

IMPORTANCE OF SMALL THINGS IN RELIGION

NO. 307

A SERMON
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AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

*“The LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.”
1 Chronicles 15:13*

LET me explain the events of which a summary is to be found in 2 Samuel 6, and 1 Chronicles 13:15. The ark of the covenant was a kind of chest made of shittimwood and lined inside and out with gold. Within this ark were preserved the tables of stone which were received from heaven by Moses when he was upon the mount. There also lay the golden pot that had the manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded. Upon the lid of it were represented cherubic figures of angels, and between the wings of the cherubim, when the ark was at rest, there was seen that miraculously bright light called the Shekinah, which was the token of the presence of the Most High God.

The lid of the ark, as you will remember, was called the mercy seat. The whole ark was one of the most sacred things in the symbolic worship of the Jews, because if they understood aright, it was to them the expression of God’s dwelling with them, for where that ark was, God specially rested. Its lid being called the mercy seat, was the representation of Jesus Christ who is our ark—the ark of the covenant in which God dwelt among men, and He is our mercy seat by whom we have access to our Father, God.

You will remember that after this ark was made in the wilderness, it was carefully kept in the secret place of the tabernacle, into which no man ever entered, except the high priest once in the year, and then, not without blood. With his censor smoking, he made a thick cloud of incense and then sprinkling the blood upon the mercy seat, he ventured near to it—but not without blood.

That ark when it was removed was covered over, so that no human eye should ever see it, and it was carried by golden staves upon the shoulders of the Levites. It was by the presence of this ark that Jordan was driven back, and an easy passage was made for the children of Israel when they entered into Canaan.

The ark was in an evil day captured by the Philistines. But when they took it away into their country, wherever the ark went, it smote the Philistines with pestilence, until they were compelled to bring it back, for they cried, “Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to its own place, that it slay us not and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.”

Placing the terrible captive upon a new cart, they left the oxen to bear it as they pleased, and by divine providence, the ark was carried to Beth-Shemesh. The men of Bethshemesh, struck with an evil curiosity, lifted up the lid and looked therein, and there fell many thousands of them dead for the impious presumption.

The ark was then removed to Kirjath-jearim and taken into the house of Abinadab, where it was preserved till the days of David, who desired to bring it up to the tabernacle which he had erected for it on the top of Mount Zion. The messengers hastened through all the land carrying the royal message, “Come up, ye tribes of Israel, and ye sons of Judah, gather yourselves together, and bring up the ark of the covenant of your God with music and with joy.”

They came from every city, from the remotest ends of Judea, and from the borders of Egypt. But forgetful of the divine law, they took up the ark and put it on a new cart or chariot which they had made for it. They thought, doubtless, it was too heavy for the priests to carry so many miles, or else, forgetful

altogether of the divine law, they imitated the example of the Philistines. It is an evil hour for the people of God, when they set up their own judgment, and fail to yield implicit obedience to divine law.

The ark is dragged along by the oxen, but as there are no roads in the East, but only here and there a cart rut, the cart shakes, and the ark totters. Just when they come to the threshing floor of Chidon, there is a peculiarly boggy place in the road, and the cart is almost upset. The ark is about to fall in the mire, so Uzzah thinks, and he puts out his hand, touches the ark to stop it, is rent in pieces, and falls a mangled corpse.

The procession stops. They begin to weep, they cast dust into the air, the king himself is angry, angry with his God. He thinks He is dealing harshly with them, and the ark is taken into Obed-edom's house and all their joy is suspended.

You have before you now the picture. I shall want you to look at it, first, *in detail*, to bring out certain truths which I think it teaches to us, and then, I shall want you to regard the picture *as a whole*, to run your eye along the whole length of the canvas, and see the fullness of its meaning.

I. First then, we shall take THE PICTURE IN IT'S DETAIL.

1. The first observation I make upon it is this, *that God's judgment of sin must differ exceedingly from ours*. Who among us when he has read this narrative has not thought that Uzzah was treated harshly? What! was he not actuated with a proper motive? He could not bear the idea that the ark should fall into the mire and therefore he put out his hand.

