

MANASSEH NO. 105

A SERMON
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AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS

*“Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God.”
2 Chronicles 33:13*

MANASSEH is one of the most remarkable characters whose history is written in the sacred pages. We are accustomed to mention his name in the list of those who greatly sinned and yet found great mercy. Side by side with Saul of Tarsus, with that great sinner who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and with the thief who died upon the cross—a forgiven sinner at the eleventh hour, we are wont to write the name of Manasseh, who “shed innocent blood very much,” and notwithstanding that, he was forgiven and pardoned, finding mercy through the blood of a Savior who had not then died, but whom God foresaw should die, and the merits of whose sacrifice He therefore imputed to so great a transgressor as Manasseh.

Without preface we shall enter on the history of Manasseh this morning and consider him in a three-fold light. First, *as a sinner*, then *as an unbeliever*, and thirdly, *as a convert*. It may be there shall be some Manasseh within these walls now, and if in describing the case of this ancient king of Israel, I shall in some degree describe him, I trust he will take to himself the same consoling truths which were the means of the comfort of Manasseh when in the dungeon of repentance.

I. First then, we shall consider MANASSEH IN HIS SIN.

1. And we note, first, that he belonged to that class of sinners who stand first in the phalanx of evil—namely, those *who sin against great light, against a pious education, and early training*. Manasseh was the son of Hezekiah, a man who had some faults, but of whom it is nevertheless said, “He did right in the sight of the LORD.”

To a great degree he walked before God with a perfect heart, even as did David his father. We cannot suppose that he neglected the education of his son Manasseh. He was the son of his old age. You will remember that at a time of heavy sickness God promised Hezekiah that he would have his life prolonged fifteen years.

Three years after that event, Manasseh was born and he was, therefore, only twelve years old when his father died. Still, he was old enough to remember the pious prayer of a father and a mother, and had arrived at sufficient maturity to understand right from wrong, and to have received those early impressions which we believe are, in most cases, eminently useful for adult life. And yet Manasseh pulled down what his father had built up and built up the idol temples which his father had pulled down.

Now, it is a notorious fact that men who do go wrong after a good training are the worst men in the world. You may not know, but it is a fact, that the late lamented murder of Williams at Erromanga was brought about by the evil doings of a trader, who had gone to the island and who was the son of a missionary.

He had become reckless in his habits and treated the islanders with such barbarity and cruelty that they revenged his conduct upon the next white man who put his foot on their shore, and the beloved Williams, one of the last of the martyrs, died a victim of the guilt of those who had gone before him. The worst of men are those who, having much light, still run astray.

You shall find amongst the greatest champions of the camp of hell, men who were brought up and educated in our very ranks. It is not necessary that I should mention names, but any of you that are acquainted with those who are the leaders of infidelity at the present time will at once recognize the fact.

And such men actually make the very worst of infidels, while the best of Christians often come from the very worst of sinners.

Our John Bunyans have come from the tavern and the taproom, from the bowling alley, or places lower in the scale. Our best of men have come from the very worst of places and have been the best adapted to reclaim sinners, because they themselves had stepped into the kennel, and had, nevertheless, been washed in a Savior's cleansing blood.

And so it is true that the worst of the enemies of Christ are those who are nourished in our midst, and like the viper of old, which the husbandman nursed in his bosom, turned round to sting the bosom which has nurtured them. Such a one was Manasseh.

2. In the next place, *Manasseh, as a sinner, was a very bold one.* He was one of those men who do not sin covertly, but who, when they transgress, do not seem to be at all ashamed, who were born with brazen foreheads, and lift their faces to heaven with insolence and impudence. He was a man who, if he would set up an idol, as you would see by reading this chapter, did not set it up in an obscure part of the land, but put it in the very temple of God.

And when he would desecrate the name of the Most High, he did not privily go to his chapel, where he might worship some evil deity, but he put the deity into the very temple itself, as if to insult God to His very face. He was a desperado in sin and went to the utmost limit of it, being very bold and desperately set on mischief.

