

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE BIG GATES WIDE OPEN.

A Sermon

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"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."—John vi. 37.

A COUNTRY gentleman is expecting a number of persons to come and dine with him. He has a little side swing-gate, at the entrance to the park, through which people generally come; but, on the day when he expects company, he says to one of his men, "John, be sure that you set the big gates wide open, for we are expecting several people to come in;" and that is the order which I have received from my Master. He is expecting company. The evangelistic services in the South of London will, I trust, bring large numbers of people to feast with my Lord at his banqueting table, and I believe it is his will that I should set the big gates wide open, so that some sinners, who might be going by, would take that act as an invitation to them to come in. I feel sure that they will come in, for God is going to bring them in. He is about to stretch forth his almighty arm, and to compel them to come in, that his house may be filled. So my object, in this discourse, is to proclaim the fulness and freeness of the grace of God, in the hope that some may be led to come to Christ, and so to obtain eternal life.

But, first, our text sets before us a rather knotty point; yet it reveals to us an excellent way of untying the knot. This is the knotty point. It would seem, from the text, that the Father has given some souls to Christ; and not only from this text, but also from a great many other passages of Scripture, it is clear that God has a people whom he has chosen unto eternal life, and that Christ has redeemed a people from among men. It is no use trying to shut your eyes to this truth, as some do, for it is there; and unless we really wish to twist the plain meaning of words, and to make something out of Scripture which Scripture does not naturally teach, we shall never be able to escape from the doctrine of divine predestination,—the doctrine that God has foreordained certain people unto eternal life.

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Now, if you like, you can make any number of difficulties out of that truth. If you wish to do so, here is a whole forest before you, and you can easily find wood enough to make a gallows to hang yourself upon. It is true that, if you wish to wrest the Scriptures to your own destruction, you will have to use very bad reasoning in order to do it; but it will be no worse reasoning than many other people have used before you. It is true that everything is predestinated, and that everything that happens is ordered according to the unailing purpose and will of God; yet you will go to bed to-night, and get up to-morrow morning, and go about your business, never thinking of that predestination, but acting like people of common sense, guided by the ordinary rules of sound judgment. That is to say, you will do that in ordinary matters, but there are some of you who will not act in the same sensible way in spiritual things, but you will twist this doctrine round, and look at it in all manner of strange ways till you are dizzy with gazing at it, and trying to make some excuse out of it for not coming to Jesus Christ.

My text, however, cuts the ground from under your feet if you seek to act thus, for it tells you this, which is all you need to know,—that all who are God's chosen ones may be known by this mark, that they come to Christ, as he said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." So that those who come to Christ are God's chosen people, and those who live and die without coming to Christ are not God's people. If you come to Christ, and trust in him, you are one of those whom the Father gave to his Son. If you refuse to come to Christ,—it matters not what excuse you may make,—your blood will be upon your own head. You will perish if you do not come to Christ; and if you do not come to him, it will be because you were not one of his sheep, neither did the Father give you to Christ. Rowland Hill, when he was asked to preach only to the elect, said that he would do so if somebody would chalk them on the back. That cannot be done; but God does, in process of time, mark them all, not on the back, but on the heart. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and his faith proves that he was chosen of God to that life; but he that believeth not on the Son, if he persists in that unbelief, will assuredly perish, for there shall be no deviation from this divine declaration, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." That is the matter with which we have to deal; may God help us, like prudent men, to deal with it earnestly!

I. Leaving that knotty point altogether, I notice, in our gloriously free and open text, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," that there is A NECESSARY ACT, and that is, that we come to Christ.

Before we go any further, let me ask, "How many of us have come to Christ?" I believe that by far the larger proportion of those now present have done so, and I am grateful that I am able to believe that. If any of you, who have thought of coming to the Lord's table, have never come to Christ, I implore you not to come to the communion until you are truly converted. None have any right to the sacred emblems but those who have already enjoyed

true communion with Christ by believing in him. If you have not come to Christ, you must not act as if you had done so, for that would not benefit you, but it would insult the Lord, and bring great guilt upon your own conscience. No, brethren and sisters, we must come to Jesus Christ; that is our one business if we would be saved;—to come to Christ is not only the main point in it, but it is the top, and bottom, and midst, and whole of it.