Why, to our mode of thinking, it seemed to be but a small offense, and the motive so excellent that it might almost be justified. I am sure there is a disposition in us to excuse Uzzah and to think that this judgment which came upon him was not deserved.

Let me remark here, that I am not sure Uzzah suffered any eternal punishment as the result of it. Perhaps he was a gracious man, and God may smite even His own children with death as a chastisement, and yet their souls may be saved eternally. We have nothing to look at except what God did with him in this world. He struck him dead in this world for touching the ark.

Verily, my brethren, the Lord seeth not as man seeth. We cannot readily perceive the evil, but there was sin or else He would not have punished it. He is too good, too just to smite any man more severely than he deserves. God never exaggerates our sins. He looks at them as they are. And what think you, my hearers, if the mere sin of touching the ark brought death upon the man, what would our sins have brought on us if God had "laid justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet?"

Why, we have all of us done ten thousand times worse than Uzzah. Nay, some of you are living in the commission of sin this very day. You have never repented of your sins, but you love your evil ways, and though warned many times (not like Uzzah, who was taken away with a stroke), though warned many times, you still persevere in your iniquities.

Oh, must not God's patience be pressed down under your sins? Must He not have become as Amos has it, like a cart that is full of sheaves, the axles whereof are ready to break? and then you sink and sink forever into the pit of eternal wrath. It seems strange that Eve's taking the apple should be the ruin of the entire world, that the mere violation of a sacred tree should bring death into the world, with all its train of woe. But this arises from the fact that we do not know how black a thing sin is.

The least sin is so great an evil, so excessively black an abomination, that God were just if He smote us all to hell the moment we had thought an idle thought, or had uttered a single wrong word. Sin is an immeasurable evil. Man cannot weigh it. It is a gulf without a bottom. It is a desperate evil, the desperateness of which we shall never know, unless, as God forbid, we should ever come to feel its terror in the pit of hell.

I think this lesson lies upon the very surface of the narrative, that we do not know how bad a thing sin is, for if the mere act of touching the ark brought death on Uzzah, what a desperate evil sin must be!

2. But again, we learn, in the second place from this narrative—that *all changes from the written revelation of God are wrong*. There has sprung up in the church of Christ an idea that there are many things taught in the Bible which are not essential, that we may alter them just a little to suit our

convenience, that provided we are right in the fundamentals, the other things are of no concern and of no value whatever.

Now, look at our picture and let your mistake forever be driven away. It did seem to the people of Israel but a very indifferent matter whether the ark was carried on men's shoulders, or whether it was dragged upon a cart. Why, they said, "It cannot matter. It is true God has told us that it is to be borne by the Levites, but what does that signify as long as it is carried? It will be all right. We will do the thing and if we alter the mode, it will not signify very materially."

Yes, but it did signify, for it was through this alteration which they made in God's law that the ark first began to shake, and to totter, and then Uzzah was tempted to put forth his hand and touch it. So that the death of Uzzah was the punishment upon the whole people for having neglected to observe the minute laws of God in every particular.

My brethren, when Moses built the tabernacle, he was not left to build it after his own whim and taste. Every tache and every loop, every board and every fillet, everything was marked down in the divine plan, and Moses must build everything according to the pattern which he had seen in the Mount.

Now, *this* is the pattern for a Christian—*this Book of God* which lies before me. The New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is our only rule of practice. And you think, do you, that you may alter some few things, that you may change them to suit the climate, or to indulge your own ideas of taste or convenience?

You fancy, that doctrine, for instance, is not of such sublime importance—that if a man does but preach the fundamentals, he may preach any other things he likes, and yet all will be well—that ceremonies, that baptism, and the Lord's supper, for instance, are to be cut, and hacked and fashioned, to suit modern fancies, and that they are not to be retained in their integrity according to apostolic rule and precedent?

