

THE FRIEND OF SINNERS

NO. 458

A SERMON
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*“He was numbered with the transgressors;
 and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”
 Isaiah 53:12*

A VAGUE notion is abroad in the world that the benefit of Christ’s passion is intended only for good people. The preaching of some ministers, and the talk of some professors, would lead the uninstructed to imagine that Christ came into the world to save the righteous, to call the godly to repentance, and to heal those who never were sick.

There is in most sinners’ consciences, when they are aroused, a frightful fear that Christ could not have come to bless such as they are, but that He must have intended the merit of His blood and the efficacy of His passion for those who possess good works or feelings to recommend them to Him.

Dear friends, you will clearly see, if you will but open one eye, how inconsistent such a supposition is with the whole teaching of Scripture. Consider the *plan* itself. It was a plan of salvation and of necessity, it was intended to bless sinners. Wherefore salvation if men be not lost, and for whom salvation but for the ruined? The plan was based in grace, but how “*grace*” unless it was meant for persons who deserve nothing?

If you have to deal with creatures who have not sinned, and have been obedient, what need of grace? Build then on justice, let merit have its way. But as the whole covenant is a covenant of grace, and as in the whole matter it was ordained that grace should reign through righteousness unto eternal life, it is plain enough from the very plan itself that it must have to do with sinners and not with the righteous.

Moreover, think of the *work* itself. The work of Christ was to bring in a perfect righteousness. For whom, think you? For those who had a righteousness? That were a superfluity. Why should He weave a garment for those who were already clothed in scarlet and fine linen? He had, moreover, to shed His blood. For whom His blood? Wherefore the agony in the garden? Why the cry upon the cross? For the perfect? Surely not, beloved. What need had they of an atonement? Verily, brethren, the fact that Jesus Christ bled for sin upon the cross bears, on its very surface, evidence that He came into the world to save *sinners*.

And then look at *God’s end* in the whole work. It was to glorify Himself, but how could God be glorified by washing spotless souls, and by bringing to everlasting glory by grace those who could have entered heaven by merit? Inasmuch as the plan and design both aim at laying the greatness of human nature in the dust, and exalting God, and making His love and His mercy to be magnified, it is implied as a matter of necessity that it came to deal with undeserving, ill-deserving sinners, or else that end and aim never could be accomplished.

Salvation needs a sinner as the raw material upon which to exercise its workmanship—the precious blood that cleanses needs a filthy sinner upon whom to show its power to purge—the atonement of Christ needs guilt upon which to exercise itself in the taking of it away. And it is absurd, it is ridiculous, it is unworthy of God to suppose a scheme of salvation, a work so tremendous as the atonement of Christ, and an aim so splendid as the glorification of God, unless there are sinners to be the instruments of God’s glory through being the partakers of God’s grace.

A moment’s thought will be enough to convince us that the whole plan is made for sinners, and that “Jesus Christ died for the ungodly.” Indeed dear friends, it is only when we get this view very clearly

before us that we see Jesus in His glory. When does the shepherd appear most lovely? It is a fair picture to portray him in the midst of his flock, feeding them in the green pastures, and leading them beside the still waters, but if my heart is to leap for joy, give me the shepherd pursuing his stray sheep over the mountains, let me see him bringing home that sheep upon his shoulders rejoicing, let me hear his song of mirth when he calls upon his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him because he has found the sheep which was lost.

When looks our God look most like a loving and tender father? Truly He looks blessed when He divides His inheritance among His sons, but I never saw Him so resplendent in His fatherhood as when He runs out to meet the prodigal, throws His arms about his neck, and kisses him, crying—"My son who was dead is alive again."

Indeed, for some offices of Christ, it is absolutely necessary that there should be a sinner for us to see any meaning in them at all. He is a Priest. What need of a priest except for the sins of the people? Why, I dare to say it, Christ's priesthood is a mockery and Christ's sacrifice is ridiculous unless there be sin in the world, and sinners whom Jesus came to save. Brethren, how is He a Savior except to the lost? How is He a physician but to the sick? How is He like the brazen serpent if He does not save the sin-bitten, or how the scapegoat if He does not bear the sin of transgressors?