“What is it to come to Christ?” asks someone. Here I feel a solemn trembling come over me, for, too often, in trying to explain what faith is, and what coming to Christ is, we darken counsel “by words without knowledge;” and God forbid that I should do that! Look at the words which Christ used, “Him that *cometh* to me.” He speaks of an action, a movement, but not of an action or movement of the body, for there were many who came to Christ in a physical sense, but they were not saved by such a coming as that. *This coming is an action, or movement, or turning of the mind*; you know readily enough what it is for the mind to come to such-and-such a point. But, observe that the pith of the matter lies here, “Him that *cometh* to me.” Saving faith is a coming to Christ,—to the person of Christ. It is not merely to believe that Christ is God, though you must believe that if you would be saved. It is not merely to believe that Christ is a sacrifice for sin, though you must believe that. It is not merely to believe that Christ lived, and died, and rose again for our salvation, though those three blessed facts must be believed. But it is to come unto HIM. If you had seen him when he uttered these words, perhaps you would have understood them better, for there he stood, the “Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,”—the very Person of whom John the Baptist had said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” He says, “Him that *cometh* to me I will in no wise cast out.” Everybody knows what it is for the mind to trust in a doctrine, but you will perish if you trust only to doctrine. The true way of salvation is trusting to the living person of Jesus Christ, who is the God-appointed Saviour. Perhaps some of you know what it is to trust to baptism, confirmation, sacraments, but you will perish if you trust only to them. You must come, not to them,—to sprinkling or immersion, to the mass or to the communion,—but to HIM, to the Christ who, upon the accursed tree, has made expiation for all who trust in him. You must come, by faith, to that cross, and accept him as your Substitute. He has gone up into heaven, but he is pleading there for sinners, and you must dart the eye of your mind upwards to him in such a way that you will trust in him who has risen from the dead, and gone up into the glory. That is coming to Christ,—the mind resting in his person and in his atoning sacrifice.

It is clear, too, that when we come to a certain thing, we come from something else, so that *coming to Christ implies that you leave something behind you*, and he who would be saved must leave behind him the sins he formerly loved. He must come to the holy Saviour to be himself made holy; he must come to sit at Jesu's feet, to learn his commands, and to be willing to do them. Jesus Christ will not

save any man who abides *in* his sins; he came to save his people *from* their sins. The salvation of Jesus Christ is a salvation, not merely from the guilt and the penalty of sin, but from the sin itself, from the foulness and degradation of it. If we would come to Christ, we must come away from sin. Repentance must make us turn from sin, and faith must make us turn to Christ; and we must also come away from self-righteousness if we are to come to Christ. It is very difficult for some people to part with their self-righteousness. They have looked in the glass till they are in love with themselves, and they cannot bear to be separated from their beloved self. They feel so good, so proper, so respectable, so excellent, so amiable, so lovely, and so dear to themselves that they would fain hang about the neck of their self-righteousness, and embrace it as long as they can. But, sirs, you must come away from it; you must learn to look at it as a loathsome thing, and such it would appear to you if you could see it in the light in which God sees it; and you must give up every trust except trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. This, then, is coming to him,—coming away from your sinful self and your righteous self, and putting your trust alone in the one great Surety and Substitute for sinners.

When we come to a person, in the full sense of the word come, we also stay with that person. If I walk past a man in the street, I have certainly come to him in a sense; but I have also gone beyond him, and so I have gone from him; and *when a soul really comes to Christ, that soul stops with Christ, and rests in him.* Does it not want anything else? No. Surely it wants some more holiness? No. Does it not want a fuller pardon? No. Does it not want additional support? No. Does it not need some addition to its robe of righteousness? No. Does it not need another washing? No, for the apostle says to those who have come to Christ, “Ye are complete in him.” Having come to him, you stop with him, and rest in him. The saved soul does not take temporary lodgings with Christ, but abides in him.

Now, dear friends, I cannot put this question personally to every one of you, but you can each one put it to yourselves, “Have you come to Jesus Christ?” That is to say, is he your only confidence, or have you any other hope? Are you trusting in Jesus Christ alone? If so, you have come to him, and the promise in the text is yours: “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

II. This brings us to the next point, which is, A NEEDLESS FEAR BANISHED.

There are some persons, who say that they would fain come to Christ, but they fear that, if they did come to him, he would reject them. Ask them why, and one of them says, “*I am too old to come to Christ.*” Will you kindly read the text, my venerable friend? “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Now, if Christ cast out anyone who came to him because he was too old, the text would not be true. There is nothing written between the lines; you may look as long as you like, but you will not find there anything like this, “Him that cometh to me up to seventy-five years of age, I will in no wise cast out.” Christ says nothing

of the kind. If you were a hundred years old,—if you were two hundred,—it would make no difference to him; he would still say, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

Perhaps another says, “*I am too young to come to Christ.*” Possibly there are some children here who have had the thought in their minds, “We are too young to come to Christ.” But that cannot be, for he said, “They that seek me early shall find me;” and he also said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.” You cannot possibly be too young to come to Christ, for he says, “Him that cometh to me”—and he intends that the youngest one who comes should be included,—“I will in no wise cast out.”

