

THE GREAT JAIL, AND HOW TO GET OUT OF IT

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A SERMON
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*“But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin,
that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”
Galatians 3:22*

IN every work which we undertake, it is most important that we should act upon right principles, for if we are misled upon essential points, our efforts will be wasted since success cannot possibly be the result. A man may study the stars as long as he pleases, but he certainly will not come to right conclusions if he calculates their courses upon the theory that they daily revolve around the earth as a center.

The alchemists were earnest even to enthusiasm, but the object of their pursuit was unattainable, and the theories which guided their investigations were absurd, and therefore, they exhibited a sorrowful spectacle of perseverance misapplied, and labor thrown away.

In mechanics the most ingenious contriver must fail if he forgets the law of gravitation. You must proceed upon right principles, or disappointment awaits you. If a man in London believed that he would reach the city of York by traveling rapidly to the south, he would certainly fail, even though he had a special express attached to his carriage.

If another should be sincerely of the opinion that by drinking a strong poison he would restore himself to health, his friends and survivors would have to regret his infatuation. The earnestness of his belief will not alter the fact—the principles which make the deadly drug so murderous will not yield because the man is sincere, but he will certainly die for his obstinacy.

Now, the greatest matter of concern for any one of us is the eternal salvation of our soul. We need to be saved, and according to the Scriptures of truth, there is but one way of salvation—but that way does not happen to be in favor among the sons of men. The great popular principle, popular all over the world, no matter whether the people happen to be Protestant or Catholic, Parsee or Mahomedan, Brahminist or Buddhist, is *self-salvation*—they would reach eternal life by merit. There are differences about what is to be done, but the great universal principle of unregenerate man is that he is, somehow or other, to save himself. This is his principle, and the further he goes in it, the less likely is he to be saved.

My object this morning is to bring before you the much despised principle which God has revealed as the only true one, namely, salvation by the grace of God, through Jesus Christ, by simple faith in Him. We preach, at God's command, the way of salvation by mercy, not by merit—by faith, not by works—by grace, not by the efforts of men. May God help us so to set forth that principle that many may accept it.

I do not care one snap of my finger about preaching so that the style shall please the ear, but I long to reach your hearts. I want you to receive the only sure method of salvation, and I pray the Holy Ghost to baptize my words in His own mighty fire, and make them to burn their way into your hearts, and subdue you to the obedience of faith.

The text divides itself into two parts, but my sermon will not end there, for I shall try to enforce its great truths. Upon two points we will speak at once. The first is *a crowded prison*, “The scripture hath shut up all under sin.” And the second is *a glorious jail delivery*, “that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”

After that we will try to show how excellent is that plan which God has marked out—the plan of deliverance from sin by the promise of faith in Christ Jesus.

I. Behold THE CROWDED PRISON—“*The scripture hath concluded or shut up all under sin.*”

The jailer is the Scripture—a *lawful* authority, for the Scripture is not the word of man, but of the Spirit of God. If any man reject the Scripture, I have little to say to him at this moment, for I am speaking mainly to those who accept the Bible as having been written by an infallible pen.

If the Scripture, then, which you admit to be written by God, shut you up in sin, you are shut up by a lawful authority, against which you cannot rebel. God has done it. God’s own voice has declared you to be a prisoner under sin. No authority is more *powerful* than that of Scripture, for it is not only true, but it has force to support it.

Where the Word of the God is, there is power. The Scripture, when it comes home to the heart, like a hammer breaks in pieces, and like a fire burns its way. We need not be alarmed when judged of men, but the voice of the Lord is full of terrible majesty, and awes the spirit which it condemns.

But how does the Scripture confine all men under sin? I reply, first, it has been well-observed by Martin Luther that the very promises of Scripture shut up all mankind under sin. To begin with the first—that morning star of promise which shone over this world when first our parents left the gates of blighted Eden—“The seed of the women shall bruise the serpent’s head.”

Since such a promise was needed, it is clear that the blessing could only come to men through the Redeemer, the seed of the woman, and that in the case of all men, the serpent’s head must be broken, or they would remain under his dominion. When a blessing is promised, there must have been a need for it. Where a deliverer is predicted, there must have been a necessity for Him.

