

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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“TO YOU.”

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## A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

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“To you is the word of this salvation sent.”—Acts xiii. 26.

My text must be read in the light of the 46th verse, or else I may be thought to be guilty of wresting it from its true meaning. Paul originally said, to the Jews and proselytes in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, “To *you* is the word of this salvation sent.” But they rejected the message; and, therefore, the apostle said to them, “It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” So, if Paul were here now, he might, in addressing you, use the very same words which he used in addressing Israel of old, and say, “To *you* is the word of this salvation sent.”

This fact furnishes us with a warning. Remember, brethren, that the gospel was first sent to Israel. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself confined his personal ministry almost entirely within the bounds of Palestine, and he bade his disciples begin the preaching of the gospel at Jerusalem; and such was the narrowness which naturally appertained to their nationality that it took a very long time to bring the most of the apostles to preach to any people beside the Jews. In this way, the Jews had a full opportunity of knowing the truth; but, because they were blinded by prejudice and sin, they could not see Christ. They judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, so Paul and the rest of the apostles turned to the Gentiles. I would solemnly remind you, who now have the opportunity of hearing the gospel, that, if any nation shall be privileged to have the gospel sent to it, and yet shall continue to reject it, God may turn from that nation as readily as he turned from the Jews;—perhaps, even more readily than he turned from his ancient and peculiarly favoured people, Israel.

If, in this country, men and women continue to go after the idolatrous calves of Ritualism, or turn aside to the modern

Sadduceeism of scepticism, it may be that the Lord will remove the candlestick out of its place, and that the word of the gospel will be no longer sent to us. There are many nations, to which the gospel has scarcely been sent, at present, by the way of preaching it in their own tongue. They have not yet heard it; but they must do so, sooner or later. There are other countries, that were, at one time, the home of saints to whom Christ's name was known; yet they are now left in the darkness of Popery, or else Mohammedanism has brought the falsehoods of the crescent to take the place of the truth of the cross. Go to the ruins of the seven churches of Asia, and ask how it is that, as churches, we know nothing of them now; and learn, from their doom, not to trifle with the truth when it comes to you, nor to judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life; lest, perhaps, the messengers of peace should be sent to other lands, and the light of the gospel should no longer shine upon our highly favoured island.

And you, dear friend,—speaking personally to you as an individual rather than to the nation in general,—I pray you to take heed that, while you are able to hear the gospel, you also receive it; for it may be that, very soon, you will be unable to come to the house of prayer, or your lot may be cast where the gospel is not faithfully preached, and you may have to rue these blessed days in which the kingdom of God came so near to you, yet you did not enter in. Yea, you may lie a-dying, and you may have to lament the Sabbaths that you have wasted, and which never will come back to you. And oh, in the next world, with what regret you will have to look back upon the desecrated Sabbaths, and the neglected means of grace, and the despised invitations of God's ministers; and you will mourn that you judged yourself unworthy of everlasting life; and, therefore, have passed away into that place of woe where gospel invitations can never reach your ears. I am preaching with the hope that at least some of you may be saved from such a terrible doom as that, and that, this very hour, the gospel, which is sent to you, may be accepted by you.

There was a little boy, whom his mother noticed as always wonderfully attentive to the Word; he would frequently put his hand to his ear so as to catch every word from the preacher. She said to him, "John, why do you do that, my dear?" He replied, "Did you not hear the minister say, the other Sunday, that, if there was any part of the sermon that would be sure to do us good, the devil would try to cause a disturbance just then, so that we might not hear it. So I am determined that, if there is anything that is likely to do me good, I will hear it." Any man, or woman, or child, who will hear like that, will not hear in vain; that is impossible.

I. My talk will be very simple, and not very long; and, first of all, I am going to answer the question, WHAT IS THIS WORD OF SALVATION, WHICH IS SENT TO US?

If you read the passage through, as we did just now, you will see that the word of salvation, which is sent to us, is *the testimony that Jesus Christ is the promised Saviour*. Paul showed that he was

of the seed of David, the Messiah whom God had promised to his people by the prophets. Jesus of Nazareth was the seed of the woman who was to bruise the old serpent's head, the One of whom the ancient seers spake so sweetly, and for whom the twelve tribes, instantly watching night and day, waited so long. This is the Messiah, the world's only hope, the one Redeemer, rightly called the King of the Jews, yet also the Saviour of all who believe in him.