Our text, in its threefold character, shows the intimate connection which exists between Jesus and sinners, for in none of its sentences is there meaning unless there be a sinner, and unless Christ has come into connection with him. It is this one point which I want to work out this morning, and may God bless it to many a sinner's troubled conscience.

"He was numbered with the transgressors; he bare the sin of many, and he made intercession for the transgressors." It is for transgressors all the way through. Bring in a company of righteous people who think they have no sin and they cannot appreciate the text, in fact it can have no meaning to them.

I. We shall begin then, by taking the first sentence. To the sinner, troubled and alarmed on account of guilt, there will be much comfort in the thought that CHRIST IS ENROLLED AMONG SINNERS. "He was numbered with the transgressors."

In what sense are we to understand this? "He was numbered with the transgressors."

He was numbered with them, first, *in the census of the Roman empire*. There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed, and the espoused wife of Joseph, being great with child, must travel to Bethlehem that Christ may be born there, and that He may be numbered with the transgressing people who, for their sins, were subject to the Roman yoke.

Years rolled on, and that child who had been early numbered with transgressors and had received the seal of transgression in the circumcision, which represents the putting away of the flesh—that child, having come to manhood, goes forth into the world, and is numbered with transgressors *in the scroll of fame*.

Ask public rumor, "What is the character of Jesus of Nazareth?" and it cannot find a word in its vocabulary foul enough for Him. "This _____" they sometimes said, and our translators have inserted the word "fellow" because in the original there is an ellipsis—the evangelists, I suppose, hardly liking to write the word which had been cast upon Christ Jesus. Fame, with her lying tongue, said He was a drunken man, and a winebibber, because He would not yield to the asceticism of the age. He would not, since He came to be a man among men, do other than eat and drink as other men did. He came not to set an example of asceticism but of temperance. He came both eating and drinking, and they said at once, "Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber."

They called Him mad. His warm enthusiasm, His stern and unflinching rebukes of wickedness in high places brought upon Him the accusation that He had a devil. "Thou hast a devil and art mad," they said. They called Him the Master of the house Beelzebub! Even the drunkards made Him their song, and the vilest thought Him viler than themselves, for He was, by current rumor, numbered with the transgressors.

But to make the matter still more forcible, “he was numbered with transgressors in the *courts of law*.” The ecclesiastical court of Judaism, the Sanhedrim, said of Him, “Thou blasphemest,” and they smote Him on the cheek. Written down among the offenders against the dignity of God and against the security of the Jewish Church, you find the name of Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified.

The civil courts also asserted the same. Pilate may wash his hands in water and say, “I find no fault in him,” but still, driven by the infernal clamors of an angry people, he is compelled to write, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews,” and he gives Him up to die as a malefactor who has rebelled against the sovereign law of the land.

Herod too, the Jewish tetrarch, confirms the sentence, and so, with two pens at once, Jesus Christ is written down by the civil leaders among transgressors.

Then, *the whole Jewish people* numbered Him with transgressors, nay, they reprobated Him as a more abominable transgressor than a thief and a murderer who had excited sedition. Barabbas is put in competition with Christ, and they say, “Not this man, but Barabbas.” See, brethren, His being numbered with transgressors is no fiction. Lo, He bears the transgressor’s scourging! He is tied to the whipping post, His back is marred and scarred, the ploughers make deep furrows, and the blood flows in streams.

He is numbered with transgressors, for He bears the felon’s cross, He comes into the street bowed down with the weight of His own gibbet, which He must carry upon His raw and bleeding shoulders. He goes along to the place of doom. He comes to Calvary—the place of a skull—and there, hoisted upon the cross, hanging in mid-air, as if earth rejected Him and heaven refused Him shelter, He dies the ignominious death of the cross, and is thus numbered with transgressors.