But this know, the slightest violation of the divine law will bring judgments upon the church, and has brought judgments and is even at this day withholding God's hand from blessing us. For within a few years we might see all the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, if we would but carry God's ark as God would have it carried, instead of marring the Gospel by human inventions, and leaving the simplicity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I am not going this morning to enter into particulars, but just lay down the general fact, that whatever God has commanded is important, and that I have no right whatever to alter anything—no, not the least thing, but to take the Word just as it stands, just as God has revealed it to me, to be my rule of faith and practice. Ay, but there are some of you who never read your Bibles. You have a secondhand religion which you have borrowed from other people, you do not come to this Book to drink at the fountainhead.

Your grandmother thought so-and-so, and you think the same. Your great grandfather went to church or to chapel, and that is your reason for going, but you have not come to God's Word to submit your judgment to it. The reason why there are so many sects nowadays is just this. If we all come straightway to the Bible, we should come far nearer together than we are now.

It is not likely we should all see eye to eye. You cannot make a dozen watches all tick to the same time, much less make a dozen men all think the same thoughts. But still, if we should all bow our thoughts to that one written Word, and would acknowledge no authority but the Bible, the church could not be divided, could not be cut in pieces as she now is.

We come together when we come to the Word of God. But I am always answered when I talk about these things, "Well, but they are not essential." *Who told you they were not?* "Now," saith one, "we'll admit that the baptism of infants is not in the Bible, but it is not an essential thing, we may practice it, and no harm will come of it." No, sirs, you have no right to alter a word of God's command, you have no right to turn them aside in any respect or in any manner.

God's doctrines are to be preached as God delivers them, and His ordinances are to be practiced after His own mode and law. Woe worth the day when God's ark is put upon the chariot and dragged by oxen, instead of being carried upon the shoulders of men, who read God's Word, and take it as it stands,

and then follow out what God commands them, and will not be led by the sleeve or by the nose by any man or set of men.

Forget not this lesson brethren, for it is of the greatest importance to the church.

3. Now, there is a third thing, and that is, that whenever the practices of Christians differ *from Scripture they are sure to incur inconvenience*. When the ark was carried on the shoulders of men, it did not matter whether it went uphill or downhill, rugged road or smooth, there was the ark carried in state like the litter of a king. But once put it on the cart—although they thought it would look better—then it went jolting here and jolting there, and threatening constantly to tumble into the mire. Whenever we alter one word of Scripture, we shall get ourselves into trouble. We may not see it at first, but we surely shall find it out by and by.

A minister, for instance, thinks, “Well, now, I must not preach all the doctrines of the Gospel, it would not suit my people, there is a great deacon sitting in the green pew in the corner, there is the squire of the parish, he would not like it if I were to be too severe on him.” Ah, my friend, alter one word, and you have fallen into a snare, you have entered a labyrinth, and God help you to find your way out again, for you will never be able to get through it alone.

Stand to God’s Word and you stand safely. Alter one dot of the *i*, one cross of the *t*, and you are nowhere at all, you are in an enemy’s country, and you cannot defend yourself. When we have got Scripture to back us up we defy the world, but when we have nothing but our own whims, or the work of some great preacher, or the decree of a council, or the tradition of the Fathers, we are lost, we are trying to weave a rope of sand, we are building a house of cards, that must totter to the ground.

The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, is the religion of Christ’s church. And until we come back to that the church will have to suffer. She will not carry the ark up to the hill of Zion, she will not see His kingdom come, or His will done in earth as it is in heaven, till she has done with those bullocks and that new cart, and goes back to the New Testament plan of keeping consistently to the truth as it is in Jesus, and contending earnestly for the faith.

4. Furthermore, another thing lies upon the surface of this passage, namely, that *one innovation upon sacred writ leads to another*. A little error leads to a great one. Nobody ever intended that Uzzah should touch that ark. They had not a thought when they lifted it up and put it on the car that it would lead to poor Uzzah’s death, and that he would commit the sin of violating the ark, else surely they would have kept to the Scriptural plan.

