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A SERMON
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"And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion."
Mark 2:12

IT is very natural that there should be many surprising things in the Gospel, for it is beyond measure remarkable that there should be a Gospel at all. As soon as I begin thinking of it I exclaim with Bunyan, "O world of wonders, I can say no less." And I invite you all to join with the multitude in saying with the text, "We never saw it on this fashion."

When man had sinned, God might instantly have destroyed our rebel race, or He might have permitted it to exist as the fallen angels do—in a state of enmity to all goodness, and in consequent misery. But He who passed the angels by took up the seed of Abraham and looked upon man—that insignificant item in the ranks of creatureship—and determined that man should experience salvation, and show forth His divine grace.

It was a wonderful thing, to begin with, that there should be a Gospel for men. And when we remember that the Gospel involved the gift of the only-begotten Son of God, when we remember that it was necessary that God, the invisible Spirit, should be veiled in human flesh, that the Son of God should become the son of Mary, should be subject to pain and weakness, poverty and shame—when we remember all this, we may expect to find great wonders clustering round such a stupendous fact.

Beholding God in human flesh, miracles no longer strike us as being at all marvelous, for the incarnation of God outmiracles miracle. But we must further remember that in order to bring the Gospel to us it was needful that God should in our nature offer atonement for human sin.

Think of it! The holy God making atonement for sin! When the angels first heard of it, they must have been lost in astonishment, for they "never saw it on this fashion." Shall the offended die for the offender? Shall the judge bear the chastisement of the criminal? Shall God take upon Himself the transgression of His creature?

Yet so it has been, and Jesus Christ has borne, that we might never bear, the consequences of sin—nay, sin itself. "For the transgression of my people was he stricken." Jesus was made a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

Now, a commonplace result could not be imagined as growing out of a Gospel sent to rebellious men, much less a Gospel involving the incarnation and the death of the Son of God. Everything in God's creation is made to scale. There is a balance between the dewdrop on the rose, and the most majestic of yonder orbs that adorn the brow of night.

Law regulates everything, from a single drop of water to the ocean itself. Everything is proportionate, and therefore we are persuaded that in an economy in which we start with an incarnate God, and an infinite atonement, there must be something very striking. And we ought to be prepared to exclaim frequently, "We never saw it on this fashion."

Commonplaces are foreign to the Gospel. We have entered the land of wonders, when we behold the love of God in Christ Jesus. Romance is out-romanced in the Gospel. Whatever marvels men are able to imagine, the *facts* of God's amazing grace are more extraordinary than anything imagination has ever conceived.

I desire at this time to say two or three things to those who are not familiar with the Gospel. Some have dropped in here to whom the Gospel, as we believe it, is quite a new thing. I want to say to them, first, *do not disbelieve it because it strikes you as being something very strange*. In the second place, remember that *in the Gospel there must be amazing and surprising things*, and we shall try to set them out before you, hoping that so far from your disbelieving them, faith may be wrought in your soul as you hear them. And, thirdly, *if any of these strange things should have happened to you, and you should have to say,* "*We never saw it on this fashion,*" *then glorify God and give new honors to His name*.

I. First, then, DO NOT DISBELIEVE THE GOSPEL BECAUSE IT SURPRISES YOU.

Remember, in the first place, that *nothing stands so much in the way of real knowledge as prejudice*. Our race might have known a great deal more of scientific fact if it had not been so largely occupied and captivated with scientific supposition.

Take up books upon most sciences, and you will find that the main part of the material is an answer to divers theories that have been set up in ages gone by, or originated in modern times. Theories are the nuisances of science, the rubbish which must be swept away that the precious facts may be laid bare.

If you go to the study of a subject, saying to yourself, "This is how the matter must shape itself," having beforehand made up your mind what the facts ought to be, you will have put in your own way a difficulty more severe than the subject itself could place there. Prejudice is the stumbling block of advance. To believe that we know before we do know is to prevent our really making discoveries and coming to right knowledge.

When an observer first discovered that there were spots on the sun he reported it, but he was called before his father confessor, and upbraided for having reported anything of the kind. The Jesuit father said that he had read Aristotle through several times, and he had found no mention in Aristotle of any spots on the sun, and therefore there could be no such things.