If a blessing could come to men by the way of merit, or in the course of nature, there would be no need of a promise—a promise implies a want, and the very first promise of deliverance by the woman’s seed from the power of the serpent implies that men were under that evil power.

The promise of grace is clear in the covenant with Noah, in which the Lord declared that He would no more destroy the earth with a flood. Had the race of man been holy, God could not have destroyed it with a flood, for He would have violated justice by destroying an innocent race. To a pure race there could be no necessity for a covenant of preservation, for there would be no conceivable reason for the destruction of the innocent.

The very making of a covenant that the earth should not again be swept with an overwhelming flood implies that, apart from such a gracious covenant, the earth might justly be destroyed at any time. The lovely rainbow, while it comfortably reminds us of the divine faithfulness, is also a memorial of that universal depravity of our race which necessitated a covenant of grace to stand as a barrier for our protection, lest the righteous wrath of God should break forth upon us.

The yet more explicit covenant which God made with Abraham plainly shows men to be shut up under sin, because it runs thus, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,” proving that the nations were not originally in a blessed state, and could only be blessed through the promised seed. If some of them were blessed already, or could be blessed by their works, then the words of the promise would not be true. The covenant blessing comes to the nations only through Jesus Christ, the seed, and consequently, it is clear that the nations were in need of a blessing.

The fact is that the very existence of the Gospel, and its provisions of grace, pardon, and so on—the coming of a Savior, His death upon the tree, and His intercession in heaven—all prove that men were shut up under sin. If they had not been so, what need of you, O Cavalry? What need of Your five wounds, O Son of God?

Surely all this vast machinery for redemption is ridiculous if men be not slaves. This wondrous filling of a fountain with blood is a vain superfluity, if men are not foul. So that the very Scripture which is brightest with life to the sons of men carries within it convincing evidence that men, apart from the grace of God, are shut up under sin.

I have no doubt the apostle alluded more immediately to that part of Scripture which deals with *law*. Turn, I pray you, to the twentieth chapter of Exodus, which I hope you carry in your memories. Let me ask you to read those Ten Commands with deep solemnity, and see whether they do not shut you up under sin.

What man can read them, and then say, “I am clear of all these”? The Ten Commands surround us on all sides, and encompass all the movements of body, soul, and spirit—comprising under their jurisdiction the whole range of moral action. They hold us under fire from all points, and nowhere are we out of range.

These ten precepts are condensed into two comprehensive precepts, “Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself.” Can you listen to those two precepts, which are the essence of the ten, without feeling that you have not loved God with all your heart and soul, and mind and strength, but very far from it. And that you have not loved your neighbor as yourself, but have gone far aside.

A man who can read the law and not tremble, if he be out of Christ, must be dead in his sin. He must be ignorant altogether of its meaning, or else he must have hardened his heart against its terrible import. The awakened conscience knows that the law curses every one of us, without exception, for we have broken it.

The law as given on Sinai does that, and let us remember that the law as repeated by Mosaic command upon Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, at the time of the entrance of Israel into the Holy Land, is not less express than the thunders of the mount which might not be touched. Read the passage in Deuteronomy 27:26. Perhaps of all the verses of the Word of God, this is the most sweeping and utterly crushing to self-righteous hopes.

“Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of the law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.” The apostle quotes in another form, in the New Testament—“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” The law roars like a lion upon us in this sentence. If there be in any one of us a solitary violation of the command of God, we are cursed by Him.

If we have at any time throughout life, in any measure or degree, in deed, word, or thought, by omission or commission, diverged from absolute perfection, we are cursed. Such is the statement of God Himself, by the mouth of His servant Moses, in this Book of Deuteronomy. There is no exception made whatever—all sins are included in it, and we are all of us included, “Cursed is *every one* that continueth not in *all things* that are written in the book of the law to do them.” Right well does our text say that the Scripture has shut all of us up under sin.