What has this truth to do with you? Why, it has this to do with you,—that, *through this Man, is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.* That same Jesus, who was the Son of God, took upon himself our human nature, lived in this world, and wrought righteousness; and when the due time came, he took upon himself the sins of all his people. The Lord laid them upon him, and he carried them up to the tree, and there, upon the tree, he bore the full penalty for all the transgressions of his people. The penalty for sin was death, so Jesus died; and Paul writes, by inspiration, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Now, because Christ died in the room, and place, and stead of the ungodly, the forgiveness of sins is being preached, at this moment, in tens of thousands of places, all over the world. Whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ,—that is, simply trusts in him,—shall receive at once the forgiveness of all his sins,—a complete and irreversible forgiveness, by which the whole of his sin is blotted out, as when a man strikes his pen through the record of a debt, or writes below it, "Settled." All his sin is removed, as when the North wind drives away the cloud, and the sky is bright and clear. All his sin is removed, as when the fuller cleanses the filthy garment, and makes it white as snow. All his sin is removed for ever, "as far as the East is from the West." So, who can lay anything to the charge of the man whose sins Christ hath forgiven? This forgiveness is preached unto you, through the Man Christ Jesus, even to you who believe on his name.

The word of this salvation is *the proclamation of perfect salvation through the risen Redeemer*, for the apostle adds, "by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." That is to say, there were some sins which the law given to Moses never thought of forgiving, but there are no sins which Christ is either unable or unwilling to forgive. The law of Moses could not, in very deed, put away any sin; so, fresh sacrifices had to be continually offered under the Mosaic dispensation; "but this Man," whom we preach unto you, "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God," having no need to present any more sacrifices. So that, if you believe on him, your sins shall be, not figuratively, but actually, put away for ever, and there shall remain to you no more consciousness of sin. Washed in the precious blood of Christ, you shall be whiter than snow, and shall enter into heaven, none daring to accuse you; for who shall accuse the man or woman whom Christ hath justified? This is the word of salvation, then, that is sent to you, my dear friends, as much as to those to whom Paul spoke. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." He

shall never perish, for he is forgiven by God, and is "accepted in the Beloved."

If there are any of you who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, it seems to me that you are like a ship that is derelict, left to the mercy of the winds and waves. O soul, yours is an unhappy condition for anyone to be in! Though as yet you are not destroyed, though as yet you are not in hell, it ought to be misery enough for a man to feel, "I am not under the direction of God; I have not Christ on board to be my Pilot." Stop, young woman; stay, young man; if that is the case with you. Go no further as you are, but ask the Lord to direct you from this time forth, and even for evermore. I stand here as a living witness to this fact, that it is the highest wisdom and happiness to trust in the Lord. I have relied upon him since I was fifteen years of age, and my only grief is that I did not trust him earlier; but since the hour that brought me to his feet, and enabled me to rest in him, he has been a good Helper, a sure Guide, and a blessed Friend to me; and, speaking from my own experience, I would entreat my brothers and sisters, who are younger than I am, to delay no longer, but to take my Heavenly Father to be their Guide also. May the Lord, the Holy Spirit, lead you to do so, this very hour, for Jesus Christ's sake!

II. Now let us pass on to a second question, which is, **IN WHAT MANNER IS THIS GOSPEL SENT TO YOU?** Let me have your ears and your hearts while I try to answer this important question, as the Holy Spirit shall guide me.

Well, first, it was sent to you, dear friend, whoever you may be, *in Christ's universal commission*, which he gave to his disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." You are a creature, are you not? Then the gospel is to be preached to you. Paul wrote to Timothy, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." You are a sinner, are you not? Then, Christ came to save you, and this faithful saying is worthy of your acceptation. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in his last invitation in the Book of Revelation, says, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Surely, "*whosoever will*" must include you, whosoever you may be, for you have a will, and you can come to Christ if you will.

"Let every mortal ear attend,  
And every heart rejoice;"—

for, to everyone of woman born,—

"The trumpet of the gospel sounds  
With an inviting voice."

