

ZEALOUS, BUT WRONG

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A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”
Romans 10:1, 2, 3.

WE ought to have an intense longing for the salvation of all sorts of men, and especially for those, if there are any that treat us badly. We should never wish them ill, not for a moment, but in proportion to their malice should be our intense desire for their good. Israel had persecuted Paul everywhere with the bitterest imaginable hate. When he addressed them in their synagogues, they rushed upon him in their fury. When he left them alone, and preached quietly to the Gentiles, they made a mob, dragged him before the magistrates, and charged him with causing a tumult and either stoned him, or beat him with rods. He was “an Israelite indeed,” but his people regarded him as a turncoat indeed, because he had become a Christian. Mad as they were against all Christians, they had a special spite and fury against the apostate Pharisee. Paul’s only reply to all their infuriated malice is this gentle assertion, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.”

Brethren, let us pray for men that they may be saved. Simple as the statement is, I feel sure that we shall see more conversions when more people pray for conversions. If, as we went about the street, we made a rule that, whenever we heard a man swear, we would pray that he might be saved, might we not hope to see a great many more saved? If, whenever we saw a case of special sin, or read of it in the newspaper, we were to make it a habit always to offer our heart’s desire and prayer for such offenders that they might be saved, I cannot tell what countless blessings would come from God’s right hand.

I would bring before you one peculiar class of persons whose conversion some of us should very earnestly pray for. They are the kind of people who are here described by the apostle; Israelites, religious people, intensely religious in their way, although that way is not the way of truth. They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. They are righteous people, *self*-righteous people, people that have done no ill, but, on the contrary, have labored to do a great deal of good. They are running, and running well, but they are not running on the right road. They are laboring, and laboring hard, but they are not laboring in the right style, and so they will miss their reward. Many of these people are around us, and very admirable people they are in many ways, but their condition causes us the utmost anxiety. There are a few such persons in this present congregation, and though they are not as numerous among us as in many other quarters, yet they have a peculiar place in our affectionate regard. We esteem them so highly that we would be shocked and grieved that one single person of their character should perish. I say most solemnly, “My heart’s desire and prayer for such is that they might be saved; for I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.”

Bear with me at this time while I talk about these people. If *you* do not belong to this order of minds yourselves, I am glad of it. Pray for them if you yourselves are saved. If you know any such, keep on mentioning them to God in prayer, while I am preaching. Use the next half-hour as a time of quiet pleading with God, about individuals of whom you will be reminded while I am talking. Say, “Lord, bless her,” or, “Lord, bless him.” If you are not one of those at whom I shall be especially aiming, then help me with your prayers that this sermon may be clothed with power by the Holy Spirit.

I. And first, why ARE WE ESPECIALLY CONCERNED FOR THESE PEOPLE? The answer is, “Because *they are so zealous.*” They have a zeal of God. I feel right glad to meet with a zealous man nowadays, for zeal for God has become a rare quality in our land. You see plenty of zeal where politics are concerned. Fashion, and art, and society, and literature, each one evokes zeal of a certain kind, but we are not overdone with those who are zealous in the matter of religion. We seem to be pretty nearly gone to sleep as to essentials of creed and worship. Who is zealous? Who burns with holy ardor? Who is consumed with sacred enthusiasm? If anybody comes to be a little zealous above others, he is straight-way condemned. The man of fervent spirit is laughed at as “a hot gospeller,” he is called fanatical, and great efforts are made to put him down. I fear that both the wise and the foolish virgins are going to sleep at this present time. There is a dullness in the religious world, as if we had passed into a dull, thick, autumn fog. We want a great and general revival. Meanwhile, when we do meet with people who are zealous, we take an interest in them. Zealous at church, zealous in their ceremonies, zealous in their belief of what they believe—however mistaken their zeal may be, there is something interesting about it. We like to associate with people who have hearts—not dry leather bottles, out of which all the juice has gone, but those who have heart, and soul, and life, and fire, and go. I love to meet with those who believe in something, and who work under the pressure of their belief, and give their strength to the carrying out of what they believe to be the will of God. It does seem a very great pity that any zeal should be wasted, and that anyone full of zeal should yet miss his way. We fear that there are some who will do so. If you want to go to York you may ride very fast south, but you will not get to York with all your speed. Unless you turn your rein towards the north, you may ride a thousand horses to death, and never see the gates of the old city. It is of no use to be zealous if you are zealous in a wrong cause, but when we meet with any who are such, I say that they become peculiarly the object of a Christian’s prayers. Pray for the zealous with all your hearts, for it is such a pity that one of them should go astray.