But will there be none to enter a protest? Will no eye pity? Will no man declare His innocence? None, they are all silent! Silent, did I say? ’Tis worse! All earth holds up its hands for His death, it is carried unanimously. Jew and Gentile, bond and free, they are all there. They thrust out the tongue, they hoot, they laugh, they cry, “Let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.” His name is written in the calendar of crime by the whole universe, for He is despised and rejected of men, *of all men* is He accounted to be the off-scouring of all things, and is put to grief.

But will not heaven interfere? O God, upon Thy throne, wilt Thou let the innocent suffer? He is fast nailed to the tree, and cries in agony, “I thirst.” Will You permit this man to be numbered with transgressors? Is it rightly done? It is, heaven confirms it. He has no sin of His own, but He has the sin of His people upon His shoulders.

And God, the Eternal Judge, shows that He too considers Him to be in the roll of transgressors, for He veils His face, and the Eternal Father betakes Him to His hiding place, and Christ can neither see a smile nor a glance of His Father’s face, till He shrieks in agony so unutterable, that the words cannot express the meaning of the Redeemer’s soul, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

The only answer from heaven being, “I must forsake transgressors, Thou art numbered with them, and therefore, I must forsake Thee.” But surely the doom will not be fulfilled? Certainly, He will be taken down ere He dies? Death is the curse for sin, it cannot come on any but transgressors. It is impossible for the innocent to die, as impossible as for immortality to be annihilated. Surely, then, the Lord will deliver His Son at the last moment, and having tried Him in the furnace, He will bring Him out? Nay, not so, He must become obedient to death, even the death of the cross.

He dies without a protest on the part of earth, or heaven, or hell, He that was numbered with the transgressors, having worn the transgressor’s crown of thorns, lies in the transgressor’s grave. “He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.”

It is a marvellous thing, brethren, a marvellous thing! Who ever heard of an angel being numbered with devils? Who ever heard of Gabriel being numbered with fiends? But this is more marvellous than that would be. Here is the Son of God numbered, not with the sons of men (that were a gracious act) but numbered with transgressors; numbered, not with the faithful who struggle after purity; numbered, not with those who repel temptation and resist sin; numbered, not with those who earn unto themselves a

good degree and much boldness in the faith—that were a marvellous condescension, but here it is written, “He was numbered *with the transgressors*.”

I must pause here a moment, and get you to think this matter over a little. It is a strange and a wonderful thing, and ought not to be passed by in silence. Why, think you, was Christ numbered with transgressors? First, surely, because *He could the better become their advocate*.

I believe, in legal phraseology, in civil cases, the advocate considers himself to be part and partner with the person for whom he pleads. You hear the counselor continually using the word “we,” he is considered by the judge to represent the person for whom he is an advocate. In some suits of law, there is on the part of the bar and the bench, a perfect identification of the counselor with the client, nor can they be looked upon in the eye of the law as apart from one another.

Now Christ, when the sinner is brought to the bar, appears there Himself. The trumpet sounds, the great assize is set. Come, come, ye sinners, come to the bar to be tried. There stands the man whose hands are pierced, He stands numbered with transgressors. Let the trial proceed. What is the accusation?

He stands to answer it, He points to His side, His hands, His feet, and challenges justice to bring anything against the sinners whom He represents, He pleads His blood, and pleads so triumphantly, being numbered with them and having a part with them, that the Judge proclaims, “Let them go their way, deliver them from going down into the pit, for He at their head has found a ransom.”

But there is another reason why Christ was numbered with transgressors, namely, *that He might plead with them*. Suppose a number of prisoners confined in one of our old jails, and there is a person desirous to do them good, imagine that he cannot be admitted unless his name is put down in the calendar.

