

THE HOPE OF FUTURE BLISS

NO. 25

A SERMON
 DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, MAY 20, 1855
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 AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

*“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness;
 I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness.”
 Psalm 17:15*

IT would be difficult to say to which the Gospel owes most to its friends or to its enemies. It is true that by the help of God, its friends have done much for it. They have preached it in foreign lands, they have dared death, they have laughed to scorn the terrors of the grave, they have ventured all things for Christ, and so have glorified the doctrine they believed.

But the enemies of Christ, unwittingly, have done no little, for when they have persecuted Christ's servants, they have scattered them abroad, so that they have gone everywhere preaching the Word. Yea, when they have trampled upon the Gospel, like a certain herb we read of in medicine, it has grown all the faster, and if we refer to the pages of sacred writ, how very many precious portions of it do we owe, under God, to the enemies of the cross of Christ!

Jesus Christ would never have preached many of His discourses had not His foes compelled Him to answer them. Had they not brought objections, we should not have heard the sweet sentences in which He replied. So with the book of Psalms—had not David been sorely tried by enemies, had not the foemen shot their arrows at him, had they not attempted to malign and blast his character, had they not deeply distressed him and made him cry out in misery, we should have missed many of those precious experiential utterances we here find, much of that holy song which he penned after his deliverance and very much of that glorious statement of his trust in the infallible God

We should have lost all this had it not been wrung from him by the iron hand of anguish. Had it not been for David's enemies, he would not have penned his Psalms. But when hunted like a partridge on the mountains, when driven like the timid roe before the hunter's dogs, he waited for a while, bathed his sides in the brooks of Siloa and panting on the hilltop a little, he breathed the air of heaven and stood and rested his weary limbs. Then was it that he gave honor to God. Then it was he shouted aloud to that mighty JEHOVAH, who for him had gotten the victory.

This sentence follows a description of the great troubles which the wicked bring upon the righteous, wherein he consoles himself with the hope of future bliss. “As for me,” says the patriarch, casting his eyes aloft—“As for me,” said the hunted chieftain of the caves of Engedi—“As for me,” says the once shepherd boy, who was soon to wear a royal diadem—“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness.”

In looking at this passage tonight, we shall notice first of all, the *spirit of it*. Secondly, the *matter of it*. And then, thirdly, we shall close by speaking of *the contrast which is implied in it*.

I. First, then, the SPIRIT OF THIS UTTERANCE, for I always love to look at the spirit in which a man writes or the spirit in which he preaches. In fact, there is vastly more in that than in the words he uses.

Now, what should you think is the spirit of these words, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness.”

First, they breathe the spirit of a man *entirely free from envy*. Notice that the psalmist has been speaking of the wicked. “They are inclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly.”

“They are full of children and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.” But David envies them not.

“Go,” says he, “rich man, in all your riches—go, proud man, in all your pride—go, you happy man, with your abundance of children. I envy you not. As for me, my lot is different. I can look on you without desiring to have your possessions. I can well keep that commandment, ‘Thou shalt not covet,’ for in your possessions there is nothing worth my love. I set no value upon your earthly treasures. I envy you not your heaps of glittering dust, for my Redeemer is mine.” The man is above envy, because he thinks that the joy would be no joy to him—that the portion would not suit his disposition. Therefore, he turns his eye heavenward and says, “As for me I will behold thy face in righteousness.”

Oh! beloved, it is a happy thing to be free from envy. Envy is a curse which blights creation. And even Eden’s garden itself would have become defaced and no longer fair if the wind of envy could have blown on it. Envy tarnishes the gold. Envy dims the silver. Should envy breathe on the hot sun, it would quench it. Should she cast her evil eye on the moon, it would be turned into blood and the stars would fly astonished at her.

Envy is accursed of heaven. Yea, it is Satan’s first-born—the vilest of vices. Give a man riches, but let him have envy, and there is the worm at the root of the fair tree. Give him happiness, and if he envies another’s lot, what would have been happiness becomes his misery, because it is not so great as that of someone else.