And when the offender replied that he had seen these spots through glasses, the father told him that he must not believe his eyes—he must believe *him*, because it was certain, to begin with, that if Aristotle had not indicated the spots, spots there could not be—and he must not believe it.

Now, there are some who come to hear the Gospel in that spirit. They have a notion of what the Gospel ought to be—a pretty firm and strong cast-iron creed of their own manufacturing—or a hereditary one which they have received with the old family chest of drawers. And they are therefore unprepared candidly to hear and learn.

Neither do they turn to Scripture to discover the mind of the Spirit of God, but to find some color for their prejudices. It is easy to show a man a thing if he will open his eyes, but if he shuts his eyes, and resolves not to see, the task is difficult. You may light a candle pretty readily, but you cannot do so if it has an extinguisher over it.

And there are persons who have extinguished their souls and covered them over with prejudices. They act as judges of what the Gospel ought to be, and so, if there is anything said that does not suit their preconceived notions, straightway they are offended. This is very absurd, and in a matter in which our souls are concerned, it is something worse than ridiculous.

It is dangerous to the highest degree. We ought to come to the preaching of the Word praying, "Lord, teach Thou me. Blessed Spirit guide me into all truth. Let me see a doctrine to be in Your Word and I will accept it, though it should shock all my prejudices. Though it should seem to me to be a totally new thing, yet, if clearly it be the Word of God, I am willing to receive it and to rejoice in it."

God give us such a spirit, so that when we have to say in the words of the text, "We never saw it on this fashion," yet still our prejudices may not prevent our accepting the truth.

Let us remember, dear friends, that *many things which we know to be true would not have been believed by our fathers if they had been revealed to them*. I feel morally certain that there were many generations of Englishmen who, if they could have been informed that men would travel at forty or fifty miles an hour over the surface of the earth, drawn without horses, but by a steam engine, they would have shaken their heads, and laughed such a prediction to scorn.

Even a little time ago, if some one had prophesied that we should be able to speak across the Atlantic in a single instant, and speedily obtain a reply, by a cable that should be laid along the ocean's bottom, we ourselves could not have conceived it to be possible. How could it be?

And yet these things are common every-day facts with us now. Do let us, therefore, expect that when we come to deal with what is more wonderful than creation, and far more wonderful than any of the inventions of man, we should meet with things which will be hard to be believed. Let us willingly give up our heart and soul to receive the impress of the truth, and constantly exercise a simple faith in what God reveals.

It is well-known that *there are many things which are undoubted facts which certain classes of men find it hard to believe*. Some time ago a missionary had told his congregation that in the winter time the water in England became so hard that a man could walk upon it. Now, they believed a good deal that he had said, but they did not believe that. And they whispered to one another that the missionary was a great liar.

One of them was brought over to England. He came over with the full conviction that it was a most ridiculous thing to suppose that any man could ever walk across a river. At last the frost came, the river was frozen over and the missionary took his friend down to it. The good man stood on the ice himself, but he could not persuade his convert to venture.

"No," he said, "I do not believe it." "But you can *see* it, man." said the other. "Come along with you! Come here!" "No," he said, "I never saw it so. I have lived fifty years in my own country, and I never saw a man walk on a river before." "But here I am doing it," said the missionary, "come along with you!"

And he seized his hand, and pulled so vigorously that at last the African tried the frozen water, and found that it did support his weight. Thus a statement proved to be none the less true because it was contrary to experience.

The same rule holds good in the case of the Gospel. Yet you must expect to find in it certain things which you could not have believed to be true. But if some of us have proved them to be facts, and are living in the daily enjoyment of them, do not stubbornly refuse to try them yourself. If we get you by the hand affectionately and say, "Come on to this river of life. It will bear you. You can walk in safety here. We are doing so and have done so for years," do not act towards us as if we were deceivers.

And do not put us off with the absurd argument that the Gospel cannot be true because you have not hitherto tried it, and therefore have no experience of its power. Why, my dear friend, it may be true for all that, just as the ice was a matter of fact, though the friend from Africa had never seen it. He found the ice a reality when he at last ventured upon it, and you will find Jesus Christ and the precious things of the Gospel to be sure and firm and true, as we have found them to be, if you will only venture your soul upon them.

