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## THE GOSPEL

#198

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# A REPORT FROM HEAVEN

Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

**T**HE Gospel is a report from heaven to be believed and trusted to for salvation. *First*, we shall view the Gospel in the nature of a report in general. And,

**1. There is the *subject* of a report or the thing that is reported, viz.,<sup>1</sup> some design, action, or event, true or false.** The subject of the Gospel report is a love-design in God for the salvation of sinners of mankind (2Ti 1:9-10). Such was the Gospel report that was first made in the world (Gen 3:15). It is the report of an act of grace and kindness in God, in favor of them, whereby He has given them His Son for a Savior (Joh 3:16; Isa 9:6) and eternal life in Him (1Jo 5:11). The report of the event of Christ's dying for sinners and a crucified Christ's being ready for marriage with sinners (Mat 22:4), [which is] a subject of the utmost importance.

**2. There is the place whence the report originally comes.** And the place here is heaven, the bosom of the Father. Hence, the Gospel is called "heavenly things" (Joh 3:12), revealed from the bosom of the Father. The original place of a report is the place of the transaction, and that at some distance from where it is reported. So,

(1) *The Gospel is a report from heaven, where the design of love was contrived, the gift of the Son was made, and from whence He came to die for sinners, and where He is ready to match<sup>2</sup> with them.* The Gospel may come from one place of the earth to another, as it did from Jerusalem to other places of the world (Isa 2:3; Luk 24:47). But it came from heaven originally (Luk 2:13-14).

(2) *The Gospel is good news from a far country, and so should be as acceptable as cold water to the thirsty (Pro 25:25).* The farther off a country is from whence a report comes, we think ourselves the less concerned in it; and so do carnal men treat the Gospel report. Far indeed it is. But as far as it is, we must spend our eternity in it or else in hell; and therefore it does most nearly concern us.

**3. The matter of a report is something unseen to them to whom the report is made.** And so is the matter of the Gospel report. It is an unseen God (Joh 1:18); an unseen Savior (1Pe 1:8); and unseen things (2Co 4:18) that are preached unto you by the Gospel. So the Gospel is an object of faith, not of sight (Heb 11:1). We receive it by hearing, not by seeing (Isa 55:3). It is not what we credit on our eyesight, but upon the testimony of another, viz., of God. Hence, the carnal world are fond of seen objects (Psa 4:6), but slow to believe the Gospel.

**4. There is a reporter or reporters.** And in this case, the report is made by many. But,

(1) *The first-hand reporter is an eyewitness, viz., Jesus Christ.* Christ Himself was the raiser of the report of the Gospel (Heb 2:3). And who else could have been so (Joh 1:18)? What He reported, He saw and gives us His testimony of the truth of it on His eyesight (Joh 3:11). Hence, He is proposed to us as the Faithful and True Witness (Rev 3:14), Who was from eternity privy<sup>3</sup> to the whole design revealed to us in the Gospel.

(2) *The prophets, apostles, and ministers of the Gospel.* They are the secondhand reporters. The former had it immediately from Christ, the latter from them again...

**5. Lastly, there is a manifestation of the thing by the report to the parties to whom the report is made.** So is the grace of God to poor sinners, manifested to them by the Gospel (2Ti 1:9, 10). It is no more kept a secret from them, but they are let into the knowledge of the design, action, and events that concern their salvation. The Gospel opens up and reveals the secret of God's grace to sinners with the method of communicating it, even the whole plan of salvation, which from eternity was hid in the breast of God (Joh 1:18)...

We shall consider the report of the Gospel and the trusting to it conjunctly:<sup>4</sup>

**1. The Gospel is a report from heaven of salvation for poor sinners from sin (Mat 1:21) and from the wrath of God (Joh 3:16).** [It is] dear bought, yet freely made over to you in the word of promise, so as that ye may freely take

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<sup>1</sup> viz. – Latin for *videlicet*: that is; namely.

<sup>2</sup> match – join in companionship.

<sup>3</sup> privy – made a participant in knowledge of something private or secret.

<sup>4</sup> conjunctly – joined together.

possession of it (Isa 55:1). This report being brought to the sinner, faith trusts it as a true report, believing that God has said it and trusts to it as good, laying our own salvation upon it. So the soul greedily embraceth the Savior, and the salvation brought to it in that report, as ever a drowning man would take hold of a rope let down to bring him out of the waters.

**2. The Gospel is the report of a crucified Christ made over to sinners as the device of heaven for their salvation.** It is proclaimed by the authority of heaven that Christ has died and by His death purchased life and salvation for lost children of Adam and that they and every one of them may have full and free access to Him (Mat 22:4). Faith trusting this report as good and true, the soul concludes, “The Savior is mine,” and leans on Him for all the purchase of His death, for life and salvation to itself in particular (1Co 2:2).

**3. The Gospel is the report of a righteousness wherein we guilty ones may stand before a holy God.** “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith” (Rom 1:17). And by faith, one believes there is such righteousness, that it is sufficient to cover him, and that is held out to him to be trusted on for righteousness. And so the believer trusts it as his righteousness in the sight of God, disclaiming all other, and betaking himself to it alone (Gal 2:16).

**4. The Gospel is the report of a pardon under the great seal of heaven, in Christ, to all who will take it in Him.** “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things” (Act 13:38-39). This pardon is proclaimed openly by the authority of heaven, full and free, without exception of any of lost Adam’s race, to whom the report comes. The soul by faith believes this to be true and applies it to itself, saying, “This pardon is for me! It is good and suitable to my case. I will therefore lean to this word of grace for my pardon and come in, for this is the Word of God that cannot lie.”

**5. The Gospel is the report of a Physician that cures *infallibly* all the diseases of the soul (Mat 9:12-13; Heb 7:26), and *freely* (Hos 14:4), and *rejects no patients* (Joh 6:37).** The soul believes it, applies it to its own case, and says, “Then I will trust Him for the removing the stony heart out of my flesh, for curing me of the falling evil of backsliding, the fever of raging corruption, the running issue of the predominant lust, and the universal leprosy of the corruption of my nature.”

**6. The Gospel is the report of a feast for hungry souls (Isa 25:6), to which all are bid welcome, Christ Himself being the Maker and Matter of it too (Isa 55:2).** The soul, weary of the husks of created things and believing this report, accordingly falls a-feeding on Christ—His flesh which is meat indeed and His blood which is drink indeed—believing and applying to itself all that Christ was, did, and suffered, as that whereof the soul shall reap the benefit, which is the feeding by faith on a slain Savior.

**7. The Gospel is the report of a treasure (2Cor 4:7).** In it are the precious promises—within them precious Christ with His merit—like the gold mentioned: “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich” (Rev 3:18). The field it is hid in may be yours (Mat 13:44); the Gospel offers you the covenant as that field. Faith believes the report; and the soul lays hold on the covenant and trusts entirely to the treasure hid there for the payment of all its debt, for its through-bearing<sup>5</sup> during life, and through death, and for procuring it eternal happiness.

**8. The Gospel is the report of a victory won by Jesus Christ over sin, Satan, death, and the world,** and that [for the benefit] of all that will join the glorious Conqueror (Psa 98:1). Faith believes this report; and the soul trusts to it for its victory over all these as already foiled enemies (1Jo 5:4). To name no more,

**9. Lastly, the Gospel is the report of a peace purchased by the blood of Christ for poor sinners (Eph. 2:14)...**Faith believes it; and trusting to it, the soul comes before God as a reconciled Father in Christ, brings in its supplications for supply before the throne, believing the communication to be opened betwixt heaven and them...

**USE:** This shows that the Gospel is the means of divine appointment for the salvation of sinners. Therefore, it is called “the gospel of our salvation” (Eph 1:13), and [it] “bringeth salvation” (Ti 2:11). The light of nature is not the external means or instrument of salvation, for it brings no report of Christ (Act 4:12). The Law is not it either—it is the ministration of death and condemnation (2Co 3:7, 9)—but the Gospel only. For it is in the Gospel only that a

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<sup>5</sup> through-bearing – support; livelihood.

righteousness is revealed for the unrighteous (Rom 1:16-17), and in which the Spirit is conveyed to dead sinners (Gal 3:2). To slight the Gospel, then, is to slight the only means of salvation...Wherefore know, that your life lies here, and that there is no salvation but in the way of trusting to the report of the Gospel.

From "The Unsuccessfulness of the Gospel..." in *The Complete Works of Thomas Boston*, Vol. 10, reprinted by Richard Owen Roberts, Publishers.

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**Thomas Boston** (1676-1732): Scottish Presbyterian minister and scholar; author of *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State* (1720) and many other treatises and sermons. Born in Duns, Berwickshire, Scotland.

## WHAT IS THE GOSPEL MESSAGE?

J. I. Packer

**I**N a word, the evangelistic message is the Gospel of Christ and Him crucified, the message of man's sin and God's grace, of human guilt and divine forgiveness, of new birth and new life through the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a message made up of four essential ingredients.

**1. The Gospel is a message about God.** It tells us who He is, what His character is, what His standards are, and what He requires of us, His creatures. It tells us that we owe our very existence to Him; that for good or ill, we are always in His hands and under His eye; and that He made us to worship and serve Him, to show forth His praise and to live for His glory. These truths are the foundation of theistic<sup>6</sup> religion; and until they are grasped, the rest of the Gospel message will seem neither cogent<sup>7</sup> nor relevant. It is here with the assertion of man's complete and constant dependence on his Creator that the Christian story starts.

We can learn again from Paul at this point. When preaching to Jews, as at Pisidian Antioch, he did not need to mention the fact that men were God's creatures. He could take this knowledge for granted, for his hearers had the Old Testament faith behind them. He could begin at once to declare Christ to them as the fulfillment of Old Testament hopes. But when preaching to Gentiles, who knew nothing of the Old Testament, Paul had to go further back and start from the beginning. And the beginning from which Paul started in such cases was the doctrine of God's Creatorship and man's creaturehood. So, when the Athenians asked him to explain what his talk of Jesus and the resurrection was all about, he spoke to them first of God the Creator and what He made man for. "God...made the world...seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made...all nations...that they should seek the Lord" (Act 17:24-27). This was not, as some have supposed, a piece of philosophical apologetic<sup>8</sup> of a kind that Paul afterwards renounced, but the first and basic lesson in theistic faith. The Gospel starts by teaching us that we, as creatures, are absolutely dependent on God, and that He, as Creator, has an absolute claim on us. Only when we have learned this can we see what sin is, and only when we see what sin is can we understand the good news of salvation *from* sin. We must know what it means to call God *Creator* before we can grasp what it means to speak of Him as *Redeemer*. Nothing can be achieved by talking about sin and salvation where this preliminary lesson has not in some measure been learned.

**2. The Gospel is a message about sin.** It tells us how we have fallen short of God's standard, how we have become guilty, filthy, and helpless in sin, and now stand under the wrath of God. It tells us that the reason why we sin continually is that we are sinners by nature, and that nothing we do or try to do for ourselves can put us right or bring us back into God's favor. It shows us ourselves as God sees us and teaches us to think of ourselves as God thinks of us. Thus, it leads us to self-despair. And this also is a necessary step. Not until we have learned our need

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<sup>6</sup> **theistic** – believing in a personal Creator and Ruler of the world.

<sup>7</sup> **cogent** – appealing to the powers of reasoning; convincing.

<sup>8</sup> **apologetic** – defensive method of argument.

to get right with God and our inability to do so by any effort of our own can we come to know the Christ Who saves from sin.

There is a pitfall here. Everybody's life includes things that cause dissatisfaction and shame. Everyone has a bad conscience about some things in his past, matters in which he has fallen short of the standard that he set for himself or that was expected of him by others. The danger is that in our evangelism we should content ourselves with evoking thoughts of these things and making people feel uncomfortable about them, and then depicting Christ as the One who saves us from these elements of ourselves, without even raising the question of our relationship with God. But this is just the question that has to be raised when we speak about sin. For the very idea of sin in the Bible is of an offence against God that disrupts a man's relationship with God. *Unless we see our shortcomings in the light of the Law and holiness of God, we do not see them as sin at all.* For sin is not a social concept; it is a *theological* concept. Though sin is committed by man, and many sins are against society, *sin cannot be defined in terms of either man or society.* We never know what sin really is until we have learned to think of it in terms of God and to measure it, not by human standards, but by the yardstick of His total demand on our lives.