Well, out of his abundant love to these prisoners, he consents to it, and when he enters to talk with them, they perhaps think that he will come in with cold dignity, but he says, “Now, let me say to you first of all that I am one of yourselves.” “Well,” they say, “but have you done aught that is wrong?” “I will not answer you that,” saith he, “but if you will just refer to the calendar you will find my name there, I am written down there among you as a criminal.”

Oh, how they open their hearts now! They opened their eyes with wonder first, but now they open their hearts, and they say, “Art thou become like one of us? Then we will talk with thee.” And he begins to plead with them. Sinner, do you see this? Christ puts Himself as near on a level with you as He can. He cannot be sinful as you are, for He is God and perfect man, but He so puts His name down in the list that when the roll is called, His name is called over with yours. Oh, how near does He come to you in your ruined state!

Then He does this that *sinners may feel their hearts drawn to Him*. What, do You become poor as I am that I may be made rich? Jesus, Son of God, do You allow Yourself to be numbered among lost ones that You might find me? Oh, then my soul shall open itself to give You a hearty reception. Come in, You loving Savior, abide with me, and go no more out for ever.

There is a tendency in awakened sinners to be afraid of Christ, but who will be afraid of a man that is numbered with us, and put down in the same list with us? Surely now we may come boldly to Him, and confess our guilt. He that is numbered with us cannot condemn us. He whose name is down in the same indictment with ourselves, comes not to condemn, but to absolve, not to curse, but to bless.

He was put down in the transgressors’ list *that we might be written in the red roll of the saints*. He was holy, and written among the holy—we were guilty, and numbered among the guilty. He transfers His name from yonder list to this black indictment—and ours are taken from the indictment, foul and filthy, and written in the roll which is fair and glorious—for there is a transfer made between Christ and His people. All that we have goes to Christ, sin and all, and all that Christ has comes to us. His righteousness, His blood, and everything that He has belongs to us.

Dear hearers, before I leave this point I want to put this to you. Is this yours by faith? Remember, faith is wanted here, nothing else. “He was numbered with transgressors.” Oh, soul, can your heart say, “Then if He was numbered with me, if He put His name down where mine stands in that terrific roll,

then I will believe in Him, that He is able and willing to save me, and I will trust my soul in His hands”? I conjure you by the living God do it, man, and your soul is saved. Oh, by Him who from the highest throne in glory stooped to the cross of deepest ignominy, trust your soul with Him. It is all He asks of you, and this He gives you.

Blessed Master, would that You could stand here and say, “Sinners, full of iniquity, I stood with you, God accounted Me as if I had committed your sin, and visited Me as if I had been a transgressor, trust Me, cast your souls upon My perfect righteousness, wash in My cleansing blood, and I will make you whole, and present you faultless before My Father’s face.”

II. We are taught in the next sentence, that Christ “BARE THE SINS OF MANY.”

Here it is as clear as noonday, that Christ dealt with *sinners*. Do not say Christ died for those who have done no wrong. That is not the description given. It is clear, I say, to everyone that chooses to look, that Christ could not bear the sins of those who had no sins, but could only bear the sins of men who were sinful and guilty.

Briefly, then, but very plainly, to recount the old, old story over again, man stood with a load of sin upon his shoulders, so heavy that it would have crushed him lower than the lowest hell, Christ Jesus came into the world, stood in the room, place, and stead of His people, and He did, in the expressive words of the text, bear their sins—that is to say, their sins were really, not in a legal fiction, but really transferred from them to Him.

You see, a man cannot bear a thing which is not on his back, it is impossible that he can bear it unless it is actually there. The word “bear,” implies weight, and weight is the sure indicator of reality. Christ did bear sin in its fullness, vileness, and condemnation upon His own shoulders. Comprehend this, then, and you have the marrow of the subject.

Christ did really, literally, and truly, take the sins that belonged to all who do believe on Him, and those sins did actually and in very deed become His sins (not that He had committed them, nor that He had any part or lot in them, except through the imputation to which He had consented, and for which He came into the world), and there lay the sins of all His people upon Christ’s shoulders.

