

HUMAN INABILITY

NO. 182

A SERMON
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“No man can come to me, except the Father which sent me draws him.”
John 6:44.

“COMING to Christ” is a very common phrase in Holy Scripture. It is used to express those acts of the soul wherein, leaving at once our self-righteousness, and our sins, we fly unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive His righteousness to be our covering, and His blood to be our atonement. Coming to Christ, then, embraces in it repentance, self-negation, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it sums within itself all those things which are the necessary attendants of these great states of heart, such as the belief of the truth, earnestness of prayer to God, the submission of the soul to the precepts of God’s Gospel, and all those things which accompany the dawn of salvation in the soul. Coming to Christ is just the one essential thing for a sinner’s salvation. He that comes not to Christ, do what he may, or think what he may, is yet in “the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.”

Coming to Christ is the very first effect of regeneration. No sooner is the soul quickened than it at once discovers its lost estate, is horrified thereat, looks out for a refuge, and believing Christ to be a suitable one, flies to Him and reposes in Him. Where there is not this coming to Christ, it is certain that there is as yet no quickening; where there is no quickening, the soul is dead in trespasses and sins, and being dead it cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. We have before us now an announcement very startling, some say very obnoxious. Coming to Christ, though described by some people as being the very easiest thing in all the world, is in our text declared to be a thing utterly and entirely impossible to any man, unless the Father shall draw him to Christ.

It shall be our business, then, to enlarge upon this declaration. We doubt not that it will always be offensive to carnal nature, but, nevertheless, the offending of human nature is sometimes the first step towards bringing it to bow itself before God. And if this is the effect of a painful process, we can forget the pain and rejoice in the glorious consequences.

I shall endeavor this morning, first of all, to notice *man’s inability*, wherein it consists. Secondly, *the Father’s drawings*—what these are, and how they are exerted upon the soul. And then I shall conclude by noticing *a sweet consolation* which may be derived from this seemingly barren and terrible text.

I. First, then, MAN’S INABILITY.

The text says, “No man can come to me, except the Father which sent me draws him.” Wherein does this inability lie?

First, it does not lie in any *physical* defect. If in coming to Christ, moving the body or walking with the feet should be of any assistance, certainly man has all physical power to come to Christ in that sense. I remember to have heard a very foolish Antinomian declare, that he did not believe any man had the power to walk to the house of God unless the Father drew him. Now the man was plainly foolish, because he must have seen that as long as a man was alive and had legs, it was as easy for him to walk to the house of God as to the house of Satan. If coming to Christ includes the utterance of a prayer, man has no physical defect in that respect, if he be not dumb, he can say a prayer as easily as he can utter blasphemy. It is as easy for a man to sing one of the songs of Zion as to sing a profane and libidinous song. There is no lack of physical power in coming to Christ. All that can be wanted with regard to the bodily strength man most assuredly has, and any part of salvation which consists in that is totally and entirely in the power of man without any assistance from the Spirit of God. Nor, again, does this

inability lie in any *mental* lack. I can believe this Bible to be true just as easily as I can believe any other book to be true. So far as believing on Christ is an act of the mind, I am just as able to believe on Christ as I am able to believe on anybody else. Let his statement be but true, it is idle to tell me I cannot believe it. I can believe the statement that Christ makes as well as I can believe the statement of any other person. There is no deficiency of faculty in the mind; it is as capable of appreciating as a mere mental act the guilt of sin, as it is of appreciating the guilt of assassination. It is just as possible for me to exercise the mental idea of seeking God, as it is to exercise the thought of ambition. I have all the mental strength and power that can possibly be needed, so far as mental power is needed in salvation at all. Nay, there is not any man so ignorant that he can plead a lack of intellect as an excuse for rejecting the Gospel. The defect, then, does not lie either in the body, or, what we are bound to call, speaking theologically, the mind. It is not any lack or deficiency there, although it is the vitiation of the mind, the corruption or the ruin of it, which, after all, is the very essence of man's inability.