We are putting no strain upon the Scripture, for such was the understanding of the law by the saints of old. Turn to Psalm 143:2, and remember, while I quote this, that this is by no means a solitary passage, but only selected as one of many. There David says, “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” He stood before God, a man whose heart was sincere and true, but he did not dare to bring his works into judgment. And speaking by the Spirit of God as a prophet, he declared that in God’s sight no man could be clear of guilt.

And yet further, brethren, the law of God shuts us up, not only as it was delivered from Sinai, as it was repeated at Gerizim, as it was understood by the saints, but especially as it was expounded by the Savior. He did not come to break the bars of this prison, nor to remove this jailer from being its marshal—His deliverance is not by violence, but by fair legal process.

He came to strengthen rather than to weaken the law, for what does He say concerning it? He does not merely forbid adultery, but He expounds the command by saying, “He that looketh upon a woman to lust after her committeth adultery with her already in his heart.” He shows what had been so much forgotten by the Jews, that the commandments are spiritual, and that they reach infinitely further than mere outward actions.

That, for instance, “Thou shalt not kill,” does not merely mean, “Thou shalt do no murder,” but is to be understood in the sense given it by the Lord Jesus, “I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.” As Christians understand it, the law forbids our doing anything whereby the natural or spiritual life of another may be placed in jeopardy.

Now, since the law is to be so understood, its commandments are exceeding broad. Since it touches our thoughts, our imaginations, and our casual wishes, who among us can stand before it? Verily the law shuts us up as in a terrible Bastille, and we are each one of us prisoners under sin.

Here will be the time for us to say that not only do the Scriptures of promise, and the Scriptures of law shut us up, but so do all the Scriptures of the old ceremonial law of the Jews. “Oh,” say you, “how is that?” I reply, “When the destroying angel went through Egypt on that memorable night, not one man, woman, or child was delivered except through the sprinkling of the blood upon the door-posts and the lintel of the houses where they dwelt.

What did that mean? Why, that they were all under sin—and had it not been for the blood, the same angel who smote the first-born of Egypt, would have smitten every one of them, God’s people as they were, for they were all under sin. When they reached the wilderness, there were divers rites and ceremonies, but it is remarkable that everything under the law was sprinkled with blood, because the people and all that they did were polluted with sin before God, and needed to be cleansed by an atonement.

When an Israelite came to worship God at the Tabernacle, he could not come without a sacrifice. Atonement for sin was the way to God—the altar and the slaughtered lamb were the way of approach. There must be blood to cleanse the comer, because every comer was unclean.

Note also that the Holy Place in the Tabernacle in the wilderness was closed, and into it no man went but the High Priest, and he but once every year. This was a most solemn declaration of God that no man was fit to come near to His infinite holiness—that every man, even of the chosen people, was so polluted that there must be hung up a veil between him and God. And the one man who did come near at all must approach with sprinkled blood and smoking incense, typical of the coming sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

There was nothing about the Mosaic economy to say to man, “You are good, or you can be good, and you can save yourself.” But everywhere the declaration was—“You have rebelled and have not served the Lord. You cannot come nigh unto Him until you are purged by the blood of the great sacrifice. God cannot accept you as you are—you are polluted and defiled.”

The sinfulness of all men is abundantly taught in Scripture. Indeed, it is to be found on every page of it.

I have spoken of the jailer. Now notice His prisoners. “The Scripture hath concluded *all* under sin”—all, all. The heathen? Yes, for the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans tells us that, though they have not God’s written law, they have sufficient of it upon their consciences to accuse them if they do wrong, and every heathen has violated the law of God by sinning against the light of nature. To us who have heard that law the “all” of the text is very emphatic.

But you have been very moral, you say. Yes, but you are shut up under sin, for outwardly moral as you have been, you dare not say that you have never thought of evil so as to long for it, that you have never indulged wrong imaginations, that you have never spoken a rash word, that you have never sinned in action.

Surely you dare not say that you have loved God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your strength? Nor that you have always loved your neighbor as yourself? My friend, you, who are so fair to look upon when you look in the glass of your own self-adulation—if you could see yourself as God sees you, would discover that you are leprous from head to foot. Your sins are abundant and loathsome, though you perceive them not.