Many persons, however, see no difficulty so far as their age is concerned, but they suppose that there is some difficulty because of their position. “May I come?” asks one, “*I am so very poor.*” The poorer you are, the more welcome you are to come. There is not a syllable here about property; Christ simply says, “Him that cometh to me.” It does not matter though you come in rags, or though you come in the workhouse suit; whatever your outward apparel may be is of no consequence to our blessed Lord. Though you are as poor as poverty itself, if anybody has any preference, I think that you will be all the more welcome to Jesus Christ because of that very poverty, for of old it was specially mentioned that the poor had the gospel preached to them, and God has often chosen the poor of this world, and made them, by his grace, rich in faith. Come along with you, my poor brother or sister.

“Oh!” says another, “but it is not poverty that is the difficulty with me, it is *my want of education.*” Well, my friend, I am very sorry for you if you cannot read or write; that is a misfortune for you in many ways, but it has nothing to do with your salvation. I should think that there were very few of the early Christians who could read or write. Certainly, those who put up the inscriptions over the tombs in the Catacombs made all sorts of mistakes in spelling and grammar, and I suppose that they were as well educated as the most of the Christians who were buried there. What has the gospel of Christ to do with education? You do not need a degree from a university,—you do not need to be a master of arts, or a bachelor of arts, in order to find Christ. Knowledge sometimes misleads in spiritual things. I would not commend ignorance; but, certainly, it is a fact that the shepherds of Bethlehem, when they wanted to see the newborn King, went straight to him, but the wise men from the East went a long way round before they came to him. Augustine used to say, “While Pharisees and philosophers are fumbling to find the latch of God’s door, the poor and illiterate have entered into the kingdom of heaven.” If thou didst but believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and didst but rest thyself wholly upon him, even if thou wert half an idiot, Christ would not cast thee out. Yea, if there were only a faint glimmer of intelligence within thy soul, yet if there were enough to catch the flame of faith, thou wouldst be saved; so let not that matter keep any of you back.

“Ah!” says another, “I should not be kept back by such a thing as that, but *it is my past character that is my hindrance.*” Well, dear friend, I will not enquire into your past character, but will take it for granted that it has been as bad as it could be; yet, even then, what does Christ say in our text? Does he say anything about character? No; he simply says, “Him that cometh to me;” and if the person, who comes to him, should have committed every crime of which it is possible for humanity to be guilty, my text would not allow even him to be excluded. I do bless my Lord and Master that he did not put any exclusions or exceptions here. Neither thief, nor drunkard, nor harlot, nor adulterer, nor even murderer is shut out here: “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” So it stands, and so it shall remain. If he will but come to Christ, he cannot be cast out on account of his sins; but his sins, which are many, shall all be forgiven him; he shall be pressed to the heart of everlasting love, and the kiss of pardon shall be imprinted upon his cheek.

I fancy that I hear someone else say, “I have not been guilty of any of those gross sins. I have almost wished—though perhaps it is a wicked wish,—that I had been, for then I think I could feel more than I do now. Through the gracious arrangements of providence, I have been kept from gross outward sin, and *I cannot feel what I want to feel of repentance.*” No, dear friend, but the Lord does not ask you to repent of sins that you have not committed. Just look at what you have done, and do not wish that your sin was any greater than it is, for that would be indeed a wrong thing. “I do look at what I have done,” says one, “yet I cannot repent.” And do you expect to repent before you come to Christ? Is that your idea of the gospel plan? The gospel, as I understand it, is,—to quote Joseph Hart’s well-known lines,—

“True belief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings us nigh,
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”

I remember also that Peter said to the high priest, concerning Christ, “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give (mark that term, *to give*) repentance.” It is not for you to bring it to him, but to come to him for it. Some of you have been looking to the law to make you conscious of your sin. Do you not know that—

“Law and terrors do but harden
All the while they work alone”?

But if you will come to Jesus, and trust in him, then—

“A sense of blood-bought pardon
Will dissolve the heart of stone.”

You are to trust Jesus for a new heart, for repentance, for a tender conscience; if you cannot come to him *with* them, come to him *for* them. O ye broken-hearted, come to Christ, but do not plead

your broken hearts; and you, who want to have your hearts broken, come to Christ to break them! He is able, with the mighty hammer of his gospel grace, to break the heart of stone.