What we have to grasp, then, is that the bad conscience of the natural man is not at all the same thing as conviction of sin. It does not, therefore, follow that a man is convicted of sin when he is distressed about his weaknesses and the wrong things he has done. It is not conviction of sin just to feel miserable about yourself, your failures, and your inadequacy to meet life's demands. Nor would it be saving faith if a man in that condition called on the Lord Jesus Christ just to soothe him, and cheer him up, and make him feel confident again. Nor should we be preaching the Gospel (though we might imagine we were) if all that we did was to present Christ in terms of a man's felt wants: "Are you happy? Are you satisfied? Do you want peace of mind? Do you feel that you have failed? Are you fed up with yourself? Do you want a friend? Then come to Christ; He will meet your every need"—as if the Lord Jesus Christ were to be thought of as a fairy godmother or a super-psychiatrist...To be convicted of sin means not just to feel that one is an all-round flop, but to realize that one has offended God, and flouted<sup>9</sup> His authority, and defied Him, and gone against Him, and put oneself in the wrong with Him. To preach Christ means to set Him forth as the One Who through His cross sets men right with God again...

It is indeed true that the real Christ, the Christ of the Bible, Who [reveals] Himself to us as a Savior from sin and an Advocate with God, does in fact give peace, and joy, and moral strength, and the privilege of His own friendship to those who trust Him. But the Christ who is depicted and desired merely to make the lot of life's casualties easier by supplying them with aids and comforts is not the real Christ, but a misrepresented and misconceived Christ—in effect, *an imaginary Christ.* And if we taught people to look to an imaginary Christ, we should have no grounds for expecting that they would find a real salvation. We must be on our guard, therefore, against equating a natural bad conscience and sense of wretchedness with spiritual conviction of sin and so omitting in our evangelism to impress upon sinners the basic truth about their condition—namely, that their sin has alienated them from God and exposed them to His condemnation, and hostility, and wrath, so that their first need is for a restored relationship with Him...

**3. The Gospel is a message about Christ**—Christ, the Son of God incarnate; Christ, the Lamb of God, dying for sin; Christ, the risen Lord; Christ, the perfect Savior.

Two points need to be made about the declaring of this part of the message: **(i) *We must not present the Person of Christ apart from His saving work.*** It is sometimes said that it is the presentation of Christ's Person, rather than of doctrines about Him, that draws sinners to His feet. It is true that it is the living Christ Who saves and that a theory of the atonement, however orthodox, is no substitute. When this remark is made, however, what is usually being suggested is that doctrinal instruction is dispensable in evangelistic preaching, and that all the evangelist need do is paint a vivid word-picture of the man of Galilee who went about doing good, and then assure his hearers that this Jesus is still alive to help them in their troubles. *But such a message could hardly be called the Gospel.* It would, in reality, be a mere conundrum,<sup>10</sup> serving only to mystify...*the truth is that you cannot make sense of the historic figure of Jesus until you know about the Incarnation*—that this Jesus was in fact God the Son, made man to save sinners according to His Father's eternal purpose. Nor can you make sense of His life until you know about the atonement—that He lived as man so that He might die as man for men, and that His passion, His judicial murder

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<sup>9</sup> **flouted** – mocked; showed contempt.

<sup>10</sup> **conundrum** – a puzzling question or problem.

was really His saving action of bearing away the world's sins. Nor can you tell on what terms to approach Him now until you know about the resurrection, ascension, and heavenly session—that Jesus has been raised, and enthroned, and made King, and lives to save to the uttermost all who acknowledge His Lordship. These doctrines, to mention no others, are essential to the Gospel...In fact, without these doctrines you would have no Gospel to preach at all.

*(ii) But there is a second and complementary point: we must not present the saving work of Christ apart from His Person.* Evangelistic preachers and personal workers have sometimes been known to make this mistake. In their concern to focus attention on the atoning death of Christ as the sole sufficient ground on which sinners may be accepted with God, they have expounded the summons to saving faith in these terms: “Believe that Christ died for your sins.” The effect of this exposition is to represent the saving work of Christ in the past, dissociated from His Person in the present, as the whole object of our trust. But it is not biblical thus to isolate the work from the Worker. *Nowhere in the New Testament is the call to believe expressed in such terms.* What the New Testament calls for is faith *in (en) or into (eis) or upon (epi)* Christ Himself—the placing of our trust in the living Savior Who died for sins. The object of saving faith is thus not, strictly speaking, the atonement, *but the Lord Jesus Christ, Who made atonement.* We must not, in presenting the Gospel, isolate the cross and its benefits from the Christ Whose cross it was. For the persons to whom the benefits of Christ's death belong are just those who trust His Person and believe, not upon His saving death simply, but upon Him, the living Savior. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” said Paul (Act 16:31). “Come unto me...and I will give you rest,” said our Lord (Mat 11:28).

This being so, one thing becomes clear straight away: namely, that the question about the extent of the atonement, which is being much agitated in some quarters, has no bearing on the content of the evangelistic message at this particular point. I do not propose to discuss this question now; I have done that elsewhere.<sup>11</sup> I am not at present asking you whether you think it is true to say that Christ died in order to save every single human being, past, present, and future, or not. Nor am I at present inviting you to make up your mind on this question, if you have not done so already. All I want to say here is that even if you think the above assertion is true, your presentation of Christ in evangelism ought not to differ from that of the man who thinks it false.

What I mean is this: it is obvious that if a preacher thought that the statement, “Christ died for every one of you,” made to any congregation, would be unverifiable and probably not true, he would take care not to make it in his Gospel preaching. You do not find such statements in the sermons of, for instance, George Whitefield<sup>12</sup> or Charles Spurgeon. But now, my point is that, even if a man thinks that this statement would be true if he made it, it is not a thing that he ever needs to say or ever has reason to say when preaching the Gospel. For preaching the Gospel, as we have just seen, means [calling] sinners to come to Jesus Christ, the living Savior, Who, by virtue of His atoning death, is able to forgive and save all those who put their trust in Him. What has to be said about the cross when preaching the Gospel is simply that Christ's death is the ground on which Christ's forgiveness is given. And this is all that has to be said. The question of the designed extent of the atonement does not come into the story at all...*The fact is that the New Testament never calls on any man to repent on the ground that Christ died specifically and particularly for him.*

The Gospel is not, “Believe that Christ died for everybody's sins, and therefore for yours,” any more than it is, “Believe that Christ died only for certain people's sins, and so perhaps not for yours”...We have no business to ask them to put faith in any view of the extent of the atonement. Our job is to point them to the living Christ, and summon them to trust in Him...This brings us to the final ingredient in the Gospel message.

**4. The Gospel is a summons to faith and repentance.** All who hear the Gospel are summoned by God to repent and believe. “God...commandeth all men every where to repent,” Paul told the Athenians (Act 17:30). When asked by His hearers what they should do in order to “work the works of God,” our Lord replied, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (Joh 6:29). And in 1 John 3:23 we read: “This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ...”

Repentance and faith are rendered matters of duty by God's direct command, and hence impenitence<sup>13</sup> and unbelief are singled out in the New Testament as most grievous sins. With these universal commands, as we

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<sup>11</sup> *Introductory Essay* available as a small booklet from Chapel Library.

<sup>12</sup> **George Whitefield** (1714-1770) – the best-known evangelist of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>13</sup> **impenitence** – hardness of heart; unrepentant.

indicated above, go universal promises of salvation to all who obey them. “Through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Act 10:43). “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev 22:17). “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Joh 3:16). These words are promises to which God will stand as long as time shall last.

It needs to be said that faith is not a mere optimistic feeling, any more than repentance is a mere regretful or remorseful feeling. Faith and repentance are both acts, and acts of the whole man...faith is essentially the casting and resting of oneself and one’s confidence on the promises of mercy which Christ has given to sinners, and on the Christ Who gave those promises. Equally, repentance is more than just sorrow for the past; repentance is a change of mind and heart, a new life of denying self and serving the Savior as King in self’s place...Two further points need to be made also:

(i) *The demand is for faith as well as repentance.* It is not enough to resolve to turn from sin, give up evil habits, and try to put Christ’s teaching into practice by being religious and doing all possible good to others. Aspiration,<sup>14</sup> and resolution, and morality, and religiosity,<sup>15</sup> are no substitutes for faith...*If there is to be faith, however, there must be a foundation of knowledge:* a man must know of Christ, and of His cross, and of His promises before saving faith becomes a possibility for him. In our presentation of the Gospel, therefore, we need to stress these things, in order to lead sinners to abandon all confidence in themselves and to trust wholly in Christ and the power of His redeeming blood to give them acceptance with God. For nothing less than this is faith.

(ii) *The demand is for repentance as well as faith...*If there is to be repentance, however, there must, again, be a foundation of knowledge...More than once, Christ deliberately called attention to the radical break with the past that repentance involves. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me...whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Mat 16:24-25). “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also (i.e., put them all decisively second in his esteem), he cannot be my disciple...whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luk 14:26, 33). The repentance that Christ requires of His people consists in a settled refusal to set any limit to the claims that He may make on their lives...He had no interest in gathering vast crowds of professed adherents who would melt away as soon as they found out what following Him actually demanded of them. In our own presentation of Christ’s Gospel, therefore, we need to lay a similar stress on the cost of following Christ, and make sinners face it soberly before we urge them to respond to the message of free forgiveness. In common honesty, we must not conceal the fact that free forgiveness in one sense will cost everything; or else our evangelizing becomes a sort of confidence trick. And where there is no clear knowledge, and hence no realistic recognition of the real claims that Christ makes, there can be no repentance, and therefore no salvation.

Such is the evangelistic message that we are sent to make known.

From *Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God* by J. I. Packer. Copyright (c) 1961  
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**J. I. Packer:** Anglican theologian; born in Gloucestershire, England.

☞ Chapel Library deeply appreciates Dr. Packer’s early writings for their sound Biblical content, their Christ-centered focus, and the encouragement they have been to God’s people. However, our readers must understand that our using this article is in no way an endorsement of Dr. Packer’s involvement with Evangelicals and Catholics Together. We pray that Dr. Packer will rethink his position, repent of his involvement with ECT, and return to a defense of the Gospel that he ably proclaims in this article. ☞

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<sup>14</sup> **aspiration** – longing desire for high achievement.

<sup>15</sup> **religiosity** – religious feelings or sentiments.

# GOD'S UNSPEAKABLE LOVE

Thomas Manton (1620-1677)

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,  
that whosoever believeth in him should not perish,  
but have everlasting life.”—John 3:16*

**I**N these words, you have the sum and substance of the Gospel. In them, observe, 1. The fountain and original of all that grace and salvation that is brought unto us, God's unspeakable love to mankind: *God so loved the world*. 2. The way that God took to recover our lapsed condition or the effect and fruit that flows from this fountain: *that He gave His only-begotten Son*. 3. The end of it: *that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life...*

**FIRST, THE RISE AND BEGINNING OF ALL IS GOD'S INCONCEIVABLE LOVE:** “God so loved the world.” Where observe, 1. The object: the *world*; 2. The act: *loved*; 3. The degree: *so* loved...Observe from the words that the beginning and first cause of our salvation is the mere love of God. The outward occasion was our misery; the inward moving cause was God's love.

**1. Love is at the bottom of all.** We may give a reason of other things, but we cannot give a reason of His love. God showed His wisdom, power, justice, and holiness in our redemption by Christ. If you ask why He made so much ado about a worthless creature, raised out of the dust of the ground at first, had now disordered himself, and could be of no use to Him, we have an answer at hand: because He loved us. If you continue to ask, “But why did He love us?” we have no other answer but, “Because He loved us”; for beyond the first rise of things, we cannot go. And the same reason is given by Moses: “The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you” (Deu 7:7-8), that is, in short, *He loved you because He loved you*. The same reason is given by our Lord Jesus Christ: “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight” (Mat 11:26). All came from His free and undeserved mercy; higher we cannot go in seeking after the causes of what is done for our salvation.