Young or old, rich or poor, whosoever you may be, "to *you* is the word of this salvation sent" by him who bade us go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, saying, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

But it is also sent to you in another sense, for *the preaching of it has come actually to you*. The word of this salvation is sent to every creature under heaven, but the great mass of mankind have

not yet heard it. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" O Church of the living God, what a sin lies at thy door because they are not sent, and therefore the heathen do not hear, and hence they are not saved! But "to you" the preacher has come. You have heard the gospel; some of you, from your childhood. Can you recollect the time when you did not hear it? You say, sometimes, that it has been dinned into your ears until you are almost weary of it. When we come into the pulpit, we cannot tell you anything fresh; it is just the same old story that you have heard so long. "To you" the word of this salvation has been sent, and you have heard it, and know what it is.

Perhaps some of you may say to me, "Sir, we live in a place where the gospel is not preached. We have rank Ritualism in the parish church, and nothing but vapid intellectualism in all the Dissenting chapels." I am sorry if that is true; but look you here, sirs, you have all got this Bible, or you can all get it, and it will be a stern witness against every one of you, whether you hear the gospel preached or not. I suppose that a copy of the Bible is in almost every Englishman's house; I wonder whether there is one home in this land without it; there should not be. Well, then, as long as this invaluable preacher is with you,—as long as you can read the Word of God in your home, or in the field, or in the barn or the shop,—to you, indeed, is the word of this salvation sent.

Further, I believe that, *to some people, the gospel is sent in a yet more remarkable manner.* Possibly, the very fact that you are here, at this service, is one of the many instances in which the gospel has been sent to you. There was a young man, some years ago, who dishonoured his father's name in the village where he lived,—a scapegrace, as they called him,—and he ran away from his home, to go to a distant land. He came to London, and went on board a vessel, at the docks, expecting to sail. This was on a Saturday, but an accident occurred, and the ship was delayed, so he had a Sunday in London. He remembered that his father had often spoken of the Tabernacle, so he enquired the way, and came here, an utterly ungodly young man. Some months after, in a letter which he wrote to his home, his father was surprised to find that he was commencing to preach the gospel. He said that, on that Sunday night when he came here, the Lord met with him, and saved him. That was a blessed accident, that kept him from sailing on the Saturday, and that brought him here to listen to the gospel of Jesus. I never know who may be in my congregation. Ah, Tom, you scapegrace, I should not wonder, as you have come in here, if there was another wonder in store for you; and I trust that the Lord has sent the gospel to you by that singular providence which has brought you amongst us here. Out of this crowd, there must be some who are here under very peculiar circumstances. Some of you have come up from the country, and you have been persuaded by friends to come here. I do not know you, or aught about you; but my Lord does, and I trust that to you is the word of this salvation sent by

the very providence which has brought you here. A child takes the seed of a weed, when it is fully ripe, and blows upon it in sheer sport; away go the little parachutes, bearing through the air the seeds, and you may find that weed, over hill and dale, miles away. We, though not little children, take the divine seed of truth, and, with our anxious, but believing breath, we blow it abroad in this congregation. Where that seed may fall, we cannot tell; it may fall upon some stranger from the backwoods of Canada, or some brother from a great city of America, or some lonely worker who has been toiling far away in India, or on some at home, unknown to us, who, nevertheless, shall receive into good soil the seed, not of a weed, but of a precious flower of God; and if the world be not sooner brought to its close, even a thousand years hence there may be plants growing that can trace their spiritual parentage to the sowing of to-night. O young man, young woman, worker for Christ, thou canst never tell the infinite issues of what seemed so small a matter as the sowing of the good seed of the kingdom!

Sometimes, God sends the truth very specially home to the heart and conscience of the hearer by the singularity of the preacher's words; he has been guided by the Holy Spirit to paint the man's portrait to the life, and the man has been astounded at it. He has imagined that somebody must have informed the preacher about him; yet the speaker was, all the while, quite innocent of the man's affairs. "Why, the very words I have used," says he, "and the inmost thoughts of my heart were laid bare." Do you not know that this is one of the characteristics of the Word of God? Paul says that it "is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." If anything, in the preaching, at any time comes right home to you, as though the preacher looked right into you, and knew all about you, and reckoned you up as a boy does a sum in arithmetic on his slate, do not begin to wonder how it is done, but realize that, in this way, "to you is the word of this salvation sent." Oh, that the blessed Spirit would now arrest some of you;—laying his hand of grace upon your shoulder, as the sheriff's officer does when he arrests a man in the name of the law! May the Lord say to you, "Thou art my prisoner; thou shalt give thine heart to me. Make haste, and come down, and receive me into thine heart, for there I must dwell for ever."