But give me freedom from envy. Let me be content with what God has given me. Let me say, “You may have yours, I will not envy you—I am satisfied with mine.” Yea, give me such a love to my fellow creatures that I can rejoice in their joy and the more they have the more glad I am of it. My candle will burn no less brightly because theirs outshines it. I can rejoice in their prosperity. Then am I happy, for all around tends to make me blissful, when I can rejoice in the joys of others and make their gladness my own. Envy! Oh! may God deliver us from it.

But how, in truth, can we get rid of it so well as by believing that you have something that is not on earth, but in heaven. If we can look upon all the things in the world and say, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied by and by!” Then we cannot envy other men, because their lot would not be adapted to our peculiar taste.

Does the ox envy the lion! Nay, for it cannot feed upon the carcass. Does the dove grieve because the raven can gloat itself on carrion? Nay, for it lives on other food. Will the eagle envy the wren his tiny nest? Oh, no! So the Christian will mount aloft as the eagle, spreading his broad wings, he will fly up to his nest amongst the stars, where God has made him his nest, saying, “As for me, I will dwell here. I look upon the low places of this earth with contempt. I envy not your greatness, you mighty emperors. I desire not your fame, you mighty warriors. I ask not for wealth, O Croesus. I beg not for your power, O Caesar. As for me, I have something else, my portion is the Lord.”

The text breathes the spirit of a man free from envy. May God give that to us!

Then, secondly, you can see that there is about it the air of a man who is *looking into the future*. Read the passage thoroughly and you will see that it all has relation to the future, because it says, “As for me, I *shall*.” It has nothing to do with the present. It does not say, “As for me I do, or I am, so-and-so,” but “As for me, I *will* behold thy face in righteousness; I *shall* be satisfied when I awake.”

The psalmist looks beyond the grave into another world. He overlooks the narrow deathbed where he has to sleep and he says, “When I awake.” How happy is that man who has an eye to the future. Even in worldly things we esteem that man who looks beyond the present day. He who spends all his money as it comes in will soon bring himself to rags. He who lives on the present is a fool, but wise men are content to look after future things.

When Milton penned his book, he might know, perhaps, that he would have little fame in his lifetime, but he said, “I shall be honored when my head shall sleep in the grave.” Thus have other worthies been content to tarry until time has broken the earthen pitcher and suffered the lamp to blaze.

As for honor, they said, “We will leave that to the future, for that fame which comes late is often most enduring.” They lived upon the “shall” and fed upon the future. “I shall be satisfied” by-and-by.

So says the Christian. I ask no royal pomp or fame now. I am prepared to wait, I have an interest in reversion. I want not a pitiful estate here—I will tarry till I get my domains in heaven, those broad and beautiful domains that God has provided for them that love Him. Well-content will I be to fold my arms and sit down in the cottage, for I shall have a mansion of God, “a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

Do any of you know what it is to live on the future—to live on expectation—to live on what you are to have in the next world—to feast yourselves with some of the droppings of the tree of life that fall from heaven—to live upon the manna of expectation which falls in the wilderness, and to drink that stream of nectar which gushes from the throne of God?

Have you ever gone to the great Niagara of hope and drank the spray with ravishing delight? For the very spray of heaven is glory to one’s soul! Have you ever lived on the future and said, “As for me I *shall* have somewhat, by and by?” Why, this is the highest motive that can actuate a man. I suppose this was what made Luther so bold, when he stood before his great audience of kings and lords and said, “I stand by the truth that I have written and will so stand by it till I die, so help me God!” Methinks he must have said, “I *shall* be satisfied, by and by. I am not satisfied now, but I *shall* be soon.”

For this the missionary ventures the stormy sea. For this he treads the barbarous shore. For this he goes into inhospitable climes and risks his life, because he knows there is a payment to come by and by. I sometimes laughingly tell my friends when I receive a favor from them that I cannot return it, but set it up to my Master in heaven, for they shall be satisfied when they awake in His likeness.

There are many things that we may never hope to be rewarded for here, but shall be remembered before the throne hereafter, not of debt, but of grace. Like a poor minister I heard of, who, walking to a rustic chapel to preach, was met by a clergyman who had a far richer berth. He asked the poor man what he expected to have for his preaching. “Well,” he said, “I expect to have a crown.” “Ah!” said the clergyman, “I have not been in the habit of preaching for less than a guinea, anyhow.” “Oh!” said the other, “I am obliged to be content with a crown, and what is more, I do not have my crown now, but I have to wait for that in the future.”