Then notice, that as He did bear them, so other texts tell us that *He did bear them away*. “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Sin being on His head, the scapegoat took it away, away, away. Where? Into the wilderness of forgetfulness. If it is sought for it shall not be found, the Everlasting God sees it no more, it has ceased to be, for He has finished iniquity and made an end of sin, and when there is an end of it what more can be said?

Christ took our debts, but He was not long before He paid them all. Where then, are the debts? There are no debts now, there is not one in God’s book against His chosen, for Jesus died. If Christ has paid the debt, then there is no debt left, it is gone. I can rejoice in its discharge, I can mourn that ever I cast myself into such a position, but the debt itself is gone. “I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.” “As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.” “I will cast their sins into the midst of the sea.” And yet again, “I will put away thy sin like a cloud, and thine iniquity like a thick cloud.”

Now, there were some clouds during the last week, but where are they now? They have turned to rain, they are gone, no strong-winged angel could find those clouds again, there are no such things, they are gone. And so with believers’ sins, they were black, thick, thick clouds, full of tempests, big with lightnings and with thunder, but they are gone. The drops have fallen upon Christ, the thunder and the lightning have spent their fury upon Him, and the clouds are gone, for Christ has taken them away. “He bare the sins of many,” and He bore them away for ever.

And then, beloved, you must understand that if it be so, if Christ did really bear His people’s sins, and did bear them away—and since a thing cannot be in two places at one time, *there is now no sin abiding upon those for whom Jesus died*. “And who are they?” you say. Why, all those who trust Him. Any man whatsoever, the wide world over, who shall ever trust Christ, may know that no sin can be with him because his sin was laid on Christ.

Oh, I do delight in this precious doctrine! If anything could unloose my poor stammering tongue, this might, to see sin literally transferred so that there is none left! I cannot express the delight and joy of my soul at this moment, in contemplation of the blessed deliverance and release which Christ has given. I can only sing out again with Kent—

*“Sons of God, redeemed by blood,
Raise your songs to Zion’s God—
Made from condemnation free,
Grace triumphant, sing with me.”*

Now, do you not see that this must be for sinners? See, you black ones, you filthy ones, you lost ones, you ruined ones, this is for sinners. You see it does not say it was for *sensible* sinners, no, no, but sinners. It does not say, “He was numbered with *awakened* transgressors,” no, it is “transgressors.” It does not say that He bare the sins of tender-hearted sinners, no, but “He bare the sin of many.” This is the only description I can find in my text.

Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and if in very deed and truth I know myself to be this day a sinner, I may trust Christ, and trusting Christ I may know, as surely as there is a God in heaven, that Jesus Christ took my sins and carried them all away.

Now, I want to know whether you have got this by an act of faith this morning. “Oh,” says one, “I am a sinner, but, but ____.” Well, what but? If you be a sinner, you are commanded to trust Christ this morning. “Oh, ____.” I will have no “buts,” sir, no “buts” whatever. Are you a sinner? Yes or no. If you say “No,” then I have nothing to say to you, Jesus Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. If you are a sinner, to you is the Word of this salvation sent.

“But I have been a thief!” I suppose a thief is a sinner! “But I have been a drunkard!” A drunkard is a sinner. “But I have led an unclean liver!” You are a sinner then. “But I have such a hard heart!” Well, to have a hard heart is one of the greatest sins in the world. “But I am unbelieving!” Well, that is a sin too. You come in under the list of sinners, and I say that such Christ contemplated, and the two sentences we have already considered prove this to a demonstration. He contemplated such as you are when He came to save, for “He was numbered with transgressors,” and “He bare”—not the virtues of many, not the merits of many, not the good works of many, but “the sin of many.”