I merely mention these things to prepare your mind for the full conviction that *the fact that a Gospel statement seems new and astonishing ought not to create unbelief in the mind*. My beloved friend, it may be that you exclaim, "I cannot hope that my sin can be forgiven. I cannot imagine that my heart can be changed. I cannot suppose it possible that, by one simple act of faith, I could be a saved man."

No, but do you not see that every man measures things according to his own standard? We measure other people's corn, but we always do it with our own bushel. We even try to measure God by our own standard, and there is a text which very sweetly rebukes us for it, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD."

What I consider it right to expect from God may, very naturally, be a very different thing from what God may be prepared to give me. Perhaps I judge of His behavior towards me by what I deserve, and if I do so, what can I look for?

Or perhaps, I judge of His mercy by my own, and considering whether I could forgive to seventy times seven—whether, if often provoked, I could still overlook the transgression. I find in my own heart

no very great powers of forgiveness, and then I conclude that God is as hard, and as unwilling to forgive as I am.

But we must not so judge. Oh, sinners, *you* must not do so! If you are longing for a great salvation, you must not sit down and begin to calculate the Godhead by inches, and measure out the merit of Christ by yards, and calculate whether He can do this, or can do that. A God—what is there that He cannot do? Did Jesus make an atonement boundless as His nature? Then what sin is there which that atonement cannot wash away?

Judge not the Lord according to human judgment. Know you, O man, that He is no small streamlet, or lakelet, which you can measure, and whose capacity you can calculate—He is a sea without a bottom and without a shore—and all your thoughts are drowned when you attempt to measure Him. Lift up your thoughts as high as you ever will, and think great things of God, and expect great things from God. And when you shall have enlarged your expectation, and your faith shall have grown to its very utmost, God is able to do exceeding abundantly above what you ask, or even think.

"Canst thou by searching find out God?" Do you expect that you can exceed Him, and desire more and hope for more than He is able to give? Oh, it cannot be. Consider this—that you are very liable to make a mistake as to what the Gospel is, because your mode of estimating it must naturally be a false one, since you judge only from what you know, and what you are capable of, while God is infinitely above all that you know or can conceive.

Further, let me remind you, dear friend, you who are a stranger to the Gospel, that when we come to speak of it directly, *you must not disbelieve it on account of its strangeness, for it is clear that many have made a mistake as to what the Gospel is*. The Jews who lived in our Savior's day heard the best preacher that ever preached, but they did not understand Him. It was not from want of a lucid style, for "Never man spake like this man," but yet they mistook all that He said.

They thought that they knew His meaning, but they did not. And even His own disciples and the apostles, until they were illuminated by the Spirit of God, mistook the meaning of their Master, and knew but little, after all His teaching. Should you feel at all astonished if you should have been mistaken, dear friend—you who have never found joy and peace in believing?

Is it not possible that you may have been mistaken, after all? The Jews heard the Savior Himself and yet did not understand the truth. Some of them were men of genius, and well-instructed. There was one especially who was a ruler—a doctor among the Jews—who understood not these things. And when the Savior said to him, "Ye must be born again," he took it literally—he could not understand the mystic change which the Savior meant to describe.

Now, if Nicodemus did not know, and a great many like Nicodemus, may it not happen to be the case that you also have not found out the secret, and are at this moment without the possession of it? Possibly you may be a person of very considerable education, and of remarkable gifts and parts. My dear friend, if any people are liable to miss the true sense of the Gospel, it is such as you are.

It is strange, you will say, that I should make such a remark, but the observation is founded upon fact. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen." Not many of the learned of this world ever learn of Christ. He teaches babes, but leaves wise men to boast in their own folly.

The Magi of the East went round about to find the Savior—even with a star to guide them they missed their way. But the humble shepherds from the plains of Bethlehem, without a star, went immediately to the place where Jesus was.

Ah, it was a good and true remark of Augustine when he said, "While the learned are fumbling to find the latch, the simple and poor have entered into the kingdom of heaven." Simplicity of heart is more helpful to the understanding of the Gospel than culture of mind. To be ready to be taught is a better faculty than to be able to teach, as far as the reception of the Gospel is concerned.

That degree in divinity may stand in your way for understanding divinity. And the very position that you have taken in the classical tripos may render it the more difficult for you to comprehend that which the wayfaring man, though he be a fool, knows by heart.