Again, they should be especially the subject of our prayers, because *they may go so very wrong, and may do so much mischief to others.* Those who have no life or energy may easily ruin themselves, but they are not likely to harm others, whereas a mistaken zealot is like a madman with a firebrand in his hand. Persons who are zealous, and are under a mistake, may do such a deal of mischief! What did those Scribes and Pharisees in Christ’s day? They were very zealous, and under the pressure of their zeal they crucified the Lord of glory. What did Saul do in his time? He was very zealous, and under the influence of his zeal he dragged men and women to prison, and compelled them to blaspheme, and when they were put to death he gave his voice against them. I do not doubt that many who burned the martyrs were quite as sincere in their faith as those whom they burned. In fact, it must have taken an awful amount of sincerity in the case of some to have been able to believe that the cruelties which they practiced were really pleasing to God. We cannot doubt that they had such sincerity. Did not our Lord Himself say, “Yes, the time comes, that whosoever kills you will think that he does God service”? Documents, written by men who stained their hands with the blood of Protestants, prove that some of them had a right heart towards God. In their mistaken zeal for God, and truth, and church unity, they believed that they were crushing out a very deadly error, and that the persons whom they sent to prison and to death were criminals that ought to be exterminated, because they were destroyers of the souls of men.

Take heed that none of you fall into a persecuting spirit through your zeal for the gospel. A good woman may be intensely zealous, and for that reason she may say, “I will not have a servant in my house that does not go to my place of worship.” I have known landlords, wonderfully zealous for the faith, who have therefore turned every Dissenter out of their cottages, and have refused to let one of their farms to a Nonconformist. I do not wonder at their conduct, if they are zealous, and at the same time blind, they will naturally take to exterminating the children of God. Of course, in their zeal they feel as if they must root out error and schism. They will not have Nonconformity near them, and so they get to work, and in their zeal they hack right and left. They say strong things and bitter things, and then proceed to do cruel things—very cruel things—verily believing that, in all that they do, they are doing God service, not thinking that they are violating the crown rights of God, who alone is Lord of the consciences of men. They would not oppose the will of God if they knew it, and yet they are doing so. They would not willingly grieve the hearts of those whom God loves, and yet they do so when they are brow-

beating the humble cottager for his faith. They look upon the poor people who differ a little from them as being atrociously wrong, and they consider it to be their duty to set their faces against them, and so, under the influence of the zeal that moves them, which, in itself, is a good thing, they are led to do that which is sinful and unjust. Hence the apostle, after he had felt the weight of the stones from the hands of the Jews, prayed that they might be saved, for if they were not saved, their zeal for God would continue to make murderers of them.

Another reason why we long to see the zealous converted is this—because *they would be so useful*. The man that is desperately earnest in a wrong way, if you can but show him his wrong, and teach him what is right, will be just as earnest in the right way. Oh, what splendid Christians some would make who are now such devotees of superstition! Despite their superstition, I look upon many High Churchmen with admiration. Up in the morning early, or at night late, ready to practice all kinds of mortifications, to give their very bodies to be burned, and all their substance in alms, ready to offer prayers without number, and to be obedient to rites without end—what more could external religion demand of mortal men? Oh, if we could get these to sit at Jesus' feet, and leave the phylacteries and the broad-bordered garments, and worship God in spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh, what grand people they would make!

