

CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR BELIEVERS

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[ON BEHALF OF THE GOSPEL MINISTERS' RELIEF SOCIETY.]

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word."

John 17:20.

IN the very opening of this subject one feels inexpressibly delighted to see the wondrous love of our Savior towards His people. He here promises that He will intercede for each of them before His Father's throne and He declares that this intercession also rises for those who are yet uncalled, unconverted, and unregenerated. Mark the depth of His affection—He spends all His time in continually interceding for His people. I marvel at the condescension of Jesus Christ, that His people's names are always on His lips. When we consider that, notwithstanding all His exceeding grace and affection towards them, they transgress and rebel, it appears wonderful that He should mention their names, or that He should regard their persons.

But when we remember that, day by day, in that land where there is no night, He who stands before His Father's throne bears perpetually on His breast their names deeply cut in the precious jewels and stones of the breastplate, and always with outspread hands, pleads for them, we cannot but admire His love for them and feel a deep veneration for that divine grace which makes Him declare, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof goes forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns."

You must also note here the peculiar knowledge which our Savior, Jesus Christ, has of all His people, as well as His particular love for them, for He says He prays for those who are yet uncalled. Now, none of us who have faith in God, none of those called and led to believe in Jesus, are unknown to Him. He knows His redeemed as well in one condition as another. He knows which of two drunks shall turn and become one of His family. There are none so sunk in the depths of sin and wickedness that, if they are His by the covenant of His grace, do not even now share in His intercession. He knows His beloved when there is no visible mark by which to know them.

He discerns His sheep when, to other people, they seem like wolves or goats. He recognizes His family when they are black as the tents of Kedar and He knows they shall be fair as the curtains of Solomon. He knows His children when they do not know themselves to be His, when they fancy they are lost beyond rescue, or when they foolishly conceive that they can save themselves. Yea, and when all hope fails them, when it seems that the Lord does not know them and the Gospel does not know them—when no Christian knows them and the minister can give them no comfort—Christ knows them even then, for still it is written, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for those whom You have given Me out of the world, those who have not yet believed, but who shall believe through the word of those who are already called."

Another thought before we pass to the subject, for we need to suggest a few of these thoughts just to start with, as they are in the text. The other thought is this—mark how Jesus loves all His people with the same affection. He could not pray for those few who, in His lifetime, had believed on Him without suddenly (to speak after the manner of men), recollecting that these were but a handful and therefore, He stirs Himself up and says, "My Father, neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe

on me through their word”—as much as to say, “These are not My special favorites because they are converted so early. I do not love these better than others. I pray also for those who shall yet be called. I pray as much for one of My people as for another.”

It is well said by the apostle Paul, “there is no difference.” And verily, beloved, there is no difference in the affection of God towards His children. There is an elect out of the elect, I will acknowledge, as to gifts and standing, and as to the labor they may accomplish in this world—but there is no election out of the elect as for a deeper extent of love. They are all loved alike. They are all written in the same book of eternal love and life. They were all purchased with the selfsame precious blood of the Savior. One was not purchased with His foot, another with His hand, but all with His very heart's blood. They are all justified with the same righteousness, all sanctified by the same Spirit, and they shall all enter the same heaven. They are all saved by the same grace, loved by the same love, heirs of the same inheritance—and Jesus Christ puts them all together when He says, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word.”

I. Let us now proceed to the text. The first thing we learn from it is this, that GOD LOVES HIS PEOPLE BEFORE THEY BELIEVE ON HIM.

Jesus Christ would never pray for those whom He did not love. He is no hypocrite in His prayers. Some people are. Many prayers are not worth buying. Indeed, they are not worth taking gratis—they are not prayers at all. I have heard some pray for their brethren in the ministry and at the same time they do not act with them, or for them. We have seen many bow the knee in prayer for such-and-such a person and when they rise, their knees are unbent, but their hands are raised to strike the very person for whom they were praying.

We have too many hypocritical prayers that are good for nothing. We might roll many into a parcel and nobody would pick them up in the streets—they are worse than useless, they are absolutely wicked. For a man to bend his knees and utter the hypocritical language of affection before God, which he never feels in his heart, is little short of blaspheming God. We must have very light thoughts of God when we try to deceive Him with such prayers as these.

