

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GOOD NEWS FOR YOU.

A Sermon

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“But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was.”—Luke x. 33.

THE good Samaritan is a masterly picture of true benevolence. The Samaritan had no kinship with the Jew, he was purely of foreign origin, yet he pities his poor neighbour. The Jews cursed the Cuthites, and would have no dealings with them, for they were intruders in their land. There was nothing therefore, in the object of the Samaritan's pity that could excite his national sympathies, but everything to arouse his prejudices, hence the grandeur of his benevolence.

It is not my intention this morning, to indicate the delightful points of excellence which Christ brings out in order to illustrate what true charity will perform. I want you only to notice this one fact, that the benevolence which the Samaritan exhibited towards this poor wounded and half-dead man, was available benevolence. He did not say to him, “If you will walk to Jericho, then I will bind up your wounds, pouring in the oil and wine;” or, “If you will journey with me as far as Jerusalem, I will then attend to your wants.” Oh, no, he came “where he was,” and finding that he could do nothing whatever for his own assistance, the good Samaritan began with him there and then upon the spot, putting no impossible conditions to him, proposing no stipulations which the man could not perform, but doing everything for the man, and doing it for him as he was and where he was.

Beloved, we are all quite aware that a charity of which a man cannot avail himself, is no charity at all. Go among the operatives of Lancashire, and tell them that there is no necessity for any of them to starve, for on the top of Mt. St. Bernard there are hospitable monks who keep a refectory, where they relieve all passers-by; tell them they have nothing to do but to journey to the top of the Alps, and there they will find food enough. Poor souls! they feel that you mock them, for the distance is too great. Penetrate one of our back streets, climb up three pair of stairs into a wretched room, so dilapidated that the stars look between the tiles, see a poor young girl dying of consumption and poverty, tell her if you dare, “If you could get to the sea-side, and if you could eat so much beef-steak, you would no doubt recover.” You are shamefully laughing at her—she cannot get these things—they are

beyond her reach: she cannot journey to the seaside—she would die ere she reached it. Like the wicked, your tender mercies are cruel. I have noticed this unavailing charity in hard winters. People give away bread and soup tickets to poor people, who are to give sixpence, and then receive soup and bread; and often I have had persons come to me—"Sir, I have a ticket; it would be worth a great deal to me, if I had sixpence to go with to get the relief; but I have not a farthing in all the world, and I cannot make out the good of giving me this ticket at all." This is hardly charity. Think you see Jeremiah, down in the low dungeon: if Ebed-melech and Baruch had stood over the top of the dungeon, and called out to him, "Jeremiah, if you will get half way up, we will pull you out," when there was not a ladder, nor any means by which he could possibly get so far, how cruel would have been this charity; but, instead thereof, they took old rags from under the king's treasury, and put them on ropes, and bade him put the rags under his armholes, and sling his arms through the ropes, and then they pulled him up all the way. This was available charity; the other would have been hypocritical pretence. Brethren, if in the description of a good Samaritan, Christ hits him off to the life, as giving to this poor wounded man a charity of which he could avail himself, does it not seem to be strongly probable—nay, even certain—that when Christ comes to deal with sinners, he gives them available mercy—grace which may be of real service to them.