**2. The most remarkable thing that is visible in the progress and perfection of our salvation by Christ is love.** And it is [fitting] that the beginning, middle, and end should suit. Nay, if love be so conspicuous in the whole design and carrying on of this blessed work, it is much more in the rise and fountain. God's great end in our redemption was the demonstration of His love and mercy to mankind, yea, not only the demonstration, but the commendation of it. That is the Apostle's word: “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). A thing may be demonstrated as real that is not commended or set forth as great. God's design was that we should not only believe the reality, but admire the *greatness* of His love. Now, from first to last, love is so conspicuous that we cannot overlook it. Light is not more conspicuous in the sun than the love of God in our redemption by Christ.

**3. If there were any other cause, it must be either the merit of Christ or some worthiness on our part.**

**(1) The merit of Christ was not the first cause of God's love, but the manifestation, fruit, and effect of it.** The text telleth [us that] He first loved the world and then gave His only-begotten Son. It is said, “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us” (1Jo 3:16). Look, as we perceive and find out causes by their proper effects, so we perceive the love of God by the death of Christ. Christ is the principal means whereby God carrieth on the purposes of His grace, and therefore is represented in Scripture as the Servant of His decrees.<sup>16</sup>

**(2) No worthiness in us:** For when His love moved Him to give Christ for us, He had all mankind in His prospect and view, as lying in the polluted mass, or in a state of sin and misery, and then provided a Redeemer for them.<sup>17</sup> God at first made a perfect law, which forbade all sin upon pain of death. Man did break this law, and still we break it day by day in every sin. Now when men lived and went on in sin and hostility against God, He was pleased

<sup>16</sup> **decrees** – “God's eternal purpose according to the counsel of His will, whereby for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass” (*Shorter Catechism*, Q.7).

<sup>17</sup> Not all Puritan or Reformed theologians hold the same view of the order of God's decrees displayed here.

then to send His Son to assume our nature and die for our transgressions. Therefore, the giving of a Redeemer was the work of His free mercy. Man loved not God, yea, was an enemy to God, when Christ came to make the atonement: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1Jo 4:10). “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled” (Col 1:21). We were senseless of our misery, careless of our remedy, so far from deserving that we desired no such matter. *God’s love was at the beginning, not ours.*

**USE 1:** *Is to confute<sup>18</sup> all misapprehensions of God.* It is the grand design of Satan to lessen our opinion of God’s goodness. So he assaulted our first parents, as if God (notwithstanding all His goodness in their creation) was envious of man’s felicity<sup>19</sup> and happiness. And he hath not left off his old wont.<sup>20</sup> He seeketh to hide God’s goodness and to represent Him as a God that delighteth in our destruction and damnation, rather than in our salvation, as if He were inexorable<sup>21</sup> and hardly entreated to do us good. And why? That we may stand aloof from God and apprehend Him as unlovely. Or if he cannot prevail so far, he tempteth us to poor, unworthy, mean thoughts of His goodness and mercy. Now we cannot obviate<sup>22</sup> the temptation better than by due reflections on His love in giving His Son for the world. This showeth that He is fuller of mercy and goodness than the sun is of light or the sea of water. So great an effect shows the greatness of the cause. Wherefore did He express His love in such a wonderful, astonishing way, but that we might have higher and larger thoughts of His goodness and mercy? By other effects, we easily collect the perfection of His attributes: that His power is *omnipotent* (Rom 1:20), that His knowledge is *omniscient* (Heb 4:12-13). And by this effect, it is easy to conceive that His love is infinite or that God is love.

**USE 2:** *Is to quicken us to admire the love of God in Christ.* There are three things that commend any favor done unto us: (1) The good will of him that giveth; (2) The greatness of the gift; (3) The unworthiness of him that receiveth. All concur here.

(1) ***The good will of Him that giveth:*** Nothing moved God to do this but His own love. It was from the free motion of His own heart, without our thought and asking. No other reason is given or can be given. We made no suit for any such thing; it could not enter into our minds and hearts; into our minds to conceive or into our hearts to desire such a remedy to recover the lapsed estate of mankind. Not into our minds, for it is a great mystery: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness” (1Ti 3:16). Not into our hearts to ask or desire, for it would have seemed a strange request that we should ask that the eternal Son of God should assume our flesh and be made sin and a curse for us. But grace hath wrought “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph 3:20), above what we can imagine, and above what we can pray for to Him.

(2) ***The greatness of the Gift:*** Great things do even force their way into our minds, whether we will or no. The gift of Jesus Christ is so great that the love of God is gone to the uttermost in it. He hath not a better Christ, nor a more worthy Redeemer, nor another Son to die for us; nor could the Son of God suffer greater indignities than He hath suffered for our sakes...So now we may know God loveth us; here is the manifest token and sign of it.

(3) ***The unworthiness of him that receiveth:*** This is also in the case. We were altogether unworthy that the Son of God should be incarnate<sup>23</sup> and die for our sakes. This is notably improved by the Apostle: “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:7-8). The Apostle alludeth to the distinction familiar among the Jews: they had their *good* men or bountiful; their *righteous* men, zealous for the Law; and their *wicked* men, obnoxious to judgment. Peradventure<sup>24</sup> one would venture his life for a very merciful person, but you shall hardly find any to be so liberal and friendly as to venture his life for a righteous and just man, or a man of rigid innocence. But mark, there are abating<sup>25</sup> terms—*scarcely* and *perhaps*. The case is rare that one should die for another, be he never so good and righteous. But God’s expression of mercy was infinitely above the proportion of any the most friendly man ever showed. There was nothing in the object to move Him to it, when

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<sup>18</sup> **confute** – prove an argument to be false or defective; disprove.

<sup>19</sup> **felicity** – prosperity.

<sup>20</sup> **wont** – habit.

<sup>21</sup> **inexorable** – rigidly severe; incapable of being persuaded to mercy.

<sup>22</sup> **obviate** – to avoid an anticipated difficulty by doing something to prevent its arising.

<sup>23</sup> **be incarnate** – become flesh; John 1:14.

<sup>24</sup> **peradventure** – perhaps.

<sup>25</sup> **abating** – bringing down in size or amount; diminishing.

we were neither good nor just, but wicked. Without respect to any worth in us, for we were all in a damnable estate, He sent His Son to die for us, to rescue and free us from eternal death, and to make us partakers of eternal life. God *so* loved the world, when we had so sinned and willfully plunged ourselves into an estate of damnation.

From Sermon XVI, “Sermons upon John III.16” in *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton, D.D.*, Vol. 2, reprinted by Maranatha Publications.

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**Thomas Manton** (1620-1677): prolific Non-Conformist Puritan preacher whose works fill twenty-two volumes. Born in Lawrence-Lydiat, Somerset, England.

## A RIGHT UNDERSTANDING OF SIN

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

*“Sin is the transgression of the law.”—1 John 3:4*

**T**HE plain truth is that a right understanding of sin lies at the root of all saving Christianity. Without it such doctrines as justification, conversion, sanctification, are “words and names” that convey no meaning to the mind. The first thing, therefore, that God does when He makes anyone a new creature in Christ is to send light into his heart and show him that he is a guilty sinner...I believe that one of the chief wants<sup>26</sup> of the contemporary church has been, and is, clearer, fuller teaching about sin.

**1. I will begin the subject by supplying some definition of sin.** We are all, of course, familiar with the terms “sin” and “sinners.” We talk frequently of “sin” being in the world and of men committing “sins.” But what do we mean by these terms and phrases? Do we really know? I fear there is much mental confusion and haziness on this point. Let me try, as briefly as possible, to supply an answer.

“Sin,” speaking generally is...“the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that is naturally engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always against the spirit; and, therefore, in every person born into the world, it deserveth God’s wrath and damnation.”<sup>27</sup> Sin is that vast moral disease that affects the whole human race of every rank, class, name, nation, people, and tongue—a disease from which there never was but one born of woman that was free. Need I say that One was Christ Jesus the Lord?

I say, furthermore, that “a sin,” to speak more particularly, consists in doing, saying, thinking, or imagining anything that is not in perfect conformity with the mind and Law of God. “Sin,” in short as the Scripture says, is “the transgression of the law” (1Jo 3:4). The slightest outward or inward departure from absolute mathematical parallelism with God’s revealed will and character constitutes a sin, and at once makes us guilty in God’s sight.

Of course, I need not tell anyone who reads his Bible with attention that a man may break God’s Law in heart and thought when there is no overt and visible act of wickedness. Our Lord has settled that point beyond dispute in the Sermon on the Mount (Mat 5:21–28)...Again, I need not tell a careful student of the New Testament, that there are sins of omission as well as commission, and that we sin, as our Prayer Book justly reminds us, by “leaving undone the things we ought to do,” as really as by “doing the things we ought not to do”...I do think it necessary in these times to remind my readers that a man may commit sin and yet be ignorant of it and fancy himself innocent when he is guilty...I find our Lord expressly teaching that “the servant who knew not his master’s will and did it not,” was not excused on account of his ignorance but was “beaten” or punished (Luk 12:48). We will do well to

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<sup>26</sup> wants – lacks; things needed but missing.

<sup>27</sup> The Ninth Article of the Anglican Church’s *Book of Common Prayer*.

remember that, when we make our own miserably imperfect knowledge and consciousness the measure of our sinfulness, we are on very dangerous ground...

**2. Concerning the origin and source of this vast moral disease called “sin,” I am afraid that the views of many professing Christians on this point are sadly defective and unsound.** I dare not pass it by. Let us, then, have it fixed down in our minds that the sinfulness of man does not begin from without, but from within. It is not the result of bad training in early years. It is not picked up from bad companions and bad examples, as some weak Christians are too fond of saying. No! It is a family disease, which we all inherit from our first parents, Adam and Eve, and with which we are born. Created “in the image of God,” innocent and righteous at first, our parents fell from original righteousness and became sinful and corrupt. And from that day to this, all men and women are born in the image of fallen Adam and Eve and inherit a heart and nature inclined to evil. “By one man sin entered into the world.” “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” “We are by nature children of wrath.” “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries” and the like (Rom 5:12; Joh 3:6; Eph 2:3; Rom 8:7; Mar 7:21).

The fairest child, who has entered life this year and become the sunbeam of a family, is not, as his mother perhaps fondly calls him, a little “angel” or a little “innocent,” but a little “sinner.” Alas! As that infant boy or girl lies smiling and crowing in its cradle, that little creature carries in its heart the seeds of every kind of wickedness! Only watch it carefully, as it grows in stature and its mind develops, and you will soon detect in it an incessant tendency to that which is bad, and a backwardness to that which is good. You will see in it the buds and germs of deceit, evil temper, selfishness, self-will, obstinacy, greediness, envy, jealousy, passion, which, if indulged and let alone, will shoot up with painful rapidity. Who taught the child these things? Where did he learn them? The Bible alone can answer these questions!...

**3. Concerning the extent of this vast moral disease called “sin,” let us beware that we make no mistake.** The only safe ground is that which is laid for us in Scripture. “Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart” is by nature “evil” and that “continually” (Gen 6:5). “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9). Sin is a disease that pervades and runs through every part of our moral constitution and every faculty of our minds. The understanding, the affections, the reasoning powers, the will are all more or less infected. Even the conscience is so blinded that it cannot be depended on as a sure guide, and is as likely to lead men wrong as right, unless it is enlightened by the Holy Spirit. In short, “from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness” about us (Isa 1:6). The disease may be veiled under a thin covering of courtesy, politeness, good manners, and outward decorum, but it lies deep down in the constitution...in spiritual things he is utterly “dead” and has no natural knowledge, or love, or fear of God. His best things are so interwoven and intermingled with corruption that the contrast only brings out into sharper relief the truth and extent of the Fall. That one and the same creature should be in some things so high and in others so low; so great and yet so little; so noble and yet so mean;<sup>28</sup> so grand in his conception and execution of material things and yet so groveling and debased in his affections...all this is a sore puzzle to those who sneer at “God’s Word written” and scoff at us as bibliolaters.<sup>29</sup> But it is a knot that we can untie with the Bible in our hands...