The clergyman little thought that he meant the “crown of life that fades not away!” Christian! Live on the future. Seek nothing here, but expect that you shall shine when you shall come in the likeness of Jesus, with Him to be admired, and to kneel before His face adoringly. The psalmist had an eye to the future.

And again, upon this point, you can see that David, at the time he wrote this, was *full of faith*. The text is fragrant with confidence. “As for me,” says David, no *perhaps* about it. “I *will* behold thy face in righteousness; I *shall* be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness.” If some men should say so now, they would be called fanatics, and it would be considered presumption for any man to say, “I *will* behold thy face, I *shall* be satisfied.”

And I think there are many now in this world who think it is quite impossible for a man to say to a certainty, “I know, I am sure, I am certain.” But beloved, there are not one or two, but there are thousands and thousands of God’s people alive in this world who can say with an assured confidence, no more doubting of it than of their very existence, “I *will* behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake in thy likeness.”

It is possible, though perhaps not very easy, to attain to that high and eminent position wherein we can say no longer do I *hope*, but I *know*. No longer do I trust, but I am persuaded. I have a happy confidence, I am sure of it. I am certain. For God has so manifested Himself to me that now it is no longer “if” and “perhaps,” but it is the positive, eternal, “shall.” “I *shall* be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness.”

How many are there here of that sort? Oh! if you are talking like that, you must expect to have trouble, for God never gives strong faith without fiery trial. He will never give a man the power to say

that “shall” without trying him. He will not build a strong ship without subjecting it to very mighty storms. He will not make you a mighty warrior, if He does not intend to try your skill in battle. God’s swords must be used. The old Toledo blades of heaven must be smitten against the armor of the evil one and yet they shall not break, for they are of true Jerusalem metal, which shall never snap. Oh! what a happy thing to have that faith to say, “I shall.”

Some of you think it quite impossible, I know, but it “is the gift of God,” and whosoever asks it shall obtain it and the very chief of sinners now present in this place may yet be able to say long before he comes to die, “I shall behold thy face in righteousness.”

Methinks I see the aged Christian. He has been very poor. He is in a garret where the stars look between the tiles. There is his bed. His clothes ragged and torn. There are a few sticks on the hearth, they are the last he has. He is sitting up in his chair. His paralytic hand quivers and shakes, and he is evidently near his end. His last meal was eaten yester-noon, and as you stand and look at him, poor, weak, and feeble, who would desire his lot?

But ask him, “Old man, would you change your attic for Caesar’s palace? Aged Christian, would you give up these rags for wealth and cease to love your God?” See how indignation burns in his eyes at once! He replies, “‘As for me, I *shall*,’ within a few more days, ‘behold his face in righteousness; I *shall* be satisfied’ soon. Here I never shall be. Trouble has been my lot and trial has been my portion, but I have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

Bid high. Bid him fair, offer him your hands full of gold, lay all down for him to give up his Christ. “Give up Christ?” He will say, “No, never!”

***“While my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the miser’s gold.”***

Oh! what a glorious thing to be full of faith and to have the confidence of assurance, so as to say, “I *will* behold thy face; I *shall* be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.”

Thus much concerning the spirit of David. It is one very much to be copied and eminently to be desired.

II. But now, secondly, THE MATTER OF THIS PASSAGE.

And here we will dive into the very depths of it, God helping us, for without the Spirit of God I feel I am utterly unable to speak to you. I have not those gifts and talents which qualify men to speak. I need inspiration from on high, otherwise I stand like other men and have nought to say. May that be given me. For without it I am dumb.

As for the matter of this verse, methinks it contains a double blessing. The first is a beholding, “I will behold thy face in righteousness,” and the next is a satisfaction, “I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.”

Let us begin with the first, then. David expected that he should *behold God’s face*. What a vision will that be, my brethren! Have you ever seen God’s hand? I have seen it, when sometimes He places it across the sky and darkens it with clouds. I have seen God’s hand sometimes, when the carts of night drag along the shades of darkness. I have seen His hand when, launching the thunderbolt, His lightning splits the clouds and rends the heavens.

