

CLEARING THE ROAD TO HEAVEN NO. 1131

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Gather out the stones.”
Isaiah 62:10.

“GATHER out the stones”—that is to say, out of the King’s highway. Clear the road. Make room for coming sinners. Take away all stumbling blocks. Make the Gospel plain and simple and come to the help of those who find hindrances and impediments in their progress to the Savior. Such stones are there and Satan tries to increase their number. The Lord’s servants must gather them out. That is my object. I do not intend to attempt anything beyond that. I shall only try, with great simplicity of thought and speech, to deal with those things which prevent sinners from getting to Christ, for perhaps while we are trying to do this the Eternal Spirit may bring them to Jesus and they may find salvation on the spot. To that end let all who are already saved cry mightily to the Lord for His saving health and consoling Grace.

Beloved Friends, when poor souls are coming to Jesus they are generally, themselves, their own worst enemies. They have a singular ingenuity in finding out reasons why they should not be saved. A strange infatuation seems to possess them so that they ransack Heaven, earth and Hell to find discouragements. They become inventive of difficulties where difficulties are not and often the pastor, whose business it is to look after the little ones, finds himself, notwithstanding his former experience with persons of like character, utterly bewildered. He is often put to a nonplus with the strange and novel difficulties which awakened sinners will imagine and the reasons which they invent why they should not believe in Jesus Christ.

One would hardly think that the human mind could twist itself into such knots. So many sinners, so many new arguments—for each one has a logic of his own by which he labors to prove the impossibility of his own salvation. Upon consideration, this will not appear very remarkable, for they have long been living in sin and it is no wonder that when they begin to see aright they should be bewildered with fear. Who would not be full of fear if all of a sudden he saw Hell opening right under his feet? They have been eating nothing lately but unsatisfying husks which may nourish swine, but cannot support men. No wonder that they are very weak and scarcely can stagger towards the Father’s house! Poor souls, their hearts are in their mouths, for they cannot tell what is to come next—only a dreadful sound is in their ears, as of the destroying angel pursuing them with vengeance!

They know that God is angry with them and they do not yet understand His great love to penitent sinners. And so they are like men in an upper chamber who start up in the night when a cry of fire is raised—they know not which way to turn. Or I may compare them to mariners in great jeopardy at sea, when they reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man and are at their wit’s end. I wonder not, I say, that they refuse the comforts which we offer them, for it is one of the effects and symptoms of great sickness that the patient refuses all manner of meat—he has lost his appetite—he is too ill to eat and his soul draws near unto the gates of death.

Moreover, in addition to fear and weakness, seeking sinners are generally the prey to severe assaults of the great enemy of souls. When Satan sees a soul coming to Christ, he hastens to aggravate that sinner’s doubts and fears. He raises a double tempest in his spirit. It is “now or never” with the devil—he perceives that if he does not tear poor souls in pieces, now, and drive them to utter desperation—they will soon be in Christ’s fold where he will never be able to touch them again. They are just escaping from the old slaveholder’s hand and if he does not bring them back and chain them up with fresh irons he will lose his captives, for they will follow the Morning Star and enter the land of Liberty where his whip cannot reach them. Therefore he uses double craft and cruelty to oppress and puzzle poor seeking sinners. They are in a state of mind in which they are ready to believe anything which he will tell them, and therefore, upon this string the arch-deceiver plays right horribly.

What with a troubled conscience and with Satan, it is no wonder that the seeking sinner falls into a maze and scarcely knows which way to turn! He sees no ground for hope, but a thousand reasons for despair! It is therefore a holy and necessary work to endeavor to remove some of the stumbling blocks out of the poor beginner's way. When I have attempted this good work, I shall do far better still, for I shall point the coming sinner to Him who in His own Person has effectually removed every real stumbling block, so that there is nothing, now, that can keep a sinner from his God, if that sinner is but ready to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. First, then, by way of LIFTING SOME OF THE STONES OUT OF THE ROAD, let us begin with a very old and very common difficulty—I refer to the doctrine of Election. Many will say, “Perhaps I am not one of God's chosen. It may be that my name is not written in the Lamb's Book of Life.” Unbelief hammers away at this! It is a favorite topic with doubters. And think not, my dear Friends, that I am about to attempt an explanation of the mysteries of predestination, or mean to deny the doctrine of Election for an instant! I believe the doctrine of Election to be as certainly true as the doctrine of the existence of God!