And this is true of the most religious of those men who are resting in outward observances. They have prayed every night and morning since they were children. They have never absented themselves from assemblies for worship. They have attended to baptism and communion, and the like. Ah, sirs, but

the law takes no account of this. If you have not kept its Ten Commandments perfectly, it accepts no ceremonies as a recompense. God requires of His creatures that they obey His law completely, without flaw, and one sin of omission or commission will bring down that dreadful sentence which I have already quoted, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.” Religious or irreligious, the broken law shuts up all men in the selfsame prison.

Now, notice for a minute the prison itself. It is one from which we cannot escape by any efforts of our own. Brethren, if we say, “We will never sin again,” we shall sin. And our never sinning again would make no atonement for past offenses. Suppose we were to resolve from this time forth that we would suffer mortifications of body, and sorrow of heart, to make atonement for sin? It would be useless, for the law speaks nothing of repentance.

When a man has broken the law, he must be punished for it—there is no space left for repentance under the law—and the sure result of our being shut up in the prison of the law, apart from the grace of God, is to be taken from that prison to execution—and to be destroyed forever by the wrath of God. There is the prison of the text. There is the jailer and his prisoners.

II. It is our great happiness to know that we are not shut up in this way with a view to our hopeless destruction, but in order that the grace of God may come to us, and so we have to speak of A GLORIOUS JAIL-DELIVERY.

The jail-delivery which I have to speak of is evidently *of those who are shut up in the prison*. “The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”

Christ came into this world to save those who have broken the law, those whom the law curses, and those who have no means whatever of escaping from the curse, unless Jesus opens the way. He has not come to save the righteous. If there be any among you who will not believe that you are shut up in the prison of the law, I have no Gospel to preach to you.

Why send a physician to a man who is not sick? And why offer alms to a man who is not poor? If you can save yourselves by your works, go and do so, fools that you are, for you might as well hope to drink dry the Atlantic. If you believe in self-salvation, I am hopeless of doing you any good till you are exhausted of your strength. When you are weak and sick, and ready to die, then will you be willing to accept the free salvation of Christ. But remember, Christ came to save the ungodly—the guilty alone are objects of mercy.

The Lord Jesus Christ has come to bring to all those who believe in Him *a complete deliverance* from the bondage of the law. The man who believes in Jesus is forgiven. The very moment he believes, all his transgressions are blotted out, and from that moment he is just in the sight of God. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Having believed, he becomes at once a child of God, a son of the Most High, and since God will never cast away His children, nor reject those whom He has loved, the man is there and then saved, and saved eternally. He was a slave before, and deserved the lash, and felt it. He is a child now, and is no longer under the law, but under grace.

The principle which guides him now is not, “This do and thou shalt live,” but this—“I am saved, and now I love to serve my God.” Now he does not work for wages, and expect to win a reward by merit—he is a saved man, and he has all that he needs—for Christ is his, and Christ is all. Now a higher principle burns within his bosom than that of self-salvation, he loves God and is selfish no longer.

Observe that this jail-delivery *comes to men by promise*. It is salvation according to promise. The promise is given, says the text. Now, if any man is saved on the Bible plan of salvation, it is not the result of anything he has done—he has never deserved it—it is not the result of a bargain between him and God.

No, the Lord says freely, “I will blot out your sins. I will accept you. I will hear your prayer. I will save you.” He does this, because He chooses to do it of His own sovereign good will and pleasure. “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have

compassion.” “So, then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”

The promise is not made to works, but only to *faith*. It is “the promise of faith by Christ Jesus.” If God had made His promise to a certain measure of holiness, or a certain amount of feeling, then, brethren, we might have despaired—but the promise is to faith. If you believe, you are saved.

You poor harlot, if you believe, you are saved. You thief, you murderer, you vilest of wretches, however far you may have gone, if you believe in Jesus Christ, your transgressions are forgiven you, and you are a child of God. It is your believing, not your doing.