So, if you have any sin, here is Christ the sin-bearer, and if you are a sinner, here is Christ numbered with you. “Oh!” says one, “but what is faith? I want to know at once.” Faith, sinner, is to believe in Jesus, and to trust in Jesus now. Saving faith can sing this verse—

*“Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one foul blot,
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.”*

It is as sinners, not as sensible sinners, not as repenting sinners, that Jesus died for us. Sinners as sinners, Jesus Christ has chosen, redeemed, and called, in fact, for them, and for only such, Jesus Christ came into the world.

III. Our third sentence tells us that JESUS INTERCEDES FOR SINNERS. “And made intercession for the transgressors.”

He prays for His saints, but dear friends, remember that by nature they are transgressors, and nothing more.

What does our text say? He intercedes for transgressors! There is a transgressor here this morning. He has been hearing the Gospel for many years—for many years, and he has heard it preached faithfully too. He is growing grey now, but while his head is getting white his heart is black, he is an old hard-hearted reprobate, and by and by, unless grace prevents—but I need not tell that story.

What is that I hear? The feet of justice, slowly but surely coming. I hear a voice saying—“Lo, these three years I came seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none, cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?” The woodman feels his axe, it is sharp and keen. “Now,” says he, “I will lay to at this barren tree, and cut it down.”

But hark! There is one that maketh intercession for transgressors, hear Him, hear Him, “Spare it yet a little while, till I dig about it and dung it, and if it bears fruit *well*, but if not, after that thou shalt cut it down.” You see there was nothing in that tree why He should plead for it, and there is nothing in you why He should plead for you, yet He does it.

This very morning perhaps, He is crying, “Spare him yet a little while, let him hear the Gospel again, let him be entreated once more, oh! let him have another sickness that it may make his conscience feel, let Me have another endeavor with his hard heart, it may be, it may be that he will yield.” O sinner, bless God that Jesus Christ pleads for you in that way.

But that done, *He pleads for their forgiveness*. They are nailing Him to the cross, the wretches are driving iron through His hands, but even while they fasten Him to the tree hear Him—“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Oh, I spoke to a brother this week, whose heart all-conquering love has touched. He had been a great blasphemer, and when we were talking together about the fact that Jesus Christ loved him even when he was cursing, I saw how it broke his heart, and it broke mine too, to think that I could rebel against Christ whilst He was loving me, that I could despise Him while He was putting Himself in my way in order to do me good.

Oh! it is this that breaks a man’s heart, to think that Christ should have been loving me, with the whole force of His soul, while I was despising Him, and would have nothing to do with Him. There is a man there who has been cursing, and swearing, and blaspheming, and the very man whom he has cursed has been crying “Father, forgive him, for he knows not what he does.” O sinner, I would this might break thy heart, and bring thee to the Savior.

Nor does He end there. He next prays *that those for whom He intercedes may be saved, and may have a new life given them*. “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive.”

Every soul that is quickened by the Holy Spirit is so quickened as the result of Christ’s intercession for transgressors. His prayer brings down the life, and dead sinners live. When they live, He does not cease to pray for them, for by His intercession *they are preserved*. They are still tempted and tried, but hear what He says. “Satan has desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy strength fail not.”

Yes, brethren, beloved, this is the reason *why we are not condemned*, for our apostle puts it—“Who is he that condemneth?” and the answer he gives is, “Christ hath died, yea, rather, hath risen again, who ever maketh intercession for us,” as if that intercession choked at once the advocate of hell, and delivered us from condemnation. And more, *our coming to glory* is the result of the pleading of Christ for transgressors. “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.”

There are a great many sermons preached that have not the Gospel in them, especially those sermons the drift of which is to tell the sinners “Go home and pray, go home and pray.” That is very good advice, but it is not the Gospel. The sinner might answer me, “How can I come before God as I am, I cannot plead before Him, for I am a wretch undone, if I should stand in His presence He would drive me from Him.”

Behold Jesus Christ maketh intercession for transgressors. It is a common saying in the world, that a man who pleads his own cause has a fool for his client, certainly it is so in heaven. But when Christ comes I, the Wonderful, the Counselor, He takes up the brief, and now the adversary trembles, for no sooner does he find that the suit is put into the hands of Him who is the advocate of His people than he knows that his case is lost, and that the sinner will go free.