I am not about to attempt to clear up the metaphysical difficulties which could be suggested, world without end, by a subtle thinker. Those I leave to others and I wish them joy in their task. If I were to venture upon such a labor I should only be like Sisyphus who rolled a stone uphill which always rolled down again. The difficulties about free agency and predestination have existed, do exist and will exist to the world's end—yes, and through eternity, too. Both facts are, to my mind, certain, but where they meet none knows but God, Himself. Here is the way John Bunyan met the difficulty in his, “Grace Abounding,” which book I earnestly recommend to every tempted soul. In that autobiography, which he entitles, “Grace Abounding,” he says that he was perplexed for many days together over the doctrine, till at last this thought came into his mind—Search in the Book of God and see whether ever there was a sinner that trusted in Jesus who was refused.

So the good man set to work and read the Book through from the first of Genesis to the last of Revelation, but he could not find an instance of a sinner that ever did come to Christ that was rejected because he was not elect. And the snare was broken, and he said, “I will go, even I. He will not reject me.” There is a practical, common sense way out of the difficulty. I know not any better way of practically treating the matter, than of saying, “I will go to Jesus because He bids me and because He has said, ‘Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.’ If I go to Him and He casts me out, then He has broken His promise. But that He can never do, so now I venture to rest upon His blood and leave my soul's salvation in His hands.”

In other matters you act so—when you are ill you do not know whether you are ordained to get well, but you send for the doctor. You cannot tell whether you are predestinated to be rich, but you endeavor to make money. You do not know whether you will live through the day, but you work to provide yourself with bread. Thus common sense cuts the knot which mere theory can never untie. Leave the subtleties of argument alone and act as sensible men. Go to Jesus and try whether He will reject you and you will be saved. Another difficulty which is very common is a deep sense of sin. In some persons, conviction of sin and terror concerning the wrath to come arise out of the recollection of one glaring sin. I have known persons more troubled about one atrocious offense than about all the transgressions of the rest of their lives! The one great blot has appeared to stare them in the face both day and night and to burn its way into their souls.

In others, however, it is the whole series of their iniquities, the indefinite but most crushing weight of a life of careless unbelief. They could not count their sins, they know that, and they do not try to do so. But all their sins together surround them like raging waves of the sea, or a pack of hungry wolves howling for their prey, or the dense clouds and fierce winds of a gathering tempest hastening to overwhelm a half-shipwrecked vessel. They can hardly conceive that salvation is possible in their case. Gave me your hand, my Brother, and let me say to you, Do you think Christ died on the Cross for nothing? There must have been some great reason for His being put to such a cruel and shameful death! That reason was *great sin*. If there had not been great sin there would not have been need of a great Savior. Know assuredly that the Savior is greater than your sin and His merit is greater than your guilt—

*“If all the sins that men have done,
In will, in word, in thought, in deed,
Since worlds were made, or time begun,
Were laid on one poor sinner's head,
The stream of Jesus' precious blood,*

Applied, removes the dreadful load."

If the blackest sinner outside the gates of Hell would believe in Jesus, in that moment all his sins would cease to be, for there is, and there must be an infinite efficacy in the blood of such an One as Jesus Christ, who "counted it not robbery to be equal with God." Does the Son of God smart beneath the lash of Justice? Then, Beloved, that substitutionary suffering must have a merit in it which it is not in your power or mine to measure. Does sin trouble you? Then remember that it is written, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Remember, this, again, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." And hear, yet again, this Word, "Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Do you know, I feel right happy to have to talk to you about this, and yet I feel a dart going through me lest I should not speak of it as I ought to do, for, oh, I would that poor troubled sinners would see that sin need not deter them from coming to a reconciled God! The blood of Jesus Christ has already removed from before the Throne of Justice all the transgressions of all those who come and rest in Jesus! If you believe in the Savior sent of God, your sin is already gone and you are accepted in the Beloved!

