

EZEKIEL'S DESERTED INFANT

NO. 468

A SERMON
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“None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.”
Ezekiel 16:5-6

DOUBTLESS the Lord here describes the Jewish people when they began to multiply in the land of Egypt, and were grievously oppressed by Pharaoh. Pharaoh had commanded them to cast out the male children that they might perish. Hence, the figure of an infant deserted, cast out into the open field to perish by wild beasts, by starvation, or exposure, was a very apt portrait of the youthful state of Israel, when God looked upon her in love, and brought her out of Egypt to set her in a goodly land.

But all the best divines and expositors concur in the belief that we have here also a most extraordinarily apt and significant description of the human race by nature, and of the way in which God in divine mercy passes by the sinner when utterly lost and helpless, and by the power of the Spirit, bids him “Live.” At any rate, we intend to consider it so this morning.

Without any preface, for we need none, we shall first of all, bid you *look at the misery of man's estate as set before us in the present verses*, then next we shall *search for motives which could urge the Lord to have pity upon this miserable one*, and then thirdly, we shall pause a little while *to listen to the divine mandate by which this unhappy being is delivered from his lost estate*. “I said unto thee, Live; yea, I said unto thee, Live.”

I. At the outset, I shall direct your contemplations to a survey of THE MISERY OF MAN'S ESTATE.

The verse presents to us an infant exposed to die. All the common offices that were necessary for its life and health have been forgotten. Its heartless parents have laid it out in the open field, having no regard whatever for it, there it lies before our eye covered with blood, exposed to wild beasts, famishing, ready to perish.

Among many heathen nations there existed the barbarous custom of leaving deformed children to perish in the woods or fields. Among the Spartans it was an established regulation to abandon their weaker offspring to perish at the foot of Mount Taygetus, and in these times there are dark places of the earth which are full of this unnatural cruelty.

The Jews were certainly free from this sin, but it was a practice of their near neighbors and therefore well known to them, and moreover, the remembrance of Egypt and their great lawgiver among the crocodiles of the Nile, and all the males murdered by royal decree, would make the metaphor very simple to them.

1. At the very first glance we remark, here is an *early ruin*. It is an infant. A thousand sorrows that one so young should be so deeply taught in misery's school! It is an infant, it has not yet tasted joy, but yet it knows pain and sorrow to the full. How early are you blasted, O sweet flower! How soon are your young dawns quenched in darkness, O rising sun! A ruin so terrible and so early has fallen upon each of us.

Let proud man kick against the doctrine as he may, Scripture tells us assuredly that we are “born in sin and shapen in iniquity.” We came not into this world as Adam came into the garden, without flaw, without condemnation, without evil propensities, but lo, by one man’s offense we are all made sinners, and through his desperate fall our blood is tainted and our nature is corrupt.

From the very birth we go astray, speaking lies, and in the very birth we lie under the condemnation of the law of God. It is not mine to defend this doctrine, to answer objections to it, or to bring arguments for it, I simply announce what God has Himself revealed by the mouth of His servant David, and also more fully by the tongue of the apostle Paul.

Man, except God have mercy on you, you are lost, and lost from your very beginning! You did not come into this world as one who might stand or fall, you were fallen already, an original and birth-sin had seized upon you in the womb, and you were even then as an infant cast out to perish and to die.

There is hardly any doctrine more humbling than that of natural depravity or original sin. It has been the main point of attack for all those who hate the Gospel, and it must be maintained and valiantly vindicated by those who would exalt Christ, since the greatness and glory of His salvation lies mainly in the desperateness of the ruin from which He has redeemed us.

Man, think not to save yourself by your works, boast not of the excellence of your character and of your nature—you are a traitor’s son, you are a felon’s child! An act of attainder was passed upon your father’s house, and you were born under the law and under the curse, obnoxious to divine wrath in the very moment when your first breath was drawn. Sad heritage of sin! Miserable estate of sorrow! How deep the ruin of the fall! Oh, to grace what debtors we are, that out of this ruin it can lift us up to heights of glory!

2. The next very apparent teaching of the text is *utter inability*. It is an infant—what can it do for itself? If it were a child of some few years it might be able, with tottering feet, to find its way to some shelter. If it had the gift of articulate speech, it might sob out its wants and tell to the passerby what it needed, but it is an infant, it cannot speak. It knows pain, but it has not mind enough to know wherefore the pain is there.