Hence, permit me to say, I do not believe in the way in which some people pretend to preach the gospel. They have no gospel for sinners as sinners, but only for those who are above the dead level of sinnership, and are technically styled *sensible* sinners. Like the priest in this parable; they see the poor sinner, and they say, "He is not conscious of his need, we cannot invite him to Christ;" "He is dead," they say, "it is of no use preaching to dead souls;" so they pass by on the other side, keeping close to the elect and quickened, but having nothing whatever to say to the dead, lest they should make out Christ to be too gracious, and his mercy to be too free. The Levite was not in quite such a hurry as the priest. The priest had to preach, and might be too late for the service, and therefore he could not stop to relieve the man; besides, he might have soiled his cassock, or made himself unclean; and then he would have been hardly fit for the dainty and respectable congregation over which he officiated. As for the Levite, he had to read the hymns; he was a clerk in the church, and he was somewhat in a hurry, but still he could get in after the opening prayer, so he indulged himself with the luxury of looking on. Just as I have known ministers say, "Well, you know we ought to describe the sinner's state, and warn him, but we must not invite him to Christ." Yes, gentlemen, you must pass by on the other side, after having looked at him, for on your own confession you have no *good* news for the poor wretch. I bless my Lord and Master he has given to me a gospel which I can take to *dead* sinners, a gospel which is available for the vilest of the vile. I thank my Master that he does not say to the sinner, "Come half way and meet me," but he comes "where he is," and finding him ruined, lost, obdurate, he meets him on his own ground, and gives him life and peace without

asking, or expecting him to prepare himself for grace. Here is, I think, set forth in my text, the available benevolence of the Samaritan; it is mine this morning, to show the available grace of Christ.

I. The sinner is WITHOUT MORAL QUALIFICATION FOR SALVATION, but Christ comes where he is.

I want, if I can, not to talk about this as a matter having to do with the multitude that are abroad, but with us in these pews. I speak not of *them* and *those*, but of *you* and *me*. I want to say to every sinner, "You are in a state in which there is nothing morally that can qualify you for being saved, but Jesus Christ meets you where you now are."

1. Remember first, that when the gospel was first sent into the world, *those to whom it was sent, were manifestly without any moral qualification.* Did you ever read the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans? It is one of those awful passages in Scripture, not intended to be read in congregations; but to be read and studied in the secrecy of one's chamber. The apostle gives a portrait of the manners and customs of the heathen world, so awful, that unless our missionaries had informed us, that it is exactly the photograph of life in Hindostan at the present moment, infidels might have declared that Paul had exaggerated. Heathendom in the time of Paul, was so desperately wicked that it would be utterly impossible to conceive of a sin, into which men had not fallen; and yet, "We turn unto the Gentiles," said the apostle; and yet the Lord himself commanded, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." What! to Sodomites, whose very smallest sin is adultery, and fornication; to thieves and murderers, to murderers of fathers and mothers? Yes, go and preach the gospel *to them!* Manifestly, the fact that the world was steeped up to its very throat in the filth of abominable wickedness, and yet the gospel was sent to it, proves that Christ does not seek for any qualification of morality, or righteousness in man, before the gospel is available to him. He sends the Word to the drunkard, to the swearer, the harlot, the vilest of the vile; for such is the gospel of Christ intended to save.

2. Recollect again, *the Biblical descriptions of those whom Christ came into the world to save, which prove to a demonstration that he comes to the sinner where he is.* How does the Bible describe those whom Christ came to save? As men? No, my brethren; Christ did not come to save men as men, but men as sinners. As sensible sinners?—nay, I aver not; they are described as "*dead in trespasses and sins.*" But to the law and to the testimony, let me read you one or two passages; and, while I read them, I hope you may be able to say, "There is hope for me." First, those whom Christ came to save are described in 1 Timothy, i. 15, and many other places, as "*sinners.*" "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." "Sinners," without any adjective before the word; not awakened sinners, not repenting sinners; but sinners as sinners. "Surely," saith one, "I am not shut out." Another account is found in Romans v. 6, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died"—for whom? those who had some desires after God? some respect to his name? nay, "*for the ungodly.*" Now, an ungodly

man means a man without God, who cares not for God; "God is not in all his thoughts," and therefore he is not what men call a sensible sinner. "The ungodly are like "the chaff which the wind driveth away:" even these are the persons that Christ came to save. In the same chapter, 10th verse, you find them mentioned as "*enemies*"—"When we were yet enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." What say ye to this? they are not described as friends. Christ laid down his life for his friends in one sense; "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Enemies to God were the objects of grace, so that in enmity Christ comes and meets man where he is.