Another stone in the road, in the case of some, is a fear that the day of Grace has passed. Probably there may only be one or two in this place who have ever fallen under *that* trouble, but those one or two are precious and I must seek them. Read again Bunyan's, "Grace Abounding," and you will find him recording that he said to himself, "Oh, that I had given my heart to God seven years ago, but now it is certainly too late." And then he remembered that there had been a large addition to the little Baptist Church at Bedford and he said to himself, "Now God has saved all the people He means to save in Bedford, and as for the poor tinker, He will never save him. My day of Grace is over." I do not quite know where that notion of, "a day of Grace," came from. I am not quite sure about the truth of that doctrine and if it means that any man who repents and believes will find it too late in this life, I deny it altogether!

But without controversy I will tell you one thing for certain—there never was a sinner that believed in Jesus who believed in Him too late for salvation! There never was a man in this world who cried to God for mercy through the blood of Jesus and who had for his answer, "Your day of Grace is past." No such thing! How dare I say, how dare *any* man say that a fellow creature's day of Grace is past? When the thief's hands were nailed to the cross and the cross was lifted up, and he hung bleeding there, soon to die, and to be devoured by the carrion crows, it did look as if his day of Grace were past and yet his day of Glory had dawned! For the Savior said, "*Today* shall you be with Me in Paradise." The Lord's Grace can come to a man at any time and at any hour! It is never too late to believe in Jesus!

Dear Heart, it is not too late for *you*. Do not believe the suggestion of Satan, but come, and welcome! Mercy's gate is not shut. Mr. Bunyan escaped from that temptation by this excellent method—he read the Scriptures diligently, and he came upon that verse, (you remember hearing our friends, the Jubilee Singers, sing it), "Yet there is room!" "Oh!" thought he, "then my day of Grace is not past." "Yet there is room." Lay hold on that, I pray you—you who think your time of hope is over. "Yet there is room."—

*"Don't stay away,
Brothers, don't stay away.
For the angel says
There's room enough in
Heaven for you."*

Let not the demon of unbelief tempt you to limit God's mercy and set bounds to His power! Come and learn the infinite compassion of your gracious God!

Here and there I have met with persons who have stumbled at a very terrible stone in the road. It may never have occurred to some of you and I hope it never may, but it is this—they have a tendency to blasphemous thoughts. The more earnest a man is about religion the more likely he is to meet with this peculiar temptation, especially if there is some bodily disease about him. I should never have believed it if I had not experienced it—what intolerably wicked, atheistic and profane thoughts will come into the minds of pure-minded people—against their will and without their consent—to their utter horror and dismay! I can remember as a child hearing a man swear. I think it was the first time in my life I had heard such profanity and I felt as if I had been cut by a whip. It was the only word of blasphemy I think that had ever passed my ears, then, and yet, when I was under conviction of sin, seeking the Lord, thoughts that I dare not even think

of, now, would thrust themselves upon me when I tried to get alone in prayer. And I rose astonished, as though I was scared from my knees.

When I attempted to cry for mercy there would be sure to come some hideous sentence which I had never heard from anyone else, and certainly thought I could never have invented in my heart, which would well near drive me from the Mercy Seat. Well, now, Beloved, it may be you cannot grapple with these thoughts, and I would advise you not to try. I believe they are works of Satan who is darting his thoughts into your soul in a secret manner. They are not thoughts of yours. They should lead you to go and tell Jesus Christ about it, but they should not drive you to despair. Tell the Lord that these thoughts, if they are yours, are hateful to you and pray Him to remove them. If they are not yours, but come from Satan, ask Jesus to rebuke the evil spirit that you may have a little peace. And I will tell you another thing. If these thoughts *are* yours and you are guilty of them, do Christ the honor to believe that He can pardon even these, and throw yourself, with all the defilement of your thoughts, black as you are, right down at His feet and He will save you notwithstanding all.

A little sinner can, as it were, only give to Christ little glory by trusting Him. But, if you feel yourself the greatest of sinners, give Jesus the great glory of believing that His precious blood can cleanse you—that He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him! O Soul, let these blasphemous thoughts drive you to Jesus, and the devil will find that they do not answer his purpose and will cease to assail you with them. Stand at the foot of the Cross, and resolve never to depart from it, and Satan will depart from you. Another stone which frequently stumbles others is the need, or rather the absence, of anything like a horrible thought, or a terror, or an alarm. I have known some who have believed in Jesus Christ as soon as ever Christ has been preached to them and, consequently, they have found joy with but little difficulty. And then, a little while afterwards they have said, “this cannot be real conversion because I did not suffer the terrors and distresses which some others have experienced.”