It is ignorant, and although conscious of its ills, its untutored, undeveloped intellect can neither describe the evil, nor prescribe the remedy. Though it may cast its little eyes around, even if help were there it is not in its power to avail itself of the proffered aid. It is impotent, helpless, utterly powerless, if anything is to be done for it, it must all be done by another’s hand. Not even clay on the potter’s wheel is more helpless than this infant as it now lies cast out in the open field. Such is human nature, it can by no means help towards its own restoration.

“Dead,” says our apostle, “dead in trespasses and sins,” and what shall the dead in their graves do towards resurrection? Shall the worm become mother of life, or shall corruption be the father of immortality? No, trumpet of God, there is no life in the dull, cold ear of death, and no hearing in the hollow skull of the skeleton. If the graves open, a divine hand must break the seal, heave up the mold, and uplift the moldering corpse. If there be resurrection, it must come from God, and from God alone. It must be a miracle in the beginning, and a miracle even to the end.

My hearers, I am not the author of this doctrine, but simply the declarer of what God reveals. You are so lost, that you cannot by the most desperate efforts of your own save yourselves. Nay, worse, so lost that by nature you have no wish to be saved, and will not make the efforts or desire to make them. You hate God. It is a cutting accusation, but it is true, and may God the Holy Ghost make you feel its truth.

Naturally, I say, you hate the Lord, by nature you love vanity, and not God’s truth, you love sin, and do not wish to be delivered from it. Holiness you choose not, God’s commandments you abhor. Your nature has become so evil that the Ethiopian may sooner change his skin, and the leopard his spots, than you of yourself learn to do well.

But mark you—and this is a thought that may crush our boastings, and make us hang our heads like a bulrush forevermore—this inability is our own sin. This is laid at our door, not as an excuse for our

sinfulness, but as a frightful aggravation of our guilt, that we have become so bad that we cannot make ourselves good, that our nature is now so desperately evil, both by its native depravity and by our continual practice of sin, that iniquity has become our nature, so that it is as natural to us to sin as for water to descend, or sparks to fly upward,

*“Where vice has held its empire long,
'T will not endure the least control;
None but a power divinely strong
Can turn the current of the soul.”*

You cannot, souls, you *cannot* save yourselves, you are as helpless as the infant cast out, your inability is utter and entire.

3. Apparent too, is yet a third misfortune—we are *utterly friendless*. “None eye pitied thee to do any of these things unto thee.” We have no friend in heaven or in earth that can do aught for us, unless God shall interpose. Grant you that a tender parent may pity, but no parent can change his child’s nature or cleanse away the sin of his offspring.

Let it be granted that there are ministers of Christ whose tearful eyes would woo you to Christ, but the most earnest evangelist cannot quicken your soul. The most thundering of all God’s Boanerges cannot awake the dead. Let it be considered that angels are anxious for your conversion, that were you saved they would clap their wings with joy and make glad holiday in heaven. But an angel’s power cannot snatch you from the grave of your sin, nor could the whole host of seraphs with their kindred cherubs combined, do aught to deliver you from the ruin into which by Adam’s sin, and your own, you have been brought.

Weep and lament your kinsfolk may for you, but no lamentation can make an atonement for your sin, no human tears can cleanse your filthiness, no Christian zeal can clothe you with righteousness, no yearning love can sanctify your nature. Friendless, helpless, and ruined from our earliest state—good God, what creatures are men! Sinai thunders at us, the law condemns us, justice bares its sword, holiness is incensed, and truth is sworn to destroy. Where, where shall we fly, if Thou refuse us, O God!

4. Furthermore, our text very clearly reveals to us that we are by nature in a sad state of *exposure*. Cast out into the open field, left in a wilderness where it is not likely that any should pass by, thrown where the cold can smite by night, and the heat can blast by day, left where the wild beast goes about seeking whom he may devour—such is the estate of human nature, unclothed, unarmed, helpless, exposed to all manner of ravenous destroyers.

Little do any of us know how exposed by nature we are to sloth, to drunkenness, to lust, and pride, and unbelief—to all those young lions which hunt in company with the great lion of the pit who seeks whom he may devour. O Lord God, You alone know the awful dangers which prowl around an unregenerate man, what mischiefs waylay him, what crimes beset him, what follies haunt him! As God only knows the fullness of the guilt, of even one sin, so His infinite mind alone can grasp the number of those tremendous temptations which are planted like snares of death in the path of an unconverted soul.