But Jesus Christ never prayed a deceitful prayer. If He intercedes for any, He loves them. If He pleads for any, He has chosen them. If He asks His Father that they may be blessed, we are sure that He asks it from His heart. Christ's prayers all come from His inmost soul. You never hear Him mentioning anyone's name before the throne of God whom He does not really love with an eternal affection. Hence, then if Jesus Christ prayed for His people before they were called and before they believed, and if His intercession implies love, He must have loved His people before they believed on Him.

This will very easily appear to you to be a doctrine of truth if we consider the Scriptures at large. Some men will talk against it as a wonderfully wicked doctrine. I refer to those who believe in creature merit and who imagine that we are “made children of God” by some act of our own. But I think no sincere and earnest student of Scripture will ever believe that God commences to love His people when they begin to love Him. Such a thought would be utterly inconsistent with the nature of God.

Do you not know that God is an eternal, self-existent Being, that to say He loves *now*, is, in fact, to say He always did love, since with God there is no past and can be no future? What we call past, present, and future, He wraps up in one eternal NOW. And if you say that He loves you *now*, you thereby say that He loved you yesterday, He loved you in the past eternity, and He will love you forever—for now with God is past, present, and future.

Those who talk of God's beginning to love His people know not “what they say, nor whereof they affirm.” They might speak of man beginning to love. They might speak of angels beginning to love. But of God we never can, since He, without beginning, had a deathless love in His heart. He has an affection which has no source except in Himself. He could not begin, for He is without beginning of years and without end of days. From everlasting to everlasting He is God—and from everlasting to everlasting His mercies extend to His people.

That is an argument, I think, that none can answer—that God loved His wandering people, not only because Christ intercedes for uncalled ones, but because, from the very nature of God, He must have loved them forever if He loves them at all.

But we do not need this proof that God loved His people before they believed. Go to Calvary and you shall see the greatest proof. Did my Savior die for me because I believed on Him? No. I was not then in existence. I was not even formed, “and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.” Could the Savior then have died because I had faith when I was not in existence? Could that have been the origin of the Savior’s love towards me? Oh, no! My Savior died for me long before I believed.

“But” say you, “He foresaw that you would have faith and therefore, He loved you.” What did He foresee about my faith? Did He foresee that I would get that faith myself, and that I would believe on Him of myself? No, my friends, Christ could not foresee that, because no Christian man will ever say that faith came of itself without the gift and without the assistance of the Holy Spirit. I have met with a great many, and talked about the matter, but I never knew one who could put his hand on his heart and say, “I believed in Jesus without the assistance of the Holy Spirit.” I have seen many dying men and asked them this question, and never did I meet with such a one.

God foresaw that He would give you faith and therefore loved you—is not that absolutely absurd? It is as much as to say, I foresee I shall give a beggar a shilling when I go out of this place and therefore, because I foresee that gift, I love him, or you foresee that you will give something tonight towards the Society for the Relief of Faithful Gospel Ministers and therefore, you will then love God’s ministers because you foresee you will give them something. My gift is not the cause of my benevolence, but my benevolence is the cause of my giving it.

God does not love His people because they have faith—He loved them long before. Faith is the gift of God. Does my natural father love me because he fed me and because he clothed me? Nay, he clothed and fed me because he loved me, but his love was prior to his gift. His gifts did not draw his love to me, because he loved me before he gave them. And if any man says, “God loves me because I can do this or that for Him,” he talks nonsense. God cannot love me because of what He has given me Himself. You may say, “He loves me because I love Him,” but God gave you that love. God does not love you because you are so holy, but you are holy because God loves you. And your holiness is God’s gift.

In the very beginning, when this great universe lay in the mind of God, like unborn forests in the acorn cup—long ere the echoes waked the solitudes, before the mountains were brought forth and long ere the light flashed through the sky, God loved His chosen creatures. Before there was creatureship, when the ether was not fanned by the angel’s wings, when space itself had not an existence, when there was nothing save God alone—even then, in that loneliness of deity, and in that deep quiet and profundity, His heart moved with love for His chosen. Their names were written on His heart and then were they dear to His soul.

Jesus loved His people before the foundation of the world, even from eternity. He purchased me with His blood. He let His heart run out in one deep gaping wound for me long ere I loved Him. Yea, when He first came to me, did I not spurn Him? When He knocked at the door and asked for entrance, did I not drive Him away and do despite to His grace? Ah! I can remember that I full often did, until at last, by His effectual grace, He said, “I must, I will come in”—and then He turned my heart and made me love Him. But even until now I would have resisted Him had it not been for His grace. Well then, since He purchased me when I was dead in sins, does it not follow as a consequence necessary and logical that He must have loved me? And hence, the Savior said, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word.”