So there are some of you, my dear brethren in Christ, who are not quite right in your views of Scripture. Well, perhaps you think the same of me. We will speak of somebody else then. There is a man in the world, whose views are not quite in consistency with Scripture. He says, “Well, it does not matter, it is a little thing, a very little thing.” Yes, but that little wrong thing leads to a great wrong thing! The sinner’s path is downhill, and when you take one step in violation of Scripture precept, your next step is not only easy, but seems even to be forced upon you.

Doubt election; you will soon doubt perseverance, and you may soon come to deny redemption. Where did the errors of the Church of Rome come from? Were they all born in a day? No, they came by slow degrees. It happened thus—I will trace but one error, against which as a denomination we always bear our protest, and I only take that as a specimen of the whole.

Among the early Christians, it was the practice to baptize those who believed in Christ Jesus, by immersing them in the water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Well, the first wrong doctrine that started up was the idea that perhaps there was some efficacy in the water. Next, it followed that when a man was dying who had never been baptized he would perhaps profess faith in Christ, and ask that he might be baptized, but as he was dying they could not lift him from his bed, they therefore adopted sprinkling as being an easier method by which they might satisfy the conscience by the application of water.

That done, there was but a step to the taking of little children into the church—children, unconscious infants, who were received as being members of Christ’s body, and thus infant sprinkling was adopted.

The error came in by slow degrees—not all at once. It would have been too glaring for the church to receive, if it had shown its head at one time with all its horns upon it. But it entered slowly and gradually, till it came to be inducted into the church. I do not know an error which causes the damnation of more souls than that at the present time.

There are thousands of people who firmly believe that they shall go to heaven because they were sprinkled in infancy, have been confirmed, and have taken the sacrament. Sacramental efficacy and baptismal regeneration, all spring from the first error of infant baptism. Had they kept to the Scripture, had the church always required faith before baptism, that error could not have sprung up. It must have died before the light of the truth, it could not have breathed, it could not have had a foothold in the Christian church.

But one error must lead to another—you never need doubt that. If you tamper with one truth of Scripture, he that tempts you to meddle with one, will tempt you to tamper with another, and there will be no end to it, till at last, you will want a new Bible, a new Testament, and a new god. There is no telling where you will end when you have begun.

I am speaking very pointedly and very plainly this morning, on a subject which very seldom comes in my way. But I must be clear in my language when I do speak about it, for I do not often make allusions to this truth. Judge me as I judge others. You tell me, if I make one step in error, you do not know how far I may go. I believe you. Believe me also when I say the same. Let us both go to Scripture, let us stand only by this.

I like your prayer book well enough, but not as well as my Bible. I respect your church decrees, but not so as I venerate this Book. I believe what your minister says, so far as it is consistent with this Book. Believe me so far, but not one inch further. Have done with me when I have done with my Master. Think no more of any man you hear, when he goes from the Scripture, and when he errs, than you would think of Satan himself, except this, pity him for his errors, but pin not your faith to his sleeve.

Scripture, Scripture only, is the model doctrine, the model practice, the model experience of a Christian, and whatsoever is more than this comes of evil.

5. Having now dwelt upon these points, I will take one more, and then I will leave this looking at the picture in detail. It strikes me that on the very surface of this passage there *is a refutation of a very common error*, that if we do a thing from a right motive, God accepts it, even though it is a wrong thing.

The common error of the time is this, “Well,” says one, “I have no doubt that if a man is a good Mahomedan, and keeps up to what he knows, he will go to heaven.” “Ah,” says another, “and if he is a good Roman Catholic, and if he keeps up to what he knows, he is safe.” “Yes,” says another, “we must not judge one another harshly, no doubt those who bow before Juggernaut, if they live up to what they know, will be saved.”