Now, whether it be for right or wrong, boldness is always sure to win the day. Give me a coward—you give me nothing. Give me a bold man and you give me one that can do something, whether for Christ's cause or for the devil's. Manasseh was a man of this kind. If he cursed God, it was with a loud voice. It was not in a hole or corner, but upon his throne that he issued proclamations against the Most High and in the most daring manner, insulted the Lord God of Israel.

And yet, dear friends, this man was saved, notwithstanding all this. This greatest sinner, this man who had trampled on his father's prayers, who had wiped from his brow the tears which had been shed there by an anxious parent, who had stifled the convictions of his conscience, and had gone to an extremity of guilt, in bold, open, and desperate sin, yet this man was at last, by divine grace, humbled and brought on his knees to acknowledge that God was God alone.

Let no man, therefore, despair of his fellow. I never do, since I think and hope that God has saved me. I am persuaded that, live as long as I may, I shall never see the individual of whom I can say, "That man is a hopeless case." I may peradventure meet with the person who has been so exhorted and so warned, and has so put off all the sweet woings of his conscience that he has become seared and hardened, and consequently apparently hopeless. But I shall never meet a man who has sinned so desperately that I can say of him, he never can be saved.

Ah! no, that arm of mercy which was long enough to save me is long enough to save you. And if He could redeem you from your transgression, assuredly there are none sunk lower than you were, and therefore you may believe that His arm of mercy can reach them. Above all, let no man despair of himself. Whilst there is life, there is hope. Give not up yourselves unto Satan's arms.

He tells you that your death warrant is sealed, that your doom is cast, and that you never can be saved. Tell him to his face that he is a liar, for Jesus Christ "is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

3. Again, Manasseh was a sinner of that peculiar caste which we suspect is not to be found very frequently. He was one of those who *had the power of leading others* to a very large extent astray from the truth and religion of God. He was a king and had, therefore, great influence—what he commanded was done. Among the ranks of idolaters, Manasseh stood first, and it was the song and glory of the false priests that the king of Judah was on the side of the gods of the heathen.

He was the leader—the first man in the battle. When the troops of the ungodly went to war against the God of the whole earth, Manasseh led the vanguard and cheered them on. He was their great Goliath, challenging all the armies of the living God. Many amongst the wicked stood back and feared the

conflict, but he never feared. “He spake and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast,” and therefore he was bold and arrogant in leading others astray.

There are some such still alive—men not content with treading the broad road themselves, but seeking to entice others into it. And oh, how active they are in their efforts! They will go from house to house and distribute those publications which are impure and polluting. They will stand in our streets and endeavor to draw around them the young, ay, men and women just fresh come from the house of God, or going to God’s sanctuary, to tell them that dreary story that there is no God, or the dismal falsehood that there is no future, but that we must all die like dogs and suffer annihilation.

There are some such who never seem to be happy unless they are leading others astray. It is not enough for them to go alone against God, but they must sin in company. Like the woman in the Proverbs, they hunt for precious life, and like hounds thirsting for blood, they are seeking after men to destroy.

Society is now like Prometheus. It is, to a great extent, bound hand and foot by the very customs that surround us, and like Prometheus, we have upon us the winged hound of hell perpetually tapping at our heart and swallowing the life-blood of our spirit. I mean we have that accursed infidelity which seeks to lead men from God and drive them from their Maker. But nevertheless, leaders amongst them have yet been saved. Manasseh, the leader of those who hated God, was yet humbled and made to love the Most High.

Do you ask me whether such cases ever occur now? I answer, yes they do—too rarely, but yet they do happen. Yesterday I received something which cheered my heart very much and made me bless my God, that notwithstanding all opposition, He had still made me of some little use in the world. I received a long letter from a certain city, from one who has been one of the leaders of the secular society in that place.

The writer says, “I purchased one of the pamphlets entitled, ‘Who Is This Spurgeon?’ and also your portrait, (or a portrait sold as yours) for 3d. I brought these home and exhibited them in my shop window. I was induced to do so from a feeling of derisive pleasure. The title of the pamphlet is, naturally, suggestive of caricature and it was especially to incite that impression that I attached it to your portrait and placed it in my window. But I also had another object in view. I thought by its attraction to improve my trade. I am not at all in the book or paper business, which rendered its exposure and my motive the more conspicuous.