Your trusting, your relying upon Christ, not your prayers, tears, preachings, hearings, or anything else you can do, or be, or feel. You are saved by giving up self entirely, and resting wholly on Him whom God has set forth to be a propitiation, namely, the crucified Redeemer.

Observe that the faith spoken of in the text is faith *in Christ Jesus*. It must not be faith in yourself, nor faith in a priest, nor faith in sacraments, nor faith in a set of doctrines—the promise is to faith in Christ Jesus. That is to say, you must believe that Christ the Son of God came on earth and became a man, took your sins upon His shoulders, bore them up to the tree, and suffered what was due for your sins in His own person on the cross—and you must trust yourself with Him, with Him fully, with Him alone, and with all your heart.

And if you do so, the promise is given to faith in Christ Jesus, and it will be fulfilled to you, and you shall be blessed and saved. This promise of faith in Christ Jesus is given *to all believers*, weak as well as strong, young as well as old.

Dear friend, if you have only believed in Jesus during the present service, you are as certainly forgiven as if you had been a believer fifty years. For if you only believed in Jesus when the last word escaped my lips, yet still your faith has saved you. Go in peace. Faith is the vital matter.

“But there must be works,” says one, “to follow.” Brother, there will be works to follow. There was never a true faith which did not produce works—but the works do not save us—faith alone saves. How strong is the apostle Paul upon this point. Read the epistle to the Romans carefully, and the epistle to the Galatians, and you will see that they come down like a Nasmyth hammer upon all notion of salvation by our own doings.

No reasoning could be more cogent, no expressions more plain. “Not of works, lest any man should boast,” says the apostle. And he puts it over again—“If by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” He will have it that we are saved as poor sinners by the sovereign grace of God, through faith in Christ Jesus, and not by works, or forms, or ceremonies, or anything whatsoever of our own doing.

Now, that is the plan of salvation. I put it before you, and I pray through Jesus Christ that many may receive it, for it is not a matter of human opinion, but of divine ordinance. I am not setting up the dogma of a sect—I am preaching to you the very truth of God. If there be salvation by any other way than by Jesus Christ, I am a false prophet among you, and this Bible also is false. But if there be salvation to believers in Jesus, I am a saved man, and all of you who have believed in Jesus are saved also, effectually and eternally saved.

Having thus spoken upon the text itself, I desire to say a few things upon the subject in general. Objections are continually raised to this plan of salvation. The world’s plan of salvation is, “Do.” The Bible plan of salvation is, “It is all done, accept it as a free gift.” The Gospel way of salvation is, Christ has saved His people, and as many as trust in Him are His people, and are saved.

Just think for a minute—is not this way of salvation which we have preached to you the only one which would be suited to all sorts and conditions of men? Dear sir, you may be a man of excellent disposition, and of admirable habits. I will suppose that the salvation to be preached by us was exactly such as would be suitable to such a person as you believe yourself to be—would not this be a very misfortunate thing for many others?

Are there not living within your observation many persons who are far below you in moral character? Do you not know of whole swarms of your fellow creatures whose outward life is utterly defiled? Some of these are conscious of their degradation, and would fain rise out of it—would you have them left to despair?

A way of salvation suited to the righteous it is clear would not suit them—are they to be overlooked? Would you have salvation put up to an examination like a place in the Civil Service, and only those allowed to pass who are as good as you are? Are all beneath your level, to perish?

I am speaking to you on your own ground, and I feel sure that you love your fellow men enough to say, “No, let the plan of salvation be such as to save the most reprobate of men.” Then, I ask you, what plan could there be but this one, that God freely forgives for Christ’s sake, even the greatest offenders, if they turn to Him, and put their trust in His dear Son? We have here a Gospel which reaches to the lowest depths, and saves to the uttermost.

But I shall put another argument. Would any other salvation than that which I have preached suit any man? O excellent sir, would any other, after all, suit you? I admit, and I admire your excellences. I would that all men were such as you are, rather than dissolute and depraved.

