

THE TREASURE OF GRACE

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A SERMON
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AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

“The forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”
Ephesians 1:7.

AS IS Isaiah among the prophets, so is Paul among the apostles; each stands forth with singular prominence, raised up by God for a conspicuous purpose and shining as a star of extraordinary brilliance. Isaiah spoke more of Christ and described more minutely His passion and His death than all the other prophets put together. Paul proclaimed the grace of God—free, full, sovereign, eternal grace—beyond all the glorious company of the apostles. Sometimes he soared to such amazing heights, or dived into such unsearchable depths, that even Peter could not follow him! He was ready to confess that “our beloved brother, Paul, recording to the wisdom given unto him,” had written “some things hard to be understood.” Jude could write of the judgments of God and reprove with terrible words, “ungodly men, who turned the grace of God into lasciviousness.” But he could not tell out the purpose of grace as it was planned in the eternal mind or the experience of grace as it is felt and realized in the human heart, like Paul. There is James again—he, as a faithful minister, could deal very closely with the practical evidences of Christian character. And yet he seems to keep very much on the surface. He does not bore down deep into the substratum on which must rest the visible soil of all spiritual graces. Even John, most favored of all those apostles who were companions of our Lord on earth—sweetly as the beloved disciple writes of fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ—even John does not speak of grace so richly as Paul, “in whom God first showed forth all long-suffering as a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.” Not, indeed, that we are at any liberty to prefer one apostle above another. We may not divide the church, saying, I am of Paul, I of Peter, I of Apollos; but we may acknowledge the instrument which God was pleased to use; we may admire the way in which the Holy Spirit fitted him for his work; we may, with the churches of Judea, “glorify God in Paul.” Among the early fathers, Augustine was singled out as the “Doctor of grace;” so much did he delight in those doctrines that exhibit the freeness of divine favor. And surely we might affirm the same of Paul. Among his compeers, he outstripped them all in declaring the grace that brings salvation. The sense of grace pervaded all his thoughts as the lifeblood circulates through all the veins of one’s body. Does he speak of conversion, “He was called by grace.” No, he sees grace going before his conversion and “separating him from his mother’s womb.” He attributes his entire ministry to grace. “To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” See him at any time, and under any circumstances, whether bowed down with infirmity, or lifted to the third heavens with revelation, he has but one account to give of himself, “By the grace of God I am what I am.”

There are no ministers who contend so fully and so unflinchingly for free, sovereign, unconditional grace, as those who before their conversion have reveled in gross and outrageous sin. Your gentleman preachers who have been piously brought up and sent from their cradle to school, from school to college and from college to the pulpit, without encountering much temptation, or being rescued from the haunts of profanity—they know comparatively little and speak with little emphasis of *free grace*. It is a Bunyan who breathed curses, a Newton who was a very monster in sin; it is the like of these, who cannot forget for one hour of their lives afterwards, the grace that snatched them from the pit and plucked them as brands from the burning! Strange, indeed, that God would have it so. The providence is inscrutable that permits some of the Lord’s chosen people to wander and rove as far as sheep can. Such men, however, make the most valiant champions for that grace which only can rescue any sinner from eternal woe.

This morning we propose to expound to you “*the riches of God’s grace;*” this is the *Treasure*. Secondly, we shall speak of the “*Forgiveness of Sins,*” which is to be judged of by that *Measure*. The for-

givenness is according to the riches of His grace; and we shall afterwards wind up by considering some of the *privileges connected therewith*.

I. First, consider the RICHES OF HIS GRACE. In attempting to search out that which is unsearchable, we must, I suppose, use some of those comparisons by which we are known to estimate the wealth of the monarchs and mighty ones of this world. It happened once that the Spanish ambassador, in the halcyon days of Spain, went on a visit to the French ambassador and was invited by him to see the treasures of his master. With feelings of pride he showed the repositories, profusely stored with earth's most precious and most costly wealth. "Could you show gems so rich," he said, "or anything the like of this for magnificence of possessions in your sovereign's entire kingdom?" "Call your master rich?" replied the ambassador of Spain, "why, my master's treasures have no bottom"—alluding, of course, to the mines of Peru and Petrosa. And truly, in the riches of grace, there are mines too deep for man's finite understanding ever to fathom! However profound your investigation, there is still a deep couching beneath that baffles all research. Who can ever discover the attributes of God? Who can find out the Almighty to perfection? We are at a loss to estimate the very quality and properties of grace as it dwells in the mind of Deity! Love in the human heart is a passion. With God it is not so. Love is an attribute of the divine essence. God is love. In men, grace and bounty may grow into a habit, but grace with God is an intrinsic attribute of His nature, He cannot but be gracious. As by necessity of His Godhead, He is omnipotent and omnipresent, so by absolute necessity of His divinity is He gracious!

