged or not. I’ll take my chance along with other people, I shall take no notice of you”?

And suppose more than that, rising from his seat, he indulges again in all the crimes for which he has already been condemned, and plunges headlong afresh into the very sins which have brought his neck under the rope of the gallows. Now, if Her Majesty would spare such a man as that, on what terms can she do it? You say, “Why, she cannot, unless she does it out of love, she cannot because of any merit in him, because such a beast as that ought to die!”

And now, what are you and I by nature but like this? And my unconverted hearer, what is this but a picture of you? Has not God Himself visited your conscience? And has He not said to you, “Sinner! come now, let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool”? And what have you done? Stopped your ear against the voice of conscience—cursed and swore at God, blasphemed His holy name, despised His Word, and railed against His ministers.

And this day, again with tears in his eyes, a servant of God is come to you and his message is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, as I live, saith the LORD, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live.”

And what will you do? Why, if left to yourselves you will laugh at the message—despise it. It will glance off of you like an arrow from a man that is girt about with mail, and you will go away to despise God again, as you have done before. Do you not see then, that if God ever shall save you, it cannot be for your sakes, it must be from His own infinite love, it cannot be from any other reason, since you have rejected Christ, despised His Gospel, trodden under foot the blood of Jesus, and have refused to be saved. If He saves you, it must be free grace, and free grace alone.

But now picture a little more about this criminal at Newgate. Not content with having added sin to sin, and having rejected mercy for himself, this wretch industriously employs himself in going round to all the cells where others are confined, and hardening their hearts also against the mercy of the Queen. He can scarce see a person but he begins to taint him with the blasphemy of his own heart, he utters injurious things against the majesty that spares him, and endeavors to make others as vile as himself.

Now, what does justice say? If this man ought not to die on his own account, yet he ought to die for the sake of others, and if he be spared, is it not as plain as a pike-staff that he cannot be spared because of any reason in him? It must be because of the unconquerable compassion of the Sovereign.

And now look you here, is not this the case of some here present? Not only do you sin yourselves, but lead others into sin. I know this was one of my plagues and torments, when first God brought me to Himself, that I have led others into temptation.

Are there not men here that have taught others to swear? Are there not fathers here that have helped to destroy their own children's souls? Are there not some of you that are like the deadly Upas tree? You stretch out your branches and from every leaf there drops poison upon those who come beneath its deadly range. Are there not some here who have seduced the virtuous, that have misled those who were seemingly pious, and that are perhaps so hardened that they even glory in it? Not content with being damned yourselves, you are seeking to lead others to the pit also. Thinking it not enough yourselves to be at enmity with God, you want to imitate Satan by dragging others with you.

O my hearer, is not this your case? Does not your heart confess it? And do not the tear flow down your cheek? Remember then, this must be true, if God shall save you, it must be because He will do it. It cannot be because there is anything good in you, for you deserve now to die, and if He spare you it must be sovereign love and sovereign grace.

I will just use one other illustration, and then I think I shall have made the text clear enough. There is not so much difference between black and a darker shade of black as there is between pure white and black. Every one can see that. Then there is not so much difference between man and the devil as there is between God and man. God is perfection, we are black with sin. The devil is only a darker shade of black, and great as may be the difference between our sin and the sin of Satan, yet it is not so great as the difference between the perfection of God and the imperfection of man.

Now, imagine for a minute that somewhere in Africa there should be a tribe of devils living, and that you and I had it in our power to save these devils from some threatened wrath which must overtake them. If you or I should go there and die to save those devils, what could be our motive? From what we know of the character of a devil, the only motive that could make us do that must be love. There could not be any other. It must be simply because we had such big hearts that we could even embrace fiends within them.

Well now, there is not so much difference between man and the devil as between God and man. If then, the only motive that could make men save a devil must be man's love, does it not follow with irresistible force, that the only motive that could lead God to save man must be God's own love. At any rate, if that reason be not cogent the fact is indisputable—"Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel." God sees us abandoned, evil, wicked, and deserving His wrath, if He saves us, it is His boundless, fathomless love that leads Him to do it—nothing whatever in us.

III. And now, having thus preached this doctrine and enforced it, I come to a very solemn PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

And here may God the Holy Spirit help me labor with your hearts!

First, since this doctrine is true, how humble a Christian ought to be. If you be saved, you have had nought to do with it, God has done it. If you be saved, you have not deserved it. It is mercy undeserved which you have received. I have sometimes been delighted when I have seen the gratitude of abandoned characters to any who have assisted them.

I remember visiting a house of refuge. There was a poor girl there who had fallen into sin long, and when she found herself kindly addressed and recognized by society, and saw a Christian minister longing after her soul's good, it broke her heart. Why should a man of God care about her? she was so vile. How could it be that a Christian should speak to her?

Ah! but how much more should that feeling rise in our hearts? My God! I have rebelled against You, and yet You have loved me, unworthy *me!* How can it be? I cannot lift myself up with pride, I must bow down before You in speechless gratitude. Remember, my dear brethren, that not only is the mercy which you and I have received undeserved, but it was unasked. It is true you prayed, but not till free grace made you pray. You would have been to this day hardened in heart, without God, and without Christ, had not free grace saved you.