In Ephesians ii. 1, we read of them as "*dead* in trespasses and sins"—"and you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Christ, then, does not ask the sinner to make himself alive; the gospel is not only to be preached to those who have some good notions, some good desires, some tremblings of the heavenly life within, but to the dead as dead; to the dead doth Christ come, and meet them in the grave of their sin. Again, (Ephesians ii. 3,) they are "*children of wrath*"—"we were by nature the children of wrath even as others." Yet the gospel came to such. Can ye see anything hopeful in a child of wrath? I ask you to look over him from head to foot, if this be his name and character; can ye see a spot of goodness as large as a pin's point in the man? And yet such Christ came to save. Once again, they are mentioned as "*accursed*." Ah," says one sinner, "I have often cursed myself before God, and asked him to curse me." Well, Christ died for the accursed; (Galatians iii. 13,) "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for *us*;" that is, for us who were under the curse. And, once more, they are described by the dreadful word "*lost*." They are lost to all hope, to all consideration for themselves; even their own friends have given their case up as hopeless. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke xix. 10.) If I understand those passages which I have read in your hearing, they mean just this—that those whom Christ came to save have no good whatever in them to co-operate towards their salvation, and Christ doth not look upon them in order to find aught that is good in them. I am bold to say, the only fitness for cleansing is filthiness; the only fitness for a Saviour is being lost; and the only character under which we come to Jesus is as sinners, lost, dead, and accursed.

3. But, thirdly, it is quite certain from *the work of grace itself*, that the Lord does not expect the sinner to do anything or to be anything in order to meet him, but that he comes to him where he is. See, sinner, Christ *dies* on Calvary, a weight of sin is on his shoulders, and on his heart; in agonies the most awful he shrieks under the desertion of his God. For whom did he die? For the innocent? Wherefore for the innocent? What sacrifice did they need? For those who had some good thing in them? Why all these agonies *for such*? Surely a less price might do for them if they could eke it out themselves. But because Christ died on account of sin, I take it that those whom he died for must be viewed as sinners, and only as such. Inasmuch as he paid a

dreadful price, I gather that they must be dreadfully in debt, and that he died for those who had nothing to pay with. But Christ *rose again*, rose again for our justification. For whose justification? For the justification of those who were justified in themselves? Why this were to perform an unnecessary work. No, my brethren, but for those who had no justification of their own, not a shadow of any, who were condemned, utterly condemned on account of their own works. Moreover, I hear him by the ear of faith *pleading* before the eternal throne. Who does he plead for? For those who have something to plead on their own account?—that were needless. Do men give their money to the rich? Do they spend their charity on those who do not need it? If men have something to plead for themselves, then why does Christ plead for them? No, brethren, he pleads for those who have nothing whatever that they can bring as an argument with which to enforce their prayers. But Christ ascended and *received gifts*. Who for? For those who merited rewards? No, verily, let them get them for themselves. But he received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. But he *gives the Holy Spirit*. To whom does he give the Holy Spirit? To those that are strong, and good, and can do all themselves? O, my brethren, this were a work of supererogation; but he gives the Holy Spirit to those that are powerless, weak, dead; he gives the Holy Worker to those who are all unholy and full of sin; he puts the omnipotent influence into those who were slaves to the spirit of evil. Brethren, the work of Christ supposes a lost, ruined, rebellious sinner, and so I say, Christ meets the man where he is.

4. Yet more, for I would clear up this point before I leave it, *the godlike character of the grace of God* proves that he meets the sinner where he is. If God forgive little sinners only, then he is little in his mercy. If the Lord does not do something more than men can think, then we have made too much noise about the gospel, and have exalted the cross above measure. Unless there be something extraordinary in divine grace, then I cannot understand such a passage as this, "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts." I venture to say, brethren, that many of us have thought of forgiving our enemies. It has sometimes been our happy portion to do good to them that hate us. Now, if God would be godlike in his grace—and I am sure he will—he must do something more than that; he must not only forgive his enemies, but they must be enemies of such an atrocious character that no *man* would have forgiven them.