Come then, my brothers and sisters, into this glittering mine of the attributes of the grace of God! Every one of God's attributes is Infinite and, therefore, this attribute of grace is without bounds. You cannot conceive the infinity of God, why, therefore should I attempt to describe it? Remember, however, that as the attributes of God are of the like extent, the gauge of one attribute must be the gauge of another. Or, further, if one attribute is without limit, so is another attribute. Now, you cannot conceive any boundary to the omnipotence of God. What cannot He do? He can create, He can destroy; He can speak myriad universes into existence, or he can quench the light of myriads of stars as readily as we tread out a spark! He has but to will it and creatures without number sing His praise; yet another volition and those creatures subside into their naked nothingness, as a moment's foam subsides into the waste that bears it and is lost forever! The astronomer turns his tube to the remotest space; he cannot find a boundary to God's creating power. But could he *seem* to find a limit, we would then inform him that all the worlds on worlds that cluster in space, thick as the drops of morning dew upon the meadows, are but the *shreds* of God's power! He can make more than all these, can dash those into nothingness and can begin again! Now as boundless as is His power so infinite is His grace. As He has power to do anything, so has He grace enough to *give* anything—to give *everything* to the very chief of sinners!

Take another attribute if you please—God's omniscience, there is no boundary to that. We know that His eyes are upon every individual of our race—He sees them as minutely as if he were the only creature that existed. It is boasted of the eagle that though he cannot outstare the sun, yet when at his greatest height, he can detect the movement of the smallest fish in the depths of the sea. But what is this compared with the omniscience of God? His eyes track the sun in his marvelous course, His eyes mark the winged comet as it flies through space, His eyes discern the utmost bound of creation inhabited or uninhabited. There is nothing hid from the light thereof, with Him there is no darkness at all. If I mount to heaven, He is there. If I dive to hell, He is there. If I fly mounted on the morning ray beyond the western sea—

*“His swifter hand shall first arrive,
And there arrest the fugitive.”*

There is no limit to His understanding, nor is there to His grace! As His knowledge comprehends all things, so does His grace comprehend all the sins, all the trials, all the infirmities of the people upon whom His heart is set. Now, my dear brothers and sisters, the next time we fear that God's grace will be exhausted, let us look into this mine—and then let us reflect that all that has ever been taken out of it has never diminished it a single particle! All the clouds that have been taken from the sea have never diminished its depth and all the love and all the mercy that God has given to all but infinite numbers of the race of man, has not diminished by a single grain the mountain of His grace!

But to proceed further: We sometimes judge of the wealth of men, not only by their real estate in mines and the like, but by what they have on hand stored up in their treasury. I must take you now, my

brothers and sisters, to the glittering treasury of divine grace. You know its name, it is called the *Everlasting Covenant*. Have you not heard the marvelous story of what was done in the olden times before the world was made? God ordained that man would fall, but He determined of His own infinite purpose and will that He would raise out of this fall a multitude which no man can number. The Eternal Father held a solemn council with the Son and Holy Spirit. Thus spoke the Father—"I will that those whom I have chosen be saved!" Thus said the Son—"My Father, I am ready to bleed and die that Your justice may not suffer, and that Your purpose may be executed." "I will," said the Holy Spirit, "that those whom the Son redeems with blood shall be called by grace, shall be quickened, shall be preserved, shall be sanctified and perfected, and brought safely home." Then was the Covenant written, signed and sealed and ratified between the Sacred Three. The Father gave His Son, the Son gave Himself, and the Spirit promises all His influence, all His presence, to all the chosen. Then did the Father give to the Son the persons of His elect; then did the Son give Himself to the elect and take them into union with Him. And then did the Spirit in covenant vow that these chosen ones would surely be brought safely home at last. Whenever I think of the old covenant of grace, I am perfectly amazed and staggered with the grace of it! I could not be an Arminian on any inducement—the very poetry of our holy religion lies in these ancient things of the everlasting hills—that glorious covenant signed and sealed, and ratified, in all things ordered well from old eternity!