Death is after you, O you helpless one, hell yawns for you, sin longs to devour you, friend you have none, but foes you have many. Armed and mighty are those who would destroy you, and you have no power nor will to resist them. You are as a helpless infant in a tiger’s jaws. Fascinated by the serpent eyes of sin, you are paralyzed by its witcheries, and so rendered an easy prey for the destroyer.

5. It seems that this child, besides being in this exposed state, was *loathsome*. “Thou wast cast out to the loathing of thy person.” It was in such a condition that the sight of it was disgusting, and its person was so destitute of all comeliness that it was absolutely loathed. Such is man by nature, but he will not believe it, he still flatters himself that he is comely as the curtains of Solomon, while he is black as the tents of Kedar. We think ourselves angels, when we are nearest akin to devils, but when we get akin to

angels, then we mourn the devil that still is within us. I know this, that when God the Holy Ghost gives a man a view of himself, he is utterly loathsome in his own esteem.

One of the cardinals of the olden times—when cardinals were sometimes saints—happened to pass by a meadow where he saw a shepherd leaning on his crook, weeping. He stopped to ask the lad what made him weep. The lad replied by pointing to the ground, for just at his feet there was a toad. “I was weeping,” said he, “to think that God should have made me, a creature so infinitely superior to this loathsome reptile at my feet, and that I should have made myself such a creature that this loathsome thing is superior to me, because it has never sinned.”

As the cardinal went his way, he said, “Verily, has it happened, that the foolish and unlearned enter into the kingdom of heaven before us, for this peasant has found out the truth.” Not vipers nor toads are more venomous or more loathsome to men than man must be to God, or would be to himself if he could see himself with the eyes of truth, and if the veil of pride were once lifted from his eyes. The image of God in man is all obliterated, we have ashes for beauty, shame for glory, rottenness for health, and hell for heaven.

6. We close this fearful description by observing *the certain ruin to which this infant was exposed*, as setting forth the sure destruction of every man if grace prevent not. It is not a question whether man will be lost or not, as to whether man shall enter into the flames of hell or not, is no query, man **MUST** perish unless God saves.

Every one of us *must* be lost to all eternity, unless the strong arm of the divine One interferes. There is no one else to nurture this helpless infant. This infant cannot rescue itself. Lost, lost, lost! Howl its requiem ye lost ones who have gone before, for help or hope there is none, unless the Eternal One shall interpose.

I would dear hearers that this strong language, as you may think it, might be felt to be pertinent to your own case, if you are unconverted. I am not selecting special characters, and impeaching certain offenders who have been outrageously wicked, I am not now describing only the harlot, or the burglar, or the murderer, I am speaking of every one of you by nature, of every one of you who have not been born again. This is not complimentary language, but it ill becomes God's minister to compliment any man, we must tell you plainly the truth.

You may have been moral, sober, generous, honest, philanthropy may have been as the air you breathe. There may be many good traits in your character that render you amiable to your relatives and friends, but by nature you are not one whit better than the vilest of the vile. And were your nature permitted to show itself in all its foulness, the black fountain is in your heart as much as in those who are banished from their country for their country's good. It is only providence, or the check of society, that keeps it under. You are as much lost and ruined as they.

I know I address many of you who have never fled to Christ for refuge, but are on very good terms with yourselves, because in comparison with others your character is blameless. Let me adjure you by the living God that searches all hearts, look at yourselves this morning in your fallen state. If you live and die as you now are, there can be nothing for your portion but the flames of hell. God grant you may be snatched from so terrible a doom, but I see not how this can be unless you first are led to see that you deserve this doom, and are made to tremble at the evil of sin and the wrath of the Lord.

No doubt, Noah, when he told men they would all be drowned except they fled to the ark, was thought to be very uncharitable, but it was the truest charity which made him warn them. You *must* perish unless you find shelter in Jesus Christ. Your state is so terrible and damnable, that lost you *must be* unless you fly to God's plan of salvation which He has laid down for lost, ruined, helpless sinners. “Micaiah, spake not good but evil,” said the king, but he learned afterwards that Micaiah's hardness and boldness came of God, while the smooth things of the false prophets came from the devil. I do again, then, beseech and entreat you to lay these things to heart.