II. The second thing we learn from the text is THE USE OF A GOSPEL MINISTRY.

Captious and caviling persons will object, “You say that God loves His people and therefore, they will be saved. Then what is the good of your preaching?” *What is the good of your preaching?* When I say that God loves a multitude that no man can number, a countless host of the race of men, do you ask me what is the good of preaching? What is the good of preaching! To fetch these diamonds of the Lord

out of the dunghill, to go down to the depths, as the diver does, to fetch up God's pearls from the place where they are lying. *What is the good of preaching?* To cut down the good corn and gather it into the garner. What is the good of preaching? To fetch out God's elect from the ruins of the fall and make them stand on the rock Christ Jesus, and see their standing sure.

Ah, you who ask what is the good of preaching, because God has ordained some to salvation, we ask you whether it would not be a most foolish thing to say, because there is to be a harvest, what is the good of sowing? There is to be a harvest, what is the use of reaping? The very reason why we sow and reap is because we feel assured there is to be a harvest. And if indeed I believed there was not a number who must be saved, I could not go into a pulpit again. Only once make me think that no one is certain to be saved and I do not care to preach. But now I know that a countless number must be saved, I am confident that Christ, "shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days." I know that if there is much to dispirit me in my ministry, and I see but little of its effects, yet He shall keep all whom the Father has given Him—and this makes me preach.

I come into this chapel tonight with the assurance that God has some child of His in this place, not yet called, and I feel confident that He will call someone by the use of the ministry, so why not by me? I know there are not a few souls whom God has given me through my ministry, not only hundreds, but thousands. I have seen some hundreds of those who profess to have been brought to God through my preaching at Park Street and elsewhere, and with that confidence I must go on. I know that Jesus must have a "seed." His people must increase and it is the very purpose of the ministry to seek them out and bring them into God's fold. Our Savior tells us the use of the ministry is that they may "believe on me through *their* word."

There is one peculiarity about this. Christ says, "They shall believe on me through *their* word." Have you never heard people call out about running after men? They say, "You are all running after such-and-such a *man*." What then, would you have them run after a woman? You say, "The people go after one particular man." Whom else shall they go after? Some persons say, "We went to such-and-such a place and the people there love their minister too much." That would be very dreadful, but it is not so. As for ministers being in danger of being ruined by too much love, it very seldom falls to their lot. Very generally they get quite as many kicks as anything else, and if they do get too much love in any particular place, they get too much of the reverse somewhere else. If we get a little sweet, somebody else is sure to put in much that is bitter.

Is it not singular that Christ should say, "They shall believe on me through *their* word?" Now, do God's people believe on Christ through the word of the ministry? We know that our faith does not rest on the word of man, but on the Word of God. We do not rest on any man, yet it is through "*their*" word—that is, through the word of the apostles and through the word of every faithful minister.

I take it that *the Gospel is the minister's own word, when he speaks from experience*. What is in the Bible is God's Word. What God speaks to me by experience becomes my word as well as God's. And it is then "*their*" word when ministers come into the pulpit with God's Word in their hearts. I think a minister is not only called to preach what he finds in the Bible, the mere naked doctrine, but what he has experienced in his own heart, what he has tasted, felt, and handled. If he does this, he will be greatly in danger of being called an egotist. Very likely he will use too many, "I's." Well, he cannot preach John Smith's experience, or anybody else's experience, he can only preach his own, and then he will have to say, "I."

But if he does not preach experientially what he has himself felt, it will not be through *his* word. When we speak that which we know and testify that which we have seen and felt—if we say we know the Savior will pardon sinners because He has pardoned us, then it is not only God's Word, but it is also *our* word. If I say to a child of God, "Go, and cast your burden on the Lord and you will find relief, for I have done so," then it is not only God's Word, but my word.

When he has proved the Savior's Word by experience, then it becomes the minister's word, *as also when he has it manifested to him by the Holy Spirit*. Some people say that these manifestations are all

nonsense. I have heard many object to applied texts. Such men do not understand much about the real law of piety, or else they would see texts manifested to them at one time which they had never seen before. I know many of my ministering brothers who now testify that they have sometimes taken a text and tried to break it. They have smitten it with a sledgehammer, but they could not get an atom off it. And they have had to throw it aside.