"Who is a pardoning God like thee,
Or who hath grace so rich and free."

But where is the meaning of this boast, if the Lord merely pardons sinners who are sensible of their sins, and lament them? The marvel is in this, that while they are yet enemies he calls them by his grace, and invites them to mercy; yea, more, he blots out their sins, and makes them friends; thus meeting the sinner where he is.

5. *The spirit and genius of the gospel utterly forbid the supposition that God requires anything in any man in order to save him.* If salvation be

offered to man upon a condition, they who fulfil the condition have a claim to the blessing. This is the old covenant of works. The substance of the legal covenant is, "Do this and I will reward you." When the man has done it, he deserves what has been promised. Yes, and if you make the condition never so easy, yet, mark you, so long as it be a condition, God is bound by his own Word, the condition being fulfilled, to give man what he has earned. This is works and not grace; it is debt and not free favour. But, inasmuch as the gospel is free favour from beginning to end, I am absolutely sure that God asketh nothing; neither good wishes, good desires, nor good feelings of a sinner before he may come to Christ. But that he may know that everything is of grace, the rebel is commanded to come just as he is, bringing nothing, but taking everything from God, who is superabundant in mercy, and therefore meeteth the sinner just where he is.

I say to the sinner, wherever thou mayest be to-day, if thou be without any virtue, and if thou be filled with all vice, if there be no good points in thy character, but if there be everything that is bad against man and against God; if thou hast committed every crime in the catalogue, if thou hast ruined thy body and damned thy soul, yet still Christ hath said it, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." And if thou comest to him, he can no more cast thee out than if thou hadst been the most virtuous, the most honourable, and the most devout of all living men. Only do thou to-day believe in the mercy of God, in Christ, and cast thyself on Him, and thou art saved to the praise and glory of that grace which meets thee just where thou art, and saveth thee from sin.

II. In the second place, there are very many of the lost race of Adam, who say that they are WITHOUT ANY MENTAL QUALIFICATION.

This is their excuse—"But, sir, I never was a scholar. I was sent out as a boy to earn my own living, so that I never had a week's schooling; I am so ignorant that I cannot read my book, and if anybody were to ask me to make a prayer I could not, I have not sense enough." Now, you see the Lord Jesus meets you just where you are. And how does he do this? Why, first, *the saving act is one that requires no mental power*. Faith lays hold on eternal life. Now, a child whose faculties are never so little developed can believe what it is told. The child cannot reason, cannot argue, cannot dispute, cannot split hairs, cannot see a knotty point in theology, but it can believe what it is told. Faith requires so little mental vigour or intellectual clearness, that there have been many who were idiots in other things, who have been made wise unto salvation by the act of faith in Christ. You remember our Lord's own words, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." But this never could have happened had not the act which brings us into communion with Christ been the lowest act of the human faculty, that of simply trusting to Christ, as the result of crediting that which is told us upon good testimony.

But then, again, to meet this defect of mental power, remember *the singular simplicity of that which is believed*. Is there anything more simple in the world than the doctrine of the atonement. We deserve to die, Christ dies for us; we are in debt, Christ pays for us. Is not

this plain enough for a Ragged School? It is so plain, that many of our learned doctors of divinity try to get it out of the Bible; they think, "If this be the marrow of it all, then any fool can be a theologian;" so they kick against it. What is Unitarianism but a stumbling at the simplicity of the cross. They were Unitarians who stood at the cross when Christ died; they said, "Let him come down from the cross and we will believe on him." That has been the Unitarian character ever since; they will receive Jesus anywhere but on his cross; but up there, dying in man's stead, he is so commonplace, that these great gentlemen run to philosophy and vain deceit sooner than lay hold on that which the commonest may as fully understand as they.