Ruined souls, self-destroyed, ready to perish, without help, without power, cast out and exposed to evils of which you as yet are not aware, but certain ultimately to make your bed in hell except God

deliver you, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time. Confess your sins before Him with broken hearts, weep before Him the tears of penitence, and He can, yea, He will deliver and bring up His chosen from the depths of destruction, and His elect ones from the jaws of hell. Thus mournfully have we rehearsed the story of human ruin, let us bless God that we end not here.

II. We are now to search for MOTIVES FOR GOD'S GRACE, and brethren, we have a very difficult search before us when we look to this infant which is cast out, because its loathsomeness and its being covered with its own blood, forbid us at once to hope that there can be anything in it which can merit the esteem of the merciful One.

Let us think of some of the motives which may urge men to assist the undeserving.

1. One of the first would be, *necessity*. Some men, I do not doubt, are generous from necessity, that is to say, they feel it necessary to maintain their reputation, and therefore they are generous before men, or they gain so much self-esteem—and there is a necessity in man's nature to make him seek after that—that they are willing to be kind that they may be approved within.

Not a few are placed in such a position that they could not well refuse to give their help when it is asked of them. But no necessity can ever effect the Most High. The first of all causes must be absolutely independent of every other cause. He acts voluntarily. It belongs to God to say absolutely, "I will." Man may say, "I will," but it must always be with bated breath, for the sovereign fiat of God may contradict him. But God is under no necessity. Has He a superior? Who is king over Him? Who dictates counsel to the Most High? Who sits at His bar and gives Him advice and warning, and makes Him do according to his pleasure?

Nor had God any necessity, in order to make Himself happy or to increase His glory. The praises of angels were enough for Him, nay, even the praise of angels is as nothing in His awful sight. His joy is in Himself. He finds within His own infinite essence a sufficiency of delight, He needs go abroad for nothing, for He fills all things and He is all in all.

If it had been God's will to leave the human race to perish, He might have done it and there was none to say to Him, "What doest Thou?" And when He does save man, it is not because there is any compulsion either moral, physical, or spiritual upon Him. He has done as He wills in this great matter of the redemption and salvation of men.

O soul, God is not bound to save you! Man, you are lost, and there is nothing that can compel the Almighty to deliver you. If He does it, it must be according to His own good pleasure, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

2. In this case, there was nothing in the *birth* of this child, in its original parentage that could move the passerby. We are told in some former verses, "Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite," both of them belonging to an accursed race.

Look into the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. There was nothing in your birth or mine why He should have pity on us. Kings, princes, mighty men, boast much of their pedigrees, but the Lord knows nothing of the glory of these family trees and ancestries. Nay, rather, He leaves the mighty man in the dust, cutting down the high tree, that He may cause the low tree to flourish. He pours contempt upon princes, and knows no respect of persons.

All spring from the common race of man, and what is there in our corrupt nature, what is there in us to move the heart of God? Nothing, absolutely nothing. Young man, it is not because your father was godly that therefore God should be constrained to save you. It is not because your mother was a lady of rank that therefore the Almighty should stretch out His arm to you. You were conceived in sin, and stained in your very birth, and there is therefore nothing here that could move the heart of deity.

3. Nor was there anything in this child's *beauty*, for it was loathsome. Men are often affected by beauty. Doubtless Pharaoh's daughter preserved Moses because he was a comely child. We know that Ahasuerus chose Esther because of her beauty, and there have been many that have been exalted in the world for their personal attractions, but it was not so with man in God's sight.

“The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.” We are not only sinners, but *sin* itself. How then can sin attract the regard and love of a perfectly holy God? There may be much in us that can make our fellow creatures esteem us, there can be nothing in us as fallen, condemned, ungodly, that can make God esteem us.

I know that you who are spiritually taught, will join with me in singing:

*“What was there in us to merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
'Twas even so, Father, we ever must sing,
For so it seemed good in Thy sight.”*

See then sinner, you are without form or comeliness, and you have no beauty that He should desire you. What can there be in a worm to gratify the Almighty? The heavens are not pure in His sight, and He charged His angels with folly. How much less then, should there be any beauty in man, that is but a worm, or in the son of man, that is crushed before the moth. Think not that He needs your beauty to excite His love. He can love you though deformed, and love you till He has made you comely by His comeliness, which He shall put upon you.