There is a numerous class to whom we have preached Christ who have replied to all encouragements, “Oh, but we don’t feel the terrors of the Lord. We are not plunged in despair. We are not haunted with horrible forebodings and therefore we are not in the right road, and cannot expect to be saved.” Oh, my dear Friend, if you are allowed to come to Jesus without being so molested by the Evil One, do not fret about that, but rather rejoice! If you have not those horrors, be thankful you don’t! Be thankful to God that He brought you to Christ without your first having run into all excess of outward sin and wicked unbelief. Repentance of sin is necessary, but to doubt the mercy of God and to run into despair are *not* necessary—are even injurious and sinful.

Do you think that Christ needs the devil to prepare you for Him? Unbelief cannot conduce to salvation! If you do not happen to be hunted about by the hell hounds of remorse and despondency, you quite as much need the Good Shepherd and are quite as welcome to Him. There is no need to go round by Hell’s gate to get to Heaven! Trust in Jesus just as you are and you are saved. Those who have those dreadful thoughts would be glad enough to be rid of them—do not you be asking for needless vexations—but come to Jesus. Rest in His atoning blood just as you are and He will give you all that is necessary to fit you for His kingdom.

There are some, again, who are troubled because they think they have a lack of sensibility with regard to their sins. They argue thus—“I understand that whoever believes in Jesus shall be saved, but I must *feel* my sinfulness. I hear you, Sir, describe sometimes the deep contrition and brokenness of spirit which many have felt and I fear I have not felt anything of the kind. May I hope that Jesus is able to save me notwithstanding my insensibility?” Our answer to that is that a broken heart is a gift of God’s Grace—it is not a ground or reason why Jesus Christ should save you—but it is a *part* of salvation. A man is saved by having his heart broken and being led to cast himself upon Jesus—and if you have not yet received this part of salvation, your business is to come to Jesus for it—not to stay away till you get it of yourself and then come to Christ with your feelings as a recommendation.

If you were to come to Jesus and say, “Lord, I have broken my heart down to the right state. Now I will believe that You can save me,” I think He would say to you, “If you have done so much, go and do the rest. If you can make yourself fit for Grace, go and make yourself fit for Glory.” No, but if you have not a broken heart, come to Jesus Christ for it—

*“True belief and true repentance,
Every Grace that brings you near,
Without money
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”*

You have not to do something for yourself and then look to Jesus for the rest. Shame upon you for thinking of such a thing! To melt your heart in the furnace of love is a *Divine* work and Christ must do it. Come, you stony-hearted Sinner, come with the flint and the granite still within you. Come, though you cannot feel, and believe that Christ can make you feel. Come, you who have been annealed like steel in the furnace of transgression and familiarity with sin. Come to Him, for He is able to give you a heart of flesh and take away your heart of stone. I am fully persuaded that those who mourn their need of *feeling* are the most feeling people in the world, but I will not dwell upon that truth. It is the greatest mistake for us to imagine that we are to make ourselves *feel* something and then Christ will save us. Feelings of contrition are as much His work as is the Atonement for the remission of sins. Christ is Alpha as well as Omega in salvation. You must begin with Him—and go on with Him, and end with Him if end there ever can be.

Now I hear another say, “Ah, but the stone in my road is that I cannot believe. I have not the faith I need to have.” Well, beloved Seeker, perhaps you have made a mistake about your faith. Do you think that you need to believe with full assurance before you can be saved? If so, listen. The smallest grain of saving faith will save a man. To embrace Christ in your arms like Simeon is a grand act for a full-grown saint, but to touch the hem of His garment is as surely saving as to embrace His Person. If you have faith but as a grain of mustard seed, God will recognize that faith and make it grow—and that faith will save you. It is not *quantity*, but *quality* that the Lord looks at. Do you believe in Jesus Christ? That is the point. For, remember, the whole of your salvation rests not on *your believing*, but on the *merits of Jesus Christ!*