Pause here, my hearer, a while and think—before this world was made, before God had settled the deep foundations of the mountains, or poured the seas from the layer of the bottom of His hands—He had chosen His people and set His heart on them! To them He had given Himself, His Son, His heaven, His all! For them did Christ determine to resign His bliss, His home, His life; for them did the Spirit promise all His attributes, that they might be blessed. O grace divine, how glorious you are, without beginning, without end. How shall I praise you? Take up the strain you angels; sing these noble themes—the love of the Father, the love of the Son and the love of the Spirit!

This, my brothers and sisters, if you think it over, may well make you estimate aright the riches of God's grace. If you read the roll of the covenant from beginning to end, containing as it does, election, redemption, calling, justification, pardon, adoption, heaven, immortality—if you read all this, you will say, "This is riches of grace—God, great and infinite! Who is a God like unto You for the riches of Your love?"

The riches of great kings, again, may often be estimated by the munificence of the monuments which they reared to record their feats. We have been amazed in these modern times at the marvelous riches of the kings of Nineveh and Babylon. Modern monarchs with all their riches, would fail to erect such monstrous piles of palaces as those in which old Nebuchadnezzar walked in times of yore. We turn to the pyramids, we see there what the wealth of nations can accomplish. We look across the sea to Mexico and Peru and we see the relics of a semi-barbarous people but we are staggered and amazed to think what wealth and what mines of riches they must have possessed before such works could have been accomplished. Solomon's riches are perhaps best judged of by us when we think of those great cities which he built in the wilderness, Tadmor and Palmyra. When we go and visit those ruins and see the massive columns and magnificent sculpture, we say, Solomon, indeed, was rich! We feel, as we walk amid the ruins, somewhat like the queen of Sheba, even in Scripture the half has not been told us of the riches of Solomon. My brothers and sisters, God has led us to inspect mightier trophies than Solomon, or Nebuchadnezzar or Montezuma, or all the Pharaohs! Turn your eyes yonder, see that blood-bought host arrayed in white, surrounding the throne of God—listen how they sing, with voice triumphant, with melodies seraphic, "Unto Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever." And who are these? Who are these trophies of His grace? Some of them have come from the stews of harlotry! Many of them have come from the taverns of drunkenness! No, more—the hands of some of those so white and fair, were once red with the blood of saints! I see yonder the men that nailed the Savior to the tree—men who cursed God and invoked on themselves death and damnation! I see there Manasseh, who shed innocent blood so much, and the thief who in the last moment looked to Christ and said, "Lord, remember me." But I need not turn your gaze so far aloft. Look, my brothers and sisters, around—it may be you do not know your next neighbor by whom you are sitting this morning. But there are stories of grace that might be told by some here this morning that would make the very angels sing more loudly than they have done before! Well, I know these cheeks

have well nigh been scarlet with tears when I have heard the stories of free grace worked in this congregation! There are those known to me, but of course not so to you, who were among the vilest of men, the scum of society! We have here those to whom cursing was as their breath and drunkenness had grown to be a habit. And yet here they are—servants of God and of His church and it is their delight to testify to others what a Savior they have found! Ah, but my hearer, perhaps *you* are one of those trophies, and if so, the best proof of the riches of His grace is that which you find in your own soul! I think God to be gracious when I see others saved; I *know* He is because He has saved *me!* That wayward, willful boy, who scoffed a mother's love, and would not be melted by all her prayers—who only wished to know a sin in order to perpetrate it! Is he standing here to preach the gospel of the grace of God to you, today? Yes! Then there is no sinner out of hell that has sinned too much for grace to save! That love which can reach to me, can reach to you! Now I know the riches of His grace, because I hope I prove it and feel it in my own inmost heart!