So, sinner, you are safe if He pleads for you. “Ah,” say you, “but if He asks me what He should plead I have nothing to tell Him.” You know the counselor goes into the cell, and he says to the prisoner—“Now, just tell me the case, what can I say in your favor?” The criminal replies, “Well, there is so-and-so, and so-and-so,” and perhaps he is able to say, “Why, sir, I am as innocent as a newborn babe of the whole affair, and I can prove an *alibi*, or I can do this or that.”

Very well, the advocate having grounds to go upon, pleads the case in the court right confidently. But now I hear you say, “Ah, I cannot tell the Lord Jesus Christ what He is to plead, for I have nothing to plead, the fact is I am guilty and thoroughly guilty too, and I deserve to be punished, and must be, I have nothing to plead.”

Now what does our blessed Advocate say? “Oh,” saith He, “but I have the plea in Myself,” and up He rises in the court of law, and when the accusation is read He puts in this to that accusation—“In the name of the sinner for whom I intercede, and with whom I am numbered, I plead absolution and forgiveness through punishment already borne.” “How?” saith Justice. And He shows the nail prints in His hands, and lays bare His side, and says, “I suffered for that sinner, I was punished with the sinner’s punishment, and therefore I claim, as the reward of My passion and My agony, that the sinner should go his way.”

Do you not see that Christ is a precious pleader because He can appear for us, and what is more, He can find a plea for us? “Ah!” I hear you say, “but I have no means of getting such an advocate as that, I wish I had, but I have nothing to give Him, if He asks any fees I have nothing, I do not deserve the love of Christ, I do not know why He should take up my cause, if He would I should be saved, but I cannot think He will, for I cannot hope to pay Him.” “Nay,” says He, “but I will take up your cause freely, willingly, cheerfully, and I will make intercession for you, not because you deserve it, but because you need it, not because you are not a transgressor, but because you are.”

That very thing, sinner, that makes you think Christ will not look at you, is the very reason why He will. You are full of disease. “Ah!” say you, “the physician will never look at such an arm as that,” but because the ulcer is reeking, that is why he stops and says, “I will cure that.” Your qualification is your disqualification, and what you think to be the reason why He never will look at you, is certainly the only reason you can plead why He should. You are nothing, you are utterly lost, you have no merit, you have nothing unless the Lord Jesus Christ make prevalent, acceptable, and perpetual intercession for transgressors.

I come to a conclusion reluctantly, but I must say these few words. There are some of you that make very light of sinning. I pray you to be reasonable, and think this matter over. It was no light thing for God to save a sinner, for the Son of God Himself must be numbered with sinners, and smart and die for sinners, or else they could not be saved. Touch not the unclean thing, hate it. If it be deadly to a holy Christ, it must be damnable to you. Oh! pass it by, and loathe it as the Egyptians loathed the water of the river when it was turned to blood in their sight.

To you who make but little of Christ, there is this word, you know what sin means, I do not think you can ever make too much of sin, but I pray you do not make too little of Christ. To you who think you have no qualifications for Christ, I say this closing sentence, I do beseech you get rid of that foul, that legal, that soul-destroying idea that Christ needs any preparation by you or in you before you come to Him. You may come to Him now, nay, more, you are *commanded* to come to Him now, just as you are.

And to every man among you today, and to every woman and child, I preach this Gospel in the name of Jesus Christ, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Trust Him now—in your seat—standing in the aisles—crowded in these galleries—trust Him now, God commands you. “This is *the* commandment, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.”

As Peter said, so say I, “Repent and be converted, every one of you,” and as Paul said to the Philippian jailer, so say I, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” If you do not, this shall condemn you, not your sin, but your unbelief, for they who believe not are

condemned already. Why, why are such condemned? Because they believe not. That is the accusation, that is the damning crime and curse.