4. Furthermore, as we have found no motive yet, either in necessity or the child's birth or beauty, so we find none in any *entreaties* that were uttered by this child. It does not seem that it pleaded with the passerby to save it, for it could not as yet speak. So, though sinners do pray, yet when a sinner prays it is because God has begun to save him. A sinner's prayers can never be the cause of his salvation, for mark you, the truth is that no man ever seeks God first, God has first sought him, and began a good work in his soul before he ever turns to God.

In some cases, this is very extraordinarily proved. The old writers used to quote the instance of a man who went into a wood, having been an outrageous sinner, with the determination of destroying himself, and while he adjusted the rope, some passerby hearing a sound, came and expostulated with him, and the words were blessed to his salvation. Is there any preparation or preparatory process in a man who has come to such a pitch of sin, that he is about to take away his own life, to wash his hands in his own blood? Surely this was grace.

There were one or two cases in Whitefield's history, of men who came into places where he was preaching, with stones in their pockets to pelt him with, but who became themselves converted. Was there anything there for the grace of God to get a hold of, anything to foster, to favor, to nourish the grace, the sovereign grace of the Most High? Nay, rather, while they were yet without anything whatsoever that could have cried after God, He was found of them that sought Him not, He called them a people that were not a people, and her beloved that was not beloved.

I know some think that the sinner takes the first step, but we know better. If he did, it were like the old Romish miracle of St. Dennis, where we are told that after his head was cut off, he picked it up and walked two thousand miles with it in his hand. Whereupon, some wit observed that he did not see any wonder in the man's walking two thousand miles, for all the difficulty lay in the first step.

Just so, I see no difficulty in a man's getting all the way to heaven, if he can but take the first step—for all the miracle lies in that first step, the making the dead soul live, the melting of the adamant heart, the thawing of the northern ice, the bringing down of the proud look—this is the work, this is the difficulty, and if man can do that himself, verily, he can do the whole.

But when God looks upon men to save them, it is not because they cry to Him, for they never do and never will cry until the work of salvation is begun. They are unwilling and unable to use any entreaty or persuasion that could be cogent to the heart of God. For rather, they abhor the mercy, they run away from the grace which is offered to them, they reject the Gospel when it is preached, they will not come

to Christ that they may have life, but they willfully and wickedly turn their backs upon the Most High, and until He by His strong hand brings them to Christ, saved they will never be.

O grace, O grace, how wide thy sphere! How glorious are you in meeting the degradation and the sin of man! You show the splendor of your power in beginning, carrying on, and finishing the work.

5. Yet further, brethren, it does not appear that the pity of the passerby was shown upon this child because of any *future service* which was expected of it. This child it seems, was nourished, clothed, luxuriously decorated, and yet, after all that, if you read the chapter through, you will find it went astray from Him who had set His heart upon it. The Lord foresaw this, and yet loved that child notwithstanding.

God knew that you and I, though He loved us when there was nothing good in us, after we were saved should still rebel. He knew that we had backsliding hearts. He knew that we should be unbelieving even to the end, but He loved us notwithstanding all. He did not love *you* because He foresaw you would be a preacher, nor *you* because He knew you would be a tract distributor, nor *you* because He knew that you would be an indefatigable Sunday school teacher. He loved you although He knew that you would be as you are today, ungrateful and unkind to Him, cold in your soul, worldly in your spirit. You can today, rehearse experientially, our last Sabbath's text, "I was as a beast before thee: nevertheless I am continually with thee."

There was then no motive of future service why this child should be blessed, or why God should save man. I do not know—I want to say what I cannot say this morning, I want to exhibit to you *man*, standing as a criminal at the bar, guilty, proved to be guilty even to his very face, yet proudly saying that he is not guilty. A traitor at heart, a base rebel, an ungrateful wretch!

I want you to think of him as one upon whom pity seems as if it would be thrown away, not an object for mercy, one of whom the universe cries, "Away with him, away with him, it is not fit that he should live." And then, I want to show you God in the sovereignty of His grace, saying, "I *will* spare that traitor, he deserves to die, but I will spare him. I have no motive for it, except such as is in My own will. There is nothing in him, no reason in him why I should spare him, but I *will* spare him. I *will* prove that I am king forever and ever, and the God and Lord of mercy."

The only answer that we can give to the question, "Why then, does God spare this outcast infant?" is this, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."