Perhaps you have seen it in a gentler fashion, when it pours out the water, and sends it rippling along in rills, and then rolls into rivers. You have seen it in the stormy ocean—in the sky decked with stars, in the earth gemmed with flowers. And there is not a man living who can know all the wonders of God’s hand. His creation is so wondrous that it would take more than a lifetime to understand it.

Go into the depths of it, let its minute parts engage your attention. Next take the telescope and try to see remote worlds and can I see all God’s handiwork—behold all His hand? No, not so much as one millionth part of the fabric. That mighty hand wherein the callow comets are brooded by the sun, in

which the planets roll in majestic orbits, that mighty hand which holds all space, and grasps all beings—that mighty hand who can behold it? But if such is His hand what must His face be?

You have heard God’s voice sometimes and you have trembled. I, myself, have listened awe-struck, and yet with a marvelous joy, when I have heard God’s voice, like the noise of many waters in the great thunderings. Have you ever stood and listened, while the earth shook and trembled, and the very spheres stopped their music, while God spoke with His wondrous deep bass voice?

Yes, you have heard that voice and there is a joy marvelously instinct with love which enters into my soul, whenever I hear the thunder. It is my Father speaking and my heart leaps to hear Him. But you never heard God’s loudest voice. It was but the whisper when the thunder rolled. And if such be the voice, what must it be to behold His face? David said, “I will behold thy face.”

It is said of the temple of Diana that it was so splendidly decorated with gold, and so bright and shining, that a porter at the door always said to everyone that entered, “Take heed to your eyes, take heed to your eyes. You will be struck with blindness unless you take heed to your eyes.”

But oh! that view of glory! That great appearance. The vision of God! to see Him face to face, to enter into heaven, and to see the righteous shining bright as stars in the firmament. But best of all, to catch a glimpse of the eternal throne! Ah! there He sits! ’Twere almost blasphemy for me to attempt to describe Him. How infinitely far my poor words fall below the mighty subject!

But to behold God’s face? I will not speak of the lustre of those eyes, or the majesty of those lips, that shall speak words of love and affection. But to behold His face! You who have dived into the Godhead’s deepest sea and have been lost in its immensity, you can tell a little of it! You ones who have lived in heaven these thousands of years, perhaps you know, but you cannot tell, what it is to see His face.

We must, each of us, go there, we must be clad with immortality. We must go above the blue sky and bathe in the river of life. We must outsoar the lightning and rise above the stars to know what it is to see God’s face. Words cannot set it forth. So there I leave it. The hope the psalmist had was that he would see God’s face.

But there was a *peculiar sweetness mixed with this joy*, because he knew that he would behold God’s face *in righteousness*. “I shall behold thy face in righteousness.” Have I not seen my Father’s face here below? Yes, I have, “through a glass darkly.” But has not the Christian sometimes beheld Him, when in his heavenly moments earth is gone and the mind is stripped of matter? There are some seasons when the gross materialism dies away and when the ethereal fire within blazes up so high that it almost touches the fire of heaven.

There are seasons, when in some retired spot, calm and free from all earthly thought, we have put our shoes from off our feet, because the place whereon we stood was holy ground, and we have talked with God! Even as Enoch talked with Him, so has the Christian held intimate communion with his Father. He has heard His love whispers. He has told out his heart, poured out his sorrows and his groans before Him.

But after all he has felt, he has not beheld His face in righteousness. There was so much sin to darken the eyes, so much folly, so much frailty, that we could not get a clear prospect of our Jesus. But here the psalmist says, “I will behold thy face in righteousness.” When that illustrious day shall arise and I shall see my Savior face to face, I shall see Him “in righteousness.”

The Christian in heaven will not have so much as a speck upon his garment. He will be pure and white. Yea, on the earth he is

“Pure through Jesus’ blood and white as angels are.”

But in heaven that whiteness shall be more apparent. Now, it is sometimes smoked by earth and covered with the dust of this poor carnal world. But in heaven he will have brushed himself and washed his wings and made them clean, and then will he see God’s face in righteousness.