See what Paul himself was, when, counting all he had valued so dear to be but dung, he quit it, and began to preach salvation by grace alone. While he flew over the world like a lightning flash, and preached the gospel as with a peal of thunder, he loved, he lived, he died for the Nazarene, whom once in his zeal, he had counted to be an impostor. Brethren, pray with all your might for zealous but mistaken persons, who have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

Once more, we are bound to make these people the subject of especially earnest prayer because *it is so difficult to convert them*. It requires the power of God to convert anybody really, but there seems to be a double manifestation of power in the conversion of a downright bigot when his bigotry is associated with dense ignorance and gross error. "Oh," he says, "I do that which is right. I am strict in my religion. My righteousness will save me." You cannot get him out of that. It is easier to get a sinner out of his sin than a self-righteous man out of his self-righteousness. Conceit, of our own righteousness, sticks to us as the skin to the flesh. Sooner may the leopard lose his spots than the proud man his self-righteousness. Oh, that righteousness of ours! We are so fond of it. Our pride hugs it. We do so like to think that we are good, that we are upright, that we are true, that we are right in the sight of God by nature, and though we are beaten out of it with many stripes, yet our tendency is always to return to it. Self-righteousness is bound up in the heart of a man as folly in the heart of a child. Though you grind a fool into a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet his self-righteous folly will not depart from him. He will still stick to it that, after all, he is a good fellow, and deserves to be saved. We must, therefore, in a very special manner pray for such, seeing that self-righteousness is a deep ditch, and it is hard to draw him out who has once fallen into it. Prejudice, of all other opponents, is one of the worst to overcome. The door is locked. You may knock as long as you like, but the man will not open it. He cannot. It is locked, and he has thrown away the key. You may tell him, "You are wrong, good friend," but he is so comfortably assured that he is right, that all your telling will only make him more angry at you for attempting to disturb his peace. O God! who but You can draw a man out of this miry clay of self-righteousness? Therefore do we cry to You, of Your great grace, to do it. For these and many other reasons those who have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, must have a chief place in our persistent prayers.

II. And secondly, WHAT IS IT THAT THESE PEOPLE ARE ACCORDING TO OUR TEXT? These people will not like the text, nor yet like me for honestly explaining it. According to our text, it is very clear that these good people are *ignorant*. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, go about to establish their own righteousness." Ah! you may be brought up under the shadow of a church, you may sit all your life in a meeting house, you may hear the gospel till you know every term and phrase by heart, and yet you may be ignorant of the righteousness of God. This is not a very complimentary statement, but as it is made upon inspiration, it behooves us to give earnest heed thereto.

Listen! There are many who are quite ignorant as to the natural righteousness of God's character. They do not know how intensely He hates sin, how His anger burns against injustice and untruth. They

have never conceived an idea of how pure He is, how infinitely holy. They have never been in sympathy with the angel's adoration so as to know what is meant by the celestial chant, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." "You think," says God, "that I am altogether such a one as yourself—that if you are pleased with your righteousness, I must be pleased with it too, and if your poor pride and stupefied conscience is satisfied, therefore your God must be satisfied also." Those who are satisfied with their own holiness are ignorant of God's attribute of righteousness.

Again, they are ignorant of the righteousness of the law. Indeed, there is awful ignorance about that. You may hear the Ten Commandments read every Sabbath day, and I think that it is a good thing to have them read, and a good thing to have them posted up where they can be read, but you will not know anything about them by merely reading them. There is a depth of meaning in those commandments, of which self-righteous persons are ignorant. For instance, when they read, "You shall not commit adultery," does it strike most men's minds that even a lascivious look breaks that commandment? Do they reflect that not only acts of fornication and uncleanness, but indecent words, thoughts, and looks are forbidden by that command? A man reads, "You shall not kill," and he thinks to himself, "I never committed a murder. I can shake hands with that commandment, and sing a merry song under the gallows." But Christ says, "He that is angry with his brother, without a cause, is a murderer," and ill-will is murder at bottom. Murder is but hate ripened into deed, and therefore the least degree of hate is a violation of the command, "You shall not kill." Who among us has ever measured the full compass of the great law of God? Let me stretch out the line before you for a moment. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." Who among us has ever done that? The man who says, "I have kept the law" is simply ignorant of the righteousness which the law of God sets before us as the divine requirement. Could we behold the law in all its full-orbed majesty, we should as soon expect to hold the sun in the hollow of our right hand as to fulfill the law in all its length and breadth.