Do you take in the devil-worshippers and the snake-worshippers too? You must let them all in. You have opened your door wide enough to let them all come in. And the Thugs who are going about India cutting men’s throats—they do it as a matter of principle, it is a part of their religion, they consider it to be right—do you think they will go to heaven because they have done what they thought is right? “No,” says one, “I will not go that length.” Yes, but if the principle is right in one case it is right in the other. A principle will go the whole way, it will stretch in any direction, and be as applicable to one as to another. But it is all deception and falsehood.

God has revealed to us the one true religion, and other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid. We are responsible to God for our faith, we are bound to believe what He tells us to believe, and our judgment is as much bound to submit to God’s law as any other power of our being. When we come before God, it will be no excuse for us to say, “My Lord, I did wrong, but I thought I was doing right.” “Yes, but I gave you My law, but you did not read it, or if you read it, you read it so carelessly that you did not understand it, and then you did wrong, and you tell Me you did it with a right motive. Ay, but it is of no avail whatever.”

Just as in Uzzah's case, did it not seem the rightest thing in the world to put out his hand to prevent the ark from slipping off? Who could blame the man? But God had commanded that no unpriestly hand should ever touch it, and inasmuch as Uzzah did touch it, though it was with a right motive, yet Uzzah must die. God will have His laws kept.

Besides, my dear brethren, I am not sure about the rightness of your motives, after all. The state has issued a proclamation; it is engraven according to the old Roman fashion in brass. A man goes up with his file, and he begins working away upon the brass, erases here and amends there. Says he, "I did that with a right motive, I didn't think the law a good one, I thought it was too old-fashioned for these times, and so I thought I would alter it a little and make it better for the people."

Ah, how many have there been who have said, "The old Puritan principles are too rough for these times, we'll alter them, we'll tone them down a little." What are you at, sir? Who are you that dare to touch a single letter of God's Book which God has hedged about with thunder in that tremendous sentence, wherein He has written, "Whosoever shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and whosoever shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city."

It becomes an awful thing when we come to think of it, for men not to form a right and proper judgment about God's Word, for a man to leave a single point in it uncanvassed, a single mandate unstudied, lest we should lead others astray, while we ourselves are acting in disobedience to God. The fact is, there is one way to heaven, and there are not fifty ways, there is one gate to heaven, and there are not even two gates. Christ is the way. Trusting in Jesus is the path to paradise. He that believeth not in Jesus must be damned.

The religion of Christ is intolerant, not that it ever touches man in his flesh and blood, even if he rejects it, but it does not allow for a second method of salvation. It demands your full obedience, your childlike faith, or else it threatens you with the direst penalty if you refuse to yield to it. That idea of free-thinking and the like, and the right of man to think as he likes, has no countenance in Scripture. We are bound to believe what God tells us, as He tells it to us, bound not to alter a single word, but to take the Bible as it is, or else deny it and take the consequence.

All this seems to me to lay in the picture which we have before us of the death of Uzzah.

II. But leaving these points, which I thought to be very necessary for the warning of all Christians—for judging with charity, we cannot believe that the errors which prevail among us can have sprung up from attention to the Word—they must have sprung up from the idea that the little things of Christ were of no importance whatever. I now come to the second point, which is to LOOK AT THE PICTURE AS A WHOLE.

Here I have two pictures, one for the people of God, the other for the ungodly. I shall dwell but briefly upon the first and at length on the second.

Brethren in Jesus, despite our mistakes—and we are mistaken in some things, God forgive us—despite our mistakes, we are one in Jesus. Yet, though one in Christ Jesus, we should not think our errors to be unimportant, but should every one of us on his knees seek divine teaching, that we may be purged from every false way, and that we may be led in the way of divine obedience, even unto the end.

I am sure, my brethren in Jesus, that the one object of your life, as I can say it is the object of mine, is the bringing about the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We want to bring up the ark from its obscurity, into the place of glory. Every time we bend our knee, there is one prayer we never can forget—"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Now, for eighteen hundred and sixty years, the church of Christ has been seeking to bring the kingdom of Christ on earth. Has it come? Has it come? Yes, blessed be God, it has in its measure. Here in this land, and across the Atlantic, and in other nations, there are found many who love and serve our Master.