My dear hearer—may you know it, too, and then you will join with our poet, who says—

*“Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,
While hearers resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace.”*

Go a little further now. We have thus looked at the wine and treasures and at the monuments. But more. One thing which amazed the queen of Sheba, with regard to the riches of Solomon, was the sumptuousness of his table. Such multitudes sat down to it to eat and drink, and though they were many, yet they all had enough and to spare. She lost all heart when she saw the provisions of a single day brought in. I forget just now, although I meant to refer to the passage, how many fat beast, how many bullocks of the pasture, how many bucks and fallow deer, and game of all sorts, and how many measures of flour and how many gallons of oil were brought to Solomon's table every day, but it was something marvelous! And the multitudes who had to feast were marvelous, also, yet they all had enough. And now think, my brothers and sisters, of the hospitalities of the God of grace each day. Ten thousand thousand of His people are this day sitting down to feast. Hungry and thirsty they bring large appetites with them to the banquet, but not one of them returns unsatisfied! There is enough for each, enough for all, enough forevermore! Though the host that feed there is countless as the stars of heaven, yet I find that not one lacks his portion. He opens His hands and supplies the need of every living saint upon the face of the earth! Think how much grace one saint requires, so much that nothing but the Infinite could supply him for one day! We burn so much fuel each day to maintain the fire of love in our hearts, that we might drain the mines of England of all their wealth of coal. Surely, were it not that we have infinite treasures of grace, the daily consumption of a single saint might out-demand everything that is to be found upon the face of the earth! And yet it is not one, but many millions of saints, not for one day, but for many years—not for many years, only, but generation after generation, century after century, and race after race of men—living on the fullness of God in Christ! Yet are none of them starved. They all drink to the full. They eat and are satisfied. What riches of grace, then, may we see in the sumptuousness of His hospitality!

Sometimes, my brothers and sisters, I have thought if I might but get the broken meat at God's back door of grace, I would be satisfied. Like the woman who said, “The dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the master's table.” Or like the prodigal who said, “Make me as one of your hired servants.” But you will remember that no child of God is ever made to live on husks. God does not give the parings of His grace to the meanest of them, but they are all fed like Mephibosheth. They eat from the king's own table, the daintiest dishes! And if one may speak for the rest, I think in matters of grace we all have Benjamin's mess—we all have ten times as much as we could have expected. Though not more than our necessities, yet we are often amazed at the marvelous plenty of grace which God gives us in the covenant and the promise!

Now we turn to another point to illustrate the greatness of the riches of God's grace. A man's riches may often be judged of by the equipage of his children, the manner in which he dresses his servants and those of his household. It is not to be expected that the child of the poor man, though he is comfortably clothed, should be arrayed in like garments to those which are worn by the sons of princes. Let us see, then, what are the robes in which God's people are appareled and how they are attended. Here, again, I speak upon a subject where a large imagination is needed and my own utterly fails me. God's children are wrapped about with a robe, a seamless robe, which earth and heaven could not buy the like of, if it were once lost. For texture, it excels the fine linen of the merchants; for whiteness, it is purer than the

driven snow. No looms on earth could make it, but Jesus spent His life to work my robe of righteousness! There was a drop of blood in every throw of the shuttle and every thread was made of His own heart's agonies. 'Tis a robe that is divine, complete; a better one than Adam wore in the perfection of Eden! He had but a human righteousness though a perfect one—we have a *divinely perfect righteousness*. Strangely, my soul, are you arrayed, for your Savior's garment is on you; the royal robe of David is wrapped about his Jonathan! Look at God's people as they are clothed, too, in the garments of sanctification. Was there ever such a robe as that? It is literally stiff with jewels. He arrays the meanest of His people every day as though it were a wedding day. He arrays them as a bride adorns herself with jewels. He has given Ethiopia and Sheba for them and He will have them dressed in gold of Ophir! What riches of grace, then, must there be in God who thus clothes His children!

But to conclude this point upon which I have not as yet begun: if you would know the full riches of divine grace, read the Father's heart when He sent His Son upon earth to die. Read the lines upon the Father's countenance when He pours His wrath upon His only begotten and His well-beloved Son. Read, too, the mysterious handwriting on the Savior's flesh and soul, when on the cross, quivering in agony, and the waves of swelling grief roll over His bosom. If you would know love, you must repair to Christ and you shall see a man so full of pain that His head, His hair, His garments are bloody. 'Twas love that made Him sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. If you would know love, you must see the Omnipotent mocked by His creatures. You must hear the Immaculate slandered by sinners. You must hear the Eternal One groaning out His life, and crying in the agonies of death, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" To sum up all in one, the riches of the grace of God are infinite, beyond all limit—they are inexhaustible, they can never be drained—they are all-sufficient, they are enough for every soul that ever shall come to take of them. There shall be enough forever while earth endures, until the last vessel of mercy shall be brought home safely. So much, then, concerning the riches of His grace.