Some sinners look too much to their own faith and not enough to the Object of their faith. Now, it is the Object of faith we should look to, and if we did, our faith would grow. You may look at faith till you think you have none. But, on the other hand, you may look at Christ till you feel you cannot help believing in Him. How many a time in my little vestry behind there have I charged this Truth of God home upon those who have said they could not believe. I have said, “What cannot you believe? Cannot you believe God? Is He a liar?” “Ah!” say I to these enquirers, “suppose you said to me when I told you something, ‘I can’t believe you,’ should I not at once say, ‘Why not? What do you know of my character which leads you to think that I am untruthful?’ ”

And they say at once, “Oh, Sir, I should not say that to you. I should feel sure if you told me that you knew a thing to be true that it was so. I would believe you.” “Well, then,” I have said, “how dare you tell me you cannot believe Jesus Christ and cannot believe God the Eternal One! What reason on earth can there be why you should not believe God is speaking the Truth and believe what Jesus Christ says? We will not have it that you cannot believe.” Awakened, quickened Sinner! At the same moment that God gave you spiritual life to feel that you were a sinner, He gave you the principle in which dwells power to believe in Jesus Christ, the sinner’s Savior! And we charge you to exercise that power and to cast yourself, once and for all, upon the finished Sacrifice of Christ the Lord!

Again, we have heard persons say, “But I do not think I can be saved because I am not like So-and-So.” Well, who is this So-and-So? “Why, my dear grandmother, who died so triumphantly.” Ah, and you are a little babe and you expect to be like your grandmother? You are only just born into the heavenly life and yet you expect to know and to do all that an old experienced Christian would know and do? I am sure that no man who has planted an apple tree in his garden goes the next autumn and expects a crop of apples as if the trees had been in his orchard for 20 years. Besides, the Lord is not looking for fruit on you in order to recommend you to His mercy, nor ought you to be looking for it. Your fruit must grow on another tree, on that tree where the Savior died—from *Him* is your fruit found! You be content to *have* nothing good in yourself, and to *be* nothing good, but to take all your good from Jesus Christ!

“Ah,” says one, “but you don’t know how bad I am.” No, nor yet do you. You are 10 times worse than you think you are. Yes, you are a *thousand* times worse than you think you are! You are so bad that you are good for nothing! You are neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill—but it is good-for-nothing people that Jesus Christ came to save! Not the worthy, the excellent, the valuable, but those that are humble in their own eyes—those who think themselves nothing and feel they never can be anything unless a miracle is worked for them. These are they whom the Lord loves to look upon. “He has put down the mighty from their seat, but He has exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich He has sent away empty.” This is the way He always deals with men. The worse you feel yourself to be, the more you need God’s mercy and the more likely you are to get it. Come and lay hold on Eternal Life by a simple faith in Jesus Christ. May the Spirit of God lead you to do so!

I will only speak once more about these difficulties. “Oh!” says one, “but I never have any joy and peace. And I hear those who are saved say they are so happy and so glad.” Ah, there is the door of the house of mercy wide open, and you are outside in the frost and snow. Inside that house—(there, can’t you see through that window pane?)—there are happy children sitting round a fire and they are singing merrily as they eat their evening meal. And you stand out in the cold, and you murmur, “How can I ever enter? I am so cold. I am shivering in this winter’s blast. They are so happy in there. How can I be one of the family and yet stand shivering here?”

Now, you need not ask that question. There is the door and it stands wide open. When Christ’s hands were nailed, He set that door wide open and the devil cannot shut it. And if you enter in you shall have the same joy as those who are sheltered within. But if you stand outside and expect to get the warmth enjoyed by those within—and hope to sing their cheerful song in the cold—you are greatly mistaken. You shall receive the joy when you exercise the faith! Oh, believe in Jesus, or, in other words, trust in Him! That is the Grace which enters in by the door and participates in the blessings of mercy. Trust in Him wholly, solely, entirely and in Him, alone, and, “being justified by faith,” you shall “have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The Lord grant it and He shall have the praise!