But another time, my friends, when that same text comes before us, though it seemed hard as granite when we took it up in our hands before, it now crumbles and breaks in pieces. Why? Because God's Holy Spirit shines upon it now, and He did not do so before. And we might have continued hitting it till we broke the head off our hammer and not a scrap would have come off it, but the Holy Spirit's manifestation revealed the text and most texts are to be learned so.

It is not often by sitting down in deep thought that we get at the meaning. It is by leaving it until, in some hallowed hour of high spiritual communion, we get into the very secret chamber where the meaning of the text lies. In some solemn moment, we dive down into the very depths where the meaning of the text is hidden. God teaches us the meaning and then it becomes *our* word. It is ours by application and we believe, my brethren, that sinners will be converted to God, not only by preaching the Gospel we find in the Bible, but by preaching the Gospel we find in our hearts, "known and read of all men".

Let us then come into our pulpits with this determination (I speak to my brethren in the ministry), that by the help of God, we will bring our own experience to bear upon it. We will sometimes talk of ourselves and not be ashamed of it, for whatever the Lord our God says unto us, not only in His Word, but by experience and by His Spirit, that will we speak to the people.

These two points I have mentioned—first, God loves His people before they have faith. And secondly, the ministry has its use in bringing men to faith by "their word."

III. Now, thirdly, notwithstanding this, GOD IS SUPERIOR TO THE MINISTRY AND DOES NOT REQUIRE IT. If He chose, He could do without His ministers.

I have told you that ministers are necessary, in the present state of things, to bring men to the Lord Jesus Christ, that they may have faith in Him. But when I said they were necessary, I spoke as men speak. With God, ministers are not necessary. He could do without them. I thought today, as I walked along, "God could do without me." I thought of many men who are preaching and I thought, "God could do without them—take them all away and God could do without them." I thought of some members of my church, very dear to me, who seem to be pillars of it, and I thought, "What could I do without them?" And then the thought came across my mind, "God could do without *them*." The people of God would still be saved just as well without them, if God so pleased. God is enough in Himself, without the addition of any one of His preachers.

When He made angels, it was not because He needed them. He could have accomplished His will without the wings of a flaming seraph and without the voice of a glorious cherub. When He made the stars, it was not because He needed them. He was light Himself, without the light of sun, moon, or stars. When He made man, it was not because He needed man—it was because He would make him—and for no other reason. There was no necessity for it. He would be the same eternal God were all His creatures dead. And if He were to blot out those lines of wisdom and grace written in the universe, He would be just as glorious and great as ever. And God can do without His servants in the Gospel ministry, but this being a dispensation of means, He is not a God acting without means.

God *does not* do without them, though He could if He would. God elected His people without ministers. He did not need any ministers to help Him in that. He redeemed His people without ministers. What great divine could have helped Christ to redeem His people? Yes, more, He can, if He pleases, call His people without ministers, for we know how some have become the subjects of grace by the reading of the Word, without the assistance of the ministry. And some in the Sabbath-school have received the words of eternal life. This should make our pride subside at once.

I know it is a great honor and should comfort us much to know that God is making use of us—but He could, if He pleased, well enough accomplish His ends and purposes without you and without me. If

tomorrow we were laid in our coffins and if our people should go out weeping because their pastors were dead, God has other men whom He could raise up. Or if He did not choose to raise other men up, He could attain His ends without us. And possibly there is a time coming when Gospel ministers shall not be needed, when men shall need no man to say to his brother, "Know the LORD," for all shall know Him, from the least even to the greatest. There are happy days coming "when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." When there shall be no need of the messengers upon the mountains to publish the glad tidings of salvation. When the sunshine of the Lord shall supplant our poor farthing rushlight and when Jesus shall "come in his glory, and all His holy angels with him." And we shall have too much to do to stand and admire Him without standing up to preach to men concerning Him who is present in their midst.

IV. But then, our fourth point is that **GOD WILL NEVER DO WITHOUT HIS MINISTERS LONG AS THIS DISPENSATION LASTS** because Jesus Christ said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word."

Hence, it follows that there always will be, as long as this dispensation lasts, a people who are to be gathered and ministers to gather them in. As long as there are unsaved and unconverted persons who are the elect of God, there will be some ministers to preach to them. As long as there are those who are under conviction of sin, He will have some who will proclaim the message of pardon. Christ says in the text, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word."