But have we had full fruit for the eighteen hundred and sixty years of labor? I think not. Two hundred years after the death of Christ, I think I may say, the religion of Jesus was almost as powerful in

numbers upon the face of the earth, as it is now. And all the time between—God forbid that I should say it has been wasted—has, nevertheless, been a period of going back, rather than advancing—of retreat, rather than rushing victory.

Now, how is this to be accounted for? Was there not that in the religion of Christ which would push its enemies to the very ends of the earth? Let but Paul stand up in Rome, and though after a while, his head is severed from his body, yet the very empire of the seven hills is made to totter while he speaks.

Let others of the apostles pass the Pillars of Hercules and come to Britain, and the Druid loses its power, those who bow before bloody gods that delight in human sacrifice renounce their idolatries, and churches are founded throughout England, Ireland, and Scotland. They have but to enter a country, and that country yields. It is true the martyrs bleed, and the apostles die, and the confessors are burned, but the truth lives and conquers and overcomes.

Within two or three centuries, the name of Jesus is better known than that of any man, and His religion has greater power than any other on the face of the earth. And here are we, now, sending out our missionaries everywhere, and what is the success? Thank God for what it is, it is an excellent reward for all our labor, and far more than we deserve.

But there is not the power in our missionaries that there was in the apostles. Our victories of the church have not been like the victories of the olden times. Why is this? My theory to account for it is this. In the first place, the absence of the Holy Spirit in a great measure from us. But if you come to the root of it to know the reason, my fuller answer is this—the church has forsaken her original purity, and therefore, she has lost her power.

If once we had done with everything erroneous, if by the unanimous will of the entire body of Christ, every evil ceremony, every ceremony not ordained of Scripture were lopped off and done with, if every doctrine were rejected which is not sustained by Holy Writ, if this church were pure and clean, her path would be onward, triumphant, victorious. She would set her feet on Brahma and crush Vishnu beneath her feet. She would say to the moon of Mohammed, “Set forever!” She would dash from his throne the Pope, she would rend up false religions by the roots, she would sit as empress of the earth, and Christ, her Husband, would reign with her, and the tabernacles of God would be among men.

But we are not pure, we are not clean, we cannot bring up the ark of God. Blessed be God, it still abides in Obed-Edom’s house. True religion is to be found in the hearts of God’s people, and in some churches the truth is still preserved, but till the whole church shall come forth clear as the moon, fair as the sun, she will never be terrible as an army with banners.

This may seem to you to be of little consequence, but it really is a matter of life and death. I would plead with every Christian—think it over, my dear brother. When some of us preach Calvinism and some Arminianism, we cannot both be right, it is of no use trying to think we can be—“yes,” and “no,” cannot both be true. When some of us hold a Christian free of all authority but Christ, and others hold a State Church, we cannot both be right anyhow. We may be both right in the grand things, but we cannot be right in everything, one or other of us must be wrong. When some sprinkle the infant, and others baptize the believer, we cannot both be right, it is idle for us to think so.

Christ has not made a nondescript religion that will hold all sorts of people in it, and yet all shall be alike obedient. Truth does not vacillate like the pendulum which shakes backwards and forwards, It is not like the comet, which is here, there, and everywhere. One must be right, the other wrong. It is not for me to pronounce who is right, or who is wrong. I am not infallible. It is for me to judge of Scripture, as in the sight of God, for myself. I beg you do the same. Do not think any error to be an unimportant one, but try the spirits, prove whether these things are so.

I am quite sure that the best way to promote union is to promote truth. It will not do for us to be all united together by yielding to one another’s mistakes. We are to be united heartily, I hope we are. We are to love each other in Christ, but we are not to be so united that we are not able to see each other’s faults, and especially not able to see our own. No, purge the house of God, and then shall grand and blessed times dawn on us.