Let us remember, beside this, that every part of the world bears testimony to the fact that sin is the universal disease of all mankind. Search the globe from east to west and from pole to pole; search every nation of every clime in the four quarters of the earth; search every rank and class in our own country from the highest to the lowest—and under every circumstance and condition, the report will be always the same...Everywhere the human heart is naturally “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9). For my part, I know no stronger proof of the inspiration of Genesis and the Mosaic account of the origin of man, than the power, extent, and universality of sin...

**4. Concerning the guilt, vileness, and offensiveness of sin in the sight of God, my words will be few...**I do not think, in the nature of things, that mortal man can at all realize the exceeding sinfulness of sin in the sight of that holy and perfect One with Whom we have to do. On the one hand, God is that eternal Being Who charged His angels with “folly” and in whose sight the very “heavens are not clean.” He is One Who reads thoughts and motives as well as actions, and requires “truth in the inward parts” (Job 4:18; 15:15; Psa 51:6). We, on the other hand—

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<sup>28</sup> **mean** – common; base.

<sup>29</sup> **bibliolaters** – those who idolize the Bible.

poor, blind creatures, here today and gone tomorrow, born in sin, surrounded by sinners, living in a constant atmosphere of weakness, infirmity, and imperfection—can form none but the most inadequate conceptions of the hideousness of evil. We have no line to fathom it and no measure by which to gauge it...But let us nevertheless settle it firmly in our minds that sin is “the abominable thing that God hateth”; that God “is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look upon that which is evil”; that the least transgression of God’s Law makes us “guilty of all”; that “the soul that sinneth shall die”; that “the wages of sin is death”; that God will “judge the secrets of men”; that there is a worm that never dies and a fire that is not quenched; that “the wicked shall be turned into hell” and “shall go away into everlasting punishment”; and that “nothing that defiles shall in any wise enter” heaven (Jer 44:4; Hab 1:13; Jam 2:10; Eze 18:4; Rom 6:23; 2:16; Mar 9:44; Psa 9:17; Mat 25:46; Rev 21:27). These are indeed tremendous words, when we consider that they are written in the book of a most merciful God!

No proof of the fullness of sin, after all, is so overwhelming and unanswerable as the Cross and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the whole doctrine of His substitution and atonement. Terribly black must that guilt be for which nothing but the blood of the Son of God could make satisfaction. Heavy must that weight of human sin be which made Jesus groan and sweat drops of blood in agony at Gethsemane and cry at Golgotha, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mat 27:46). Nothing, I am convinced, will astonish us so much, when we awake in the resurrection day, as the view we will have of sin and the retrospect we will take of our own countless shortcomings and defects. Never until the hour when Christ comes the second time will we fully realize the “sinfulness of sin.”

**5. One point only remains to be considered on the subject of sin...its deceitfulness.** It is a point of most serious importance, and I venture to think it does not receive the attention that it deserves. You may see this deceitfulness in 1) the wonderful<sup>30</sup> proneness of men to regard sin as less sinful and dangerous than it is in the sight of God and in their readiness to extenuate it, make excuses for it, and minimize its guilt. “It is but a little one! God is merciful! God is not extreme to mark what is done amiss! We mean well! One cannot be so particular! Where is the mighty harm? We only do as others!” Who is not familiar with this kind of language? You may see it in the long string of smooth words and phrases that men have coined in order to designate things that God calls downright wicked and ruinous to the soul. What do such expressions as “fast,” “gay,” “wild,” “unsteady,” “thoughtless,” “loose” mean? They show that men try to cheat themselves into the belief that sin is not quite so sinful as God says it is, and that they are not so bad as they really are. You may see it in the tendency even of believers to indulge their children in questionable practices, and to blind their own eyes to the inevitable result of the love of money, of tampering with temptation and sanctioning a low standard of family religion. I fear we do not sufficiently realize the extreme subtlety of our soul’s disease. We are too apt to forget that temptation to sin will rarely present itself to us in its true colors, saying, “I am your deadly enemy and I want to ruin you forever in hell.” Oh, no!

And now...Let us sit down before the picture of sin displayed to us in the Bible and consider what guilty, vile, corrupt creatures we all are in the sight of God. What need we all have of that entire change of heart called regeneration, new birth, or conversion!...I ask my readers to observe how deeply thankful we ought to be for the glorious Gospel of the grace of God. There is a remedy revealed for man’s need, as wide and broad and deep as man’s disease. We need not be afraid to look at sin and study its nature, origin, power, extent, and vileness, if we only look at the same time at the almighty medicine provided for us in the salvation that is in Jesus Christ.

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**J. C. Ryle** (1816-1900): Bishop of the Anglican Church; revered author of *Holiness, Knots Untied, Old Paths, Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, and many others. Born at Macclesfield, Cheshire County, England.

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<sup>30</sup> wonderful – incredible.

# CRUCIFIXION, RESURRECTION, AND SUBSTITUTION

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

*“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”—Romans 6:8-11*

**T**HE facts referred to in these four verses constitute the glorious Gospel that we preach: **1. The first fact here very clearly indicated is that Jesus died.** He, Who was divine and therefore immortal, bowed His head to death. He, Whose human nature was wed to the omnipotence of His divine nature, was pleased voluntarily to submit Himself to the sword of death. He, Who was pure and perfect, and therefore deserved not death, which is the wages of sin, nevertheless condescended for our sake to yield Himself up to die. This is the second note in the Gospel scale. *The first note is incarnation:* Jesus Christ became a man. Angels thought this worthy of their songs and made the heavens ring with midnight melodies. *The second note is this, I say,* that, “being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phi 2:8). He died as a sacrifice. Methinks,<sup>31</sup> after many lambs from the flocks of men had poured out their blood at the foot of the altar, it was a strange spectacle to see *God’s* Lamb brought to that same altar to be sacrificed. He is without spot or blemish or any such thing. He is the firstling of the flock; He is the only One of the Great Master, a right royal, heavenly Lamb. Such a Lamb had never been seen before. He is the Lamb Who is worshipped in heaven, and Who is to be adored, world without end. Will *that* Sacred Head condescend to feel the axe? Will *that* glorious victim really be slain? Is it possible that God’s Lamb will actually submit to die? *He does so without a struggle.* He is dumb<sup>32</sup> in the shambles<sup>33</sup> before the slaughterers; He gives up the warm blood of His heart to the hand of the executioner that He might expiate<sup>34</sup> the wrath of God.

Tell it! Let heaven ring with music, and let hell be filled with confusion! Jesus, the Eternal Son of God, the Lamb of Jehovah’s Passover, died. His hands were pierced and His heart was broken. To prove how surely the spear had struck the mark, the vital fluid flowed in a double flood, even to the ground—Jesus died. If there were any doubt about this, there were doubt about your salvation and mine. If there were any reason to question this fact, then we might question the possibility of salvation. But Jesus died and sin is put away. The sacrifice smokes to heaven; Jehovah smelleth a sweet savor and is pleased through Christ the Victim to accept the prayers, the offerings, and the persons of His people.

Nor did He die as a victim only: He died as a *substitute*. We were drawn as soldiers for the great warfare, and we could not go; for we were feeble, should have fallen in the battle, and have left our bones to be devoured of the dogs of hell. But He, the mighty Son of God, became the Substitute for us, entered the battlefield, [and] sustained the first charge of the adversary in the wilderness. Three times He repulsed the grim fiend and all his host, smiting His assailants with the sword of the Spirit, until the enemy fled and angels waited upon the weary Victor. The conflict was not over, the enemy had but retired to forge fresh artillery and recruit his scattered forces for a yet more terrible affray.<sup>35</sup> For three years, the great Substitute kept the field against continual onslaughts from the advance guard of the enemy, remaining conqueror in every skirmish...Devils were cast out of many that were possessed, whole legions of them were compelled to find refuge in a herd of swine, and Lucifer himself fell like lightning from the heaven of his power.

At last, the time came when hell had gathered up all its forces, and now was also come the hour when Christ, as our Substitute, must carry His obedience to the utmost length: He must be obedient unto death. He has been a Substitute up until now; will He now throw down His vicarious<sup>36</sup> character? Will He now renounce our

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<sup>31</sup> **methinks** – it seems to me.

<sup>32</sup> **dumb** – persistently silent.

<sup>33</sup> **shambles** – meat-market.

<sup>34</sup> **expiate** – pay the penalty of.

<sup>35</sup> **affray** – a violent disturbance; an assault.

<sup>36</sup> **vicarious** – acting in place of someone else; substitutionary.

responsibilities and declare that we may stand for ourselves? Not He. He undertook and must go through. Sweating great drops of blood, He nevertheless flinches not from the dread assault. Wounded in hands and in feet, He still maintained His ground. And though, for obedience sake, He bowed His head to die, yet in that dying He slew death, put His foot upon the dragon's neck, crushed the head of the old serpent, and beat our adversaries as small as the dust of the threshing floor. Yes, the blessed Substitute has died. I say if there were a question about this, then we might have to die, but inasmuch as He died for us, the believer shall not die. The debt is discharged to the utmost farthing...God's sword is sheathed forever, and the blood of Christ has sealed it in its scabbard. We are *free*, for Christ was bound! *We live*, for Jesus died!

Dying thus as a sacrifice and as a substitute, it is a comfort to us to know that He also died as Mediator between God and man. There was a great gulf fixed, so that if we would pass to God we could not, neither could He pass to us if He would condescend to do so...[but] Jesus comes, arrayed in His pontifical<sup>37</sup> garments, wearing the breastplate, bearing the ephod—a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. His kingly character is not forgotten, for His head is adorned with a glittering crown; and o'er His shoulders, He bears the prophet's mantle. How shall I describe the matchless glories of the Prophet-king, the Royal Priest? Will He throw Himself into the chasm? *He will*. Into the grave He plunges; the abyss is closed! The gulf is bridged, and God can have communion with man!

I see before me the heavy veil that shields from mortal eyes the place where God's glory shineth. No man may touch that veil, or he must die. Is there any man found who can rend it? That man may approach the mercy seat. O that the veil that parts our souls from Him that dwelleth between the cherubims could be torn throughout its utmost length! Strong archangel, wouldst thou dare to rend it? Shouldest thou attempt the work, thine immortality were forfeited, and thou must expire. But Jesus comes, the King Immortal, Invisible, with His strong hands; *He* rends the veil from top to bottom, and now men draw nigh with confidence, for when Jesus died a living way was opened. Sing, O heavens, and rejoice O earth! There is now no wall of partition, for Christ has dashed it down!...This, then, is one of the great notes of the Gospel, the fact that *Jesus died*. Oh! Ye, who would be saved, believe that Jesus died! Believe that the Son of God expired. Trust that death to save you, and you are saved.

**2. But Jesus rises: this is no mean part of the Gospel.** He dies; they lay Him in the new sepulcher; they embalm His body in spices; His adversaries are careful that His body shall not be stolen away. The stone, the seal, the watch, all prove their vigilance. Aha! Aha! What do ye, men? Can ye imprison immortality in the tomb? The fiends of hell, too, I doubt not, watched the sepulcher, wondering what it all could mean. But the third day comes, and with it the messenger from heaven. He touches the stone; it rolls away; he sits upon it, as if he would defy the whole universe to roll that stone back again. Jesus awakes, as a mighty man from his slumber; unwraps the napkin from His head and lays it by itself; unwinds the cerements<sup>38</sup> in which love had wrapped Him and puts them by themselves; for He had abundant leisure; He was in no haste; He was not about to escape like a felon who bursts the prison, but like one whose time of jail-deliverance has come and lawfully and leisurely leaves his cell. He steps to the upper air, bright, shining, glorious, and fair. He lives! He died once, but He rose again from the dead! There is no need for us to enlarge here. We only pause to remark that this is one of the most jubilant notes in the whole Gospel scale...Death is overcome! There is found a man Who by His own power was able to struggle with death and hurl him down. The grave is opened! There is found a man able to dash back its bolts and to rifle its treasures. And thus, brethren, having delivered Himself, He is able also to deliver others.