“I have taken it down now—I *am taken down too*....I had bought one of your sermons of an infidel a day or two previous. In that sermon, I read these words, ‘They go on; that step is safe—they take it. The next is safe—they take it. Their foot hangs over a gulf of darkness.’ I read on, but the word darkness staggered me. It was all dark with me. ‘True, the way has been safe so far, but I am lost in bewilderment. No, no, no, I will not risk it.’

“I left the apartment in which I had been musing, and as I did so, the three words, ‘Who can tell?’ seemed to be whispered at my heart. I determined not to let another Sunday pass without visiting a place of worship. How soon my soul might be required of me I knew not, but I felt that it would be mean, base, cowardly, not to give it a chance.

“Ay, my associates may laugh, scoff, deride, call me coward, turncoat, I will do an act of justice to my soul. I went to chapel. I was just stupefied with awe. What could I want there? The doorkeeper opened his eyes wider and involuntarily demanded, ‘It’s Mr. _____, isn’t it?’ ‘Yes,’ I said, ‘it is.’ He conducted me to a seat and afterwards brought me a hymnbook.

“I was fit to burst with anguish. ‘Now’, I thought, ‘I am here, if it be the house of God, heaven grant me an audience, and I will make a full surrender. O God, show me some token by which I may know that You are and that You will in no wise cast out the vile deserter who has ventured to seek Your face and Your pardoning mercy.’ I opened the hymnbook to divert my mind from feelings that were rending me and the first words that caught my eyes were,

*“Dark, dark indeed the grave would be
Had we no light, O God, from Thee.”*

After giving some things which he looks upon as evidences that he is a true convert of religion, he closes up by saying, “O sir, tell this to the poor wretch whose pride, like mine, has made him league with hell. Tell it to the hesitating and to the timid. Tell it to the cooling Christian, that God is a very present help to all that are in need...Think of the poor sinner who may never look upon you in this world, but who will live to bless and pray for you here, and long to meet you in the world exempt from sinful doubts, from human pride, and backsliding hearts.”

Ah! he need not ask my forgiveness. I am happy, too happy, in the hope of calling him “brother,” in the Christian church. This letter is from a place many miles from this city and from a man who had no small standing among the ranks of those who hate Christ. Ah! there have been Manassehs saved and there shall be yet. There have been men who hated God, who have leaped for joy and said,

*“I’m forgiven, I’m forgiven,
I’m a miracle of grace,”*

and have kissed the very feet which once they scorned and scoffed, and could not bear to hear the mention of.

There is one fact concerning Manasseh which stamps him as being a very prince of sinners, namely this, “He caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom,” and dedicated his sons unto Tophet. This was a dreadful sin, for though Manasseh repented, we find that his son Amon followed in the steps of his father in his wickedness, but not in his righteousness.

Listen! “Amon was two-and-twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned two years in Jerusalem. But he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as did Manasseh his father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them; and humbled not himself before the LORD, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more.”

Children will imitate their fathers in their vices, seldom in their repentance. If parents sin, their children will follow them, without much doubt. But when they repent and turn to God, it is not so easy to lead a child back in the way which it has once forsaken.

Are there any here, who, like that ancient Carthaginian, have dedicated their sons to the opposition of their enemy? You remember one who dedicated his son Hannibal from his very birth to be the everlasting enemy of the Romans. There may be such a man here, who has dedicated his offspring to Satan, to be the everlasting enemy of Christ’s Gospel, and is trying to train up and tutor him in a way which is contrary to the fear of the Lord.

Is such a man hopeless? His sin is dreadful, his state is dreary, his sin without repentance will assuredly damn him, but so long as he is here, we still will preach repentance to him, knowing that Manasseh was brought to know God, and was forgiven all his manifold sins.

II. The second aspect in which we are to regard Manasseh is as an UNBELIEVER, for it appears that Manasseh did not believe that JEHOVAH was God alone.