Permit me to show you wherein this inability of man really does lie. It lies deep *in his nature*. Through the fall, and through our own sin, the nature of man has become so debased, and depraved, and corrupt, that it is impossible for him to come to Christ without the assistance of God the Holy Spirit. Now, in trying to exhibit how the nature of man thus renders him unable to come to Christ, you must allow me just to take this figure. You see a sheep, how willingly it feeds upon the herbage! You never knew a sheep sigh after carrion; it could not live on lion's food. Now bring me a wolf, and you ask me whether a wolf cannot eat grass, whether it cannot be just as docile and as domesticated as the sheep. I answer, no, because its nature is contrary thereunto. You say, "Well, it has ears and legs, can it not hear the shepherd's voice, and follow him whithersoever he leads it?" I answer, certainly, there is no physical cause why it cannot do so, but its nature forbids, and therefore I say it *cannot* do so. Can it not be tamed? Cannot its ferocity be removed? Probably it may so far be subdued that it may become apparently tame, but there will always be a marked distinction between it and the sheep, because there is a distinction in nature. Now, the reason why man cannot come to Christ, is not because he cannot come, so far as his body or his mere power of mind is concerned, but because his nature is so corrupt that he has neither the will nor the power to come to Christ unless drawn by the Spirit.

But let me give you a better illustration. You see a mother with her babe in her arms. You put a knife into her hand, and tell her to stab that babe to the heart. She replies, and very truthfully, "I cannot." Now, so far as her bodily power is concerned, she can, if she pleases. There is the knife, and there is the child. The child cannot resist, and she has quite sufficient strength in her hand immediately to stab it to its heart. But she is quite correct when she says she cannot do it. As a mere act of the mind, it is quite possible she might think of such a thing as killing the child, and yet she says she cannot think of such a thing, and she does not say falsely, for her nature as a mother forbids her doing a thing from which her soul revolts. Simply because she is that child's parent, she feels she cannot kill it. It is even so with a sinner.

Coming to Christ is so obnoxious to human nature that, although, so far as physical and mental forces are concerned, (and these have but a very narrow sphere in salvation), men could come if they would; it is strictly correct to say that they cannot and will not unless the Father who has sent Christ does draw them. Let us enter a little more deeply into the subject, and try to show you wherein this inability of man consists in its more minute particulars.

1. First, it lies in the *obstinacy of the human will*. "Oh!" says the Arminian, "men may be saved if they will." We reply, "My dear sir, we all believe that, but it is just the *if they will* that is the difficulty. We assert that no man *will* come to Christ unless he be drawn, nay, *we* do not assert it, but *Christ* Himself declares it—'You will not come unto Me that you might have life,' and as long as that, 'you will not come' stands on record in Holy Scripture, we shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will." It is strange how people, when talking about free will, talk of things which they do not at all understand.

“Now,” says one, “I believe men can be saved if they will.” My dear sir, that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the Gospel of Christ? We declare, upon Scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, and so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human will will ever be constrained towards Christ. You reply, that men sometimes are willing, without the help of the Holy Spirit. I answer—did you ever meet with any person who was? Scores and hundreds, nay, thousands of Christians have I conversed with, of different opinions, young and old, but it has never been my lot to meet with one who could affirm that he came to Christ of himself, without being drawn. The universal confession of all true believers is this—“I know that unless Jesus Christ had sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God, I would to this very hour have been wandering far from Him, at a distance from Him, and loving that distance well.” With common consent, all believers affirm the truth, that men will not come to Christ till the Father who has sent Christ draws them.

2. Again, not only is the will obstinate, but the *understanding is darkened*. Of that we have abundant Scriptural proof. I am not now making mere assertions, but stating doctrines authoritatively taught in the Holy Scriptures, and known in the conscience of every Christian man—that the understanding of man is so dark, that he cannot by any means understand the things of God until his understanding has been opened. Man is by nature blind within. The cross of Christ, so laden with glories, and glittering with attractions, never attracts him, because he is blind and cannot see its beauties. Talk to him of the wonders of the creation, show to him the many-colored arch that spans the sky, let him behold the glories of a landscape, he is well able to see all these things, but talk to him of the wonders of the covenant of grace, speak to him of the security of the believer in Christ, tell him of the beauties of the person of the Redeemer, he is quite deaf to all your descriptions; you are as one that plays a goodly tune, it is true, but he regards not, he is deaf, he has no comprehension. Or to return to the verse which we so specially marked in our reading, “The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned,” and inasmuch as he is a natural man, it is not in his power to discern the things of God.