Sin, too, was manifestly forgiven. Christ was in prison as a hostage, kept there as a surety;<sup>39</sup> now that He is suffered to go free, it is a declaration on God's behalf that He has nothing against us. Our Substitute is discharged; we are discharged. He who undertook to pay our debt is suffered to go free; we go free in Him! "He rose again for our justification" (Rom 4:25). Nay more, inasmuch as He rises from the dead, He gives us a pledge that hell is conquered. This was the great aim of hell: to keep Christ beneath its heel. "Thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15). They had gotten the heel of Christ, His mortal flesh beneath their power, but that bruised heel came forth unwounded. Christ sustained no injury by His dying...Beloved, in this will we triumph: that hell is worsted,<sup>40</sup> Satan is put to confusion, and all his hosts are fallen before Immanuel. *Sinner, believe this!* It is the Gospel of thy salvation. Believe that Jesus of Nazareth rose again from the dead, and trust Him, trust Him to save thy soul!

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<sup>37</sup> **pontifical** – high-priestly.

<sup>38</sup> **cerements** – grave clothes; burial garments.

<sup>39</sup> **surety** – one who undertakes the debt of another.

<sup>40</sup> **worsted** – defeated.

Because He burst the gates of the grave, trust Him to bear thy sins, to justify thy person, to quicken thy spirit, and to raise thy dead body—and verily, verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt be saved!

**3. We now strike a third note, without which the Gospel were not complete: inasmuch as Jesus died, He is now living.** He does not, after forty days, return to the grave. He departs from earth, but it is by another way. From the top of Olivet He ascends until a cloud receives Him out of their sight. And now at this very day He lives. There at His Father's right hand He sits, bright like a sun, clothed in majesty, the joy of all the glorified spirits, His Father's intense delight! There He sits, Lord of Providence! At His girdle swing the keys of heaven, earth, and hell. There He sits, expecting the hour when His enemies shall be made His footstool. Methinks I see Him, too, as He lives to intercede. He stretches His wounded hands, points to His breastplate bearing the names of His people, and for Zion's sake He doth not hold His peace, and for Jerusalem's sake He doth not rest day nor night, but ever pleadeth, "Oh God! Bless thy heritage; gather together Thy scattered ones. 'I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am' (Joh 17:24)."

Trembling penitent, let a living Savior cheer thee. Exercise faith in Him Who only hath immortality. He lives to hear thy prayer; cry to Him, He lives to present that prayer before His Father's face. Put yourself in His hands! He lives to gather together those whom He bought with His blood, to make those the people of His flock who were once the people of His purchase. Sinner, dost thou believe this as a matter of fact? If so, rest thy soul on it, make it thine as a matter of confidence, and then thou art saved.

**4. One more note and our Gospel song need not rise higher: Jesus died, He rose, He lives, and He lives forever.** He shall not die again. "Death hath no more dominion over him" (Rom 6:9)...Disease may visit the world and fill the graves, but no disease or plague can touch the immortal Savior. The shock of the last catastrophe shall shake both heaven and earth, until the stars shall fall like withered fig leaves from the tree, but nothing shall move the unchanging Savior. He lives forever! There is no possibility that He should be overcome by a new death...This, too, reveals another part of our precious Gospel, for now it is certain, since He lives forever, that no foes can overcome Him. He has so routed His enemies and driven His foes off the battlefield that they will never venture to attack Him again! This proves, too, that His people's eternal life is sure...*He lives forever!* Oh! Seed of Abraham, ye are saved with an everlasting salvation by the sure mercies of David. Your standing in earth and heaven has been confirmed eternally. God is honored, saints are comforted, and sinners are cheered, for "he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:25).

*Now I would to God that on one of these four anchor-holds your faith might be able to get rest.* Jesus died, poor trembler. If He died and took thy griefs, will not His atonement save thee? Rest here. Millions of souls have rested on nothing but Jesus' death, and this is a granite foundation. No storms of hell can shake it! Get a good handhold on His Cross; hold it, and it will hold you. You cannot depend on His death and be deceived...But if this suffice you not, He rose again. Fasten upon this. He is proved to be Victor over your sin and over your adversary; can you not, therefore, depend upon Him? Doubtless, there have been thousands of saints who have found the richest consolation from the fact that Jesus rose again from the dead. He rose again for our justification. Sinner, hang on that. Having risen, He lives. He is not a dead Savior, a dead sacrifice. He must be able to hear our plea and to present His own. Depend on a living Savior; depend on Him *now*. He lives forever, and therefore it is not too late for Him to save you. If thou criest to Him, He will hear thy prayer, even though it be in life's last moment, for He lives forever! Though the ends of the earth were come and you were the last man, yet He ever lives to intercede before His Father's face. Oh, gad<sup>41</sup> not about to find any other hope!

*Here are four great stones for you.* Build your hope on these; you cannot want<sup>42</sup> surer foundations: He *dies*, He *rises*, He *lives*, He *lives forever!* I tell thee, Soul, this is my only hope, and though I lean thereon with all my weight, it bends not. This is the hope of all God's people, and they abide contented in it. Do thou, I pray thee, now come and rest on it. May the Spirit of God bring many of you to Christ! *We have no other Gospel.* You thought it a hard thing, a scholarly thing, a matter that the college must teach you, that the university must give you. It is no such matter for learning and scholarship. Your little child knows it, and your child may be saved by it. You without education, you that can scarce read in the book, you can comprehend this. He *dies*; there is the Cross. He *rises*; there is the

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<sup>41</sup> **gad** – to go wandering; to leave the true path.

<sup>42</sup> **want** – desire; wish for.

open tomb. He *lives*; there is the pleading Savior. He lives *forever*; there is the perpetual merit. Depend on Him! Put your soul in His hand—and you are saved.

From a sermon delivered on Sunday morning, April 5, 1863, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington; reprinted by Pilgrim Publications.

## THE CALL TO REPENTANCE

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

*“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”—Luke 13:3*

**R**EPENTANCE is one of the foundation stones of Christianity. Sixty times, at least, we find repentance spoken of in the New Testament. What was the first doctrine our Lord Jesus Christ preached? We are told that He said, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mar 1:15). What did the Apostles proclaim when the Lord sent them forth the first time? They “preached that men should repent” (Mar 6:12). What was the charge that Jesus gave His disciples when He left the world? That “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations” (Luk 24:47). What was the concluding appeal of the first sermons that Peter preached? “Repent, and be baptized.” “Repent ye, and be converted” (Act 2:38; 3:19). What was the summary of doctrine that Paul gave to the Ephesian elders when he parted from them? He told them that he had taught them publicly, and from house to house, “testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Act 20:21). What was the description that Paul gave of his own ministry, when he made his defense before Festus and Agrippa? He told them that he had showed all men that they should “repent, and do works meet for repentance” (Act 26:20). What was the account given by the believers at Jerusalem of the conversion of the Gentiles? When they heard of it they said, “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Act 11:18)...Surely we must all agree that these are serious considerations. They ought to show the importance of the inquiry I am now making. A mistake about repentance is a most dangerous mistake. An error about repentance is an error that lies at the very roots of our religion. What, then, is repentance? When can it be said of any man that he repents?

**Repentance is a thorough change of man’s natural heart upon the subject of sin.** We are all born in sin. We naturally love sin. We take to sin as soon as we can act and think, as the bird takes to flying and the fish takes to swimming. There never was a child that required schooling or education in order to learn deceitfulness, sensuality, passion, self-will, gluttony, pride, and foolishness. These things are not picked up from bad companions or gradually learned by a long course of tedious instruction. They spring up of themselves, even when boys and girls are brought up alone. The seeds of them are evidently the natural product of the heart. The aptitude<sup>43</sup> of all children to these things is an unanswerable proof of the corruption and fall of man. Now when this heart of ours is changed by the Holy Ghost, when this natural love of sin is cast out, then takes place that change which the Word of God calls “repentance.” The man in whom the change is wrought is said to “repent.” He may be called, in one word, a “penitent” man...

**(1) True repentance begins with knowledge of sin.** The eyes of the penitent man are opened. He sees with dismay and confusion the length and breadth of God’s holy Law, and the extent, the enormous extent, of his own transgressions. He discovers, to his surprise, that in thinking himself a “good sort of man,” and a man with a “good heart,” he has been under a huge delusion. He finds out that, in reality, he is wicked, guilty, corrupt, and bad in God’s sight. His pride breaks down. His high thoughts melt away. He sees that he is neither more nor less than a great sinner. This is the first step in true repentance.

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<sup>43</sup> **aptitude** – natural tendency.

**(2) True repentance goes on to work sorrow for sin. The heart of a penitent man is touched with deep remorse because of his past transgressions.** He is cut to the heart to think that he should have lived so madly and so wickedly. He mourns over time wasted, over talents misspent, over God dishonored, over his own soul injured. The remembrance of these things is grievous to him. The burden of these things is sometimes almost intolerable. When a man so sorrows, you have the second step in true repentance.

**(3) True repentance proceeds, further, to produce in a man confession of sin.** The tongue of a penitent man is loosed. He feels he must speak to that God against Whom he has sinned. Something within him tells him he must cry to God, pray to God, and talk with God about the state of his own soul. He must pour out his heart and acknowledge his iniquities at the throne of grace. They are a heavy burden within him, and he can no longer keep silence. He can keep nothing back. He will not hide anything. He goes before God, pleading nothing for himself and willing to say, “I have sinned against heaven and before Thee: my iniquity is great. God be merciful to me, a sinner!” When a man goes thus to God in confession, you have the third step in true repentance.

**(4) True repentance, furthermore, shows itself before the world in a thorough breaking off from sin.** The life of a penitent man is altered. The course of his daily conduct is entirely changed. A new King reigns within his heart. He puts off the old man (Eph 4:22). What God commands he now desires to practice; and what God forbids, he now desires to avoid (Cp. Luk 8:15; Psa 25:11; Luk 18:13). He strives in all ways to keep clear of sin, to fight with sin, to war with sin, to get the victory over sin. He ceases to do evil. He learns to do well. He breaks off sharply from bad ways and bad companions. He labors, however feebly, to live a new life. When a man does this, you have the fourth step in true repentance.

**(5) True repentance, in the last place, shows itself by producing in the heart a settled habit of deep hatred of all sin.** The mind of a penitent man becomes a mind habitually holy. He abhors that which is evil and cleaves to that which is good (Rom 12:9). He delights in the Law of God (Psa 1:2). He comes short of his own desires not infrequently. He finds in himself an evil principle warring against the Spirit of God (Gal 5:17). He finds himself cold when he would be hot, backward when he would be forward, heavy when he would be lively in God’s service. He is deeply conscious of his own infirmities. He groans under a sense of indwelling corruption. But still, for all that, the general bias of his heart is towards God and away from evil. He can say with David, “Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way” (Psa 119:128). When a man can say this, you have the fifth or crowning step of true repentance...

*True repentance, such as I have just described, is never alone in the heart of any man.* It always has a companion—a blessed companion. It is always accompanied by lively faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Wherever faith is, there is repentance; wherever repentance is, there is always faith. I do not decide which comes first—whether repentance comes before faith or faith before repentance. But I am bold to say that the two graces are never found separate, one from the other...

**Beware that you make no mistake about the nature of true repentance.** The devil knows too well the value of that precious grace not to dress up spurious<sup>44</sup> imitations of it. Wherever there is good coin, there will always be bad money. Wherever there is a valuable grace, the devil will put in circulation counterfeits and shams of that grace and try to palm them off on men’s souls. Make sure that you are not deceived.

**(1) Take heed that your repentance be a business of your heart.** It is not a grave face, or a sanctimonious<sup>45</sup> countenance, or a round of self-imposed austerities<sup>46</sup>—it is not this alone which makes up true repentance towards God. The real grace is something far deeper than a mere affair of face, clothes, days, and forms. Ahab could put on sackcloth when it served his turn—but Ahab never repented.