He was, therefore, a believer in false gods, but an unbeliever, so far as the *truth* is concerned. Now, does it not strike you at the outset, that while Manasseh was an unbeliever in the truth, he must have been a very credulous person to believe in all the imaginary deities of the heathen? In fact, the most credulous persons in the world are unbelievers. It takes ten thousand times more faith to be an unbeliever than to be a believer in revelation.

One man comes to me and tells me I am credulous, because I believe in a great First Cause who created the heavens and the earth, and that God became man and died for sin. I tell him I may be, and no doubt am very credulous, as he conceives credulity, but I conceive that which I believe is in perfect consistency with my reason and I therefore receive it.

“But” he says, “I am not credulous—not at all.” Sir, I say, I should like to ask you one thing. You do not believe the world was created by God. “No.” You must be amazingly credulous, then, I am sure. Do you think this Bible exists without being made? If you should say I am credulous, because I believe it had a printer and a binder, I would say you were infinitely more credulous, if you assured me that it was made at all. And should you begin to tell me one of your theories about creation—that atoms floated through space and came to a certain shape, I should resign the palm of credulity to you.

You believe perhaps, moreover, that man came to be in this world through the improvement of certain creatures. I have read that you say that there were certain monads—that these monads improved themselves until they came to be small animalcule—that afterwards they grew into fishes—that these fishes wanted to fly, and then wings grew—that by and by they wanted to crawl, and then legs came, and they became lizards, and by divers steps, they then became monkeys, and then the monkeys became men, and you believe yourself to be cousin-germane to an ourang-outang.

Now, I may be very credulous, but really not so credulous as you are. I may believe very strange things. I may believe that with the jawbone of an ass, Samson slew a thousand men. I may believe that the earth was drowned with water, and many other strange things, as you call them, but as for your creed, your non-creed, “’tis strange, ’tis passing strange, ’tis wonderful,” and it as much outvies mine in credulity, if I am credulous, as an ocean outvies a drop.

It requires the hardest faith in the world to deny the Scriptures, because the man, in his secret heart, knows they are true, and go where he will, something whispers to him, “You may be wrong—perhaps you are.” And it is as much as he can do, to say, “Lie down, conscience! down with you. I must not let you speak, or I could not deliver my lecture tomorrow, I could not go among my friends, I could not go to such and such a club. For I cannot afford to keep a conscience, if I cannot afford to keep a God.”

And now let me tell you what I conceive to be the reasons why Manasseh was an unbeliever. In the first place, I conceive that *the unlimited power* which Manasseh possessed had a very great tendency to make him a disbeliever in God. I should not wonder if an autocrat—a man with absolute dominion, should deny God. I should think it only natural.

You remember that memorable speech of Napoleon’s? He was told that man proposed, but that God disposed. “Ah!” said Napoleon, “I propose and dispose too.” And therein he arrogated himself the very supremacy of God. We do not wonder at it, because his victories had so speedily succeeded each other, his prowess had been so complete, his fame so great, and his power over his subject so absolute.

Power always, as I believe, except in the heart which is rightly governed by grace, has a tendency to lead us to deny God. It is that noble intellect of such and such a man which has led him into discussion. He has twice, thrice, four, five, six, seven times, come off more than conqueror in the field of controversy.

He looks round and says, “I am, there is none beside me. Let me take up whatever I please, I can defend it. There is no man can stand against the blade of my intellect. I can give him such a home thrust as will assuredly overcome him.” And then, like Dr. Johnson, who often took up the side of the question he did not believe, just because he liked to get a victory that was hard to win, so do these men espouse what they believe to be wrong, because they conceive it gives them the finest opportunity of displaying their abilities.

“Let me,” says some mighty intellect, “fight with a Christian. I shall have hard enough work to prove my thesis, I know I shall have a great difficulty to undermine the bastions of truth which he opposes to bear against me. So much the better. It were worthwhile to be conquered by so stout an opposition, and if I can overcome my antagonist, if I can prove myself to have more logic than he has, then I can say, ‘’Tis glorious. ’Tis glorious to have fought against an opponent with so much on his side and yet to have come off more than conqueror.’”