II. For a minute or two, let me now dwell upon THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. The *treasure* of God's grace is the *measure* of our forgiveness. This forgiveness of sins is according to the riches of His grace. We may infer, then, that the pardon which God gives to the penitent is no worthless pardon! Have not you asked a man's pardon, sometimes, and he has said, "Yes, I forgive you," and you have thought, "Well, I would not even have asked for pardon if I thought you would have given it in such a surly style as that! I might as well have continued as I was, as to be so ungraciously forgiven." But when God forgives a man, though he is the chief of sinners, He puts out His hand and freely forgives. In fact, there is as much joy in the heart of God when He forgives, as there is in the heart of the sinner when he is forgiven! God is as blessed in giving as we are in receiving. It is His very nature to forgive. He must be gracious, He must be loving and when He lets His heart of love out to free us from our sins, it is with no stinted stream. He does it willingly, He upbraids us not. Again—if pardon is in proportion to the riches of His grace, we may rest assured it is not a limited pardon, it is not the forgiving of some sins and the leaving of others upon the back. No, this were not godlike, it were not consistent with the riches of His grace. When God forgives, He draws the mark through every sin which the believer has ever committed, or ever *will* commit! That last point may stagger you, but I believe, with John Kent, that in the blood of Christ—

*"There's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast!
And, oh, my soul, with wonder, view,
For sins to come there's pardon, too!"*

However many, however heinous, however innumerable your sins may have been, the moment you believe, they are, every one of them, blotted out! In the Book of God there is not a single sin against any man in this place whose trust is in Christ—not a single one, not even the shadow of one, not a spot, or the remnant of a sin remaining—all is gone! When Noah's flood covered the deepest mountains, you may rest assured it covered the molehills. And when God's love covers the little sins, it covers the big ones and they are all gone at once! When a bill is fully receipted, there is not an item which can be charged again. And when God pardons the sins of the believer, there is not one single sin left, not even a fraction of one can ever be brought to His remembrance again! No, more than this—when God forgives—He not only forgives all, but once and for all! Some tell us that God forgives men and yet they are lost. A fine god theirs is! They believe that the penitent sinner finds mercy, but that if he slips or stumbles in a little while, he will be taken out of the covenant of grace and will perish! Such a covenant

I could not and would not believe in! I tread it beneath my feet as utterly despicable! The God whom I love, when He forgives, never punishes afterwards; by one sacrifice there is a full remission of all sin that was ever against a believer, or that will ever be against him! Though you should live till your hair is bleached thrice over, till Methuselah's thousand years should pass over your furrowed brow, not a single sin shall ever stand against you, nor shall you ever be punished for a single sin! *Forever* is sin forgiven, fully forgiven, so that not even part of the punishment shall be executed against you. "Well, but," says one, "how is it that God does punish His children?" I answer, He does not! He *chastises* them as a Father, but that is a different thing from the *punishment* of a judge! If the child of a judge were brought up to the bar and that child were freely forgiven all that he had done amiss—if justice exonerated and acquitted him—it might nevertheless happen that there was evil in the heart of that child which the father, out of love to the child, might have to whip out of him. But there is a great deal of difference between a rod in the hand of the executioner and a rod in a father's hand. Let God smite me, if I sin against Him, yet it is not because of the guilt of sin—there is no punishment in it whatever—the penal clause is done away with. It is only that He may cure me of my fault—that He may fetch the folly out of my heart. Do you chasten your children vindictively because you are angry with them? No, but because you love them. If you are what parents should be, the chastisement is a proof of your affection and your heart smarts more than their body pains when you have to chasten them for what they have done amiss. God is not angry against His children, nor is there a sin in them which He will punish! He will whip it out of them, but *punish* them for it, He will not. O glorious grace! It is a gospel worth preaching—

*"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in His crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Redemption in full through Christ's blood."*

All is gone! Every atom gone; gone forever and ever; and well he knows it—

*"Now freed from sin I walk at large,
My Savior's blood my full discharge!
At His dear feet my soul I lay,
A sinner saved and homage pay."*