"Thus the eternal counsel ran,—  
'Almighty grace, arrest that man;'"—

and when the eternal counsel so runs, and the divine decree so determines, so shall it be, for the Lord God is mighty to save, and none shall be able to withstand the power of his omnipotent grace.

III. Now, thirdly, I am going to keep to the same theme, yet to touch another string, while I reply to this question,—IN WHAT POSITION DOES THE GOSPEL PLACE A MAN WHEN IT COMES TO HIM?

The word of this salvation has been sent to many of you; in what position does it put you? Well, first, *in a position of great*

*indebtedness*, for you owe—I dare not try to calculate how much—to God for sending the gospel to you. That there should be a gospel to send to you,—that Christ should be given for you,—that his precious blood should be shed for you,—that there should be full and free forgiveness for you, though you feel that you are altogether undeserving of it,—all this makes up a stupendous favour from God. May you never dare to thrust it from you!

Then think of what you owe to the providence that has sent the gospel to you. For you, dear friends, apostles lived, and laboured, and suffered, and journeyed, that even to these distant isles of Britain the gospel of Jesus might be brought. For you, Reformers battled, bled, and died, that they might dispel the darkness of error and falsehood, and bring out the light of truth. For you, the martyrs suffered by thousands. Go you to Smithfield, and recall what your brave sires endured in order that their sons might have the gospel freely preached to them,—that very gospel which many of them despise. Wonderful have been the arrangements of divine providence to keep the light of truth burning in these lands.

The fact that, at this moment, you should be hearing the gospel preached, imposes a great obligation upon you. Who built this place, but generous Christian people, for the most part? Who are even now praying for your conversion, but God's servants who love you, and desire your eternal welfare? And, though I ask no thanks of you, yet does my soul yearn over you, poor soul, longing that you may find the Saviour as I have found him, and be as happy in him as I am. Well, you cannot be thought of and loved by others thus, and you cannot have the great wheels of divine providence continually revolving to bring the gospel to you; and, above all,—transcendently above all,—you cannot have the Lord Jesus Christ bleeding on Calvary's cross that there may be a gospel to preach to you, without your being put under very solemn obligations.

Further, the fact that you have the gospel sent to you *puts you into a very hopeful position*. I like to think about how many people are going to be saved every time the gospel is faithfully preached. It is not preached in vain; we deliver a message from God that never misses the mark at which he aimed it. We are sure that it is so, for we preach it in faith. We always expect to hear of sinners being saved, and we are never disappointed, nor shall we ever be while we can preach the truth with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. It is in his power that we preach, for we have sought the aid of the Holy Ghost, and thousands of you have sought his aid, too; and we have not sought in vain, so we look for conversions, and we, therefore, feel, dear friends, that you are in a hopeful condition, and we believe that many of you will be brought to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But remember that—and here let me throw the whole emphasis of my soul into my message,—*you are put into a very responsible position*: for, if the gospel be thus brought to you, and you reject it, it will be a savour of death unto death to you. To every person to whom the word of this salvation comes, I have to say, in my

Master's name,—If thou art not saved by it, thou wilt have the blood of thy soul on thine own skirts. Woe unto you, if ye judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, and declare that ye will not have Christ to reign over you. Woe unto you if ye are disobedient, and stumble at this stumbling-stone. Ah, my dear hearers, it may seem but a trifling thing to you to hear the gospel; but this makes your position very different from what it would otherwise have been. The last great day will call me to account for every word I utter in delivering my Master's message, and it will also call each one of you to account for the reception or rejection of that message. You young men and young women, and you greybeards, will have to answer in that day, for the way you deal with the message now. You will not be able to excuse yourselves by saying, "We never did hear of pardon through the blood of Jesus." You will not be able to say, "The preacher did not proclaim the gospel to us. He gave us some fine language, and tried to play the orator, and finished off with a grand display of fireworks." You will never be able truthfully to say that. You know that there is nothing that I desire but to set Christ plainly before you, and to beseech, and entreat, and implore you to put your trust in him, for he is worthy of all the trust of your heart. So, have done with all other confidences, and with the love of sin, and lay hold on eternal life. But, whether ye will do so or not, be ye sure of this; to you is the word of this salvation sent, and the kingdom of God hath come nigh unto you.