“Well,” says one, “then if God commands me to trust Christ, though I certainly have no reason why I should, then I’ll do it.” Ah! soul, do it then. Can you do it? Can you trust Him now? Is it a full trust? Are you leaning on your feelings? Give them up! Are you depending a little on what you mean to do? Give that up. Do you trust Him wholly? Can you say, “His blessed wounds, His flowing blood, His perfect righteousness, on these I rest. I do trust Him wholly”?

Are you half afraid to say you do? Do you think it is such a bold thing? Do it then, do a bold thing for once! Say, “Lord, I’ll trust Thee, and if Thou cast me away, I’ll still trust Thee, I bless Thee that Thou canst save me, and that Thou wilt save me.” Can you say that? I say, have you believed in Him? You are saved, then, you are not in a salvable state, but you are saved, not partly, but wholly saved, not some of your sins blotted out, but all, behold the whole list, and it is written at the bottom of them all, “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.”

But I hear one say, “It is too good to be true!” Soul, will you be lost through thinking little things of Christ? “Ah!” says another, “it is too simple, if this be the Gospel, we shall have all the ragamuffins in the streets believing in Christ, and being saved.” And glory be to God if it be so!

For my part, I am never afraid of big sinners being saved. I would have every harlot, I would have every whoremonger and adulterer to be saved. I would not be afraid that they would go on in their sins if they believed in Christ. Oh! no, faith in Christ would change their nature, and it will change yours too, for this is salvation, to have the nature changed, to be made a new creature in Christ, and to be made holy.

Come, soul, will you trust Him? I do not like you all to go away after crowding in here without getting that blessing. Some of you have come up to the Handel Festival, but here is better music if you trust Christ, for you shall hear the bells of heaven ringing, and all the music of the angels as they rejoice over you as a brother redeemed.

Many of you have come up to see the Great Exhibition, but here is a greater wonder than that, if you came into this place this morning in a state of nature, and go out in a state of grace, only to wait a little while, and then to reach a state of glory!

Some of you have come up to see the great Cattle Show, but here is something better to see than ever was reared on English pasture, here is food for your souls, here is that whereof if a man eateth he shall live forever, and here it is held out to you. Nothing can be plainer. Trust Christ and you are saved.

Outside in the street there is a drinking fountain. When you get there, if you are thirsty go to it, you will find no policeman there to send you away. No one will cry, “You must not drink because you do not wear a satin dress.” “You must not drink because you wear a fustian jacket.” No, no, go and drink, and when you have hold of the ladle, and are putting it to your lips, if there should come a doubt—“I do not feel my thirst enough,” still take a drink whether you do or not.

So I say to you, Jesus Christ stands like a great flowing fountain in the corners of the street, and He invites every thirsty soul to come and drink! You need not stop and say, “Am I thirsty enough? Am I black enough?” You do want it whether you think you do or not. Come as you are, come as you are. Every fitness is legality, every preparation is a lie, every getting ready for Christ is coming the wrong way.

You are only making yourselves worse while you think you are making yourselves better. You are like a boy at school who has made a little blot, and he gets out his knife to scratch it out, and makes it ten times worse than before. Leave the blots alone. Come as you are. If you are the blackest soul out of hell, trust Christ, and that act of trust shall make you clean.

This seems a simple thing, and yet it is the hardest thing in the world to bring you to it, so hard a thing that all the preachers that ever preached cannot make a man believe in Christ. Though we put it as plainly as we can, and plead with you, you only go away and say, “It is too good to be true,” or else you

despise it because it is so simple, for the Gospel, like Christ, is despised and rejected of men, because it has no form and comeliness, and no beauty in it that they should desire it.

Oh! may the Holy Ghost lay this home to you, may He make you willing in the day of His power. I hope He has, I trust He has, so that ere we go we may all join in singing this one verse, and then separate—

*“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ’s kind arms I fall;
He is my strength, my righteousness,
My Jesus, and my all.”*

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.