Further than this, dear friends, a man that is self-righteous, and hopes to get to heaven by his works and his religion, is ignorant of God's righteous requirements with regard to his own heart. God requires not only that you should do that which is right, but that you should think that which is right, that you should love that which is right, yes, and that you should be that which is right. He desires truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part He would have us to know wisdom. If I could govern my tongue entirely, yet might I be guilty before God, even with that tongue, for there is such a thing as idle silence as well as idle speech. If it were possible to keep the hands right in all things, yet the heart might all the while be willing and anxious to move the hands amiss, and after all it is the way of the heart which is the true gauge of the man's life. Unless you are clean through and through in your very inwards, in the core and center of your being, you have not reached to the righteous requirements of God. What do you say to this? Are not many grossly ignorant of this?

And then, again, all persons who are self-righteous must surely be ignorant of God's righteousness in another sense, namely, they are ignorant that God has prepared a better righteousness for us. The Lord God has prepared for man a perfect and divine righteousness, by which He justifies the ungodly. He has sent His own Son into the world, pure in heart and pure in life, to work out that righteousness. That Son of His has kept the law in every point, and what is more, He has honored the law by His death, whereby He vindicated its tarnished honor, and gave glory to the Law-giver. Now God says, "Sinner, I can make you righteous through Christ—righteous by imputation. I will impute to you what Jesus did for you. I will accept you on account of what He is, and of what He did. He shall be your righteousness. He shall be made of God unto you your righteousness." Now surely, if you say, "No, but I will have a righteousness of my own," why, man, you must be ignorant of God's righteousness. Would God have taken the trouble to make another righteousness if you could have made one of your own? Is not Calvary, with all its griefs, a superfluity of naughtiness if men could be saved without it! The death of Christ upon the tree was an extravagance—a needless extravagance, if men can be saved without it, and if any man can be saved without Christ, saved by his own works, and saved by the principle of the law, then for him is Christ dead in vain. There was no need, in the first place, that Christ should have died for such a man, and to such a man Christ has died for nothing. If you are righteous, you have nothing to do with Christ,

for He is a Savior of sinners. If you have a righteousness of your own, you are a rival to Christ. You are holding up your two-penny garment of rags, and saying, "This is as good as the divine robe of Christ's righteousness." Man, you are stitching together your poor fig leaves, and you are saying, "This is garment enough for me. I want not to wear the livery of God, the garment of Christ." But those leaves will wither before the sun goes down, and leave you naked to your shame. You are in opposition to Christ, you are an Antichrist, and your sin in setting up such a righteousness is, perhaps, greater than if you had lived in open sin. You are, at any rate, casting as much dishonor upon Christ, and doing as much displeasure to God by this vain-glorious attempt to set up your own righteousness, as if you had gone about, like Pharaoh, to ask, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" It is only another form of the same pride. In the Egyptian king it takes one shape, and in you it takes another. Therefore, beware!

Brothers and sisters, are you praying for these zealous but ignorant and vain-glorious people? Go on with your prayers. Now in silence cry, "Lord, of Your great mercy, be pleased to deliver them from their headstrong zeal! Give them light, that they may quit their ignorance, and be no longer enemies to the cross, and grace, of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

III. That brings me to my third point, which is this; I have shown you why they should be prayed for. I have shown you that they are ignorant. Now I am going to show you WHAT THEY DO. According to the text they are going about to establish their own righteousness. I do not know whether I can give you the idea which this language suggests to my mind, but it is this; here is a kind of stuffed image, or, if you like, a statue, and they have set it up, and they want it to stand, but it is so badly constructed that it tumbles down. So they set it up again, and over it goes, in other words, they use all manner of plots and schemes to set up their righteousness upon its legs, but it repeatedly topples over. Another figure which may illustrate the expression is this; they have bad foundations for a house, and bad materials, and bad mortar, and they themselves are by no means good workmen. They have built up quite a height of wall to make a shelter for themselves, but it tumbles down. Never mind, they are very industrious, and so they set to work to put it up again. They are perseveringly determined, somehow or other, to build up a righteousness of their own. That is the meaning of this text. They go about to set up, to establish—to make to stand—their own righteousness, and it is such a crazy thing that it falls down of its own weight, and whenever it tumbles down they set it up again. They go about to do it, that is, they invent all sorts of ways; they go to the ends of the earth to find another bit of stone that will just wedge in and help to settle the cornerstone. All their industry is spent in trying to set up this thing, which is not worth a button when it is set up. Alas, that folly should be so desperately entrenched in the heart of man, that he will spend his whole life in a persevering attempt to insult his Maker by preparing a righteousness of his own, when his Maker has already worked out, and brought in, a righteousness perfect in every respect!