Since it is certainly so, I am not offering you any insult when I say perhaps, dear friend, you may hitherto have labored under a mistake, and therefore, if at any time the Gospel should be spoken to you, it would well become you to give it a fair hearing, and not to reject it because it appears to be new.

One other remark, and I will go on to the next point, and it is this. The person I am now addressing, and I believe that there are such persons here, if he be the man I mean, must confess *that the religion he now possesses has not done much for him*. You think you know the Gospel? But, say—could you die upon what you know? Could you die *now—now*—happily and contentedly with the hope you have?

If you could, I thank God and congratulate you. Has your hope which you possess comforted your heart? Do you feel and know assuredly that your sins are forgiven you? Do you look upon God as your Father? Are you in the habit of speaking with Him as a child speaks with his father, confiding in Him, and telling all your cares and troubles to Him? If it is so, my dear friend, I rejoice with you.

But unless yours is the religion of Jesus Christ, I know you have not found such peace. There are many shapes of what is called "religion," many, many shapes. But they amount to this—they put a man in a position in which he feels that he is about as good as other people, and as well to do in spiritual things as the average of others—and if he does his best, and acts up to his knowledge and light, he will get better, no doubt.

And perhaps when he comes to die, possibly by the assistance of a clergyman or a priest—perhaps by some remarkable experience that he may undergo in the use of sacraments—he may get to heaven. It is the general religion of mankind that they are on a road which they have to follow, and by industriously and carefully pursuing it, they will possibly save themselves by the gracious help of the Lord Jesus Christ. They generally tack that on, of course, to make their self-righteousness look a little more respectable.

Now, I say deliberately, as in the sight of God, that such religion is not worth one solitary halfpenny. The religion of the Lord Jesus Christ gives a man a complete, full, free, irreversible pardon of all his sins at once, together with the changing of his nature, the implantation of a new life, and the putting of him into the family of God.

And it gives to him these things so that he knows that he has them, and consciously enjoys them, and lives in the power and spirit of them—humbly serving the Lord who has done such great things for him. This is the religion of Christ, and this is what we are now going to speak of more fully, while we mention some few things which lead men to say, "We never saw it on this fashion.

II. Our second point was to be that THERE ARE VERY SINGULAR AND SURPRISING THINGS IN THE GOSPEL. Let us mention some of them.

One is this—*that the Gospel should come to people whom it regards as incapable*. In the narrative before us, the wonder was that the Lord Jesus dealt with a crippled and paralyzed person so far gone that he could not crawl into Christ's presence, but had to be borne by four. See him! He is incapable and incurable. All that he can do is to lie on that bed on which the kindness of friends has placed him—and there he must remain—he can do nothing.

Now, the Gospel regards every man to whom it comes as unable to do anything good. It addresses you, not merely as paralyzed, but it goes farther, and describes you as dead. The Gospel speaks to the dead.

I have often heard it said that the duty of the Christian minister is to arouse the activities of sinners. I believe the very reverse—he should rather labor to smite their self-trusting activities dead, and to make them know that all that they can do of themselves is worse than nothing. They can do nothing, for how can the dead move in their graves?

How can the dead in sin accomplish their own quickening? The power which can save does not lie in the sinner—it lies in his God. And if any of you be unconverted, I do not come to tell you something which you are able to do, by the doing of which you can save yourselves, but I warn you that you are lost, ruined, and undone. You have power to stray like lost sheep, but if ever you come back your Shepherd must bring you back, you will never come back of yourselves.

You had power to destroy yourselves and you have exercised that power. But now your help does not lie in you, it lies in your God. It is a strange thing that the Gospel should represent a man to be in such a desperate condition, but it is a fact. And though it be astonishing, let it not be doubted.

An equally remarkable thing is that the Gospel *calls upon men to do what they cannot do*, for Jesus Christ said to this paralyzed man, "I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed and walk." He could not rise, could not take up his bed, and could not walk, and yet he was bidden to do it. And it is one of the strange things of the way of salvation that—

"The Gospel bids the dead revive;
Sinners obey the voice and live.
Dry bones are raised and clothed afresh,
And hearts of stone are turned to flesh."