Can you be proud then?—proud of mercy which, if I may use the term, has been forced upon you?—proud of grace which has been given you against your will until your will was changed by sovereign grace? And think again. All the mercy you have you once refused. Christ sups with you, be not proud of

His company. Remember, there was a day when He knocked, and you refused—when He came to the door and said, “My head is wet with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night; open to me, my beloved,” and you barred it in His face, and would not let Him enter.

Be not proud then, of what you have, when you remember that you did once reject Him! Does God embrace You in His arms of love? Remember, once you lifted up your hand of rebellion against Him. Is your name written in His book? Ah! there was a time when if it had been in your power, you would have erased the sacred lines that contained your own salvation. Can we, dare we, lift up our wicked head with pride, when all these things should make us hang our heads down in the deepest humility? That is one lesson, let us learn another.

This doctrine is true, and therefore it should be a subject of the greatest gratitude. When meditating upon this text yesterday, the effect it had upon me was one of transport and joy. Oh! I thought, upon what other condition could I have been saved? And I looked back upon my past estate, I saw myself piously trained and educated, but revolting against all that. I saw a mother’s tears shed over me in vain, and a father’s admonition lost upon me, and yet I found myself saved by grace and I could only say, “Lord, I bless You that it is by grace, for if it had been by merit I had never been saved. If You had waited till there was something good in me, You would have waited till I sank into the hopeless perdition of hell, for good in man there never would have been, unless You had first put it there.”

And then I thought immediately, “Oh! how I could go and preach that to the poor sinner!” Ah! let me try if I cannot. O sinner! you say you dare not come to Christ because you have nothing to recommend you. He does not want anything to recommend you, He will not save you if you have anything to recommend you, for He says, “Not for your sake do I this.”

Go to Christ with earrings in your ears, and jewels upon you, wash your face, and array yourself with gold and silver, and go before Him and say, “Lord, save me, I have washed myself and clothed myself, save me!” “Get you gone! Not for your sakes will I do this.” Go to Him again and say, “Lord, I have put a rope about my neck, and sackcloth about my loins, see how repentant I am, see how I feel my need, now save me!” “No,” saith He, “I would not save you on account of your flaunting robes, and now I will not save you because of your rags, I will save you for nothing about you, if I do save you, it will be from something in My heart, not from anything you feel. Get you gone!”

But if today you go to Christ and say, “Lord Jesus, there is no reason in the world why I should be saved—there *is* one in heaven, Lord, I cannot urge any plea, I deserve to be lost, I have no excuse to make for all my sins, no apology to offer, Lord, I deserve it, and there is nothing in me why I should be saved, for if You would save me I should make but a poor Christian after all, I fear that my future works will be no honor to You—I wish they could be, but Your grace must make them good, else they will still be bad. But Lord, though I have nothing to bring, and nothing to say for myself, I do say this, I have heard that You have come into the world to save sinners—O Lord, save me!

‘I the chief of sinners am.’

I confess I do not feel this as I ought, I do not mourn it as I ought, I have no repentance to recommend me, nay, Lord, I have no faith to recommend me either, for I do not believe Your promise as I ought, but oh! I cling to this text. Lord, You have said You will not do it for my sake. I thank You that You have said that. You could not do it for my sake, for I have no reason why you should. Lord, I claim your gracious promise! ‘Be merciful to me, a sinner.’”

Ah! you good people, this doctrine does not suit some of you, it is too humbling, is it not? You that have kept your churches regularly, and been to meetings so piously, you that never broke the Sabbath, or never swore an oath, or did anything wrong, this does not suit you. You say it will do very well to preach to harlots, and drunkards, and swearers, but it will not suit such good people as we are.

Ah! well, this is your text—"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." You are "whole"—you are; you "need not a physician, but they that are sick." Go your way. Christ came not to save such as you are. You think you can save yourselves. Do it, and perish in the doing of it.

But I feel that the same Gospel that suits a harlot suits me, and that that free grace which saved Saul of Tarsus must save me, else I am never saved. Come, let us all go together. We are all guilty—some more, some less, but all hopelessly guilty. Let us go together to the footstool of His mercy, and though we dare not look up, let us lie there in the dust, and sigh out again, "Lord have mercy upon us, for whom Jesus died."

*"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!"*

Sinner, come now, come now, I beseech you, I entreat you, come now. O Spirit of the living God, draw them now! Let these feeble weak words be the means of drawing souls to Christ. Will you reject my Master again? Will you go out of this house hardened once more? You may never again have such feelings as those which are aroused in your soul.

Come, now, receive His mercy, now bend your willing necks to His yoke, and then I know you shall go away to taste His faithful love, and at last to sing in heaven the song of the redeemed—"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, unto him be glory for ever. Amen."

*"O Thou great eternal Jesus,
High and mighty Prince of Peace,
How Thy wonders shine resplendent,
In the wonders of Thy grace:
Thy rich Gospel scorns conditions,
Breathes salvation free as air;
Only breathes triumphant mercy,
Baffling guilt, and all despair.*

*"O the grandeur of the Gospel,
How it sounds the cleansing blood;
Shows the bowels of a Savior,
Shows the tender heart of God.
Only treats of love eternal,
Swells the all-abounding grace,
Nothing knows but life and pardon,
Full redemption, endless peace."*

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.