Yet more; to meet any mental deficiency in man, while the truth itself is simple, it is *taught in the Bible under such simple metaphors*, that none can say they cannot understand it. How simple is the metaphor of the brazen serpent, held up before the snake-bitten Israelites, while they are commanded to look and live. Who does not understand that a look at Christ who dies in the stead of men, will make them live? "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Who does not understand the figure of a fountain flowing in the streets, that every thirsty passer-by may put his lips down and drink? "Behold the Lamb of God." Who does not understand the sacrifice? Here is a lamb killed for the sin of Israel, and so Christ dies for the sin of those who believe in him. The act of faith is simple, the object of faith is plain; the metaphors make it clear, and he is without excuse who does not understand the gospel of Christ.

To crown all, to you, my beloved hearers, Christ *has given you abundance of teachers*. There sits in your pew with you to-day a man of your own rank and calling, who will explain to you the gospel, if you do not understand it. Here are many of us, who are but too glad if we can roll away the stone from the door of your sepulchre; here are children of God themselves saved by sovereign grace, and if you really do not know the way, do but touch your next neighbour, and say to him, "Can you explain to me yet more clearly what I must do to be saved?" Now, this is meeting you, let your brains be of the very smallest; this is coming down to you though you sit on the lowest step of human intellect. Jesus Christ meets you just where you are.

III. But yet again. I think I hear another say, "I am in despair, for I CANNOT FIND ANY REASON IN MYSELF, OR OUT OF MYSELF, WHY GOD SHOULD FORGIVE SUCH A PERSON AS I AM."

So then, you are in a hopeless state, at least you see no hope. The Lord meets you where you are, by putting *the reason of your salvation altogether in himself*. Shall I remind you of one or two texts which will surely satisfy you? "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions." What for? "For mine own sake." He cannot pardon you for your sake, you clearly see that; and you feel that he cannot pardon you for other people's sake; but for "*my own sake*," saith he, "that I may glorify myself." Not in you, but in his own mighty breast he finds the motive, that he may make his own mercy illustrious; for his own sake he will do it. Or take another—"For my name's sake, even for my name's sake, will I

defer mine anger, that I cut thee not off." Here it is again for his *name's sake*, as if he knew he could not find any other motive, so he puts it all on himself; he pardons that he may honour and glorify his own name. Sinner, thou canst not say that this does not meet thy case: for if thou be the most hellish good-for-nothing sinner that ever cursed God's earth, and polluted the air thou breathest, yet he can save thee, *for his own sake*. There still is room for thee to hope; for the bigger the sinner thou be the more glory to him if he saveth thee; and if salvation be given for a reason only in himself, there is therefore yet a reason by which he can save thee, even thee.

Remember, that *he puts his own design* before your eyes to show you that if you have no reason in yourself, that is no hindrance to his saving you. What is God's design in saving men? When he brings them to heaven, what will be the result of it? Why, that they may love and praise his name for ever, and sing "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, unto him be glory." You are just the man; if you are ever saved, and brought to heaven, oh, will not you praise his grace? "Yes," said one old man who had long lived in sin, "if he ever does bring me to heaven, he shall never hear the last of it, for I will praise him throughout eternity." Why, you are the man, do you not see, you are the very man that will answer God's design, for who shall love so much as he who has had much forgiven, and who shall praise so loudly as he whose mighty sins have been overcome by the mighty love and goodness and grace of God? Thou canst not say that it does not meet thee, for here is a motive and a reason, though thou canst find none in thyself.

Here is another reason why God should save thee, it is *His own Word*, the Word of him that cannot lie. I will bring up that text again; perhaps there is a heart here that will be able to cast anchor on it—"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." You say, "But if I come, I can see no reason why he should save me." I answer, there is a reason in His own promise. God cannot lie. You come; he will not cast you out. He says, "I will in no wise cast out;" but you say, "He may for such-and-such a reason." Now, this is a flat contradiction; the two cannot stand. If there be anything that is necessary in order for a soul to come, and you come without it, yet there is the promise, and as it has no limit in it plead it, and the Lord will not refuse to honour his own Word. If he can cast you out because you have not some necessary qualification, then his Word is not true. Whoever you may be, whatever you may not be, and whatever you may be, if you believe in Jesus Christ, there is a reason in every attribute of God why you should be saved. His truth cries, "Save him, for thou hast said 'I will.'" His power says, "Save him, lest the enemy deny thy might." God's wisdom pleads, "Save him, lest men doubt thy judgment." His love says, "Save him;" his every attribute says, "Save him;" and even Justice, with its hoarse voice, cries, "Save him, for God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, if we confess our sins."

