

## “BY WATER AND BLOOD”

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A SERMON

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*“This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood.”*  
*1 John 5:6*

BY the terms “water” and “blood” we understand the purifying and the pardoning effects of Christ’s work for His people. He came to purify them from the power of sin, that they might no longer live in it. This is indicated by the declaration that He “came by water.” He also came to put away the guilt of their sin, that they might not be condemned for it. This is set forth by the intimation that He also came “by blood.”

We might say that all the Lord’s prophets, who came before Christ, in a certain sense, “came by water.” That is to say, they all sought the purification of the Lord’s people. Whether it was Isaiah, whose lips had been touched with the live coal from the altar, or Jeremiah, whose eyes were fountains of tears as he wept over sinners, or Amos, who spoke as a herdsman, or Ezekiel, whose message was one of grandeur and sublimity, the object of every one of them was to purge the people from their sins.

It was against sin that they all lifted up their voices, yet none of them could pardon sin and no one of them ever professed to be able to do so. Of the whole of them it must be said that they came by water only, and not by blood.

But Jesus Christ does what the prophets could not do. It is true that He does seek to make His people holy, but it is by His blood that all their sins are forever put away. John the Baptist was the last and the greatest of all the prophets who came before Christ, yet he had to say, “He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear.” John never spoke of his own blood having any power to take away sin, but he pointed to Christ and said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

So far as our Lord’s first disciples were concerned, He certainly “came by water,” for contact with His unique personality must have tended to purify their lives. Yet He also came “by blood” as well as by water, for it was by virtue of His atoning sacrifice that their sins were blotted out and that they became “accepted in the beloved.”

The two ordinances of our holy religion were intended, I take it, to sum up the teaching of Christ. The one is baptism, which represents the cleansing of the conscience as the body is washed with water, the death of the soul to the old carnal life, its burial with Christ, and its resurrection to a life of holiness. Then comes the ordinance of the Lord’s supper, which sets forth, in the broken bread and the poured-out wine, the great truth of Christ’s atonement—the fact that He has, by His death, perfected forever all those who have been set apart unto Him.

It is very important that we should always carry in our minds the remembrance of these two truths—first, *that Jesus Christ “came by water,”* that is, it was His divine purpose to purify His people and make them holy. And secondly, *that Jesus Christ “came by blood,”* that is, it was His grand aim and object to deliver His people from the guilt of sin. These are the two topics upon which I am going to speak to you as the Holy Spirit shall graciously guide me.

**I.** So, first, JESUS CHRIST “CAME BY WATER”—it was His divine purpose to purify His people.

It is manifest that *there was an urgent necessity for this purification,* for all of us had become as an unclean thing in the sight of God, and even our righteousnesses were as filthy rags. We could not

cleanse ourselves, neither could we obtain cleansing through the works of the law. Yet it was imperatively necessary that we should be made holy, for, otherwise, where God is and where His holy angels dwell, we could never be—and therefore what we ourselves could not do, and what the law could not do, “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh” has perfectly accomplished.

If any of you ask me how Christ makes His people holy, I would remind you that, when the Spirit of God reveals Jesus Christ to our heart, we then begin to perceive the exceeding sinfulness of sin. What! did sin stab my Savior to the heart? Did sin nail my Best-beloved to the cross? Then I hate sin with a perfect hatred and will be revenged upon it.

The atonement of Christ gives such an exhibition of the guilt of sin as is not to be seen anywhere else—no, not even in the flames of hell. And when a soul sees Christ despised, rejected, wounded, bleeding, and dying because of sin, it realizes how foul and vile a thing sin is, and so is moved to hate it, not only because of its foulness and blackness, but also out of gratitude to Christ who has put it away.

Did my Savior love me so much as to bear the dread penalty of my sin? Then I will give sin no quarter, but seek to utterly destroy it.

*“The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,”—*

shall be cast down from the throne which it has usurped that I may worship my gracious God, and Him alone.

This gratitude to Christ begets a more and more intense love to Christ, and the more we love Him, the more we become like Him—and becoming like Him, of course sin is cast out and virtue is nourished. Ask any Christian whether he has not found that the best weapon with which to smite his sins has been a nail from Christ's cross or the spear that pierced His side. Men have tried to overcome sin by the reasoning of philosophy, or by arguments fetched from common sense—but those blunt wooden swords have been powerless to destroy it.