How is JEHOVAH exalted in our midst this morning! My spirit trembles while it labors to exalt the Lord alone. The Lord is King forever and ever, hallelujah! Bow your heads, both saints and sinners, and adore Him as King of kings and Lord of lords. Ask not questions, for He gives no account of His matters. Quarrel not with His dominion, for His answer is to you, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him who formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"

Impeach not His justice, or His justice you shall feel in smiting you. Entreat His mercy, but entreat it as those that have no claim upon Him. Ask Him for it as knowing that if He gives it to you He has a right to give it or to withhold it if He will.

Sinners, behold yourselves this morning, in the hand of an angry God. There you lie before God, like a moth beneath your own fingers. It is as He wills, to save or to destroy you. Are you at ease? Will you mock Him? Will you boast and glorify yourselves? Rather, as creatures that are now absolutely under His control, and deservedly subject to His rod, bow your heads and cry, "God be merciful to us, sinners! Thou canst save, do it for Thine own will and glory's sake, that Thy mercy may be magnified and Thy sovereignty may be clearly seen."

We have found no motive in the creature, and therefore we refrain from further search, believing that the fountain and wellspring of mercy is in God Himself. Into *His* reasons we cannot search, lest like Job, we should hear the rebuke of the Lord, "Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in search of the depth?"

III. But now, we turn to consider THE MANDATE OF HIS MERCY, "I said unto thee, Live."

First, I want you to notice that this fiat of God is *majestic*. "I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, *Live*; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, *Live*." Darkness was upon the face of the earth, and thus the Almighty spoke, "Let there be light!" And light was. Sublime because simple, without any oratorical embellishments, magnificently stern, God speaks, and it is done.

So in our text we perceive a sinner with nothing in him but sin, expecting nothing but wrath, but the majestic One passes by, He is making a tour of His dominions, splendidly arrayed, with ten thousand times ten thousand angels at His beck and call. He looks, and there lies an infant, loathsome, in its blood. He stops, and He pronounces the word, the royal word "Live." There speaks a God. Who but He could venture thus to deal with life and dispense it with a single syllable? 'Tis majestic, 'tis divine!

And mark you, brethren, though the word preached by us may be very rough and rugged, as we confess it is, though we know but little of the graces of oratory, yet when God speaks by a minister, there is nothing more divine under heaven, nor in heaven, than the Gospel. When the Lord speaks, even though it be by the unlettered and the ignorant, when through the Gospel He saith, "Live," to a sinner, not even the angels who bow before the throne ever heard a diviner sound. Thus saith the Lord, thou dead sinner, "*Live!*"

Again, this fiat is *manifold* as well as majestic. When He says, "Live," it includes many things. Here is *judicial* life. The sinner is ready to be condemned and executed, his neck is on the block, and the axe is gleaming in the sunlight, but the mighty One saith, "Live," and he rises pardoned and absolved. The execution is not only stayed, that were but respite, the crime is forgiven, the man is to live for aye!

It is, moreover, *spiritual* life. The man knew nought of God, his eyes could not see Christ, his ears could not hear His voice, JEHOVAH said, "Live," and spiritual life was given, and we were quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.

Moreover, it includes glory-life, which is the perfection of spiritual life. "I said unto thee, *Live*;" and that word rolls on through all the years of life till death comes, and in the midst of the shadows of death, the Lord's voice is still heard, "I say unto thee, *Live!*" In the morning of the resurrection, it is that selfsame voice which is echoed by the archangel, "Live." And as the spirits rise to heaven to be blessed forever in the glory of their God, it is in the power of this same voice, "I say unto thee, *Live*."

Note again, that it is an *irresistible* voice. When God says to a sinner, "Live," all the devils in hell cannot keep him in the grave. If the Lord should say to a blasphemer here today, "Live," that blasphemer *must* become a saint.

Saul of Tarsus is on the road to Damascus to arrest the saints of the living God. A strong hand might seize the bridle of his charger and throw him to the ground, but Saul is not to be stopped like this, he will rise from the ground the same Saul, to go to Damascus as blood-thirsty as ever.

But see what divine grace can do! A voice from heaven and a light above the brightness of the sun, and Saul is crying out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Within three days he is baptized, he becomes a preacher, and Saul that was called Paul becomes a leader in the hosts of the Most High. My Master can do the like today. Mighty to save is He.