Someone may object, and say, "Yes, but 'their word' signifies the word of the apostles." Then another might ask, "Are you the successors of the apostles?" There has been a vast deal of fudge in these days about "the successors of the apostles." We have people who pretend to be the successors of the apostles. There are the Roman Catholics. But I think, if Peter and Paul were to come and see those who claim to be their successors, they would think there was a mighty difference between themselves and them.

By way of parable, suppose the Virgin Mary, Peter and Paul should come one Sunday and go to a certain cathedral? Well, when they entered, the Virgin would hear them singing together to her honor, and praise, and glory. She would nudge Peter and say, "What are these people doing? They are worshipping me. My Son said to me, 'Woman, what have I to do with you?' He never worshipped me. Let us turn out of this." They stayed a little longer and they heard one of them say that the apostle Peter was the head of the church—and his successor, the Pope, was therefore the Head. Peter nudges the Virgin Mary and says, "What a lie that is! I was never head of the church at all. Did I not fall into sin? I, the head of the church? A pretty head I was."

Soon afterwards, Paul heard them preaching justification by works. "Let's go," he says, "there is no Gospel here. I preached justification by faith without works, and they are preaching justification by works." And so, upon that, they all three of them leave. By-and-by, they come to a place where they hear the people singing, "Glory, honor, praise and power, be unto the Lamb that sits upon the throne." And they hear them speak of those who were "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." "Ah," says Peter, "this is the right place, and here I will stay."

Those are the successors of the apostles who are like the apostles. Are those the successors of the apostles who take our money from us by force to pay for their religion? Are those the successors of the apostles who go to brother So-and-So's house and take away his table and his spoon, and his candlestick, to pay rates for a religion in which he does not believe? I have never read about a church-tax in Corinth, or about the apostle Paul upon some man in Jerusalem. Such men successors of the apostles! They may be in godliness, for holy men are sometimes very much mistaken, but I say again, those who are like the apostles are their successors—not men who are ashamed to speak to anybody else because they think they are above them—not those who cannot speak plain words. Have we not some ministers, to understand whom you need to take a dictionary always to chapel with you? Do you call them the successors of the apostles? Your judgments answer, "No." A downright honest man who speaks what can be understood, who declares God's Gospel in unmeasured terms, as God would have

him speak it, he is a successor of the apostles. And it is through "*their*" word (the apostles' word, and the word of the successors of the apostles), that men are to be saved.

Successors of the apostles. I am as much a successor of the apostles as the Bishop of Bath, the Bishop of London, or the bishop of anywhere else—and perhaps more so. We are all bishops who are called of God, ordained by the Most High. We trace our ordination to the hands of the Almighty, who has put His hands on our head. There will always be successors of the apostles. The Christian ministry shall never cease till the last period of time. Never has there been a spiritual night so dark as that there have been no stars to illuminate it—never a sky so clouded that the sun could not shine through it. There always have been some lights and until the last hour, there always shall be some who are girded with the strength of the omnipotent and made strong in the almighty God, JEHOVAH, who shall testify their word, which is, after all, God's Word, that thereby men shall be saved.

Now, my dear brothers and sisters, having directed your attention to the fact that we are quite sure God will always have a ministry, and always use it, and since a ministry, under God, is necessary, though He could do without them, what should we do for them? I will tell you what some people say—*starve them*. I do not say it is so here, or with my people, but it is so in many country villages. Unfortunately, there are many farmers who could afford to give much to the cause of God, who, while their servant Betty sits in the gallery and pays her shilling a quarter for her pew, the master only pays a shilling a quarter, too. But Christ's ministers give themselves to the work because they feel they must preach, and they would rather preach on dry bread than be silent.

We have formed this Society just to help them. I can assure you, if any one of our dear friends stood in the position I have occupied for a single year, when you come to cast up your income, if you felt any benevolence, you would have very little left—indeed, you would have nothing left if you listened to the claims made upon you.

Now, one other thought. If God sends ministers into the world to preach His Gospel, how ill does it become us to hurt them! "He that touches you, touches the apple of his eye." I have always felt very careful about touching a child of God. You know that there is nothing that puts a man so much on his mettle as to touch his children. I have seen a father calm and placid and very gentle—someone has touched his children—the father flashed into his face at once. Do what you like—touch his property, or his house and he may be vexed, but touch his child and then his fury comes up at once. He cannot stand that.