We have to say, in the name of Jesus, to the man with the withered arm—whose arm is so withered that we know he has no power in it, "Stretch out thy hand." And we say it in God's name. Some of my brethren of a certain order of doctrine say, "It is ridiculous! If you admit that a man cannot do it, it is ridiculous to tell him to do it."

But we do not mind being ridiculous—we care little for the censure of human judgment. If God gives us a commission, that commission will prevent our suffering very seriously from the ridicule of other people.

"Ezekiel, do you not see before you that valley of dry bones?" "Yes," says he, "I see them. They are very many and very dry. Lo! through many a summer the sun has scorched them, and through many a winter the fierce winds have dried them till they are as if they had passed through an oven." "Prophet, what can *you* do with these bones? If God means to raise them to life they will be raised, therefore let them alone. What can *you* do?"

Listen to him as he makes solemn proclamation. "Thus saith the LORD, Ye dry bones live!" "Ridiculous, Ezekiel! they cannot live, why speak to them?" He knows they cannot live of themselves, but he also knows that his Master bids him tell them to live, and he does what his Master tells him. So, in the Gospel, the minister is to bid men to believe, and he is to say, "Repent, and believe the Gospel."

For this reason alone do we say, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The Gospel bids you believe, albeit that you are dead in trespasses and sins. "I cannot understand it," says somebody. No, and you never will till God reveals it to you. But when the Lord comes and dwells with you, you will perfectly understand, and see how the exercise of faith on the part of the preacher of the Gospel is a part of the divine operation by which dead souls are raised.

Another and more remarkable thing is this—that while the Gospel comes to men incapable and dead, and bids them do what they cannot of themselves do, *they actually do it*—there is the marvel. In the name of Jesus we say to the paralyzed man, "Take up thy bed and walk," and he does take up his bed and walk.

For with the Word faithfully spoken, in confidence in God, there comes the eternal power into the man who had no power of his own. And God's elect, called out by the preaching of the Gospel, hear the message from heaven, and the power comes with it at the time they hear the message, so that they obey it, and live. Dead as they were, they live.

O, marvelous operation this—that, out of this congregation, while I say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ"—there will be some who will believe and be saved. Those who will believe have no more power, naturally, to believe than others have—they are by nature all in an equal state of death. But to God's own chosen the Word comes with power, attended by the Holy Spirit, and they do believe, and live.

Here are three singular things. It is a strange thing to have to tell you good church people and chapel people, who have always done everything so well, that unless you are converted you are dead in

trespasses and sins, and all your good works are so many grave clothes in which your corpse is wrapped up, and nothing better. And it is strange that we should be bound to call upon you to believe in Jesus when we have already told you that you have no spiritual life.

And it is remarkable that we should be commanded to warn you that you are living in great sin if you do not believe in Jesus. More singular still, you may judge it to be, that we are confident that the telling you these things, plainly and honestly in the name of God, will be blest by the Spirit of God, and will lead you to believe and to trust in Jesus. It seems strange, but so it is.

More remarkable still to the crowd, no doubt, was this—that *this paralyzed man was healed at once*. If ever a cure of paralysis is wrought at any time—and it is very rarely that such thing occurs—I do not think that it is ever cured in an instant. This man is unable to move hand or foot, but Jesus says, "Take up thy bed and walk," and he rises as if he had never been paralyzed.

Every ligature is in its place. Every muscle is ready for action in a moment. You would have thought it would take a month or two, and a good deal of rubbing and friction to bring the man's blood into healthy action, to get him round, and warm him into life again. But it did not—he only heard that strange voice which told him to do what he could not do, and he did what he could not do by a power that went with that message. And he rose up and was healed at once.

And here is the marvel of the Gospel. A sinner hears the Gospel, and all the sins of his whole life are upon him, but he believes that Gospel and all his sins are gone in a moment. And he is as clean before the throne of God as if never a sin had defiled him. He was, up to the time of his reception of the Gospel, an enemy to God by wicked works. But he accepts the testimony of God concerning His Son Jesus, he rests in Jesus, and his heart becomes as the heart of a little child.

In a moment the stone is taken away, and the fleshy heart is given—He becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. The darkness disappears as the primeval darkness fled before the fiat which said, "Let there be light." 'Tis done—done in a moment.