*"Tell what His arm hath done,
What spoils from death He won,
Praise His dear name alone.
Worthy the Lamb."*

We remark again, that it is *all-sufficient*. "Live," do You say, great God? Why, the man is dead! There is life—not in him, but in the voice that bids him live. "Live," do You say? "By this time he stinketh, for he has been dead four days!" There is power—not in his corruption, but in the voice that cries, "Come forth!"

When we preach to sinners and tell them to believe in Christ, do not fancy it is because we think they have any power. No, but because when in God's name we say, "Believe," the power is in the mandate as it comes from our lip, uttered by the Most High. If a minister be not filled with God's Spirit, then his ministry is an empty dream.

But if a minister be, as I conceive him to be, a man who speaks in God's name, and for the time being, is the very mouth of God to men's souls, then there is power in the Gospel as it is preached, attended with the demonstration of the Spirit, to do for the sinner what he can by no means do for himself.

I cry today in my Master's name, "Thus saith the Lord, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall live." Trust my Master bleeding on the tree, and you shall be delivered. Rest you on the merit of His blood and of His glorious righteousness, trust you in the power of His intercession before the throne, and despite your lost estate, you shall be this morning saved forever and ever.

We close when we shall have repeated ourselves once more by saying, this mandate was a mandate of *free grace*. I want to lay that down again, and again, and again, that there was nothing in this infant, nothing but loathsomeness, nothing therefore, to merit esteem—nothing in the infant but inability, nothing therefore by which it could help itself—nothing in it but infancy, nothing therefore by which it could plead for itself, and yet grace said, "Live"—freely, without any bribe, without any entreaty, said, "Live." And so when sinners are saved, it is only and solely because God *will* do it, to magnify His free, unpurchased, unsought grace.

Surely this is a subject which will suit some here, though it will not please others. Proud Pharisees will turn on their heels. "That is very high Calvinistic doctrine," says one. My dear friends, I do not care what it is, I know it is written in the Word of God. I preach very often sermons which get me the title of Arminian, and just as often I am charged with Hyperism. I am simply one who seeks honestly to tell you what he believes to be in Scripture, and what he believes to be true, and therefore, whether it be high or low is nothing to me.

Is it true? I know the proud Pharisee will say, "No. Why," says he, "there must be some merit in what we do. Surely we do something. Perseverance in well-doing, and so on, surely this will effect much." You are under the law, and not under grace. You have not yet learned the A B C of the Gospel, you want to be a saint by the merit of what you do, and you will be lost as sure as you are a man unless you look at things in a different light.

But I know that the doctrine will be acceptable to those condemned ones here this morning, who have written their own sentence out, who say, "I must perish, I have nothing to bring you, O Lord. I have not even a tender heart. I have not even such a sense of need as I want. Lord, I am empty, except that I am full of evil and full of sin. I have nothing that I could put before Your eye, except that which would excite Your wrath and Your disgust. Great God, if You should not save me I cannot blame You, I lay hold of nothing in myself, but You have said, 'He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ, hath everlasting life.' Lord, I venture to believe on Him. You will be true, You will save even me."

Soul, soul, you may go out of this house light of heart and foot, for "thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee." In God's name I pronounce the sentence of absolution on you, if you have thus come to Christ, and trusted in the Lord Jesus. There is not a sentence left in God's Book against you, you are no more dead, but you live; no more accursed, but beloved; no more loathsome, but beautiful—covered with Christ's righteousness, and filled with the Spirit of the living God.

What shall I say to you who are Christians but this—do for the sake of this grace—show your gratitude, live more like your Master, and live more in God's service. Seek to spend and be spent in Him. Nothing can make a man work for Christ like free grace, and those who believe the doctrine of free grace and yet are idle, you must surely hold the truth in unrighteousness, for there is no principle so active, so impulsive as this.

"Loved of my God, for Him again

*With love intense I'd burn:
Chosen of Thee ere time began,
I'd choose Thee in return."*

Finally, Christian, never give up any sinner. Never think that any man is beyond salvation. I charge you by the solemn thought that God looks for nothing in man, and saves only according to the sweet counsels of His own will, bring every man you meet with before God in prayer, plead with every man, preach Christ to every man, tell every man that Christ can save, tell every sinner that whatever there may not be in him, Christ's power is still the same, that *His* arm is not shortened, neither is *His* ear heavy, and spread you the glad news that it is not of the will of man, nor of his blood, nor birth, but by the power of the Spirit of God according to the will of the Most High.

May the Lord add His blessing and do some of His mighty works this morning through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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.