My God! I believe I shall stand before Your face as pure as You are Yourself, for I shall have the righteousness of Jesus Christ. There shall be upon me the righteousness of a God. “I shall behold thy face in righteousness.” O Christian, can you enjoy this? Though I cannot speak about it, does your heart meditate upon it? To behold His face forever. To bask in that vision! True, you cannot understand it, but you may guess the meaning. To behold His face in righteousness!

The second blessing, upon which I will be brief, is *satisfaction*. He will be satisfied, the psalmist says, when he wakes up in God’s likeness. Satisfaction! This is another joy for the Christian when he shall enter heaven. Here we are never thoroughly satisfied. True, the Christian is satisfied from himself. He has that within which is a well-spring of comfort and he can enjoy solid satisfaction.

But heaven is the home of true and real satisfaction. When the believer enters heaven, I believe His *imagination* will be thoroughly satisfied. All he has ever thought of he will there see—every holy idea will be solidified, every mighty conception will become a reality, every glorious imagination will become a tangible thing that he can see. His imagination will not be able to think of anything better than heaven and should he sit down through eternity, he would not be able to conceive of anything that should outshine the luster of that glorious city. His imagination will be satisfied.

Then His *intellect* will be satisfied.

*“Then shall I see, and hear, and know,
All I desired, or wished, below.”*

Who is satisfied with his knowledge here? Are there not secrets we want to know—depths in the mysteries of nature that we have not entered? But in that glorious state, we shall know as much as we want to know. The *memory* will be satisfied. We shall look back upon the vista of past years and we shall be content with whatever we endured, or did, or suffered on earth.

*“There, on a green and flowery mound,
My wearied soul shall sit,
And with transporting joys recount
The labors of my feet.”*

Hope will be satisfied, if there be such a thing in heaven. We shall hope for a future eternity and believe in it. But we shall be satisfied as to our hopes continually and the whole man will be so content that there will not remain a single thing in all God’s dealings that he would wish to have altered. Yea, perhaps I say a thing to which some of you will object—but the righteous in heaven will be quite satisfied with the damnation of the lost.

I used to think that if I could see the lost in hell, surely I must weep for them. Could I hear their horrid wailings and see the dreadful contortions of their anguish, surely I must pity them. But there is no such sentiment as that known in heaven. The believer shall be there so satisfied with all God’s will, that he will quite forget the lost in the idea that God has done it for the best, that even their loss has been their own fault and that He is infinitely just in it.

If my parents could see me in hell, they would not have a tear to shed for me, though they were in heaven, for they would say, “It is justice, Thou great God, and Your justice must be magnified, as well as Your mercy.” And moreover, they would feel that God was so much above His creatures that they would be satisfied to see those creatures crushed if it might increase God’s glory.

Oh! in heaven I believe we shall think rightly of men. Here men seem great things to us, but in heaven they will seem no more than a few creeping insects that are swept away in plowing a field for harvest. They will appear no more than a tiny handful of dust, or like some nest of wasps that ought to be exterminated for the injury they have done. They will appear such little things when we sit on high with God, and look down on the nations of the earth as grasshoppers and “count the isles as very little

things.” We shall be satisfied with everything. There will not be a single thing to complain of. “I *shall* be satisfied.”

But when? “I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.” But not till then. No, not till then. Now here a difficulty occurs. You know there are some in heaven who have not yet waked up in God’s likeness. In fact, none of those in heaven have done so. They never did sleep as respects their souls. The waking refers to their bodies and they are not awake yet—but are still slumbering.

O earth! You are the bedchamber of the mighty dead! What a vast sleeping-house this world is! It is one vast cemetery. The righteous still sleep and they are to be satisfied on the resurrection morn, when they awake. “But” say you, “are they not satisfied now? They are in heaven—is it possible that they can be distressed?” No, they are not. There is only one dissatisfaction that can enter heaven—the dissatisfaction of the blest that their bodies are not there.

Allow me to use a simile which will somewhat explain what I mean. When a Roman conqueror had been at war and won great victories, he would very likely come back with his soldiers, enter into his house, and enjoy himself till the next day, when he would go out of the city and then come in again in triumph.

Now, the saints, as it were, if I might use such a phrase, steal into heaven without their bodies. But on the last day, when their bodies wake up, they will enter in their triumphal chariots. And methinks I see that grand procession, when Jesus Christ, first of all, with many crowns on His head, with His bright, glorious body, shall lead the way.