**(2) Take heed that your repentance be a repentance wherein you turn to God...**Felix could tremble when he heard the Apostle Paul preach. But...this is not true repentance. See that your repentance leads you unto God and makes you flee to Him as your best Friend.

**(3) Take heed that your repentance be a repentance attended by a thorough forsaking of sin.** Sentimental people can cry when they hear moving sermons on Sundays, and yet return to the ball, the theatre, and the opera in the

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<sup>44</sup> **spurious** – counterfeit.

<sup>45</sup> **sanctimonious** – holy in character; sacred.

<sup>46</sup> **austerities** – severe self-disciplines or restraints.

week after...feelings in religion are worse than worthless, unless they are accompanied by practice. Mere sentimental excitement, without thorough breaking off from sin, is not the repentance that God approves.

**(4) Take heed, above all things, that your repentance be closely bound up with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.** See that your convictions be convictions that never rest, except at the foot of the Cross whereon Jesus Christ died. Judas Iscariot could say, “I have sinned” (Mat 27:4), but Judas never turned to Jesus. Judas never looked by faith to Jesus, and therefore Judas died in his sins. Give me that conviction of sin that makes a man flee to Christ and mourn because by his sins he has pierced the Lord Who bought him. Give me that contrition<sup>47</sup> of soul under which a man feels much about Christ and grieves to think of the despite he has done to so gracious a Savior. Going to Sinai, hearing about the Ten Commandments, looking at hell, thinking about the terrors of damnation—all this may make people afraid, and has its use. But no repentance ever lasts in which a man does not look at Calvary more than at Sinai, and see in a bleeding Jesus the strongest motive for contrition. Such repentance comes down from heaven. Such repentance is planted in man’s heart by God the Holy Ghost.

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## WHY IS FAITH REQUIRED?

Thomas Manton (1620-1677)

**W**HY is faith required, that we may receive benefit by Christ? For these reasons: 1. In respect of God; 2. In respect of Christ; 3. In respect of the creature; 4. In respect of our comforts.

**1. In respect of God:** that our hearts may be possessed with a full apprehension of His grace, Who in the New Covenant<sup>48</sup> appeareth not as a revenging and condemning God, but as a pardoning God. This reason is rendered by the Apostle, “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace” (Rom 4:16). The Law brought in the terror of God by being the instrument of revealing sin and the punishment due thereunto: “Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression” (4:15), no such stinging sense of it. But the Gospel brought in grace. The Law stated the breach, but the Gospel showed the way of our recovery. And therefore, faith doth more agree with grace, as it makes God more amiable and lovely to us, and beloved by us by the discovery of His goodness and grace. The saving of man by Christ, that is, by His incarnation, life, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension, all tends to possess our hearts with His abundant grace. To the same tend also His merciful covenant, gracious promises, and all the benefits given to us: His Spirit, pardon, and communion with God in glory, all is to fill our hearts with a sense of the love of God. And all this is no more than necessary. For a guilty conscience is not easily settled and brought to look for all kind of happiness from One Whom we have so much wronged. Adam, when once a sinner, was shy of God (Gen 3:30); and sin still makes us hang from<sup>49</sup> Him. Guilt is suspicious, and if we have not one to lead us by the hand and bring us to God, we cannot abide His presence. For this end serveth faith: that sinners, being possessed of the goodness and grace of God, may be recovered and return to Him by a fit means. In the New Covenant, repentance more distinctly respects God, and faith respecteth Christ: “Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Act 20:21). Repentance respects God because *from* God we fell and *to* God we must return. We fell from Him, as we withdrew our allegiance and sought our happiness elsewhere; to Him we return, as our rightful and proper happiness.

But faith respects the Mediator,<sup>50</sup> Who is the only remedy of our misery and the means of our eternal blessedness. He opened the way to God by His merit and satisfaction and actually bringeth us into this way by His renewing and reconciling grace, that we may be in a capacity to both please and enjoy God. And that is the reason

<sup>47</sup> **contrition** – sorrow or remorse for wrongdoing.

<sup>48</sup> **New Covenant** – Jer 31:31-34; Mat 26:27, 28; Heb 8:6-13; 10:12-20; 12:22-24.

<sup>49</sup> **hang from** – hesitate to come close to; unwilling to come to.

<sup>50</sup> **Mediator** – one who intervenes between two parties to bring reconciliation; a go-between.

why faith in Christ is so much insisted on as our title and claim to the blessedness of the New Covenant. It hath a special aptitude and fitness for our recovery from sin to God because it peculiarly respects the Mediator by Whom we come to Him.

## 2. In respect of Christ:

[1] *Because the whole dispensation of grace by Christ cannot well be apprehended by anything but faith.* Partly because the way of our recovery is so supernatural, strange, and wonderful, how can we be persuaded of it, unless we believe God's testimony? That the carpenter's son should be the Son of that Great Architect and Builder Who framed heaven and earth; that life should come to us by the death of another; that God should be made man, and the Judge a party; and He that knew no sin be condemned as a criminal person; that one crucified should procure the salvation of the whole world and be Lord of life and death and have such power over all flesh as to give eternal life to whom He will—reason is puzzled at these things. Faith only can unravel them...Sense only looks to things seen and felt; reason seeth effects in their causes...but faith is a believing such things as God hath revealed because *He* hath revealed them. Surely, this only can sustain us in the expectation of God's grace and mercy unto eternal life. Whilst we are employed in duties so opposite to the bent of the carnal heart and have so many temptations to the contrary, what can support us but a strong and lively faith?

[2] *Until we believe in Christ, we can have no comfort or use of all His offices.* How can we learn of Him the way of salvation, until we believe Him to be the Prophet sent of God to teach the world the way to true happiness? "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Mat 17:5). How can we obey Him, unless we believe in Him that He is our Lord, Who hath power over all flesh, at Whose judgment we must stand or fall? "[God] now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Act 17:30-31). How can we depend upon the merit of His obedience and sacrifice, be comforted with His gracious promises and covenant, come to God with boldness and hope of mercy in His name, and be confident that He will justify, sanctify, and save us unless we believe that He is a Priest, Who once made an atonement and continually makes intercession for us? (Heb 9:25). In the days of His flesh, when any came for any benefit to Him, He put him upon this trial, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" (Mat 9:28). "Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mar 9:23). "Believest thou this?" to Martha (Joh 11:26). Thus, they were not capable of any benefit until they believed.

**3. With respect to that holiness and obedience that God expected from the creature:** Christ came to restore us to God, which He doth as both a Savior and Lawgiver to His church. And until we believe in Him, both these qualities and functions miss of their effect.

[1] *As a Savior, He came to take away the curse of the Law and to put us into a capacity to serve and please God by giving us His Spirit to renew our natures and heal our souls:* "The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa 53:5). "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1Pe 2:24). We shall never mind our duty nor be capable to perform it, unless we believe that He is such a Savior.

[2] *As a Lawgiver, obliging us by His authority to live in obedience unto God.* The kingdom of the Mediator is clearly subordinate to the kingdom of God. For He came not to vacate our duty, but to establish it. He came to restore the lost groat<sup>51</sup> to the owner, the lost sheep to the possessor, the lost son to the father. As the grace of Christ doth not vacate the mercy of God, so the authority of Christ...doth not free us from the authority of God. Now, who will submit to an authority that is not convinced of it or doth not believe it? But when once we believe, then we bow heart and knee.

**4. With respect to our comfort:** Often in Scripture, faith is represented as a quieting grace. The comfort, quietness, and peace of the soul dependeth much upon faith in Christ as an all-sufficient Savior, which banishes our fears and makes us in our greatest hardships to trust Christ with all our happiness, and to feast the soul with a constant peace and everlasting joy. Whether this world be turned upside down and be dissolved; whether we be in poverty and sickness, or in health or wealth; whether we be under evil repute or good; whether persecution or prosperity befall us, how little are we concerned in all these, if we know in Whom we have believed? (2Ti 1:12).

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<sup>51</sup> **groat** – English silver coin worth four pence, used from the 14th to the 17th century.

Heaven is where it was before, and Christ is at the right hand of God. How little then should all these things disturb the peace and comfort of that soul that shall live with God forever? (Psa 112:7). But sin is our greatest trouble. If sin be your trouble, I answer, “Is it your infirmity or iniquity?” If infirmity, there is “no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). If iniquity, break off your sin by repentance; and then there may be comfort for you, for Christ came to save us from our sins.

**USE 1:** *to confute men’s presumptions of their eternal good estate, whereby many damnably delude their own souls.*

**1. Some, when they hear that whosoever believeth shall be saved, have a carnal notion of Christ.** [They believe] that if He were alive, they would own Him, receive Him into their houses, and use Him more friendly than the Jews did. This is but a knowing Christ “after the flesh” (2Co 5:16). He is not to be received into your houses, but into your hearts. Besides, we do not know our own hearts or what we should have done, if we had lived then. A person of such contemptible appearance as Christ was and so free in His reproofs of the sins of the times would not have been for our turn no more than theirs. The Jews said, “If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets” (Mat 23:30). The memory of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram was as detestable to the carnal Jews as that of Judas and Pontius Pilate to Christians; but they were not a whit the better men, no more are we.

**2. They do great reverence to His name and memory, profess themselves Christians, and abhor Turks and infidels.** No, this will not do either. Many prize Christ’s name that neglect His office. Honoring the physician without taking his remedies never brought health. They have learned to speak well of Christ by rote after others, but they do not savingly and sincerely believe in Him to cure and heal their souls and suffer Him to do the work of a mediator there...

**3. They are very willing to be forgiven by Christ and to obtain eternal life; but this is what mere necessity requires them.** They will not suffer Him to do His whole work, to sanctify them, and fit them to live to God, nor part with their nearest and clearest lusts, and come into the obedience of the Gospel; or at least, if Christ will do it for them, without their improving this grace or using His holy means, they are contented. But “having therefore these promises,” and such a blessed Redeemer, we are to “cleanse ourselves” (2Co 7:1). The work is ours, though the grace be from Him. So Galatians 5:24, “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”

**4. Some have a strong conceit that they shall be saved and have benefit by Christ.** This, which they call their faith, may be the greatest unbelief in the world; that men living in their sins shall yet do well enough is to believe the flat contrary of what God had spoken in His Word, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind...shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1Co 6:9-10). It is not strength of conceit, but the sure foundation of our hope, that will support us...

**USE 2:** *Do we believe in the Son of God?* Here will be the great case of conscience for settling our eternal interest.

**1. If we believe, Christ will be precious to us:** “Unto you therefore which believe he is precious” (1Pe 2:7). Christ cannot be accepted where He is not valued when other things come in competition with Him, and God will not be prodigal of His grace.

**2. Where there is true faith, the heart will be purified:** “Purifying their hearts by faith” (Act 15:9).

**3. If you do believe in Christ, the heart will be weaned from the world:** “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1Jo 5:4).

**4. If you have the true faith, it works by love:** “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love” (Gal 5:6).

By these things will the case be determined. Then the comfort and sweetness of this truth falls upon your hearts, that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Joh 3:16).

From Sermon XVI, “Sermons upon John III.16” in *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton, D.D.*, Vol. 2, reprinted by Maranatha Publications.