But, sir, can you really sit down in the quietude of your chamber, and as a thoughtful man weigh your own character in the scales, and say that it is so perfect that you could die with it in perfect peace, and stand before your Maker without fear? I am sure it is not so.

It is very remarkable that some persons who have been exceedingly moral have never seen their sinfulness till they have been on the borders of the grave—and then they have realized eternity, and have abhorred themselves in dust and ashes. I have heard of some who, in the very hour of imminent peril of death by drowning, have in the act of sinking seen the whole panorama of their lives pass before them, and they have seen, as they never saw before, the evil nature of that which they aforesaid thought so excellent.

Then they have said, “I must be saved by the merits of Jesus. I cannot be saved by my own.” My dear friend, whoever you may be, I am not about to decry you, but I must believe God’s Word before I believe your estimate of yourself. And as God’s Word has declared that you have sinned, and are condemned, I am sure that for you, as well as for the rest of your fellow men, there is no plan of salvation at all available, but that of salvation by the free mercy of God, through Jesus Christ His Son.

Now, observe a few of the beauties of the plan of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. It prevents men from having low thoughts of sin, because if a man says, “I have not kept this law of God perfectly, but still I have done very well, and any mistakes I have made are little sins—God is merciful—He will wipe them out,” he is sure to be a believer in self-salvation. It is always connected with narrow thoughts of sin.

A man knows he has sinned, but he thinks little of the wrong. He cannot believe that sin is such a great evil that men should be cast into hell for it. He kicks against the doctrine of damnation, he will not believe it just, because he does not know and will not admit that sin is a great and tremendous evil. So long as the idea of self-salvation exists, sin is lightly thought of.

But oh, when we see that sin could not be put away till the incarnate God Himself did hang upon the tree and bleed to death for men—then we see sin in its true colors, and loathe it as a deadly thing—and with our joy for pardoned guilt, we mingle abhorrence of the sin which required such an atoning sacrifice.

The plan of salvation by grace has this beauty about it, that it gives men high thoughts of God. In the other system, their idea of God is that He is very much like themselves. Look at the Catholic’s God. He is pleased with candles and delights in incense—He is a God who likes show and gewgaws, garments of blue and scarlet, and dolls dressed up, and flowers on his altars.

I know not what kind of God to call him. However, that is their notion of him. They try to save themselves, and they pull down their God to their standard. And every man who is a self-saver, even if

he be a Protestant, lowers God in some manner. He fancies that God will accept something short of perfection.

Each man has a different standard. That miserly old gentleman—his standard is that he will build a row of almshouses with his moldy leavings, and that will content the Most High. Another says, “I never open my shop on a Sunday.” Perhaps he cheats enough on Monday to make up for it, but Sunday’s rest—that will do for his God. Another, who is living a wicked life in private, believes the doctrines of grace, and that will satisfy his God.

But the man who is saved by the grace of God says, “My God is infinitely just. Nothing will content Him but a perfect righteousness. As a moral lawgiver, He will not put away sin till He has laid punishment upon one who stood in the sinner’s stead. He is so loving that He gave His Son. He is so just that He slew His Son on my behalf.”

All the divine attributes flame with splendor forth before the eyes of the man who is saved by faith, and he is led to reverence and to adore God.

The way of salvation by grace, beloved, is the best promoter of holiness in the entire world. “There,” says yonder gentleman, “I went to hear Spurgeon in the Tabernacle this morning, and he was crying out against salvation by good works. Of course, the worst results will come of such teaching.”

Ah, that has been the cuckoo-cry from the very first, whereas salvation by grace promotes good works far better than the teaching of salvation by works ever did—for those who hope to be saved by their works have generally very scanty works to be saved by—and those who put works aside altogether as a ground of hope, and look to grace alone, are the very people who are most zealous to perform good works, and I will tell you why.

Who loved Christ best at the Pharisee’s feast? Simon, the Pharisee, who had kept the law? Ah! no. He was to be saved by his doings, and yet Christ said to him, “Thou gavest me no kiss; thou gavest me no water to wash my feet.” Simon did not love the Master. He did what he did because he thought he ought to do it and must do it.