While I am preaching about this I am thinking of myself, and smiling and yet mourning to think how, in the days of my ignorance, I myself tried this ridiculous pastime. The pictures which I shall paint will be drawn from my own personal experience. At first the man says, "I shall be saved, for I have kept the law. What do I lack yet?" Now a very small hole will let enough light into the man's heart to force him to see that this pretence will not answer. No one of us has kept the law. What says the Scripture? "They are all gone out of the way. They are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no not one." You have only to read the law over by the light of conscience, and you must say to yourself, "I see that I cannot be saved by the perfect keeping of the law, since I have broken that law already." When driven from this foolish hope, the man readily sets up another. If he cannot work, then a man tries to feel—and I know I tried to feel. Or else he cries, "I must join a bit of religion to my pure morals. I do not quite understand how the combination is to be made, but we have to maintain a reputation for righteousness, and we must do it by hook or by crook. It is true that I have not kept the law. Well, then, I will pray every morning and pray every night very regularly, and take a good long time over it too, when I do not go to sleep, or when I do not wake up too late! And I will read so much of the Bible every day; a grand thing that! And if I can get through the Bible in a certain time, that will score one, will it not? Then I shall attend regularly a place of worship, and then, I think—well, I must be baptized, perhaps, or at any rate confirmed, or I must go to the sacrament, and when I have done all this, do you not think it will come pretty square?" If a man's conscience is awake, it will not come square, or, to

go back to the old figure, the image will not stand upright, it will tumble over. After appearing to stand firm for a while, our poor wretched righteousness grows top-heavy again, and over it goes. The man says, "No, I do not feel righteous after all! There is something amiss."

Conscience begins to call out, "It will not do." Perhaps, the man is taken ill. He thinks that he is going to die, and he says, "Alas, I could not die with so poor a hope as this! This boat would never carry me across the river Jordan. I can see that it leaks very terribly. There are a hundred points in which my hope utterly fails me. What shall I do?" Well, then, he must keep his wretched presence afloat somehow, and so he cries, "At length I must go in for something thunderingly good. I will give a lot of money away." If he is a rich man, he says, "I will endow an almshouse. You see I need not give the money till I die. That will do very well. I had better keep it while I am alive, and then leave it when I cannot keep it. Won't it be a splendid thing? And if I put a painted window in a church, surely that will go a long way, or I will give a lump sum to a hospital." To build a bridge, or mend the common roads, used to be the way in which a man who wanted to bid high for heaven made his offers in olden times, or else the monks and friars promised to sing him into glory for the small consideration of ten thousand a year. And so men go into that line, and seek salvation by purchase. And they hear about saints who fast. Well, then, they say, "Oh, I shall fast!" Then they say, "I have not prayed long enough. I must pray twice as long."

According to the church to which he belongs, the zealous person becomes a determined partisan of his sect. Remember how Mr. Bunyan said that, when he was a godless man, he could have kissed the earth on which the clergy walked, and he thought that every nail in the church door was sacred? Among Dissenters, the man who is trying to save himself usually thinks that every practice of the little community with which he is united is infallibly correct. He has no real love to Christ, and has no trust in Christ's righteousness, but how he will work at his favorite self-salvation! And you will have to work at it, sirs, if you are going to heaven by your works! To work your fingers to the bones is nothing. You might as well try to climb to the stars on a treadmill as to get to heaven by your good works, and certainly, you might more easily sail from Liverpool to America on a dried leaf than ever get to heaven by works and doings of your own. There is more wanted than will ever come of yourself. You want a Savior. You must be born again from above. You want a salvation that shall be a gift of infinite charity, a blessing of the boundless mercy of the eternal God, and nothing else will save you.