One of our friends at the Prayer Meeting prayed that I might give God’s people, this morning, a thick slice such as he gave his hungry children. Now that was a very quaint and suggestive prayer, and I sometimes try to act up to it. But tonight I have been trying to cut a *thin* slice because I have sometime heard of schools where the slice was too thick for the children’s mouths. And therefore I have tried to cut mine thin, that if there is a babe here, he might be able to feed, too. I would even crumb down the subject and mix it with the milk of the Word that it might suit those who cannot feed upon strong meat as yet. My anxious prayer is that the Holy Spirit may help the weaklings to feed and be glad!

II. But I said that in the second part I would do better than remove the stones, and so I will, for I will POINT YOU TO HIM WHO IS “THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE” who has *already* cleared the stumbling blocks out of the road! Traveler to Heaven, Pilgrim of the night, cast your eyes upon the Captain of our salvation, even Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Son of God, and see how He has cast up the highway in the desert and prepared a path through the wilderness! Looking unto Him, the crooked will grow straight and the rough places plain. And you shall see the salvation of God!

Let me ask you to look at Him, first, as He was on earth, the Son of Man. In order that men should be saved, it was necessary that God, Himself, should take into union with His Godhead the nature of the poor, feeble creature called man. Now, I must confess that had I never known by Revelation that the mysterious, Divine, Omnipotent Spirit who made all things, did actually alight upon this earth and take to Himself a body of flesh and blood—had I never known it by Revelation, I could never have imagined it possible! It would never have crossed my mind! But now I *do* know it, and am sure of it, and it still utterly astounds me! The angels, when they saw God in human flesh, wondered, (it is a mystery that He was seen of angels), and they have never left off wondering since.

Sinner, in order that *you* might be saved, God must dwell here in human flesh! He has been here! He has been here! He has been here! The fact is as certain as it is strange! He nursed on a woman’s breast at Bethlehem. He was swaddled as other babes have been. God has been with us! As Man He worked in a carpenter’s shop! He has been here! He ate and drank among men and slept and suffered as men do! He has been here! God has become Man to save sinners! Is anything impossible after that? It was necessary that Jesus Christ should abide here for a while, should work miracles of love. We read some of them just now in the lesson of the evening. He healed the sick. He opened blind eyes. He raised the dead. Yes, the Savior has been here and raised the dead! Can He not raise you? He has not lost His power. If anything, He is greater, now, in Heaven than He was here below.

Can He not open those eyes of yours and those ears of yours, and unloose that stammering tongue of yours and make your lameness to depart till you leap like a hart? Yes, He can do it, can do it tonight! And from that pew, though you came into it heavy-laden, you will, I hope, go out like one who is ready to dance for ecstasy, because you will cry, “The Lord Jesus has saved me, even me!” I say that Christ Incarnate and Christ working on earth are two grand sights, or they are two phases of the same glorious sight—and they take away the stones out of a sinner’s pathway! But ah, Beloved, I want you, most of all, to give the eyes of your heart to the strangest sight of all. It was necessary, before you could be saved, that in the Person of Man, the Son of God should die!

I can conceive Him *living* on earth, but who shall conceive Him *dying*? God was in Christ as He died upon the accursed tree! He who spread the heavens and made the earth, and piled the mountains—He was here, here in the form of man—and the soldiers came and seized Him in the garden as though He had been a thief! And they took Him away to Pilate’s Hall and there they scourged Him! There they spit in His face! There they crowned Him with a crown of thorns and then condemned Him to bear His Cross. They hounded Him—Him, the Eternal God, I say, in human flesh! They hounded Him along Jerusalem’s streets, then flung Him down upon His back upon the transverse wood and drove cruel nails through His blessed and tender hands and feet!

Then they lifted up the Cross and dashed it into its socket in the earth till all His bones were dislocated and He cried, “I am poured out like water: all My bones are out of joint.” It was He who but a little while before had heard the songs of angels and at whose feet the seraphim and cherubim adored. He, on that bloody tree, was fastened and lifted up. And there He died in infinite agonies—it is not possible to describe them, for none know their terror. God forsook Him! His Father turned away His face and in the bitterness of His anguish He cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Thus on the tree He died and in that death He took the punishment due on account of the sin of all who shall believe on Him. He suffered in their place an equivalent for all that they would have had to suffer had they been cast into the pit of Hell.