I see my Savior entering first. Behind Him come the saints, all of them clapping their hands, all of them touching their golden harps, and entering in triumph. And when they come to heaven’s gates and the doors are opened wide to let the King of glory in, now will the angels crowd at the windows and on the housetops, like the inhabitants in the Roman triumphs, to watch them as they pass through the streets and scatter heaven’s roses and lilies upon them, crying, “crying, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” “I shall be satisfied” in that glorious day, when all His angels shall come to see the triumph and when His people shall be victorious with Him.

One thought here ought not to be forgotten. And that is, the psalmist says we are to wake up in the *likeness of God*. This may refer to the soul, for the spirit of the righteous will be in the likeness of God as to its happiness, holiness, purity, infallibility, eternity, and freedom from pain. But specially, I think, it relates to the body, because it speaks of the awaking.

The body is to be in the likeness of Christ. What a thought! It is—and alas! I have had too many such tonight—a thought too heavy for words. I am to awake up in Christ’s likeness. I do not know what Christ is like and can scarcely imagine. I love sometimes to sit and look at Him in His crucifixion. I care not what men say—I know that sometimes I have derived benefit from a picture of my dying crucified Savior.

And I look at Him with His crown of thorns, His pierced side, His bleeding hands and feet, and all those drops of gore hanging from Him, but I cannot picture Him in heaven, He is so bright, so glorious. The God so shines through the man. His eyes are like lamps of fire. His tongue like a two-edged sword. His head covered with hair as white as snow, for He is the Ancient of days. He binds the clouds round about Him for a girdle. And when He speaks, it is like the sound of many waters! I read the accounts given in the book of Revelation, but I cannot tell what He is. They are Scripture phrases and I cannot understand their meaning, but whatever they mean, I know that I shall wake up in Christ’s likeness.

Oh! what a change it will be, when some of us get to heaven! There is a man who fell in battle with the word of salvation on his lips. His legs had been shot away and his body had been scarred by saber thrusts. He wakes in heaven and finds that he has not a broken body, maimed and cut about, and hacked and injured, but that he is in Christ’s likeness.

There is an old matron, who has tottered on her staff for years along her weary way. Time has ploughed furrows on her brow. Haggard and lame, her body is laid in the grave. But oh! aged woman,

you shall arise in youth and beauty. Another has been deformed in his lifetime, but when he wakes, he wakes in the likeness of Christ.

Whatever may have been the form of our countenance, whatever the contour, the beautiful shall be no more beautiful in heaven than those who were deformed. Those who shone on earth, peerless, among the fairest, who ravished men with looks from their eyes, they shall be no brighter in heaven than those who are now passed by and neglected, for they shall all be like Christ.

III. But now to close up, HERE IS A VERY SAD CONTRAST IMPLIED.

We shall all slumber. A few more years and where will this company be? Xerxes wept, because in a little while his whole army would be gone. How might I stand here and weep, because within a few more years others shall stand in this place and shall say, “The fathers, where are they?” Good God! And is it true? Is it not a reality? Is it all to be swept away? Is it one great dissolving view?

Ah! it is. This sight shall soon vanish and you and I shall vanish with it. We are but a show. This life is but “a stage where men act,” and then we pass behind the curtain and we there unmask ourselves and talk with God. The moment we begin to live we begin to die. The tree has long been growing that shall be sawn to make you a coffin. The sod is ready for you all.

But this scene is to appear again soon. One short dream, one hurried nap, and all this sight shall come o’er again. We shall all awake and as we stand here now, we shall stand together, perhaps even more thickly pressed. But we shall stand on the level then—the rich and poor, the preacher and hearer. There will be but one distinction—righteous and wicked.

At first we shall stand together. Methinks I see the scene. The sea is boiling. The heavens are rent in twain, the clouds are fashioned into a chariot and Jesus riding on it, with wings of fire, comes riding through the sky. His throne is set. He seats Himself upon it. With a nod, He hushes all the world. He lifts His fingers, opens the great books of destiny, and the book of our probation, wherein are written the acts of time.