It is only the sharp two-edged sword of the Spirit—the grand doctrine of the love and grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that can pierce our sin to the heart and lay it in the dust. You have, beloved, but to meditate upon His passion to receive the virtue of the water which flowed from His side, and that shall enable you to trample upon your lusts, and to consecrate all your powers and passions to His service.

I appeal to the experience of every Christian here to confirm what I have said—my brother or sister in Christ, was there not great need for Christ to come “by water” to you? For, first, what was your nature? Nay, what is it? If you were left to yourself, what might you not become? If circumstances put temptation in your way and God's grace did not restrain you, what sin might you not commit?

Have you not, sometimes, when your feet have almost gone and your steps have well-nigh slipped, looked down into the depths of the horrible pit of human corruption and shuddered with alarm at the discovery of possibilities of evil which you had scarcely suspected? Well, then, if you have such a nature as this, you do indeed need the purifying streams from the heart of Christ to make it clean, and you may well pray to Him, with Toplady,—

*“Let the water and the blood,  
From Thy riven side which flow'd,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”*

Then, next, what about our thoughts? As I walked to this house of prayer tonight and tried to concentrate my meditations upon the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, I could not help feeling how mysterious it is that, the more we try to guide our thoughts into right channels, the more determined they seem to be to run towards evil.

Have you not sometimes found that even in your most hallowed moments, some unchaste and vile thought, which you abhor as you hate the very fiend himself, will suddenly come into your mind? Does not blasphemy at times intrude into your prayers? Does it not occasionally happen that the hymn you are singing suggests something the very reverse of praise to God, and that the text of the sermon, or some part of the discourse itself, becomes a peg upon which the devil hangs a temptation to sin?

Alas! Alas! our thoughts, if left to themselves, are as a cage of unclean birds or a den of wild beasts. And as Hercules needed to turn a stream of water to cleanse the Augean stable, our Lord Jesus Christ needed to pour rivers of water out of His own heart to cleanse the foul stable of our corrupt thoughts.

Then think of our words. I am not now speaking of carnal man—I am talking of professing Christians. Would any of us like to have all our words printed for a single week? If any of you would, I can honestly say that I would not. One does earnestly try to keep the tongue from evil and the lips from speaking guile, but oh! how many idle words, how many frivolous words, how many sharp, angry, hot, unkind words fly from our lips almost before we are aware of it! God forgive us for the sins of the tongue! If we had nothing else for which to praise Christ, we ought to bless Him to all eternity that He came “by water” to cleanse that tongue which is naturally so foul.

Then look at our actions. John writes truly, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God”—that is to say, he does not sin willfully, he does not continue sinning, yet he does sin. Need I try to prove that he does?

O beloved, look at your lives since you have known the Lord, and see what sin there has been in them. Can you set even one week’s action in the light of God’s countenance and say, “O Lord, my life this week has been perfectly pure”? You know that you cannot. Well then, if with the utmost possible guard upon your own conduct, with the most diligent check upon your conversation, with the greatest watchfulness concerning your thoughts, you are still made to feel that there is a corrupt nature within you, and that the flesh still lusts against the Spirit, how thankful you ought to be that Jesus Christ “came by water” that He might purge your nature and make it clean!

Thus have I shown you the necessity for this purification. Now let me try to set before you *the power of this “water” which does make the Christian clean*. It is not a matter of speculation as to whether Christ makes sinners into saints—He is constantly performing this blessed work, which no power but that which is divine could ever accomplish. Think for a minute or two of the forces which it has to overcome.

There is the old nature of which I have been speaking, and that is not an enemy that can be easily overthrown. Have you ever tried to bind it fast with fetters and to keep it in chains? That “old Adam” is very strong—and even in aged Christians, who sometimes seem to fancy that their corruptions have grown as aged and as feeble as they themselves are, it has been, alas! only too sadly proved that the “old Adam” does not become weak as easily as the old man does. The opposition of our carnal nature to the grace and work of Christ is so strong that nothing but omnipotence itself can overcome it, yet Jesus Christ so gloriously “came by water” that He completely conquers the flesh.