This being done, salvation is not only possible, but it is achieved! Believe in it, Sinner! What stone remains, now that Jesus has died? God has made Atonement—the eternal God, Himself, has put away human sin! Why do you doubt? Come, I say, hasten to the Cross! Gaze upon this wondrous spectacle of Divine Love—and as you gaze you shall live—for “there is life in a look” at Jesus—life for everyone who rests in Him! But I want you to see a lovelier sight than this. The other is Divinely encouraging, but this is more encouraging, still. Look there! Look there! There is the sepulcher where He lay! They took Him from the Cross. They wrapped Him in spices and fine linen, and they laid Him there. Look there! Christ is not there, the tomb is empty! There is the napkin. There are the grave clothes, but He is not there! Where is He?

Why, He has come forth in the full glory of Resurrection and is saying to the women, “Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended.” He died for human guilt, but He lives, again, for the justification of His people! Why does He live? It is because no human guilt remains to keep Him as a hostage in the grave! All the guilt which He took upon Himself, He has put away. He has buried it—it is gone! It went from *us* when He died—it has gone from Him now that He has risen! The risen Lord has “finished transgression, made an end of sin and brought in everlasting righteousness.” Who would not believe in a risen Christ? If God has set my Surety free, I am sure that I am clear! If Christ laid as a Hostage for my sins in the cold prison of Joseph of Arimathea’s tomb, I bless Him for it. But when I see Him set free, I bless Him yet more, for I know that my sins are gone! There remains no wreck or relic of them—

*“Covered is my unrighteousness,
From condemnation I am free,”*

for Christ has risen from the dead! O, Sinner, I pray God to lead you sweetly to read the mystery of the Resurrection and to give you peace tonight.

But this is not all. Now lift up your eyes away from the garden, to the top of Olivet, and away from the top of Olivet, for, lo, He mounts the skies! His disciples gaze and as they gaze, He ascends. He rises higher and higher, till a cloud receives Him out of their sight. But though that cloud has come between us, faith’s eyes can pierce it, and we can see the angels meeting Him on the way—

*“They brought His chariot from on high
To bear Him to His Throne,
Clapped their triumphant wings, and cried,
‘The glorious work is done!’
‘Hail! Prince,’ they cry, ‘forever hail,
Whose unexampled love
Moved You to quit these glorious realms,
And royalties above.’”*

Don’t you hear their song as they approach the golden gates of the New Jerusalem? They sing, “Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in!” Can you hear the watchers

from above the gate as they challenge the cavalcade, “Who is the King of Glory?” Can you hear, yet again, the song of those who answer, “Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in!”

He enters! His Father receives Him. “Well done,” He says, “well done.” He sits at His Father’s right hand, for His life-work is finished. No more Sacrifice is needed! No other will ever be offered! But while He sits there, mark what He does—He intercedes. He pleads! He pleads! And for whom does He plead? For sinners bought with His blood! He pleads for all that come to God by Him—for *you*, if now you trust Him. You blackest sinner out of Hell—He pleads for *you*, if you trust Him! Utterly lost, ruined, condemned, dissolute, debauched as you may have been, yes, all but damned—but if you will trust Him, there is Infinite Mercy in His heart and in His plea there is Infinite Power! Oh, that I knew how to preach the Gospel! Oh, for a great trumpet to blow such a blast that every ear should hear it!

Oh, will you reject Christ? I pray you may not! At your peril you will do it! If I were called, at this moment, from this pulpit to the bar of God, I could dare to say that I have *tried* to tell you all the comforting Truths that I know about my Master. If I could weep you to the Savior, I would do it! If my arms about your necks would bring you to His feet, I would be glad, my Brothers and Sisters, to try the affectionate embrace! But what more can a mortal do? Do you reject my Master, or will you receive Him? I would do as the Roman ambassadors did to the eastern king, when they made a ring in the sand, and said, “Pass that ring, and you proclaim war, or you make peace. You must stand and decide within that circle.”

I draw such a circle around you tonight and say, “Do not stir from that pew till Christ or sin, Heaven or Hell, faith or unbelief, is chosen by you.” And may the Holy Spirit help you to such a gracious decision that you may say, “I will believe! Lord, help my unbelief! I cast myself now, whether I am saved or lost, upon the finished work of the risen Lord.” The Lord grant it, for Jesus’ sake. Amen!

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 5:25-34; 7:24-30; 10:46-52.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.