Oh, my friends, a heavy responsibility rests on the heads of some, even of God's people, if you view it in that light. Touch God's people! Touch God's chosen! Touch God's favorites! Touch God's darlings! Oh, let us take heed! We had better suffer one to pass who professes to be a child of God, and is not, than that we should treat harshly or unkindly any of these who really are His. And I think if there is any difference in the case of Gospel ministers, this has a special force. We should, above all, seek not to injure their character by spreading evil reports against them. They will have enough of that from the wicked world, but we had need be tender of them and plant a hedge around them to protect them in every way. They are the standard-bearers of Christendom and if the standard-bearer falls, what a disgrace it brings on everything! We ought to stand by them, pray for them, plead with God for them, that He will hold up their hands.

I have been talking about the Gospel ministry. What is it to do? Is it to bring men to faith in Christ? Now I am tonight to attempt to do it before I leave this place. Yes, and by God's help, so I will.

Now, a word or two very briefly to two or three characters. First, there is a man sitting here tonight who says he is "no worse than others" and who believes he shall enter heaven as well as any other person. He says, "I do not see why any man should set himself above me." My mission from heaven is, under the Holy Spirit, to knock your works down and bring you to faith in Jesus Christ. Remember that it is written in Scripture, "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." You cannot get to heaven by your works. You might as well seek to mount the stars on a tread wheel as to go to heaven by works, for as you get up a step, you will always come down as low as before. If you cannot be perfect, God will

not save you by works. If you could truly say, "I never committed a sin in all my life and never had a wicked thought, and never shall have," possibly you then might be saved by works. But since that is impossible, if you trust in the law and hang yourself upon it, you shall find it will break by your weight. You stand on a sandy foundation and when the wind blows and the storm rises, you will be led to see it is a refuge of lies—that your confidence was ill founded, that your works were bad at the bottom after all, and that though you fancied you were righteous, you were deceiving yourself and others, and must suffer the sentence of the wicked.

Someone among you may say, "I know that I am a very great sinner, but then I intend to reform. I shall turn to Christ and then I shall be saved." You intend to reform, do you? So did the damned in hell once. You intend to reform? So doubtless did Judas when he went and cast down the money in the Temple. But instead of his reformation being good, he went out and hanged himself. You intend to reform? Your intention is like a bubble blown by the mouth of a child, which shall soon be broken in the air. You intend to reform? Your reformation is like the smoke of a chimney, which the wind shall sweep away.

Suppose you do reform and you really get better? You think Jesus Christ will save you and so you will get to heaven between the two? Have you never heard the old proverb, "Between two stools he came to the ground?" Verily, I tell you, that if you trust in two things, you will be lost. Works cannot help you. Any man who trusts so much as a single hair's breadth to his works is a lost soul. He who trusts to the least atom of works, though it is so small that he cannot discern it, will be lost. It must be—

*"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Your cross I cling"—*

or else a man must be lost. For it is no use his trusting partly in works, and partly to the Savior. You must feel, "I am quite stripped of everything."

I love to find those who have not got anything good at all about them. Some like to find something good in men before they preach to them, but I like to find men who think there is nothing good in them, and then to preach God's sovereign mercy to them. You who have any good of your own, throw it away. You who have nothing, come to Christ. I advise you who think you are good, not to say you are so when you are before God. If you were in a hospital and needed to be attended to, what would you do? Would you write over your bed, or tell your doctor you were not so bad after all? You would be rather inclined to appear worse than you really were.

See if you can describe yourself worse than you really are. You may say, "That is wicked advice." No, it is not, because I am quite sure you cannot do it. Go and write bad characters against yourselves tonight. I speak to you who know this is true, and not to you who are deceiving yourselves with your own righteousness. You who now feel your need of a Savior, exaggerate that feeling before God, if it is possible. He who felt himself the most guilty of all sinners said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

If there is anyone here tonight who thinks himself, "the chief of sinners," I have called him and God has called him. I wish he would act like a man I once saw in the County Court, when I was sitting there. He said, "Make way! Make way! His Honor has called me." And He elbowed his way up, because the judge had called him.

God says, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Say, "Stand back, for God calls me and I will come." Sinner, it is Jesus you must rely on, and it is not yourself. It is nothing that you have, or can have—it is nothing that you do, or can do—you can be saved by Jesus Christ alone. Have faith in Him and rely on the Savior. Do you feel your need of a Savior? Then come and cast yourself upon Him. Leave off being anything and let Christ be everything. Leave off doing and let Him do. Say—

*“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall.
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all.”*

If any are awakened tonight by my words, I have not done it, nor has the sinner done it, but to God's praise be it spoken. And to His name be all the glory.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.