"Ah!" says another, "I believe I have come to Christ; I know that I do wish to have him as my only trust, but *I have not the experience that I have read about in others*. I have read of some people being dreadfully cut up, distressed, and alarmed under a sense of sin, but I have not been like that." Who ever said that you should be? Listen again to the text, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Does Christ say anything about experience, and law-work, and all that sort of thing? Blessed be God, though men may set up those barriers around the cross of Christ, the Lord has not set them up. If you come to him, if you are trusting in him, whatever your experience may be or may not be, he will not—he cannot—cast you out. There are certain preachers whom I have heard, who seem to me to be wonderfully busy trying to shut sinners out of the kingdom. They are terribly afraid that more people should get saved than ought to be. They look upon heaven as a sort of close borough, into which a certain number of £10 householders may be admitted, but nobody else will. They are dreadfully afraid lest there should be found, in the heavenly fold, one that is not the Lord Jesus Christ's sheep. Such a fear as that never yet penetrated my heart; I do bless his name that I have an ardent longing that many may come to Jesus, and I think that kind of spirit ought to be in all Christians, for Christ's words suggest it: "Him that cometh to me"—not one special sort of "him" or any other sort, but any "him" who comes, whoever he may be,— "I will in no wise cast out."

"Ah!" says another, "but *I have such a little faith*." Bless God that you have even a little. Have I not often told you that, if you have only starlight, you should bless God for it, and he will give you moonlight; and if you have moonlight, and bless God for it, he will give you daylight? Be thankful for any genuine faith that you possess. Does Christ say, "Him that cometh to me with a great faith"? Nay, brethren, if you come to Christ with only a grain of faith in your heart, the text must shut you in, it cannot shut you out. Do but come to Christ, do but trust in him, and, however feeble your faith, if it be but sincere faith in Jesus, you are saved by him, for he is all your salvation and all your desire. It is not the strength of your faith that saves you, but the strength of him upon whom you rely; Christ is able to save you if you come to him, be your faith weak or be it strong.

"But," I think I hear another say, "*I am afraid I am not one of the elect*." I have already answered that objection; if you believe in Jesus Christ, you *are* one of the elect. Beyond all doubt, if you come to him, he cannot shut you out because of some secret reason, for he has said, "I will in no wise" that is, for no reason, and in no way, and never,— "cast you out." Therefore, there cannot be any secret reason, in that unopened book of destiny, for your being shut out. If you do but come to Christ, he must receive you, or he will have broken his word, and that he can never do.

"But," says another, "*if I came to Christ, I should never hold on to him.*" That is very likely, but suppose he held you on, what then? "Ah, but I should not have the strength to persevere." But suppose that nobody, on earth or in hell, can separate you from him, for "he keepeth the feet of his saints," what then? Suppose, when you come to him, he says to you, "I give unto you eternal life, and you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of my hands." Why, soul, as you have not to take the first step in salvation of yourself without Christ, so you have not to take the second, or the third, or the fourth, or any other step; you must rest only in him for the whole of the way between here and heaven. I believe that, if you and I were to get as far as the very doorstep of heaven, if we were to get our fingers on the latch of the gate, we should never get in if the grace of God did not take us the last inch of the way. But, then, the grace of God *will* do this. Trust you in Jesus, for—

"His honour is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep;
All that his heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep.

"Nor death, nor hell, shall e'er remove
His favourites from his breast;
In the dear bosom of his love
They must for ever rest."

So, any "him" in all the world, and any "her" also, if they do but come to Christ, shall not be cast out.

III. We have seen, in the text, first, a necessary act; and, next, a needless fear banished; now we are to see A MOST REASONABLE CONFIDENCE SUGGESTED.

I hope that there are many here who desire to be saved. If so, let them remember what the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." I trust that you all understand that the whole process of salvation, so far as you are concerned, is for you to give up every reliance except reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ and his finished work. It has been often said that there are but two steps to heaven, and that those two are but one,—out of self and into Christ. If you are, at this moment, holding on to any other confidence, I pray you to let go of it, and drop into the arms of Jesus, and know—for God has said it,—that the instant you believe in Jesus, you are saved; there is conferred upon you a share in the divine life which will never die out. At the same moment, there is taken from you the whole mass of your sin, so that it cannot condemn you, and will never return upon you. There is also imputed to you a perfect righteousness which shall never be taken from you, and in this spotless robe you may boldly stand even at the last great judgment day.