But there was a poor woman there who was a sinner, and she had had much forgiven, and she it was that did wash His feet with her tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head. Simon shows how the self-righteous love the Savior—they do not even wash His feet or kiss His cheeks. But those who are saved by grace love Jesus, and therefore kiss His feet, and bathe them with their tears—and would willingly lay down their lives for Him.

Law! There is no power for holiness in it! Law drives our spirits to rebellion, but love has magic in it. Has God forgiven me? Did Christ die for me? Am I God’s child? Has He forgiven me, not because of anything I did, but just because He would do it, out of love to my poor guilty soul? O God, I love You. What would You have me to do? There speaks the man who will perform good works, I warrant you, sir.

And while he will tread under foot with the deepest detestation any idea that he can merit anything of God’s, he is the man who will lay himself out, as long as he lives, for the honor of that dear Lord and Master by whose precious blood he has been redeemed.

The law does not furnish me with a constraining principle, but the Gospel does. The law treats me like a mere hireling, and a hireling can never serve with the zeal which is born of love. There is a better place with double wages, and naturally enough, the servant leaves your house, but your child will not. You do not give your child wages, and you do not bind him by indentures or agreements. He loves you, and his sense of your love leads him to a tender obedience, and what he does is doubly sweet to you. Missionaries and martyrs have done and borne for love’s sake what law could not have forced from them.

Oh yes, the doctrine of salvation by grace, by teaching men to love, transforms them, and makes new creatures of them. I have seen it hundreds of times. There are some here, but I will not speak of them, but of cases parallel to theirs. They have been to a place of worship, and they have been preached to about their duty, and they have read the Bible, and have thought it was all about what was required from their own efforts.

But all the while they have felt no obedience of heart, no love to Christ, and no joy in God. But those same persons have heard the Gospel, and found that there is nothing to do, that Jesus Christ has done it all, that sin was put away by His death, and righteousness was wrought out. And they have taken what God has presented to them, and believed in Jesus, and been saved.

And from that very moment the difference has been evident. They have cried, “I never felt any love to God before, but now I do. I love Him with all my soul for what He has done for me.” You hear them say, “I used to go to the house of God as a matter of duty, and I might almost as well have been away, for it was no enjoyment to me. But now I go as a matter of privilege, and I take my heart with me, and sing God’s praises with all my soul, because He has done so much for me.”

Those people will tell you that, whereas they resolved to be good, and to give up vice, and to practice virtue, they never did it till they believed in Jesus—and when they believed in Him, love to Him made service easy, and sin hateful, and they became new creatures in Christ Jesus, by the Spirit’s power.

There is the pith of it all. If you want to get rid of the guilt of sin, you must believe in Jesus. But equally, if you would be rid of the chains of sin, the tyranny of your passions, the domination of your lusts, you must believe in Him. For from His side there flows not merely blood, but water—blood to take away your criminality, and water to take away your tendencies to sin, so that henceforth you shall not serve sin, or live any longer therein.

It is all there in that pierced heart. It is all there in that crimson fount, opened on Calvary’s bloody tree. Look to Jesus and you shall be saved. It is all in that nutshell.

“There is life in a look at the crucified One.”

I may never have an opportunity of preaching this Gospel to some of you again. It may be the first time you have heard it, and perhaps the last. O sirs, I charge you accept it, and may the Spirit of God constrain you so to do. We will meet in heaven if it be so, but if you put it from you, you are like a man who flings away the only lifebelt that can keep him alive in the angry flood.

You put from you the only medicine under heaven that can heal your soul, for I am holding up before you the only Gospel in the world. If any man preaches any other Gospel, let him be accursed. Intolerant! Content am I to be as intolerant as my Master, and He bade me say, “He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.”

“But may I not be saved some other way?” No, sir. “But may I not reject with impunity this which you have preached?” No, sir. At your peril is it, and before God I will put it right plainly before you. You must believe in Jesus, and if you reject Him your blood be upon your own head, for other way of salvation there is none. The Lord grant that you may receive it, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—GALATIANS 3

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—84 (iii), 554, 549

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.