Then there is the enmity of the world, which is always in antagonism to Christ and to His people too. Worldlings are always ready to turn us aside to sin, and they will never help us to walk the narrow way that leads unto life. The way of the world is always towards evil—the habits and customs of the world are evil, only evil, and that continually.

As the apostle John says, “All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” All these evils continually beset us and powerful indeed must be that stream which can counteract and overcome them. Yet Jesus Christ does this through coming “by water” as well as by blood.

There is also the devil to be overthrown and we must never think lightly of his powers. He has overcome many mighty men and he would easily overpower us if we were left to contend with him in our own unaided strength. Bunyan’s pilgrim found it to be no child’s play to fight with Apollyon, nor shall we. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the

rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” But blessed be God, we go not to this warfare at our own charges. But blessed be God, we go not to this warfare at our own charges, and greater is He who is with us than all that can be against us.

Yes, that awful trinity of evil—the world, the flesh and the devil—shall not be able to overcome even one believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of this, beloved, and let your eyes sparkle with the delight of anticipation—you shall one day have no tendencies to sin—you shall then be as pure in nature as the holy angels, you shall then be fit to consort with cherubim and seraphim, and the glorified spirits that, day without night, circle the throne of God.

And even the Lord God Himself, the infinitely pure and holy One, shall not disdain to dwell among you, for then you shall be perfectly free from sin, “without fault before the throne of God.” Not even the all-piercing eye of God shall be able to discover in you any thought of wrong, any word of evil, any act of sin, any corruption of nature, any sloth, or pride, or lust, or temper, or anything contrary to His holy will.

Free from all sin forever are all those who shall stand “before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.” And I shall be there and you shall be there, if here we are trusting in Him who “came by water” to “purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Have no doubt concerning it, my brother or sister in Jesus. Strong are your foes, but far stronger is your glorious Helper. Many and mighty are your enemies, but almighty is your Friend. Stern is the conflict that has to be faced, but sure is the victory that shall in due time be won. So press on bravely day by day, and moment by moment, resisting even unto blood, striving against sin.

How many of us have already proved the purifying power of this “water” by which Christ came? Of course, I need hardly point out to you that there is no support here for the unscriptural doctrine of baptismal regeneration. The water that flowed from Christ’s side is typical of the cleansing work of the truth that He has revealed, even as He said to His disciples, “Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.”

Have you, beloved, felt the cleansing power of the truth as it is in Jesus? If not, God grant that you may realize it now—and to Him shall be the praise forever.

**II.** Now, secondly, I have to remind you that JESUS CHRIST CAME BY BLOOD AS WELL AS BY WATER. “Not by water only, but by water and blood”—that is to say, it was His grand aim and object, by His atoning sacrifice, to deliver His people from the guilt of sin.

There are some who are continually trying to get the doctrine of the atonement out of the Bible. Certain philosophical divines, who have just a smattering of theological knowledge, and who seem to forget the couplet,—

*“A little learning is a dangerous thing;  
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring,”—*

try to hold up Christ for our admiration as a great Teacher, as a mighty Prophet, and as our perfect Exemplar—but as to the idea of Christ shedding His blood to wash away sin, they cry, “Away with it! Away with it!”

And yet, my dear friends, Christ cannot be of the slightest service to any of us if He did not come “by blood” to put away the guilt of our sin as well as “by water” to purify us from its defilement. For, supposing you and I could, by some mysterious influence, become from this time forth perfectly holy—what would be the good of that to us?

I do not know that it would be any benefit to us at all if there were no atonement. I think that it would be a curse rather than a blessing, for we should still be under condemnation on account of the sins which we have already committed. We are even now in the position of condemned criminals—and if there is no atoning sacrifice of Christ to put away the guilt of our many transgressions—and we have to pay the penalty which is the inevitable consequence of our past sins, how intense and indeed intensified

must be our anguish as, after being made holy, we have to suffer for the iniquities which we committed before that great change was wrought upon us! I have only to state the matter thus for you to see that such a condition of things is utterly impossible.