With His fingers He beckons to the hosts above. “Divide,” said He, “divide the universe.” Swifter than thought, all the earth shall part in sunder. Where shall I be found when the dividing comes? Methinks I see them all divided and the righteous are on the right. Turning to them, with a voice sweeter than music, He says, “Come! You have been coming—keep on your progress! Come! It has been the work of your life to come, so continue. Come and take the last step. ‘Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world.’”

And now the wicked are left alone and turning to them, He says, “Depart! You have been departing all your life long. It was your business to depart from Me. You said, ‘Depart from me, I love not your ways.’ You have been departing, keep on, take the last step!” They dare not move. They stand still. The Savior becomes the avenger. The hands that once held out mercy, now grasp the sword of justice. The lips that spoke lovingkindness now utter thunder, and with a deadly aim, He lifts up the sword and sweeps among them. They fly like deer before the lion and enter the jaws of the bottomless pit.

But never, I hope, shall I cease preaching without telling you what to do to be saved. This morning I preached to the ungodly, to the worst of sinners, and many wept—I hope many hearts melted—while I spoke of the great mercy of God. I have not spoken of that tonight. We must take a different line sometimes, led, I trust, by God’s Spirit.

But oh! you that are thirsty, heavy laden, and lost and ruined, mercy speaks yet once again to you! Here is the way of salvation. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” “And what is it to believe?” says one. “Is it to say I know Christ died for me?” No, that is not to believe, it is part of it, but it is not all. Every Arminian believes that, and every man in the world believes it who holds that doctrine, since he conceives that Christ died for every man. Consequently that is not faith.

But faith is this, to cast yourself on Christ. As the negro said, most curiously, when asked what he did to be saved, “Massa,” said he, “I fling myself down on Jesus and dere I lay. I fling myself flat on de promise and dere I lay.” And to every penitent *sinner*, Jesus says, “I am able to save to the uttermost.” Throw yourself flat on the promise and say, “Then, Lord, You are able to save *me*.”

God says, “Come now, let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, and though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Cast yourself on Him and you shall be saved.

“Ah!” says one, “I am afraid I am not one of God’s people. I cannot read my name in the book of life.” A very good thing you can’t, for if the Bible had everybody’s name in it, it would be a pretty large book. And if your name is John Smith and you saw that name in the Bible, if you do not believe God’s promise now, you would be sure to believe that it was some other John Smith.

Suppose the Emperor of Russia should issue a decree to all the Polish refugees to return to their own country. You see a Polish refugee looking at the great placards hanging on the wall. He looks with pleasure and says, “Well, I shall go back to my country.” But someone says to him, “It does not say Walewski.” “Yes,” he would reply, “but it says Polish refugees. Polish is my Christian name, and refugee my surname, and that is me.”

And so, though it does not say your name in the Scriptures, it says lost sinner. Sinner is your Christian name and lost is your surname, therefore, why not come? It says, “lost sinner”—is not that enough? “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief.”

“Yes, but” another one says, “I am afraid I am not elect.” Oh! dear souls, do not trouble yourselves about that. If you believe in Christ, you *are* elect. Whoever puts himself on the mercy of Jesus is elect. For he would never do it if he had not been elect. Whoever comes to Christ and looks for mercy through His blood is elect and he shall see that he is elect afterwards.

But do not expect to read election till you have read repentance. Election is a college to which you little ones will not go till you have been to the school of repentance. Do not begin to read your book backwards and say Amen before you have said your paternoster. Begin with “Our Father,” and then you will go on to, “thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.” But begin with “the kingdom,” and you will have hard work to go back to “Our Father.”

We must begin with faith. We must begin with—

“Nothing in my hands I bring.”

As God made the world out of nothing, He always makes His Christians out of nothing. And he who has nothing at all tonight shall find grace and mercy, if he will come for it.

Let me close up by telling you that I have heard of some poor woman, who was converted and brought to life just by passing down a street and hearing a child, sitting at a door, singing—

***“I am nothing at all
But Jesus Christ is all in all.”***

That is a blessed song. Go home and sing it. And he who can rightly apprehend those little words, who can feel himself vanity without Jesus, but that he has all things in Christ, is not only far from the kingdom of heaven, but he is there in faith, and shall be there in fruition, when he shall wake up in God’s likeness.

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.