“Well,” says one, “I think I have arrived at a very tolerable judgment in matters of theology. I think I understand almost every point.” True, that you may do in the letter of it, but in the spirit of it, in the true reception thereof into the soul, and in the actual understanding of it, it is impossible for you to have attained, unless you have been drawn by the Spirit. For as long as that Scripture stands true, that carnal men cannot receive spiritual things, it must be true that you have not received them, unless you have been renewed and made a spiritual man in Christ Jesus. The will, then, and the understanding, are two great doors, both blocked up against our coming to Christ, and until these are opened by the sweet influences of the Divine Spirit, they must be forever closed to anything like coming to Christ.

3. Again, *the affections*, which constitute a very great part of man, are depraved. Man, as he is, before he receives the grace of God, loves anything and everything but spiritual things. If you want proof of this, look around you. There needs no monument to the depravity of the human affections. Cast your eyes everywhere—there is not a street, nor a house, nay, nor a heart, which does not bear upon it sad evidence of this dreadful truth. Why is it that men are not found on the Sabbath day universally flocking to the house of God? Why are we not more constantly found reading our Bibles? How is it that prayer is a duty almost universally neglected? Why is it that Christ Jesus is so little beloved? Why are even His professed followers so cold in their affections to Him? Whence arise these things?

Assuredly, dear brethren, we can trace them to no other source than this, the corruption and vitiation of the affections. We love that which we ought to hate and we hate that which we ought to love. It is but human nature, fallen human nature, that man should love this present life better than the life to come. It is but the effect of the fall, that man should love sin better than righteousness, and the ways of this world better than the ways of God. And again, we repeat it, until these affections are renewed, and turned into

a fresh channel by the gracious drawings of the Father, it is not possible for any man to love the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Yet once more—*conscience*, too, has been overpowered by the fall. I believe there is no more egregious mistake made by divines, than when they tell people that conscience is the vicegerent of God within the soul and that it is one of those powers which retains its ancient dignity, and stands erect amidst the fall of its compeers. My brethren, when man fell in the garden, manhood fell entirely; there was not one single pillar in the temple of manhood that stood erect. It is true, conscience was not destroyed. The pillar was not shattered, it fell, and it fell in one piece, and there it lies along, the mightiest remnant of God's once perfect work in man.

But, that conscience is fallen, I am sure. Look at men. Who among them is the possessor of a "good conscience toward God," but the regenerated man? Do you imagine that if men's consciences always spoke loudly and clearly to them, they would live in the daily commission of acts, which are as opposed to the right as darkness to light? No, beloved, conscience can tell me that I am a sinner, but conscience cannot make me *feel* that I am one. Conscience may tell me that such-and-such a thing is wrong, but how wrong it is, conscience itself does not know. Did any man's conscience, unenlightened by the Spirit, ever tell him that his sins deserved damnation? Or if conscience did do that, did it ever lead any man to feel an abhorrence of sin as sin? In fact, did conscience ever bring a man to such a self-renunciation, that he did totally abhor himself and all his works and come to Christ? No, conscience, although it is not dead, is ruined, its power is impaired, it has not that clearness of eye and that strength of hand, and that thunder of voice, which it had before the fall, but has ceased to a great degree, to exert its supremacy in the town of Mansoul. Then, beloved, it becomes necessary for this very reason, because conscience is depraved, that the Holy Spirit should step in, to show us our need of a Savior, and draw us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Still," says one, "as far as you have hitherto gone, it appears to me that you consider that the reason why men do not come to Christ is that they will not, rather than they cannot." True, most true. I believe the greatest reason of man's inability is the obstinacy of his will. That once overcome, I think the great stone is rolled away from the sepulcher, and the hardest part of the battle is already won. But allow me to go a little further. My text does not say, "No man will come," but it says, "No man can come." Now, many interpreters believe that the *can* here, is but a strong expression conveying no more meaning than the word *will*. I feel assured that this is not correct. There is in man, not only unwillingness to be saved, but there is a spiritual powerlessness to come to Christ, and this I will prove to every Christian at any rate.