Having thus spoken of the pardon of sin as being fully commensurate with the grace of God, I will put this question to my hearer: My friend, are you forgiven? Are your sins all gone? "No," says one, "I cannot say they are, but I am doing my best to reform." Ah, you may do your best to reform—I hope you will, but that will never wash out your past sins! All the waters of the rivers of reformation can never wash away a single blood-red stain of guilt. "But," says one, "may I, just as I am believe that my sins are forgiven?" No, but I tell you what you may do. If God helps you, you may now cast yourself simply upon the blood and righteousness of Christ; and the moment you do that, your sins are all gone and gone so that they never can return again! "He who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." He is saved in the *moment* of his faith! He is no more, in the sight of God, received as a sinner; Christ has been punished for him! The righteousness of Christ is wrapped about him and he stands accepted in the beloved. "Well, but," says one, "I can believe that a man, after he has been a long time a Christian, may know his sins to be forgiven, but I cannot imagine that I can know it at once!" The *knowledge* of our pardon does not always come the moment we believe, but the *fact* of our pardon is before our knowledge of it and we may be pardoned before we know it. But if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart, I will tell you this—if your faith is free of all self-trust, you shall know *today* that your sins are forgiven, for the witness of the Spirit shall bear witness with your heart and you shall hear that secret still small voice, saying, "Be of good cheer; your sins, which are many, are all forgiven." "Oh," says one, "I would give all I have for that!" And you might give all you have, but you would not have it at *that* price! You might give the first-born for your transgression, the fruit of your body for the sin of your soul. You might offer rivers of oil and ten thousand of the fat of fed beasts! But you will not have it for *money*—but you *may* have it for *nothing*! It is freely brought to you; you are bid to take it. Only acknowledge your sin and put your trust in Christ and there is not one man among you who shall hear anything about his sin in the Day of Judgment! It shall have been cast into the depth of the sea—it shall be carried away forever!

I will give you a picture, and then leave this subject. Look, there stands the high priest of the Jews. A goat is brought to him—it is called "the scapegoat." He puts his hands upon the head of this goat and

begins to make confession of sin. Will you come and do the same? Jesus Christ is the scapegoat. Come and lay your hands on His thorn-crowned head by faith and make confession of your sin, as the high priest did of old. Have you done it? Is your sin confessed? Now believe that Jesus Christ is able and willing to take your sin away; rest wholly and entirely on him. Now what happens? The high priest takes the scapegoat, gives it into the hands of a trusty man, who leads it over hill and down dale, till he is many miles away. And then, suddenly loosing its bonds, he frightens it, and the goat flees with all its might. The man watches it till it is gone and he can see it no more. He comes back and he says, "I took the scapegoat away, and it vanished out of my sight. It is gone into the wilderness." Ah, my hearer, and if you have put your sins on Christ by a full confession, remember He has taken them all away—as far as the east is from the west, they are gone and gone eternally! Your drunkenness, your swearing is gone, your lying, your theft is gone, your Sabbath-breaking, your evil thoughts are gone—all gone, and you shall never see them again—

*“Plunged, as in a shoreless sea,
Lost, as in immensity!”*

III. And now I conclude by noticing THE BLESSED PRIVILEGES WHICH ALWAYS FOLLOW THE FORGIVENESS WHICH IS GIVEN TO US ACCORDING TO THE GRACE OF GOD. I think there are a great many people who do not believe there is any reality in religion at all. They think it is a very respectable thing to go to church and to go to chapel, but as to ever enjoying a consciousness that their sins are all forgiven, they never think about that. And I must confess that in the religion of these modern times, there does not seem to be much reality. I do not hear at this day that clear, ringing, distinct proclamation of the gospel that I need to hear. It is a grand thing to carry the gospel to all manner of men, to take it to the theater and the like, but we need to have the gospel undiluted—the milk must have a little less water with it. There must be a more distinct, palpable truth of God taught to the people, a something that they can really lay hold of, a something that they can understand, even if they will not believe it. I trust no man will misunderstand me this morning in what I have said. There is such a thing as having all our sins forgiven *now*. There is such a thing as knowing it and enjoying it. Now I will show you what will be the happiness resulting to you, should you obtain this blessing.