And now—having done with that subject, I turn to those of you who are not converted, but who are longing to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached. I think what I have already said to be important, but this last part of the service is *all-important*.

My dear hearer, I will suppose that in your heart there is an anxious desire to be saved, but you do not understand the plan of salvation, I grieve for you, for if you do not understand it, even though you seek Christ, you will make many mistakes, and you will suffer much inconvenience. It was a right thing in David to wish to bring up the ark, but perhaps he was ignorant of the way to bring it, and see what inconvenience he had to suffer, the ark was jolted, the oxen shook it. Now if you are not clear as to the plan of salvation, you will have many joltings, much shaking, many doubts, many fears.

Let me ask and entreat you then, to search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life and they are they which testify of Christ, and let me beg you to endeavor, by God's help, ever to keep in your mind a clear view of the fact that you are to be saved, if saved at all, by trusting in Jesus Christ, and in Jesus Christ alone. The plan of salvation is, "Trust in Jesus." Make mistakes about other things, you will suffer inconvenience, but make a mistake here and it will be fatal to you.

I think I hear some man saying, "Sir, I have longed to be saved, but I am still uneasy and troubled in my mind, I think if I were to do good works and then to save myself by them, I might trust in Christ." Stand back, Uzzah, stand back, you are about to touch the ark of God, beware lest you should die while you are doing it, other mistakes will make you uneasy, that mistake will be fatal to you. Touch the atonement of Jesus Christ and there is no salvation if you touch it with a legal hand, seeking to add to it your own self-righteousness.

***"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."***

He wants no help from you, leave Him to do it all, take Him as He is and go to Him just as you are, do not seek to bring anything, but go as you are and you will be saved. Seek to help Christ and saved you cannot be. Until you have done with that thought, you must abide in your sorrow, and in your death. No mixing with Jesus, He never came to be a makeweight. Christ must be all, and you must be nothing at all. If you attempt to patch His perfect robe, that robe shall never cover your nakedness. It is be-gemmed with jewels, put one paste jewel of yours upon it and it is not yours. You must have a whole Christ and nothing but Christ.

You know the old proverb, "Betwixt the two stools he came to the ground." When a man hopes to rely partly on Christ, and partly on himself, he will come to the ground with a vengeance. Rest on Jesus simply, and you are saved; rest on Christ and self, and you are like Uzzah, you have touched the ark, you have sought to mingle man's works with God's works, man's merits with Christ's merits, and tremble, lest the wrath of God should come forth against you and destroy you.

But after all, my dear friends, you have no merits. Christ freely offers Himself to you, if you will take Him for nothing. You thought to buy Him with your merits. Why you have no merits. Shall I tell you a little parable which shall show you your position?

There was a rich man who had a generous heart, and once upon a time he resolved to give a large estate to a poor neighbor, so he sent for him and said, "My friend, I am willing to give you a large estate for nothing." The man felt grateful and retired home, but as he lay in his bed he thought, "I should like that estate, but I should not like to be beholden to anybody for it, I think I will pay for it."

So he set out the next morning with a heavy bag on his back, and when he came to the rich man's door and the friend came out, he said, "Sir, I value your estate very highly, you promised to let me have it for nothing, but I do not want to be obliged to you, so I have brought a bag all full of gold to buy it with."

The rich man said, "I never offered to sell it to you, I said I would give it to you, but come, let us look at your bag of gold." So the poor man opened wide the mouth of the sack, he blushed and stammered and said, "Oh, sir, be not angry with me, now I come to look at it, it is nothing but a bag of

silver.” The friend said, “Look at it again.” He looked again, and blushed and cried, “Let not my lord be angry, but I find it is nothing but a bag of copper.” “Look once more,” said he. He looked once more into it, and he fell down on his knees and said, “Forgive me, forgive me, I find, sir, it is a bag of filth. You see I have brought you a bag of filth with which to buy your rich estate.”