Oh, no! if I must be lost, I will remain as I am. If there is no pardon for my past transgressions, it is of no use for me to have purity for the future. If I could become perfectly holy for a time, but should, after all, be cast away from God’s presence, I do not want a temporary holiness of that sort, for I do not see how it could be of the slightest possible use to me, and my very nature recoils against even a good thing which would only increase my misery to an intolerable degree.

But beloved, I have only been supposing, for the sake of argument, what is not true, *for Jesus Christ did come “by blood” as well as “by water.”* Paul truly wrote to the Hebrews, “Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” And He has forever put away all the sin of every one who believes in Him. That great sacrifice was once and for all completed on Calvary—and it is made efficacious to each one of the innumerable host for whom Christ died as soon as by faith he appropriates the blessing to himself. As Joseph Hart sings,—

*“The moment a sinner believes,  
And trusts in his crucified God,  
His pardon at once he receives,  
Redemption in full through His blood.”*

It was by virtue of Christ’s atoning sacrifice that Paul was able to say at Antioch what we can truthfully repeat in your hearing today, “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

The precious blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses from all sin all those who put their trust in Him. It is no sooner applied by the Holy Spirit to the heart and conscience than every sin that a man has ever committed ceases to be, and the virtue in Christ’s blood is so great that it covers all the sin that the man will ever commit, as John Kent sings,—

*“Here’s pardon for transgressions past,  
It matters not how black their cast;  
And oh! my soul, with wonder view,  
For sins to come here’s pardon too.”*

A believer in Jesus has no record against him in God’s book of remembrance. The Lord says to him as He said to Israel of old, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins.” They are as completely obliterated, annihilated, and destroyed as if they had never been committed. It is this glorious truth which sets Christ apart from all the prophets that came before Him—and all His servants who have or will come after Him—they all “came by water,” seeking to make their message the means of purification to the Lord’s people. But Christ came “not by water only, but by water and blood,” for He came both to purify His people and to put away the guilt of their transgression.

Those who deny the atonement of Christ must have very low views of what God is and of what is due to His offended majesty. According to them, God is to be insulted, His throne is to be attacked, His crown is to be assailed, and His honor is to be impugned—and yet no adequate recompense is to be made to Him.

Such persons must also have very low views of sin. They make it out to be a mere trifle which God is to forgive without exacting any penalty for it. They seem to think that in His mercy, He can put away sin without any reparation to His broken law and without any satisfaction being rendered to His offended justice.

But he who reads his Bible aright knows that all such notions are altogether erroneous. He has learnt, from the Scriptures, that God is inflexibly stern in His justice although He is supremely gracious in His Love. God hates sin so much that He had to turn away His face even from His well-beloved Son when He was, by imputation, bearing the sins of His people upon Calvary. And it was that desertion by His Father that wrung from Christ that saddest of all the cries from the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

But now that Christ has endured the full penalty for His people’s sin, God can “be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” God’s love can be displayed to the utmost without in any way infringing the rightful claims of His justice, and all His attributes remain absolutely unsullied after the vindication they have received through the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

*All this has been accomplished because Jesus Christ came “not by water only, but by water and blood.”* Oh, the power of the precious blood of Jesus! Did you ever feel it, dear friend? If so, you will never doubt the truth of the atonement, for it will be very real to you.

Never can I forget the day when I first felt in my soul the power of the blood of Jesus. Christ’s blood has the power to put away sin from the sight of the all-seeing JEHOVAH, but it also has the power, so far as man is concerned, to give peace to the troubled conscience, rest to the weary heart, joy to the miserable life.

No one could ever have been more wretched and sad than I was, when under a sense of sin, life had become almost unbearable though I was but a lad. But oh! what a leap my soul gave from the very depths of despair up to the heights of overflowing joy, when I realized that Christ had come to me—“not by water only, but by water and blood”—and that He had put away my sins as far as the East is from the West, so that they should be remembered against me no more forever!

*“Ever since by faith I saw the stream  
His flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die.”*

Remember, my dear hearer, that *Jesus Christ must come to you “by blood” or else He will never come to you “by water.”* Christ never gives a man holiness of life unless that man accepts Him as the great propitiation for sin. Do you ask, “How can Christ come to me by water and by blood?” The only way that I know is the one that I have pointed out to you over and over again.