I do believe the best man in the world is very hard to be trusted with power. He will, unless grace keeps him, make a wrong use of it before long. Hence it is that the most influential of God’s servants are almost invariably the most tried ones, because our heavenly Father knows that if it were not for great

trials and afflictions, we should begin to set ourselves up against Him and arrogate to ourselves a glory which we had no right to claim.

But another reason why Manasseh was an unbeliever, I take it, *was because he was proud*. Pride lies at the root of infidelity. Pride is the very germ of opposition to God. The man says, "Why should I believe? The Sunday school child reads his Bible and says it is true. Am I, a man of intellect, to sit side by side with him and receive a thing as true simply at the dictum of God's Word? No, I will not. I will find it out for myself and I will not believe simply because it is revealed to me, for that were to make myself a child."

And when he turns to the page of Revelation and reads thus, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, you can in nowise enter into the kingdom of heaven," he says, "Pshaw! I shall not be converted then. I am not going to be a child. I am a man and a man I will be, and I would rather be a lost man than saved a child. What! I am to surrender my judgment and sit down tacitly to believe in God's Word?"

"Yes," says God's Word, "you are. You are to become as a child and meekly to receive My Word." "Then," he says in his arrogance and pride, "I will not," and like Satan, he declares it were better to rule in hell than serve in heaven, and he goes away an unbeliever, because to believe is too humbling a thing.

But perhaps the most potent reason for Manasseh's unbelief lies here, *that he loved sin too well*. When Manasseh built the altars for his false gods, he could sin easily and keep his conscience, but he felt JEHOVAH's laws so stringent that if he once believed in the One God he could not sin as he did. He read it thus, "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not steal," and so on. Manasseh wanted to do all these things, and therefore, he would not believe because he could not believe and keep his sin.

The very reason why we have much unbelief is because we have much love of sin. Men will have no God, because God interferes with their lusts. They could not go on in their sins, if they once believed there was an Everlasting God above them, or professed to believe it, for all do believe it, whether they say so or no. And because the thought of God checks them in their impiety and their lust, therefore they cry out, "There is no God," and say it with their lips as well as in their hearts.

I believe it was this that led Manasseh to persecute the saints of God. For among his sins it is written, "He shed innocent blood very much." It is a tradition among the Jews that the prophet Isaiah was sawn in sunder by Manasseh, on account of a rebuke which he gave him for his sin. Isaiah was not wont to be very timid and he told the king of his lusts, and therefore placing him between two planks, he cut him in sunder from head to foot. It is just the reason why men hate God and hate His servants, because the truth is too hot for them.

Send you a preacher who would not tell you of your sins and you would hear him peaceably. But when the Gospel comes with power, then it is that men cannot bear it. When it trenches upon that pleasure, that sin, or that lust, then they will not believe it. You would believe the Gospel, if you could believe it and live in your sins too.

Oh! how many a drunken reprobate would be a Christian, if he might be a drunkard and a Christian too! How many a wicked wretch would turn believer, if he might believe and yet go on in his sins! But because faith in the Everlasting God can never stand side by side with sin, and because the Gospel cries, "Down with it! Down with it! Down with your sin," therefore it is that men turn round and say, "Down with the Gospel!"

It is too hot for you, O you sinful generation. Therefore you turn aside from it, because it will not tolerate your lusts, nor indulge your iniquity.

III. We look, then, at Manasseh as an unbeliever, and now we have our last and most pleasing task of looking at Manasseh as a CONVERT.

Hear it, O heavens and listen, O earth! The Lord God has said it. Manasseh shall be saved. He on his throne of cruelty has just appended his name to another murderous edict against the saints of God, yet he shall be humbled. He shall ask for mercy and shall be saved.

Manasseh hears the decree of God. He laughs. "What! I play the hypocrite and bend my knee? Never! It is not possible." And when the godly hear of it, they all say, "It is not possible. What! Saul among the prophets? Manasseh regenerated? Manasseh made to bow before the Most High? The thing is impossible." Ah! it is impossible with man, but it is possible with God. God knows how to do it.

The enemy is at the gates of the city. A hostile king has just besieged the walls of Jerusalem. Manasseh flees from his palace and hides himself among the thorns. He is taken, carried captive to Babylon and shut up in prison. And now we see what God can do. The proud king is proud no longer, for he has lost his power. The mighty man is mighty no more, for his might is taken from him.