# GOSPEL AND JUDGMENT

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

*“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.”—Acts 17:30-31*

**N**OW, according to the revelation of the Gospel, this Judgment will be conducted by the Man Christ Jesus. God will judge the world; but it will be through His Son, Whom He has ordained and appointed actually to carry out the business of that last tremendous day. He Who shall sit upon the throne is “the Son of man.” He will be thus enthroned, I suppose, partly because it is involved in His mediatorial office, in which the Lord hath put all things in “subjection under his feet” (Heb 2:8). He is at the right hand of God, “angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (1Pe 3:22). God has been pleased to put the world, not under the direct government of personal deity, but under the government of the Mediator, that He might deal with us in mercy. That Mediator is Prophet, Priest, and King; and His Kingship would be shorn of its glory if the King had not the power of life and death, and the power of holding court and judging His subjects. Jesus Christ, therefore, being mediatorial King and Sovereign, all power being given unto Him in heaven and in earth, He will take unto Himself His great power at the last and will judge the nations. This high position is also awarded to our Lord as an honor from the Father, by which shall be wiped away every trace of the shame and dishonor through which He passed among the sons of men. The kings of the earth stood up to judge Him, but they shall stand before Him to be judged. The rulers took counsel together to condemn Him, but the rulers shall stand at His bar to be themselves condemned. Pontius Pilate and the chief priests shall all be there, and Caesar, and all Caesars, Czars, emperors, kings, and princes shall do homage before Him in lowliest manner, by standing before His judgment seat as prisoners to be tried by Him. There will be no recollection of the scepter of reed, for He shall break His enemies with a rod of iron (Mat 12:20; Rev 19:15). There shall be no marks of the thorn-crown, for on His head shall be many a diadem. Men shall not then be able to think of Him as the “man of tears” with visage sadly marred by grief and shame, for His eyes shall be as a flame of fire and His countenance as the sun shining in its strength. O Cross, whatever of shame there was about thee shall be wiped out forever among the sons of men, for *this* Man shall sit upon the throne of judgment! The Father designed to put this honor upon Him, and He hath right well deserved it. Jesus Christ as God hath a glory that He had with the Father before the world was; but as God-man, He hath a glory that His Father hath given Him to be the reward of that labor of life and death by which He hath redeemed His people. “Give unto the Lord glory and strength” (Psa 96:7) is the ascription of all His saints, and God the everlasting Father hath done this unto His Son, concerning Whom He hath sworn that “every knee should bow” before Him and “that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phi 2:10-11). “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (Jud 1:14-15)...

**It is as Son of Man as well as Son of God that our Lord will judge the world at the last great day.** Be ye sure, then, of His impartiality. He is God, yet man, having an intense sympathy both with the King and with the subjects, having manifested His grace even to the rebellious and being yet filled with intense love to the Father and His Law. If we could have the election of a judge, what being could we suppose more impartial or so impartial as the Lord, Who “thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Phi 2:6-7)? O blessed Judge, be Thou at once enthroned by the choice of the whole creation!...

**[The Son of Man’s] verdict will be final and irreversible.** When Jesus has once pronounced it, there will be no appeal, no suing out of a writ of error, no reversal of the decree. He Himself hath said it: “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Mat 25:46). There will be no delay in execution or

escape from the doom. There will be no steeling of the heart to endure it and no outliving the doom. It will last on in all its terror, the final verdict of the Judge of all the earth, *pronounced by the Christ of love*. I know not how to speak upon such a theme as this, but must leave it as it stands before you. May the Holy Ghost impress it upon your minds.

From a sermon delivered on Lord's Day morning, May 25, 1879, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington,  
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## PARDON FOR THE GREATEST SINNER

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

*“For thy name’s sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.”  
—Psalm 25:11*

**D**OCTRINE: *If we truly come to God for mercy, the greatness of our sin will be no impediment to pardon...* The following things are needful in order that we truly come to God for mercy:

**That we should see our *misery* and be *sensible* of our need of mercy.** They who are not sensible of their misery cannot truly look to God for mercy, for it is the very notion of divine mercy that it is the goodness and grace of God to the miserable. Without misery in the object, there can be no exercise of mercy. To suppose mercy without supposing misery or pity without calamity is a contradiction. Therefore, men cannot look upon themselves as proper objects of mercy, unless they first know themselves to be miserable. So, unless this be the case, it is impossible that they should come to God for mercy. They must be sensible that they are the children of wrath, that the Law is against them, and that they are exposed to the curse of it: that the wrath of God abideth on them and that He is angry with them every day while they are under the guilt of sin. They must be sensible that it is a very dreadful thing to be the object of the wrath of God, that it is a very awful thing to have Him for their enemy, and that they cannot bear His wrath. They must be sensible that the guilt of sin makes them miserable creatures, whatever temporal enjoyments they have; that they can be no other than miserable, undone creatures, so long as God is angry with them; that they are without strength and must perish, and that eternally, unless God help them. They must see that their case is utterly desperate, for any thing that any one else can do for them; that they hang over the pit of eternal misery; and that they must necessarily drop into it, if God have not mercy on them...

1. **The *mercy of God* is as sufficient for the pardon of the greatest sins, as for the least, because His mercy is infinite.** That which is infinite is as much above what is great as it is above what is small. Thus, God being infinitely great, He is as much above kings as He is above beggars. He is as much above the highest angel, as He is above the meanest worm. One infinite measure doth not come any nearer to the extent of what is infinite than another. So the mercy of God being infinite, it must be as sufficient for the pardon of *all* sin as of one...

2. **That the *satisfaction of Christ* is as sufficient for the removal of the greatest guilt as the least:** “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1Jo 1:7). “And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Act 13:39). All the sins of those who truly come to God for mercy, let them be what they will, are satisfied for, if God be true Who tells us so. And if they be satisfied for, surely it is not incredible, that God should be ready to pardon them. So that Christ having fully satisfied for all sin, or having wrought out a satisfaction that is sufficient for all, it is now no way inconsistent with the glory of the divine attributes to pardon the greatest sins of those who in a right manner come unto Him for it. God may now pardon the greatest sinners without any prejudice to the honor of His holiness. The holiness of God will not suffer Him to give the least countenance to sin, but inclines Him to give proper testimonies of His hatred of it. But Christ having satisfied for sin, God can now love the sinner and give no countenance at all to sin, however great a sinner he may have been. It was a sufficient testimony of God’s

abhorrence of sin that He poured out His wrath on His own dear Son, when He took the guilt of it upon Himself. Nothing can more show God's abhorrence of sin than this...

**God may, through Christ, pardon the *greatest sinner* without any prejudice to the honor of His majesty.** The honor of the divine majesty indeed requires satisfaction, but the sufferings of Christ fully repair the injury. Let the contempt be ever so great, yet if so honorable a person as Christ undertakes to be a Mediator for the offender and suffers so much for him, it fully repairs the injury done to the Majesty of heaven and earth. *The sufferings of Christ fully satisfy justice.* The justice of God, as the supreme Governor and Judge of the world, requires the punishment of sin. The supreme Judge *must* judge the world according to a rule of justice...The Law is no impediment in the way of the pardon of the greatest sin, if men do but truly come to God for mercy: for Christ hath fulfilled the Law, He hath borne the curse of it, in His sufferings. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal 3:13).

**3. Christ will not refuse to save the greatest sinners, who in a right manner come to God for mercy; for this is His work.** It is His business to be a Savior of sinners; it is the work upon which He came into the world; and therefore He will not object to it. He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Mat 9:13). Sin is the very evil which He came into the world to remedy: therefore, He will not object to any man that he is very sinful. The more sinful he is, the more need of Christ. The sinfulness of man was the reason of Christ's coming into the world...The physician will not make it an objection against healing a man who applies to him that he stands in great need of his help...

**4. Herein doth the glory of grace by the redemption of Christ much consist, viz., in its sufficiency for the pardon of the *greatest sinners*.** The whole [plan] of the way of salvation is for this end: to glorify the free grace of God. God had it on His heart from all eternity to glorify this attribute; and therefore it is, that the device of saving sinners by Christ was conceived. The greatness of divine grace appears very much in this: *that God by Christ saves the greatest offenders.* The greater the guilt of any sinner is the more glorious and wonderful is the grace manifested in his pardon: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom 5:20)...The Redeemer is glorified, in that He proves sufficient to redeem those who are exceeding sinful, in that His blood proves sufficient to wash away the greatest guilt, in that He is able to save men to the uttermost, and in that He redeems even from the greatest misery. It is the honor of Christ to save the greatest sinners when they come to Him, as it is the honor of a physician that he cures the most desperate diseases or wounds. Therefore, no doubt, Christ will be willing to save the greatest sinners, if they come to Him. For He will not be backward to glorify Himself and to commend the value and virtue of His own blood. Seeing He hath so laid out Himself to redeem sinners, He will not be unwilling to show that He is able to redeem to the uttermost...If you see not the sufficiency of Christ to pardon you, without any righteousness of your own to recommend you, you never will come so as to be accepted of Him. The way to be accepted is to come—not on any such encouragement, that now you have made yourselves better, and more worthy, or not so unworthy, but—on the mere encouragement of Christ's worthiness and God's mercy.

From "Great Guilt No Obstacle to the Pardon of the Returning Sinner" in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2, reprinted by the Banner of Truth Trust.

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**Jonathan Edwards** (1703-1758): American Congregational preacher greatly used of God during the Great Awakening. Born in East Windsor, Connecticut Colony.

## A GOSPEL WORTH DYING FOR

**Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)**

*"To testify the gospel of the grace of God."*—Acts 20:24

**P**AUL says that, in comparison with his great object of preaching the Gospel, he did not count even his life to be dear to himself; yet we are sure Paul highly valued life. He had the same love of life as other men, and he knew besides that his own life was of great consequence to the churches and to the cause of Christ. In another place he said, "To abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Phi 1:24). He was not weary of life, nor was he a vain person who could treat life as though it were a thing to fling away in sport. He valued life, for he prized time, which is the stuff that life is made of, and he turned to practical account each day and hour, "redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph 5:16). Yet he soberly said to the elders of the church at Ephesus that he did not regard his life as a dear thing in comparison with bearing testimony to the Gospel of the grace of God. According to the verse before us, the Apostle regarded life as a race that he had to run. Now, the more quickly a race is run the better: certainly, length is not the object of desire. The one thought of a runner is how he can most speedily reach the winning post. He spurns the ground beneath him; he cares not for the course he traverses except so far as it is the way over which he must run to reach his desired end. Such was life to Paul: all the energies of his spirit were consecrated to the pursuit of one object, namely, that he might everywhere bear testimony to the Gospel of the grace of God; and the life that he lived here below was only valued by him as a means to that end. He also regarded the Gospel and his ministry in witnessing to it as a sacred deposit that had been committed to him by the Lord Himself. He looked upon himself as "put in trust with the Gospel" (1Th 2:4), and he resolved to be faithful though it should cost him his life...Before his mind's eye, he saw the Savior taking into His pierced hands the priceless casket which contains the celestial jewel of the grace of God and saying to him, "I have redeemed thee with My blood, and I have called thee by My name, and now I commit this precious thing into thy hands, that thou mayest take care of it and guard it even with thy heart's blood. I commission thee to go everywhere in My place and stead and to make known to every people under heaven the Gospel of the grace of God." All believers occupy a somewhat similar place. We are none of us called to the apostleship, and we may not all have been called to the public preaching of the Word of God; but we are all charged to be valiant for the truth upon the earth and to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Oh, to do this in the spirit of the Apostle of the Gentiles! As believers, we are all called to some form of ministry. This ought to make our life a race and cause us to regard ourselves as the guardians of the Gospel, even as he that bears the colors of a regiment regards himself as bound to sacrifice everything for their preservation...

**What was this Gospel for which Paul would die?** It is not everything called "Gospel" that would produce such enthusiasm...we have gospels nowadays which I would not *die* for nor recommend anyone of you to *live* for, inasmuch as they are gospels that will be snuffed out within a few years. It is never worthwhile to die for a doctrine that will itself die out. I have lived long enough to see half-a-dozen new gospels rise, flourish, and decay. They told me long ago that my old Calvinistic doctrine was far behind the age and was an exploded thing. Next, I heard that evangelical teaching in any form was a thing of the past, to be supplanted by "advanced thought"...Yet there used to be a Gospel in the world that consisted of facts that Christians never questioned. There was once in the church a Gospel that believers hugged to their hearts as if it were their soul's life. There used to be a Gospel in the world which provoked enthusiasm and commanded sacrifice. Tens of thousands have met together to hear this Gospel at peril of their lives. Men, to the teeth of tyrants, have proclaimed it, have suffered the loss of all things, and gone to prison and to death for it, singing psalms all the while. Is there not such a Gospel remaining? Or are we arrived at cloudland,<sup>52</sup> where souls starve on suppositions and become incapable of confidence or ardor?<sup>53</sup> Are the disciples of Jesus now to be fed upon the froth of "thought" and the wind of imagination, whereon men become heady and high-minded? Nay, rather, will we not return to the substantial meat of infallible revelation and cry to the Holy Ghost to feed us upon His own inspired Word?