IV. My last question is this. HOW ARE YOU GOING TO TREAT THE WORD OF THIS SALVATION, NOW THAT IT IS SENT TO YOU?

First, *are any of you going to contradict it, and blaspheme it?* I trust not, although that sin is not an uncommon one nowadays; yet I most sincerely hope that I am not addressing one who blasphemes the Christ who died for sinners; such love as his ought to be free from blasphemy.

If you do not commit that sin, I fear that you may say, as so many others have said before you, "*I will think of it to-morrow.*" You do not really mean to think of it if you talk like that. When Felix said to Paul, "Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee," what he meant was, "I do not want to listen to you any longer; you are a nuisance to me." Let me put the matter to you very plainly. You either love Christ or do not love him; which is it? That "to-morrow" plea is a false one. Satan has invented it in order that he may enable men to reject Christ, and yet flatter their souls with the notion that they are not doing so. Come, then; it may be that this is the last time you will ever be put to the question in this fashion. I have you, as it were, by the button-hole now; and, as the "Ancient Mariner" detained the wedding guest with his weird story, so would I hold you with this earnest personal pressure upon your heart and conscience. Do you mean to give Christ the go-by, or not? Remember that the bell shall toll ere long for you, and six feet of earth shall hold each one who comes to this Tabernacle, and who now sits and listens to the word of this salvation. Oh, whatever

you do, do not procrastinate! Say "No" if you mean "No." Say "Yes" if God the Holy Ghost enables you to say it; but do not say it, as some have too readily done, in certain revival services, without fully considering the matter. They have jumped into religion, and jump out again just as quickly. Like the rocky ground hearers, the seed quickly sprang up, and there was the green blade, but there was no depth of earth, so it soon withered away. Ask the Lord to plough your soul, and to break up the soil of your heart, that there may be roothold for the good seed of the kingdom.

And, in order to attain to this end, look right away from yourself to Jesus,—away from your repentings, and pleadings, and chapel-goings, and everything else, to Jesus only, with that true faith which has nothing to do with anything but the finished work of the Christ, who says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Do not trust to going into enquiry-rooms, and talking with earnest evangelists and other Christian workers. If you would be saved, your soul must come to grappling terms with Christ, and Christ must come to close terms with you; otherwise, you will be none the better for having heard the gospel. Indeed, the very fact that you have heard it will only increase your condemnation.

I think I hear someone say, "*Fain would I have him now! I would give my eyes to have him.*" Well, you need not give your eyes, or anything else; you may have him for nothing. I have told you the story of the vessel that was out at sea, as the captain thought, but he was out of his reckoning. They ran short of water, they had not a drop to drink; so at last they hailed a vessel, and speaking through the trumpet the captain cried, "We want water; we are perishing for want of water." Imagine his surprise when there came across the wave this reply, "Dip it up! You are in the river Amazon; it is fresh water all round you. Dip it up!" You perhaps think that you are out on the salt sea, but you are not; mercy is all round you. Throw your bucket overboard; dip it up! Trust in Jesus,—

"Only trust him; only trust him;  
He will save you now,  
Only trust him; only trust him;  
He will save you now."

Do you ask, "What shall I do to be saved?" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." That was Paul's answer to the question, and I cannot give you a better one. Believing does not take a week, or even a minute. Thy heart rests and relies on Christ, and Christ saves thy heart. See me leaning here, with all my weight, upon this platform rail. Lean so upon Christ, with all your weight. Have done with everything but Jesus; and when thou hast believed on him, then obey him by being baptized in his name, for he put belief and baptism together when he said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." So, accept the whole of the gospel, and keep to the command of Christ in every point, and then thou mayest look to the faithful God to fulfil his promise that thou shalt be saved. The Lord bless you, and save every one of you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.