It is this—you are a sinner, lost and undone. Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the lost. To do this, He had to take the sinner’s place—to bear the sinner’s guilt and to suffer the penalty that the sinner deserved to suffer. “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”

Have you faith enough to appropriate His work? Perhaps you question whether you may do so. Well, rest assured of this—there never was a sinner who trusted Christ and then was told that he had no right to trust Him. Oh, no! He Himself said, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,” and He will not cast you out if you come to Him.

Can you believe that His blood was shed for you? Dare you rest your soul’s salvation upon the great work of which He said, “It is finished,” ere He bowed His head and gave up the ghost? Will you now trust Christ as your Substitute and Savior? You know the verses that we often sing,—

*“Just as I am—without one plea  
But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bidd’st me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come.*

*Just as I am—and waiting not*

*To rid my soul of one dark blot,  
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,  
O Lamb of God, I come.”*

Is this the language of your heart? Then I venture to say that Christ has come to you, “not by water only, but by water and blood,” that Christ died for your sins according to the Scriptures and that God will never punish you for your transgressions as Christ has borne the full penalty for them all.

Then if you have received Christ thus as coming to you by blood, I feel sure that you will also believe that He has come to you by water, to purify you from all defilement, and therefore you will not any longer knowingly and willfully continue in sin. The gratitude which you must feel in your heart for all that Christ has done for you will constrain you to walk before Him in holiness and humility, and to seek to obey His will at all times.

Now, many of us are coming to the table of our Lord to commune with Him and with one another—and there we must specially think of how He came to us, “not by water only, but by water and blood.” The broken bread will remind us of His body broken for us, and the wine in the cup will bring to our remembrance His precious blood of the new covenant shed for us for the remission of our sins.

Oh, what a wonder it is that we, who once were as the prodigal son in the far country, wasting our substance in riotous living, or perhaps even herding among the swine—are now welcomed at our Father’s board among His happy forgiven children.

A few years ago, nay, even a few months ago, some of us would not have been spending the Sabbath evening among the Lord’s people in a house of prayer—and it would never have entered into our thoughts that we should be found sitting as honored guests at His table. Our ideas of enjoyment then were very different from what they are now. The laughter of fools was then in our mouth and perhaps the song of the drunkard issued from our lips. But now, by grace, a blessed change has been wrought in us, for we are washed, we are sanctified, we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

So, as we come to this table of communion, let us come humbly remembering what we once were, thankfully recollecting what Christ has done for us, and earnestly entreating Him to continue and complete His good work in us by purifying us with water even as He has already put away our guilt by His blood, and to Him shall be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

### EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

#### I JOHN 5

**Verse 1.** *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God:* [See Sermon #979, Faith and Regeneration]

Take comfort, believer, from that declaration. You have accepted Jesus as the Christ, the anointed of God, so the apostle affirms that you are “born of God.” It may be only lately that you have been born again, you may be only a babe in grace, but if you have a true faith in Christ as God’s anointed, you are “born of God.”

**1.** *And every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.*

If you truly love God, you also love His well-beloved and only-begotten Son—and you also love all His children. There cannot be a true love to the Father and a hatred to His family, that is impossible. Judge therefore by this test whether you love God or not.

**2-3.** *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*

Love is a practical thing. Love without obedience is a mere pretense. True love shows itself by seeking to please the one who is loved. May God the Holy Ghost work in us perfect obedience to the commands of God, that we may prove that we really do love Him!

**4.** *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* [See Sermons #14, The Victory of Faith and #2757, Victorious Faith]

This is the conquering weapon. He who truly believes in Jesus cannot be overthrown by the combined forces of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Remember the lesson that Haman learned when he contended in vain against Mordecai because Mordecai was of the seed of the Jews, and learn that they who belong to Christ shall, like Christ, be more than conquerors.

**5.** *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

Let that truth be firmly fixed in your mind and nerve you in your conflict with the world. The old cry, *Athanasius contra mundum*, “Athanasius against the world,” may be uttered by every believer in Jesus into *Christianus contra mundum*. “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”

**6-7.** *This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.*

Thus all the Persons in the blessed Trinity confirm the faith of the Christian—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost bear united witness to the faith which God Himself gives us.