**What is this Gospel that Paul valued before his own life?** It was called by him "the gospel of the grace of God." That which most forcibly struck the Apostle in the Gospel was that it was a message of grace and of grace alone. Amid the music of the glad tidings, one note rang out above all others and charmed the Apostle's ear. That note was *grace*—the grace of God. That note he regarded as characteristic of the whole strain: the Gospel was "the gospel of the grace of God." In these days, that word *grace* is not often heard: we hear of moral duties, scientific adjustments, and human progress; but who tells us of "the grace of God" except a few old-fashioned people who will soon be gone? As one of those antiquated folk...I shall try to sound out that word *grace*, so that those who know its joyful sound shall be glad, and those who despise it shall be cut to the heart.

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<sup>52</sup> **cloudland** – a region of fancy, myth, or unreality.

<sup>53</sup> **ardor** – fiery intensity of feeling.

***Grace is the essence of the Gospel.*** Grace is the one hope for this fallen world! Grace is the sole comfort of saints looking forward for glory! Perhaps Paul had a clearer view of grace than even Peter, James, or John; and hence he has so much larger space in the New Testament. The other apostolic writers excelled Paul in certain respects, but Paul as to his depth and clearness in the doctrine of grace stood first and foremost. We need Paul again, or at least the Pauline evangelism and definiteness. He would make short work of the new gospels and say of those who follow them, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal 1:6-7).

***Let me try to explain in a brief manner how the Gospel is the good news of grace:*** The Gospel is an announcement that God is prepared to deal with guilty man on the ground of free favor and pure mercy. There would be no good news in saying that God is just; for, in the first place, that is not news. We know that God is just; the natural conscience teaches man that. That God will punish sin and reward righteousness is not news at all. And if it were news, yet it would not be good news; for we have all sinned, and upon the ground of justice we must perish. But it is news, and news of the best kind, that the Judge of all is prepared to pardon transgression and to justify the ungodly. It is good news to the sinful that the Lord will blot out sin, cover the sinner with righteousness, and receive him into His favor, and that not on account of anything he has done or will ever do, but out of sovereign grace. Though we are all guilty without exception, and all most justly condemned for our sins, yet God is ready to take us from under the curse of His Law and give us all the blessedness of righteous men, as an act of pure mercy...This is a message *worth dying for*, that through the covenant of grace God can be just, and yet the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; that He can be the righteous Judge of men, and yet believing men can be justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus! That God is merciful and gracious and is ready to bless the most unworthy is a wonderful piece of news, worth a man’s spending a hundred lives to tell. My heart leaps within me as I repeat it in this hall and tell the penitent, the desponding, and the despairing that, though their sins deserve hell, yet grace can give them heaven and make them fit for it—and that as a sovereign act of love, altogether independent of their character or deservings. Because the Lord hath said, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” (Rom 9:15), there is hope for the most hopeless. Since “it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy” (Rom 9:16), there is an open door of hope for those who otherwise might despair...Ah, Paul, I can understand your getting into a holy excitement over such a revelation as that of free grace! I can understand your being willing to throw your life away that you might tell to your fellow sinners that grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.

***But the Gospel tells us much more than this, namely, that in order to his dealing with men upon the ground of free favor, God the Father has Himself removed the grand obstacle which stood in the way of mercy.*** God is just; that is a truth most sure; man’s conscience knows it to be so, and man’s conscience will never rest content unless it can see that the justice of God is vindicated. Therefore, in order that God might justly deal in a way of pure mercy with men, He gave His only-begotten Son, that by His death, the Law might receive its due and the eternal principles of His government might be maintained. Jesus was appointed to stand in man’s stead, to bear man’s sin and endure the chastisement of man’s guilt. How clearly doth Isaiah state this in his fifty-third chapter! Man is now saved securely, because the commandment is *not* set aside, nor the penalty revoked. All is done and suffered which could be exacted by the sternest justice, and yet grace has her hands untied to distribute pardons as she pleases. The debtor is loosed, for the debt is paid. See a dying Savior, and hear the prophet say, “The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:3). Here, too, everything is of grace.

***Brethren, it was grace on God’s part to resolve upon devising and accepting an atonement, and especially in His actually providing that atonement at His own cost.*** There is the wonder of it! He that was offended Himself provides the reconciliation! He had but one Son, and sooner than there should be any obstacle in His way as to dealing with men on the footing of pure grace, He took that Son from His bosom, allowed Him to assume our frail nature, and in that nature permitted Him to die, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God...“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1Jo 4:10). This, then, is the Gospel of the grace of God—that God is able, without injustice, to deal with men in a way of pure mercy, altogether apart from their sins or their merits, because their sins were laid upon His dear Son Jesus Christ, Who hath offered to divine justice a complete satisfaction, so that God is glorious in holiness and yet rich in mercy. Ah, beloved Paul, there *is* something worth preaching here.

*In order to the accomplishment of the designs of grace it was necessary further that a Gospel message should be issued full of promise, encouragement, and blessing.* Truly, that message has been delivered to us; for that Gospel that we preach today is full of grace to the very brim. It speaks on this wise: Sinner, just as you are, return unto the Lord, and He will receive you graciously and love you freely. God hath said, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb 8:12). For Christ's sake, and not because of any agonies, tears, or sorrows on your part, He will remove your sins as far from you as the east is from the west (Psa 103:12). He saith, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa 1:18). You may come to Jesus just as you are, and He will give you full remission upon your believing in Him. The Lord says today, "Look not within, as though you would search for any merit there; but look unto Me, and be ye saved. I will bless you apart from merit, according to the atonement of Christ Jesus." He says, "Look not within as though you looked for any strength for future life: I am become both your strength and your salvation; for when you were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"...The Gospel message is of grace because it is directed to those whose only claim is their need. The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. Come, therefore, ye morally sick; ye whose brows are white with the leprosy of sin; come and welcome, for to you is this free Gospel proclaimed by divine authority. Assuredly such a message as this is worth any exertion for its spreading, and it is so blessed, so divine, that we may gladly pour out our blood to proclaim it.

*Further, brethren, that this Gospel blessing might come within the reach of men, God's grace has adopted a method suitable to their condition.* "How can I be forgiven?" saith one, "tell me truly and quickly!" "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Act 16:31). God asks of you no good works, nor good feelings either, but that you be willing to accept what He most freely gives. He saves upon believing. This is faith: that thou believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that thou trust thyself with Him: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (Joh 1:12). If thou believest, thou art saved. Salvation "is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed" (Rom 4:16).

Dost thou say, "But faith itself seems beyond my reach"? Then, in the Gospel of the grace of God we are told that even faith is God's gift and that He works it in men by His Holy Spirit. For apart from that Spirit they lie dead in trespasses and sins. Oh, what grace is this! The faith that is commanded is also conferred! "But," saith one, "if I were to believe in Christ and have my past sins forgiven, yet I fear I should go back to sin; for I have no strength by which to keep myself for the future." Hearken! The Gospel of the grace of God is this: that He will keep thee to the end, that He will preserve alive within thee the fire that He kindles; for He saith, "I give unto my sheep eternal life." Again He saith, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (Joh 4:14). The sheep of Christ shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of Christ's hand. Dost thou hear this, thou guilty one, thou who hast no claim upon God's grace whatever? His free grace comes to thee, *even to thee*. And if thou art made willing to receive it, thou art this day a saved man and saved forever beyond all question. I do say it again, this is a Gospel so well worth the preaching that I can understand Paul saying, "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God"...

*Do you seem inclined to accept the way and method of grace?* Let me test you. Some men think they love a thing and yet they do not, for they have made a mistake concerning it. Do you understand that you are to have no claim upon God? He says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Rom 9:15). When it comes to pure mercy, then no one can possibly urge a claim. In fact, no claim can exist. If it be of grace it is not of debt, and if of debt it is not of grace. If God wills to save one man, and another be left to perish in his own willful sin, that other cannot dare to dispute with God. Or if he do, the answer is "Can I not do as I will with my own?" Oh, but you seem now as if you started back from it! See, your pride revolts against the sovereignty of grace. Let me beckon you back again. Though you have no claim, there is another truth, which smiles upon you; for, on the other hand, there is no bar to your obtaining mercy. If no goodness is needed to recommend you to God, since all must be pure favor that He gives, then also no badness can shut you out from that favor. However guilty you may be, it may be God may show favor to you. He has in other cases called out the chief of sinners: why not in your case also? At any rate, no aggravation of sin, no continuance in sin, no height of sin, can be a reason why God should not look with grace upon you; for if pure grace and nothing else but grace is to have

sway then the jet black transgressor<sup>54</sup> may be saved. In his case, there is room for grace to manifest its greatness. I have heard men make excuse out of the doctrine of election, and they have said, “What if I should not be elected?” It seems to me far wiser to say, “What if I *should* be elected?” Yea, I am elected if I believe in Jesus; for there never was a soul yet that cast itself upon the atonement of Christ but what that soul was chosen of God from before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4).

***This is the Gospel of the grace of God, and I know that it touches the heart of many of you.*** It often stirs my soul like the sound of martial music,<sup>55</sup> to think of my Lord’s grace from old eternity, a grace that is constant to its choice and will be constant to it when all these visible things shall disappear as sparks that fly from the chimney. My heart is glad within me to have to preach free grace and dying love...There is something in a free-grace Gospel worth preaching, worth listening to, worth living for, and worth dying for!

My friend, if the Gospel has done nothing for you, hold your tongue or speak against it. But if the Gospel has done for you what it has done for some of us, if it has changed the current of your life, if it has lifted you up from the dunghill and made you to sit as on a throne, if it is today your meat and your drink, if to your life it is the very center and sun—then bear constant witness to it. If the Gospel has become to you what it is to me, the light of my innermost heart, the core of my being, then tell it, tell it wherever you go; and make men know that even if they reject it, it is to you the power of God unto salvation and will be the same to *every* man that believeth. My time is gone, yet I must detain you a minute while I remind you of reasons why we, my brethren, should live to make known the Gospel of the grace of God:

**First, because it is the *only* Gospel in the world, after all.** These mushroom gospels of the hour, which come and go like a penny newspaper, which has its day and then is thrown aside, have no claim on any man’s zeal...But to hear the Gospel of the grace of God is worth many a mile’s walk, and if it were plainly set forth in all our churches and chapels I warrant we should see very few empty pews: the people would come and hear it, for they always have done so. It is your *graceless* gospel which starves the flock till they forsake the pasture...Man wants something that shall cheer his heart in the midst of his labor and give him hope under a sense of sin. As the thirsty need water, so does man want the Gospel of the grace of God. And there are no two Gospels in the world any more than there are two suns in the heavens. There is but one atmosphere for us to breathe and one Gospel for us to live by...

**Do it, next, because it is for God’s glory.** Do you not see how it glorifies God? It lays the sinner low; it makes man nobody, but God is all in all. It sets God on a throne and trails man in the dust; and then it sweetly leads men to worship and reverence the God of all grace, Who passeth by transgression, iniquity, and sin.

Therefore, **spread it.** Spread it because thus you will glorify Christ. Oh, if He should come on this platform this morning, how gladly would we all make way for Him! How devoutly would we adore Him! If we might but see that head, that dear majestic head, would we not all bow in worship? And if He then spoke and said, “My beloved, I have committed to you my Gospel. Hold it fast as ye have received it! Give not way to the notions and inventions of men, but hold fast the truth as ye have received it; and go and tell My word, for I have other sheep that are not yet of My fold, who must be brought in. And you have brothers that yet are prodigals, and they must come home!” I say, if He looked you each one in the face and addressed you so, your soul would answer, “Lord, I will live for Thee! I will make Thee known! I will die for Thee if needs be to publish the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

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**Charles H. Spurgeon** (1834-1892): Influential English Baptist minister; history’s most widely read preacher, apart from those found in Scripture. Born at Kelvedon, Essex, England.

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<sup>54</sup> **jet black transgressor** – one who is blackened by sin.

<sup>55</sup> **martial music** – military music; a march.