I am trying to fish in deep waters after some of you that have long escaped the net. I know when I have given free and full invitations, you have said, "Ah! that cannot mean me." You are without faith in

Christ, because you think you are not fit. I will be clear of your blood this morning; I will show you that there is no fitness wanted, that you are commanded now to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as you are, for Jesus Christ's gospel is an available gospel, and comes to you just where you are. Without moral or mental qualification, and without any sort of reason why he should save you, he meets you as such, and bids you trust him.

IV. We proceed to our fourth point. "Oh," says one, "but I am WITHOUT COURAGE; I dare not believe on Christ, I am such a timid, trembling soul, that when I hear that others trust to Christ I think it must be presumption; I wish I could do the same but I cannot, I am kept under by such a sense of sin, that I dare not. O sir, I dare not, it would look as if I were flying in the face of justice if I were to dare to trust Christ, and then to rejoice in the pardon of my sin." Very well, Christ comes to meet you where you are, by very tender *invitations*. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "The Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." How sweetly he puts it to you. I do not know where more wooing words could be found, than those the Saviour uses. Will you not come when Christ beckons, when with his loving face streaming with tears, he bid you come to him. What! is an invitation from him too little a thing for you. O sinner, trembling though thou art, say in thy soul,

"I'll to the gracious king approach,
Whose sceptre pardon gives;
Perhaps he may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives."

Knowing that you would neglect the invitation, he has put it to you in the light of a *command*. "This is the commandment, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." He thought you would say, "Ah, but I am not fit to accept the invitation." "Well," says he, "I will command the man to do it." Like a poor hungry man with bread before him, who says, "Ah, it would be presumption on my part to eat;" but the king says, "Eat, sir, or I will punish you." What a generous and liberal command; even the threat itself has no anger in it. Like the mother, who when the child is near to die, and nothing will save it but the medicine, and the child will not drink, she threatens the child, but only out of love to it that it may be saved. So the Lord doth add *threatenings* to commands; for sometimes a black word will drive a soul to Christ where a bright word would not draw it. Fears of hell sometimes make men flee to Jesus. The weary wing made the poor dove fly to the ark: and the thunderbolts of God's justice are only meant to make thee fly to Christ the Lord.

Beloved, once more, my Master has sweetly met your want of courage by bringing many others, so that you may follow their *example*. As fowlers sometimes have their decoy-birds, so my Master hath decoy-birds that are to draw others to him. Other sinners have been saved, others he has cleansed who did but trust him. There was Lot. Ah, Lot! guilty of drunkenness and incest, and yet a saint of God. David the adulterer and murderer of Uriah, and yet washed "whiter than snow." Manasseh the bloody persecutor, who had cut Esaias in two, sawing him in halves, and yet he was taken among the thorns, and God had mercy on him. What shall I say of Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of God's people? and the robber dying on the cross for his crimes, and yet saved? Sinner, if these do not induce thee to come, what can overcome thy sinful diffidence? "But," says one, "you have not hit my case yet; I am an outrageous sinner!" Well now, I will hit it this time. In 1 Corinthians, vi. 9, hear the Word of the Lord, "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And *such were some of you*: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Why, brethren, what horrible descriptions there are here; there are some of them so bad that when we have read the description, we wish to forget the sin; and yet, and yet, glory be to thine Almighty grace, O God! such hast thou saved, and such thou canst save still. O, timid sinner, can you not trust in Jesus after this? Hear ye the Word of the Lord again (Titus iii. 3—5), "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved *us*." Now, you hateful sinners, and you that hate others; you that are full of malice and envy, here is the gate open even for you, for the kindness and love of God towards man appears in the person of Christ. Listen to another, for God's words are more than mine, and I do hope they will attract some of you (Ephesians ii. 1—3): "Dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even **when** we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by