In the first place, you will have peace of conscience, that heart of yours that throbs so fast when you are alone will be quite still and quiet. You will be least alone when you are alone. That fear of yours which makes you quicken your steps in the dark because you are afraid of something and you do not know what, will all be gone. I have heard of a man who was so constantly in debt and continually being arrested by the bailiffs, that once upon a time, when going by some area railings, having caught his sleeve upon one of the rails, he turned round and said, "I don't owe you anything, sir!" He thought it was a bailiff. And so it is with unforgiven sinners, wherever they are—they think they are going to be arrested. They can enjoy nothing. Even their mirth, what is it but the color of joy, the crackling of thorns under the pot? There is no solid steady fire. But when once a man is forgiven, he can walk anywhere. He says, "To me it is nothing whether I live or die, whether ocean depths engulf me, or whether I am buried beneath the avalanche. With sins forgiven, I am secure." Death has no sting to him. His conscience is at rest. Then he goes a step further. Knowing his sins to be forgiven, he has unspeakable joy. No man has such sparkling eyes as the true Christian; a man then knows his interest in Christ and can read his title clear. He is a happy man and must be happy. His troubles, what are they? Less than nothing and vanity; for all his sins are forgiven! When the poor slave first lands in Canada, it may be he is without a single farthing in his purse and scarcely anything but rags on his back. But he puts his foot on British soil and is free! See him leap and dance and clap his hands, saying, "Great God, I thank You, I am a free man!" So it is with the Christian, he can say in his cottage when he sits down to his crust of bread—thank God I have no sin mixed in my cup—it is all forgiven. The bread may be dry, but it is not half as dry as it would be if I had to eat it with the bitter herbs of a guilty conscience and with a terrible apprehension of the wrath of God. He has a joy that will stand all weathers, a joy that will keep in all climates, a joy that shines in the dark and glitters in the night as well as in the day!

Then, to go further: Such a man has access to God. Another man with unforgiven sin about him stands afar off and if he thinks of God at all, it is as a consuming fire. But the forgiven Christian, looking up to God when he sees the mountains and the hills and rolling streams and the roaring flood, says, "My Father made them all." And he clasps hands with the Almighty across the infinite expanse that separates

man from his Maker. His heart flies up to God. He dwells near to Him and he feels that he can talk to God as a man talks with his friend.

Then another effect of this is that the believer fears no hell. There are solemn things in the Word of God, but they do not frighten the believer. There may be a pit that is bottomless, but into that his foot shall never slide! It is true there is a fire that never shall be quenched, but it cannot burn *him*. That fire is for the *sinner*, but he has no sin imputed to him; it is all forgiven. The banded host of all the devils in hell cannot take him there, for he has not a single sin that can be laid to his charge. Daily sinning though he is, he feels those sins are all atoned for; he knows that Christ has been punished in his place and, therefore, Justice cannot touch him again.

Once more, the forgiven Christian is expecting heaven. He is waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. If death should intervene before that glorious advent, he knows that to him sudden death is sudden glory; and in the possession of a quiet conscience and of peace with God, he can go up to his chamber when the last solemn hour shall come. He can gather up his feet in his bed; he can bid farewell to his brethren and companions, to his wife and to his children and can shut his eyes in peace without a fear that he shall not open them in heaven. Perhaps never does the joy of forgiven sin come out more brightly than it does on a dying bed. It has often been my privilege to test the power of religion when I have been sitting by the bedside of the dying. There is a young girl in heaven, now, once a member of this, our church. I went with one of my beloved deacons to see her when she was very near her departure. She was in the last stage of consumption. Fair and sweetly beautiful she looked, and I think I never heard such syllables as those which fell from that girl's lips. She had had disappointments and trials and troubles, but all these she had not a word to say about, except that she blessed God for them; they had brought her nearer to the Savior. And when we asked her whether she was not afraid of dying, "No," she said, "The only thing I fear, by His grace, is this—I am afraid of living, lest my patience should wear out. I have not said an impatient word yet, sir; I hope I shall not. It is sad to be so very weak, but I think if I had my choice I would rather be here than be in health, for it is very precious to me. I know that my Redeemer lives, and I am waiting for the moment when He shall send His chariot of fire to take me up to Him." I put the question, "Have you not any doubts?" "No, none, sir, why should I? I clasp my arms around the neck of Christ." "And have not you any fear about your sins?" "No, sir, they are all forgiven; I trust the Savior's precious blood." "And do you think that you will be as brave as this when you actually come to die?" "Not if He leaves me, sir, but He will never leave me, for He has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'"

There is faith, dear brothers and sisters! May we all have it, and receive forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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