You will not comprehend this, I am sure, till you experience it. Oh how I bless God that years ago when I heard the message of God—"Look unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth," I was enabled to look and live. I pined and longed for salvation, and labored hard and prayed hard to get it—but I never got one inch the farther.

But the message came—"Look!"—how could I look? My eyes were sightless. But I did look, for the power to look came with the command to look, and the moment I looked I was as conscious that I was forgiven as I am conscious of my existence. There was life to me in a look at the Crucified One. Pardon, sure, certain, and sealed home to my conscience, was given to me in the selfsame moment when I looked to Jesus in the bloody sweat, Jesus on the cross, Jesus risen from the dead, and Jesus gone into glory.

A look at Him and it was all done. You had not thought of that, you say, and even now it startles you. You thought you would have to take the sacrament, and keep on attending a place of worship, and gradually work yourself up out of your paralyzed condition. That is man's way of salvation. But Christ's way of salvation is an instantaneous change of heart, and an instantaneous forgiveness of sin.

Another thing which they had never seen after that fashion was that *the man was healed without any ceremony*. The proper way to heal a paralyzed person would have been to fetch the priest down, and to bring water and oil, or to shed the blood of a bullock, and offer it. And then to go through no end of ceremonies, and by degrees, through the mysterious power of ceremonies, at last the man might be cleansed.

But here was not one single ceremony. It was just this, "Take up thy bed and walk." The man, though he cannot take up his bed and walk, yet believes that He who told him to do it will give him power to do it—and he does take up his bed and walk. There is the whole of it in a nutshell. He believes, and acts on that belief, and he is restored.

And that is the whole plan of salvation. You believe the Gospel, and act upon the truth of it, and you are saved—saved the moment you accept the witness of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ. But is there not baptism? Yes, for the saved—but no baptism in order to salvation.

When you *are* saved—when you are a believer in Jesus—then the instructive ordinances of God's house become useful to you—but God forbid that we should ever look to baptism as a means of salvation. God forbid that we should even look to the Lord's Supper for that purpose. May we be preserved from anything approximating to trust in rites and forms.

When you are saved, then the ordinances of the house into which you have come—the ordinances of the family of which you are a member—belong to you. But they do not belong to you, and can render to you no service whatever, until you are a saved man. Salvation from death in sin has nothing to do with ceremonies. Believe and live is the sole Gospel precept.

Another remarkable thing was that *this man was perfectly restored*—not merely restored in a moment, but perfectly so. A partial restoration would not have been one-tenth so memorable. I have known dear friends partially paralyzed who, after some time, in the good providence of God, have somewhat recovered. But a twist of the mouth, a weakness in the eye, or a feebleness of the hand has remained as a proof that the paralysis had been there.

But this man was perfectly whole, and at once. The glory of salvation is that whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus is completely pardoned. It is not some of his sin that is put away, but all of it. I rejoice to look upon it as dear Kent does when he sings—

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast;
And, O my soul, with wonder view
For sins to come, here's pardon too."

We are plunged into the fountain of redeeming blood, and cleansed from every fear of ever being found guilty before the living God. We are accepted in the Beloved through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, justified once and for all and forever before the Father's face! Christ said, "It is finished," and finished it is.

And oh, what a bliss is this—one of the things that may well stagger those who have never heard it before, but let them not reject it because it staggers them. But rather let them say—"This wonderful system which saves and saves completely, in an instant, simply by looking out of self to Christ, is a system worthy of divine wisdom, for it magnifies the grace of God, and meets man's deep necessities."

One other thing, no doubt, astonished them about this man—*that his cure was done evidently*. There was no deception about it, for he rolled up the mattress that he had lain upon, put it upon his back, and walked away with it, and went home to his house. There was no doubt about his being perfectly restored, for he was carrying a burden on his back.

And here is the glory of it—that when a man believes in Jesus Christ—there is no doubt about his conversion—you see it in his actions. They tell me that a child is born again in baptism. Very well, let me have a look at the child. Is there any difference in him?

Some of you, perhaps, have had children that were born again in the sacramental fashion. Mine were not. I cannot, therefore, speak from experience. I wonder whether yours have turned out any better than mine—whether, indeed, the watery regeneration made any difference in them.