And now in a low dungeon listen to him. It is no more the blasphemer, no more the hater of God, but see him cold on the floor! Manasseh bows his knee, and with the tears rolling down his cheeks, he cries, "O God! My father's God! an outcast comes to You. A hell-hound stained with blood throws himself at Your feet, I, a very demon, full of filthiness, now prostrate myself before You! O my God, can You, will You have mercy on such a wretch as I?"

Hear it, you heavens! Listen yet again. See, from the skies the angel flies with mercy in his hand. Ah! whither speeds he? It is to the dungeon of Babylon. The proud king is on his knee, and mercy comes and whispers in his ear, "Hope!" He starts from his knees and cries, "Is there hope?" And down he falls again. Once more he pleads, and mercy whispers that sweet promise, uttered once by the murdered Isaiah, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my name's sake, and will not remember thy sins."

Oh! do you see him? His very heart is running over in his eyes. Oh! how he weeps for joy and yet for sorrow that he ever could have sinned against a God so kind. A moment more and the dungeon is opened. The king of Babylon, moved by God, bids him go free, and he returns to his kingdom and throne, a happier and a better man than he had ever been before.

I think I see him coming into Jerusalem. There are his statesmen and favorites. They welcome him. "Come in, Manasseh. The bowl shall be filled and we will have a merry night, tonight. We will bow before the shrine of Ashtaroth and thank her that she has set you at liberty. Lo, the horses of the sun are ready. Come and pay your devotions to him that shines on the earth and leads the host of heaven."

Methinks I see their astonishment when he cries, "Stand back! Stand back! You are my friends no longer, until you become God's friends. I have dandled you on my knees and as vipers you have stung me with the poison of asps. I made you my friends and you have led me down to the gulf of hell. But now I know it now. Stand back till you are better men and I will find others to be my courtiers."

And there the poor saints, hidden in the back streets of the city, so frightened because the king has come back, are holding meetings of solemn prayer, crying unto God that no more murderous, persecuting edicts might go forth. And lo, a messenger comes and says, "The king is returned."

And whilst they are looking at him, wondering what the messenger is about to say, he adds, "He has returned, not Manasseh as he went, but as a very angel. I saw him, with his own hands dash Ashtaroth in pieces. I heard him cry, 'The horses of the sun shall be houghed, sweep out the house of God, we will hold a passover there. The morning and evening lamb shall again burn on JEHOVAH's altars, for He is God, and beside Him there is none else.'"

Oh! can you conceive the joy of believers on that auspicious day? Can you think how they went up to God's house with joy and thanksgiving? And on the next Sabbath they sung, as they had never sung before, "O come let us sing unto the LORD, let us make a joyful noise unto the rock of our salvation," whilst they remembered that he who had persecuted the saints of God aforetime, now defended that very truth which once he abhorred.

There was joy on earth, ay, and there was joy in heaven too. The bells of heaven rang merry peals the day Manasseh prayed. The angels of heaven flapped their wings with double alacrity the day Manasseh repented. Earth and heaven were glad and even the Almighty on His throne smiled gracious approbation, while He again said, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my name's sake, and will not remember thy sins."

And now, are you curious to know what were the bases of the faith of Manasseh—what were the rocks on which he built his trust in God? I think they were two. He believed in God, first, *because He had answered his prayer*. And secondly, *because He had forgiven his sin*. I have sometimes said, when I have become the prey of doubting thoughts, “Well, now, I dare not doubt whether there be a God, for I can look back in my diary and say, on such a day in the depths of trouble I bent my knee to God, and or ever I had risen from my knees the answer was given me.” And so can many of you say. And therefore, whatever others may say, you know there is a God, because He answered your prayer.

You have heard of that holy man, Mr. Muller, of Bristol [See “The doings of God with regard to George Muller.”]. If you were to tell George Muller there was not a God, he would weep over you. “Not a God?” he would say, “Why, I have seen His hand. Where came those answers to my prayers?” Ah! sirs, you may laugh at us for credulity. but there are hundreds here who could most solemnly assert that they have asked of God for divers matters, and that God has not failed them, but granted their requests. This was one reason why Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God.