But, oh, men will go about to set up their own righteousness, and I will tell you what some of them will do tonight! "Ah!" they will say, "quite right, Mr. Spurgeon. Quite right. I cannot bear that work-mongering and self-justification, but I hope that I shall be saved because I feel so deeply my sinfulness and I groan so heavily under a sense of guilt." You trust to that, do you? It is only another form of trusting to your own works. I must rout you out of your feelings, as well as out of your works. You may just as well trust in the one thing that comes of you, as in the other thing that comes of you. Your salvation lies absolutely outside of yourself, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and not in what you do, but in what He is. If you add to that foundation stick or stone of your own—thought, feeling, or work of your own—by way of trusting in it, you have spoiled the salvation of Christ. It shall never be "Christ and Company." Hence be sure that if Jesus is to save you, you must let Him do it, and you must stand out of the way. "What! Am I not to work?" Oh, yes! Work as hard as ever you like if He has saved you, but as to the salvation itself, that is with Him. "But we are to work out our own salvation." Certainly you are, after He has worked it in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure. But you cannot work out of yourself what is not in yourself, and you cannot put it into yourself, the Lord Jesus must put it there for you, and then you must with diligence work it out in your life and conversation. The inner and spiritual work is all His doing, from first to last.

I know that you do not like this doctrine, sir. You are sitting very uneasily, and looking towards the door; I thought I saw you seize your cane just now. Have patience a few minutes longer. Suppose that you were to get to heaven in your way, what would happen? I am afraid that sacred place would become more than a little mixed. Whenever I get to heaven, I will sing to the praise of the glory of His grace to which I shall owe it all. When you get there, you cannot sing with me. You must have a new tune. You will throw up your cap, and say, "I have managed it after all!" This will lead to a very speedy contest

and quarrel. You will glorify yourself, and depend upon it; sinners saved by grace will glorify Christ. Our jealousy for His glory will not allow us to tolerate you in the realms of the blessed. Our Lord is not going to have any discord in heaven; you shall all sing His praises there, or never sing at all. There will be no divided praise, but the strain shall be set to the tune of *Salvation all of grace*. “Salvation to our God, that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever.”

IV. Lastly, dear people of God, are you praying about these zealous, mistaken people all this while? Let me entreat you to renew your supplications. Shall we stop a minute while you do? Remember that you also were once in the dark, and that you foolishly hoped to be saved in the same proud and selfish manner which has such charms for them. Pray about them that the Lord will fetch them out of their self-righteousness—“O Lord, of Your infinite mercy, bring to Yourself and to Your dear Son, those earnest persons who have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge! O You, who does great marvels, enlighten the darkness of those who are prejudiced against the day!”

The fourth thing is, **WHAT THEY WILL NOT DO**. “Going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”

“They have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” Why, there are some that have not submitted even to *hear it!* Possibly, I address tonight one who never came here before, and has always said, “No, I should not think of going to such a place.” You are only one of a numerous band of people of that character. Our law does not judge any man before it hears him, but these people both judge and condemn the gospel without giving it an hour’s attention. If you speak to them about it, they are wrapped up in an idea of their own righteous perfectness, and they really cannot endure to hear themselves talked to as if they were common sinners. Are they not good enough of themselves? What can you tell them better than they already know? They do not want to hear the gospel. I think that I would recommend them, at any rate, to hear what it is, because the next time they speak against it, they will speak with more knowledge. It is always a pity not to know even that which we most despise. Even contempt should have a rational foundation. It will not hurt you, friend, to know. And yet there is such prejudice in the mind of some that they refuse to acquaint themselves with the truths which God has revealed. “Sinners saved by grace!” they say, “Salvation by faith! It is all very well for the commonalty, but it does not do for ladies and gentlemen like us. We were always so good.” Very well, then, if that is really the case, you know there is a heaven for the commonalty, and it is highly probable that you ladies and gentlemen are too good to go there. Where will you go? There is but one way to heaven, and that way is closed against the proud, and if you choose to be so proud, you will close it against yourself, and we cannot help you. But we will pray—pray God that prejudice may yield, and that tonight, and at other times, those who have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, may, at least, be willing to hear what the gospel is. How many have been brought to Christ in the old times by reading Martin Luther upon the Galatians! That is a book in a rough enough style. What sledge-hammer words Martin uses! Only the other day I met a man who came to me like one of the old Puritans, and he said to me that he had traversed the line of the two covenants. He began to converse with me in that antique, majestic style which comes of Puritanic theology. I thought—Bless the man! He has risen from the dead. He is one of Oliver Cromwell’s grey Ironsides. He will be able to tell me of Naseby and Marston Moor. So I said to him, “Covenant and law, where did you pick that up, friend?” “Not at any church or chapel,” he said. “There are none round about where I live who know anything at all about it. They are all in the dark together—mute dogs that cannot bark.” “How did you stumble on the true light?” I asked. The man replied, “In the good providence of God, I met with Master Martin Luther on the Galatians. I bought it for six-pence out of a box in front of a bookseller’s shop.” Oh, it was a good find for that man! Six penny-worth of salvation, according to the judgment of men; but infinite riches, according to the judgment of God: he had indeed found a jewel when he learned the truth of Salvation by grace through faith. I recommend persons, whether they will read Martin Luther or any other author, to be especially careful to read the Epistle to the Galatians itself. Paul hammers there against all hope of salvation by the law, and puts salvation on the basis of grace, and grace alone, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Still there are many who will not incline their ear, and come to Christ; they will not even hear that their souls may live. Do not they deserve to die who are too proud to hearken to the way of life?