You know the meaning of that parable, do you not? You have brought to God what you thought were good works, golden works, look at them you will see them pale before you, and you will say, “My Lord, they are not so good as I thought they were, they are only silver works after all.” Look at them again and they will become dirty, brown, copper works. “Oh,” say you, “they are not worth more than a farthing now.” Look again, and you will see that your prayers, your tears, your good works, are nothing better than filth, after all. They are only another form of sin, another shape of iniquity,

Oh, sinner, take Christ as He is, take Him now, just as you are. The Gospel is just this—trust Christ and you are saved. Rely on what He did and you are delivered. Just leave off trusting to any ceremonies, to any doctrines, to any forms, to any works, but rely on Jesus and you are saved.

“Well,” says one, “*but if I go on in sin.*” You cannot go on in sin after you have relied on Jesus, that will stop you, nothing else can, but faith will. “No,” says another, “but I have nothing in the world, no reason why I should be saved, I have no good thing.” Just so, I know you have not, but still you are told to trust Jesus whether you have any good thing or not.

I think I hear someone say, “I must not trust Jesus, I have no right to do it.” But my dear friend, you are commanded to do it. “God commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” This is the commandment, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Is not this the very Gospel—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved”? Now what God commands me to do I have a right to do, it cannot be wrong for me to do what God tells me to do.

The minister who tells a man he has his right found in his own *sense of need*, makes the sinner look to himself, but if he tells him, “Feel or not feel, God has commanded you to believe,” that makes the sinner turn to Christ and Christ only, this turns his eye from himself to the Savior.

To conclude, I will tell you a little anecdote which I have often told before, it brings to your mind more clearly than any other means, your right to believe in Christ. I am speaking to those who say, “I have no right to trust Christ.” But if Christ commands you to do it, and if moreover He tells you, “you are condemned already because you do not believe,” you certainly have a right to believe.

Sitting one day in court with a judge, interesting myself with some trials that were going on, there was wanted a witness. I am not clear about his name, but I think it was Brown. So it was said from the bench that Brown was wanted next. The usher down in the court cried out, “Brown!” Someone nearer the door cried, “Brown!” and I could hear them calling out in the street two or three times, “Brown! Brown! Brown!”

The court was very crowded. By and by there came in at the court door with a great deal of difficulty, a little, ugly, mean looking creature, he came pushing and elbowing his way. There was a fine tall gentleman standing in the court, looking on. He did not like to be pushed about, and he said in a very peremptory manner, “*Who are you?*” “Brown,” said the man, “I am Brown.” “Well,” but said the other, “Who is Brown?” “Nobody,” said he, “only I was told to come.”

It was full of wonder how everybody made way for Brown, because he was told to come. They just cleared a lane for him, and I do not suppose for my lord and duke they would have made room—they were so tightly packed, but Brown must come in anyhow, because he was wanted. It did not matter how poor he looked, how ragged, how greasy, how dirty, Brown was wanted and he had a right to come.

So now, God commands you to trust Christ. But you say, “There is a great big sin standing up.” And He says, “Who are you?” You say, “A poor sinner.” “And what is a poor sinner?” says He. “Nothing at all,” you say, “but Jesus Christ told me to trust in Him. If He is wrong I leave the blame with Him, I will not keep back from Him.”

He says, “Leap into My arms.” I am at the top of a burning house, He cries, “leap, and I will catch you.” Then down I go. Dashed to pieces or saved, I have no other way of salvation—down I go into His

arms. I am sinking, the floods are ready to swallow me up. Christ says, "Lay hold of that rope." It looks like a frail rope, but I lay hold of it. Sink or swim I will not lay hold of anything else, but that and that alone, and I am safe.

Do *that*, poor sinner, whoever you may be. If you have not entered a place of worship for the last six months, trust Christ now. *Now*, I beseech you, while the accepted hour is here, may God the Holy Spirit enable you to trust Christ, and though you have come in here covered with sin, you may go out with your sin washed away, peace and joy in your heart, because the Spirit of God has sweetly led you to trust Jesus and you are saved.

May God now add His blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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.