The other reason was that *Manasseh had a sense of pardoned sin*. Ah! that is a delightful proof of the existence of a God. Here comes a poor miserable wretch. His knees are knocking together, his heart is sinking within him, he is giving himself up to despair. “Bring the physicians to him!” They cry, “We fear his mind is infirm. We believe he will at last have to be taken to some lunatic asylum.”

And they apply their remedies, but he is none the better, but rather grows worse. On a sudden this poor creature, afflicted with a sense of sin, groaning on account of guilt, is brought within the sound of the sacred Word. He hears it—it increases his misery. He hears it again—his pain becomes doubled, till at last everyone says his case is utterly hopeless.

Suddenly, on a happy morning which God had ordained, the minister is led to some sweet passage. Perhaps it is this, “Come now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” The Spirit applies it and the poor man goes home light as air and says to his wife and children, “Come, rejoice with me.”

“Why?” say they. “Because,” says he, “my sins are forgiven.” “How do you know that?” “Oh!” says he, “I sense pardoning love within my heart, which all the doubters in the world could not gainsay, and if all the earth should rise up against me and say I would be condemned, I could say, ‘I know there is now no condemnation for me.’”

Have you ever felt pardoning blood applied? You will never doubt God, I know, if you have. Why, dear friends, if the poorest old woman in the world should be brought before an infidel of the wisest order, having a mind of the greatest caliber, and he should endeavor to pervert her, I think I see her smile at him and say, “My good man, it is of no use at all, for the Lord has appeared unto me of old, saying, ‘Yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love,’ and so you may tell me what you please. I have had a sense of blood-bought pardon shed abroad in my heart, and I know that He is God, and you can never beat it out of me.”

As good Watts says, when we have once such an assurance as that,

*“Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I’d call them vanity and lies,
And bind the Gospel to my heart.”*

Oh! if you have a sense that sin is forgiven, you can never doubt the existence of a God, for it will be said of you, “Then *he* knew that the LORD he was God.”

And now I gather up my strength for just one moment, to speak to those of you who desire to know what you must do to be saved. My hearer, no question can be more important than that. None is so requisite to ask. Alas! there are too many who never ask it, but who go sailing down to the gulf of black despair, listening to the syren song of procrastination and delay.

But if you have been brought to ask the question solemnly and seriously, “What must I do to be saved?” I am happy, thrice happy to be able to tell you God’s own Word, “He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not,” the Scripture says, “shall be damned.” “Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

“But sir,” you say, “I have many good works and would trust on them.” If you do, you are a lost man. As old Matthew Wilks most quaintly said once, speaking in his usual tone, “You might as well try to sail to America in a paper boat as to go to heaven by your own works. You will be swamped on the passage if you attempt it.” We cannot spin a robe that is long enough to cover us. We cannot make a righteousness that is good enough to satisfy God.

If you would be saved, it must be through what Christ did and not what you did. You cannot be your own Savior. Christ must save you, if you are saved at all. How then can you be saved by Christ? Here is the plan of salvation. It is written, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

Do you feel that you are a sinner? Then believe that Jesus Christ came to save you, for so sure as ever you feel you are a sinner, it is a fact that Christ died for you. And if He died for you, you shall not perish, for I cannot conceive that Christ would die in vain. If He did die for you, you shall most assuredly be pardoned and saved, and shall one day sing in heaven.

The only question is, Did He die for you? He most certainly did if you are a sinner, for it is written—I will repeat it again—“It is a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came to save sinners.” Poor sinner, believe! My dear friend, give me your hand! I wish I could put it inside Christ’s hand. Oh! embrace Him! embrace Him! lest haply the clouds of night should come upon you, and the sun should set ere you have found Him.

Oh! lay hold on Him, lest death and destruction should overtake you. Fly to this mountain, lest you be consumed. And remember, once in Christ, you are safe beyond hazard.

*“Once in Christ, in Christ for ever,
Nothing from His love can sever.”*

Oh! believe Him! believe Him, my dear, dear hearers, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. 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.