**8.** *And there are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.* [See Sermon #1187, The Three Witnesses]

Three candles in the room, but the light is one. Three witnesses to our heart, but the witness is the same. If we have the witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood, we know that we have received the truth of God.

**9-10.** *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.* [See Sermons #1250, The Priest Dispensed With and #1428, The True Position of The Witness Within]

What better witness than this, could he have?

**10.** *He that believeth not God has made Him a liar;—*[See Sermon #1207, A Solemn Impeachment of Unbelievers]

He need not actually say that God is a liar—the fact that he does not believe Him has practically made out that God is a liar. How many of us are there to whom this passage applies? “He that believeth not God hath made him a liar;”—

**10.** *Because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.*

Is this true concerning anyone here? If so, perhaps you have not been aware of the extent of your guilt. You have remained unbelievers out of sheer carelessness, out of neglect of the Word. I pray you, rest not in such a state of mind and heart now that you are informed by the Spirit of God that, by your unbelief, you are making God a liar. Who would willfully commit that great sin? Let us shudder at the thought of the bare possibility of such guilt as this.

**11.** *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*

Our only hope lies in Christ. But there is life for us in Christ, and life eternal, if we do but believe in Him.

**12.** *He that hath the Son hath life; and he that has not the Son of God hath not life.*

You exist, and you always will exist, but true life is not yours if you have not Christ as your Savior. Life is something infinitely superior to mere existence, “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

**13-15.** *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the*

*confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

A very wonderful thing is prayer, yet it is not every man's prayer that is heard. But he that has the life of God within him shall have his petitions granted because the Holy Spirit will move him to ask in accordance with the will of God.

**16-18.** *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.*

He who has committed the sin which is unto death has no desire for forgiveness, he will never repent, he will never seek faith in Christ, but he will continue hardened and unbelieving. He will henceforth never be the subject of holy influences, for he has crossed over into that dark region of despair where hope and mercy never come.

Perhaps some of you think that you have committed that unpardonable sin and are at this moment grieving over it. If so, it is clear that you cannot have committed that sin, or else you could not grieve over it. If you have any fear concerning it, you have not committed that sin which is unto death, for even fear is a sign of life.

Whoever repents of sin and trusts in Jesus Christ is freely and fully forgiven, therefore it is clear that he has not committed a sin which will not be forgiven. There is much in this passage to make us prayerful and watchful, but there is nothing here to make a single troubled heart feel anything like despair. He that is born again, born from above, can never commit this unpardonable sin. He is kept from it—“that wicked one” cannot even touch him, for he is preserved by sovereign grace against this dreadful damage to his soul.

You need not be curious to enquire what this unpardonable sin is. I will give you an old illustration of mine concerning it. You may sometimes have seen a notice put up on certain estates in the country, “Man-traps and spring guns set here,” but if so, did you ever go round to the front door of the mansion and say, “If you please, will you tell me where the man-traps are, and whereabouts the spring guns are set?” If you had asked that question, the answer would have been, “It is the very purpose of this warning not to tell you where they are, for you have no business to trespass there at all.”

So, “all unrighteousness is sin,” and you are warned to keep clear of it. “There is a sin unto death,” but you are not told what that sin is on purpose that you may, by the grace of God, keep clear of sin altogether.

**19-21.** *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*

After the Reformation in England, there was a certain part of the church, called the rood-loft, where the crucifix used to be, and it was ordered by the Reformers, when “the holy rood” was taken away, that these words should be printed in capital letters in its place—“LITTLE CHILDREN, KEEP YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS.”

This was an admirable arrangement and this text might very profitably be put up in a good many Ritualistic churches now, instead of the *Agnus Dei* and the crucifix—“Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” Might we not also say to many a mother and many a father concerning their children, and to many a lover of money and hungerer after gold, “Keep yourselves from idols”?

Idolatry will intrude itself in one form or another. Some idolize themselves—they look in the glass, and there see the face of their god. O beware of all idolatry! “Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.” We may very well say “Amen” to that.

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](http://www.spurgeongems.org).