grace ye are saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." What for? "That in the ages to come,"—mark this—he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." One more passage, and I will not weary your attention. O that this last passage might comfort some of you, it is Paul who speaks (1 Timothy i. 13), "I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying," see how he puts it from his own experience, "and worthy of all acceptance;" and therefore worthy of yours, poor sinner; "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." "Ah" says one "but he would not save any more." Let me go on—"Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." So that if you trust as Paul did, you shall be saved as Paul was, for his conversion and salvation are a pattern to all those who should believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, unto life everlasting. So sinner, timid as you are, here Jesus meets you.

O, I wish I could say a word that would lead you poor tearful ones to look to Jesus. O, do not let the devil tempt you to believe that you are too sinful. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him."

"Let not conscience make you linger, nor of fitness fondly dream."

Fitness is not needed—do but come to him. You are black, and you do not feel your blackness as you ought—that makes you all the blacker. Come, then, and be clean. You are sinful, and this is your greatest sin, that you do not repent as you ought; but come to him, and ask him to forgive your impenitence. Come as you are: if he rejecteth one of you, I will bear the blame for ever; if he casteth one of you away that shall trust him, call me a false prophet in the day of the resurrection. But I pawn my life upon it—I stake my own soul's interest on this—that whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out.

V. I hear one more complaint. "I am WITHOUT STRENGTH," saith one; "will Jesus come just where I am?" Yes, sinner, just where you are. You say you cannot believe, that is your difficulty. God meets you, then, in your inability. First, he meets you with *his promises*. Soul, thou canst not believe; but when God, that cannot lie, promises, will you not believe, can you not believe then? I do think God's promise—so sure, so stedfast—must overcome this inability of yours.

“Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” Cannot you believe now? Why, that promise must be true! But next, as if he knew that this would not be enough, he has taken *an oath* with it—and a more awful oath was never sworn—“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. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel.” Can you not believe now? What, will you doubt God when he swears it, not only make God a liar but—let me shudder when I say it—will you think that God can perjure his own self? God forbid you should so blaspheme. Remember, he that believeth not hath made God a liar, because he believeth not on the Son of God. Do not do this. Surely you can believe when the promise and the oath compel you to faith. But yet more, as if he knew that even this were not enough, he has given you of *his Spirit*. “If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” Surely with this you can believe. “But,” saith one, “I will try.” No, no, do not try, that is not what God commands you to do; no trying is wanted; believe Christ now, sinner. “But,” saith one, “I will think of it.” Do not think of it, do it now, do it at once for this is God’s gospel. There are some of you standing in these aisles and sitting in these pews, who I feel in my soul will never have another invitation, and if this be rejected to-day, I feel a solemn motion in my soul—I think it is of the Holy Ghost—that you will never hear another faithful sermon, but you shall go down to hell impenitent, unsaved, except ye trust in Jesus *now*. I speak not as a man, but I speak as God’s ambassador to your souls, and I command you, in God’s name, trust Jesus, trust *now*. At your peril reject the voice that speaks from heaven, for “he that believeth not shall be damned.” How shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation. When it comes right home to you, when it thrusts itself in your way, oh, if ye will neglect it how can ye escape? With tears I would invite you, and, if I could, would compel you to come in. Why will ye not? O souls, if ye will be damned, if ye make up your mind that no mercy shall ever woo you, and no warnings shall ever move you, then, sirs, what chains of vengeance must you feel that slight these bonds of love. You have deserved the deepest hell, for you slight the joys above. God save you. He will save you, if you trust in Jesus. God help you to trust him even now, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.