I am persuaded you could not pretend to having seen any result. It is a kind of regeneration that does not show itself in the life, and indeed, produces no result—for these precious regenerate babies, and regenerate boys and girls are just the same as the unregenerate boys and girls—there is not a pin to choose between them.

Send them to the same school, and I will undertake very often to show you that some of those that never were baptismally regenerated are better than those who were, for probably they have had Christian

parents who had taken more pains to instruct them than those superstitious parents who merely relied upon the outward ceremony.

Now, that regeneration which produces no effect is nothing—less than nothing. It would be like saying, "That man is saved from the paralysis." "Well, but he lies on the bed." "Yes, he lies on the bed the same as he did before, but," you say, "he is—he is delivered from the paralysis." "But how do you know?" "Well, of course, it may not be an actual cure, but it is a virtual cure, because he has undergone a ceremony, and therefore it must be so. You are to believe it."

This is fine talk. But when the man rose and rolled his bed up, and carried it on his back—that was a deal more convincing. Now, when God's providence brings into this house a man who has been a drunkard, and he hears the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and believes in Jesus, and turns his cups bottom upwards, and becomes a sober man, there is something in that.

If a man comes here who is proud, haughty, a hater of the Gospel altogether—a man who can swear, and who has no regard for the Sabbath—and he believes in Jesus, and becomes at home as gentle as a lamb, so that his wife hardly knows that he is the same man, and on the Sabbath he delights to go to the house of God, there is something to be seen in that, is there not?—something real and tangible.

Here is a man that would cheat you, as soon as look at you, in his business. But the grace of God comes to him, and he becomes scrupulously honest. Here is a man that used to associate with the lowest of the low, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ is received by him, and he seeks godly companions, and he loves only those whose talk is sweet and clean and holy. Why, you can *see* it. You can *see* it.

And this is the kind of salvation we want in these days, a salvation that can be seen—which makes the paralyzed sinner roll up his bed and carry it away—makes him a conqueror over depraved habits—delivers him from the thralldom of his sins, and shows itself in the outer life to all who care to look upon him.

Yes, brethren, this is what the Gospel has done for us. And if I address any here tonight who have looked upon religion as a kind of salve that they were to use while they continued in their sins, I want them to see what a very different thing it is. Christ has come to save you *from* your sins—not to keep you in the fire and prevent your burning—but to pluck you like a brand out of the burning.

He has come to make you new creatures, and this He can do at this very moment, while you are sitting in your pews. If, while you hear the sound, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," there be found in you a willing mind, given you of His grace, so that you do trust Him, you shall be saved as surely as Christ lives.

These are strange things, but do not reject them because they are strange. They are things worthy of a God.

III. So, lastly, IF YOU HAVE EVER FOUND OUT ANY OF THESE THINGS, AND HAD TO SAY, "WE NEVER SAW IT ON THIS FASHION," THEN GO AND GLORIFY GOD. Magnify Him from your inmost soul.

If salvation were by works, and we could fight our own way to heaven by our own merits, I for one, when I got up there, would throw up my cap and say, "Well done! I have deserved something, and I have got it." But since salvation is by grace from first to last, and not of man, neither by man, nor of the will of the flesh, nor by blood or birth—since the Lord begins, and carries on, and ends—let us give Him all the glory.

And if ever He gives us, as He will give us, a crown of life that fades not away, we will go and cast it at His feet, and say, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be praise for ever and ever." Let us live in this spirit, dear friends. The man who believes in the doctrines of grace, and yet thinks much of himself, is highly inconsistent. A man who believes salvation to be all of grace, and yet does not glorify God continually, acts contrary to his own convictions.

"O, magnify the LORD with me. Let us exalt his name together." He took us up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and He set our feet upon a rock and established our goings. He put a new

song into our mouths, even praise for evermore. Praise be unto Him, for He has done it, and He shall be extolled.

O, you cannot praise Him, you who do not know this salvation—and I do not exhort you to attempt to do so. But first of all, may you know this salvation for yourselves. You *can* know it. Blessed be God, I trust that some of you will know it this very night by ceasing from yourselves, giving up all dependence upon anything you can do or be or feel, and by dropping into the arms of Jesus, resting in His finished work, and confiding in Him.

He will—he *must* save you if you trust Him—and then you shall give Him praise. God bless you, dear friends, for Christ's sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MARK 2

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—202, 232

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.