And then there are others who, when they hear it, will not admit that they need it. “What, sir! Must I go down on my knees? Must I confess that I am a sinner, a real sinner? Must I come before God as if I had been a criminal? Must I stand in the dock, and plead guilty?” Yes, you must, or else you will never be saved. “They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.” Off with that helmet of obstinacy! Down with the plumes of pride! You must come to God on your bended knees, with a rope about your neck, as one who is only fit to die, and be cast into hell, for He will never save you on any other terms. He must extend to you the scepter of His absolutely sovereign grace, and save you as an undeserving, ill-deserving, hell-deserving sinner, or else you can never be saved at all. What do you say to this? Do you reply, “I will never submit to such a humiliation”? God will never alter His terms to please you. Some will not submit to accept salvation. It is freely offered, without money and without price, but men would like to pay for it at least with something, and they turn upon their heel. They will not have it as a free gift.

Again, there are others who will not submit to the spirit of it—to the influence of it, for you must know that the spirit of free grace is this—if God saves me for nothing, then I belong to Him forever and ever. If He forgives me every sin simply because I believe in Jesus, then I will hate every sin, and flee from it. If He grants me forgiveness on no ground but that of His own absolute mercy and good pleasure, as He has put it, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion,” then I will love Him with all my heart, and soul, and strength, till time shall be no more. Now, for the love I bear Him, I will lead a holy life. I will serve Him with every power of my being. The virtue I aimed at before, in my own strength, I will now ask for from His Holy Spirit. The goodness that I thought I had, but never had, I will seek to have as a gift of His grace worked in me, and I, because of His great goodness to me, will live to Him, and will not henceforth serve myself or serve sin, but will serve Him who has bought me with His precious blood. Many will not submit to that, yet they can never be saved from sin unless they yield themselves as the blood-bought servants of Christ. Christ comes to save His people from their sins, and from their sins He will save them; they shall no longer be in bondage to the powers of evil. The Lord Jesus accomplishes this salvation by freely forgiving them, and then moving their hearts to such a love of Him that they become in love with everything that is pure and holy, and are filled with hatred of everything that is unjust, and wrong, and wicked, and their life becomes totally changed. What the principle of law talked about doing, but never did, the principle of grace actually does. It puts a new mainspring into the man, and when the works within are right, then the hands without soon move according to right rules. I most earnestly pray that many of you may submit to the righteousness of Christ. Yield yourselves up; trust in Christ; believe in Him who died for sinners; take Him to be your Savior tonight. Do not go to sleep till this is done, lest you wake up in the bottomless pit.

With my whole soul I offer the prayer of my text this night, and do you also, dear friends, keep on praying. I ask all of you Christian people to insert a special petition into all your prayers, and to keep it there—“O Lord, save by Your grace those who have a zeal for You, which is not according to knowledge! Grant that they may not go about to establish their own righteousness, but may submit themselves unto the righteousness of God!” Amen and Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PHILIPPIANS 3.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—563, 684, 554.**

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