Can we not all come, just now, and trust Jesus Christ? I mean not only you who have never trusted Christ before, but I would fain hope that all of us, who have believed in Jesus Christ, would

begin trusting in him again. I wonder how many times I have had to begin my spiritual life over again at the foot of the cross. I am always doing it, and I am never so happy, so safe, or, I believe, so holy, as when I stand just as I did at first, at the foot of the cross, and look up, and say to my dear Lord and Saviour,—

“Nothing in my hands I bring:
Simply to thy cross I cling.”

If any brother thinks that he has become perfect, he can appear in that character better than I can, for I cannot go to God in that fashion. The moment I think I am getting on in “the higher life”, if I go back to the cross, my “higher life” all vanishes. In fact, I have no “higher life.” I have nothing but what Christ gives me; I am a wretched, miserable beggar, dependent upon him for everything, and I am never so right before him as when I feel that it is so, and just look to him as I did when I first came to him, and put my trust in him. Some brethren have a dreadful tumble down, because they have been building up their pretty little fancied experiences something like an erection that I have seen on the top of a mountain. Certain people always want to see a little further than anyone else can, so they build up a little wooden platform, and stand on that; it is, no doubt, very delightful to stand up there, and feel that you are so many feet higher than anybody else. But that platform gets rotten in time, and all of a sudden it breaks, and all on it come down with it, and they are very apt to say that the mountain itself is crumbling. Nonsense, the mountain is all right, but you tried to get above the mountain. If you had kept down where you ought to have been,—on the granite rock,—you would not have tumbled. I charge every child of God to strive after perfect holiness with all his might, but never to think that he has got any further than this, “Jesus Christ is All-in-all to me, and I am just nothing at all apart from him; on him do I hang, and in him alone do I trust.”

The comfortable assurance of the text is this, “*If Jesus Christ will not cast me out, he will take me in.*” He must do either the one or the other, there is no middle course. I never read of anybody but those he blesses and those he curses,—those to whom he is a saviour of life, and those to whom he is a saviour of death. Then, as I just said, if he will not cast me out, I know what he will do, he will take me in, he will wash me, he will cleanse me, he will clothe me, he will feed me, he will reveal himself to me, he will make me his brother and his friend, he will keep me in life, and keep me in death, and bring me to be with him where he is, that I may behold his glory.

Now, who will begin with Jesus, or begin again with Jesus? By his grace, I will. Saviour, I have no confidence but in thy precious blood. I have preached thy gospel for many a year, and, by so doing, have been the means of bringing many sinners to thyself; but this I count less than nothing as the groundwork of my hope of eternal life. For that, I rest on thee, and on thee alone.

Now, sinners, come along, and may the Holy Spirit graciously

lead you to do as we are doing now. And then, as you go your way, each one of you can say, "He will never cast me out, for I have come to him." Trust Jesus, I implore you. He is worthy of your trust, for he is the Son of God, and he has died to put away the guilt of all who trust him. I wish someone would say, "I have tried to save myself, but I cannot do it; I will trust him to do it, and I believe that he can, and that he will." Ah, my friend, you will never be disappointed if you make such a blessed resolve as that. May God, by his grace, enable you to do it, and to him shall be praise for ever and ever. Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ISAIAH LV.

Verse 1. *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.*

The description of gospel blessings grows sweeter as it advances. "Waters" first, "wine and milk" next, and still all "without money and without price."

2. *Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*

All your largest desires can long for you will find in Christ; you shall have not only necessaries, but delicacies, delights that shall satisfy you to the full; you shall not be able to conceive of anything that shall be more rich and full than the grace of God.

3. *Incline your ear, and come unto me;*

This is the gate by which salvation enters into man,—Ear gate; by hearing and believing: "Incline your ear," bend it forward as if you would catch every word; "and come unto me:—"

3. *Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.*

Only think of a covenant made with needy sinners, thirsty sinners, God striking hands with guilty men in the person of Jesus Christ. It is a sure covenant, too; not made up of "ifs" and "buts" and "peradventures";—but a covenant sealed with blood, and signed by him who gives an oath with it that he will never turn from it, that you may have "strong consolation."

4. *Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.*

He who is our greater David comes to us to bear witness of the immutable love of God, and to be to us our Captain and our King. Happy are the souls that accept this David to be their Leader. You remember how David, in the cave Adullam, gathered to himself "every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, and he became a captain over them." Even so, the great Antitype, David's Son and David's Lord, is willing now to gather to himself those who are spiritually bankrupt, discontented, and weary with the world, and God says, "I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people."