Beloved, I speak to you who have already been quickened by the divine grace, does not your experience teach you that there are times when you have a will to serve God, and yet have not the power? Have you not sometimes been obliged to say that you have wished to believe, but you have had to pray, "Lord, help mine unbelief"? Because, although willing enough to receive God's testimony, your own carnal nature was too strong for you, and you felt you needed supernatural help. Are you able to go into your room at any hour you choose, and to fall upon your knees and say, "Now, it is my will that I should be very earnest in prayer, and that I should draw near unto God"? I ask, do you find your power equal to your will? You could say, even at the bar of God Himself, that you are sure you are not mistaken in your willingness, you are willing to be wrapped up in devotion, it is your will that your soul should not wander from a pure contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but you find that you cannot do that, even when you are willing, without the help of the Spirit.

Now, if the quickened child of God finds a spiritual inability, how much more the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sin? If even the advanced Christian, after thirty or forty years, finds himself sometimes willing and yet powerless—if such be his experience—does it not seem more than likely that the poor sinner who has not yet believed, should find a need of strength as well as a want of will?

But, again, there is another argument. If the sinner has strength to come to Christ, I should like to know how we are to understand those continual descriptions of the sinner's state which we meet with in

God's Holy Word. Now, a sinner is said to be dead in trespasses and sins. Will you affirm that death implies nothing more than the absence of a will? Surely a corpse is quite as unable as unwilling. Or again, do not all men see that there is a distinction between *will* and *power*? Might not that corpse be sufficiently quickened to get a will, and yet be so powerless that it could not lift as much as its hand or foot? Have we never seen cases in which persons have been just sufficiently re-animated to give evidence of life, and have yet been so near death that they could not have performed the slightest action? Is there not a clear difference between the giving of the will and the giving of power? It is quite certain, however, that where the will is given, the power will follow. Make a man willing, and he shall be made powerful, for when God gives the will, He does not tantalize man by giving him to wish for that which he is unable to do, nevertheless He makes such a division between the will and the power, that it shall be seen that both things are quite distinct gifts of the Lord God.

Then I must ask one more question, if all that were needed to make a man willing, do you not at once degrade the Holy Spirit? Are we not in the habit of giving all the glory of salvation wrought in us to God the Spirit? But now, if all that God the Spirit does for me is to make me willing to do these things for myself, am I not in a great measure a sharer with the Holy Spirit in the glory? And may I not boldly stand up and say, "It is true the Spirit gave me the will to do it, but still I did it myself, and therein will I glory, for if I did these things myself without assistance from on high, I will not cast my crown at His feet, it is my own crown, I earned it, and I will keep it." Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is evermore in Scripture set forth as the person who works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure, we hold it to be a legitimate inference that He must do something more for us than the mere making of us willing, and that therefore there must be another thing besides want of will in a sinner—there must be absolute and actual want of power.

Now, before I leave this statement, let me address myself to you for a moment. I am often charged with preaching doctrines that may do a great deal of hurt. Well, I shall not deny the charge, for I am not careful to answer in this matter. I have my witnesses here present to prove that the things which I have preached have done a great deal of hurt, but they have not done hurt either to morality or to God's Church, the hurt has been on the side of Satan. There are not ones or twos but many hundreds who this morning rejoice that they have been brought near to God, from having been profane Sabbath-breakers, drunkards, or worldly persons, they have been brought to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, and if this be any hurt may God of His infinite mercy send us a thousand times as much.

But further, what truth is there in the world which will not hurt a man who chooses to make hurt of it? You who preach general redemption, are very fond of proclaiming the great truth of God's mercy to the last moment. But how dare you preach that? Many people make hurt of it by putting off the day of grace and thinking that the last hour may do as well as the first. Why, if we never preached anything which man could misuse, and abuse, we must hold our tongues forever. Still says one, "Well then, if I cannot save myself, and cannot come to Christ, I must sit still and do nothing." If men say so, on their own heads shall be their doom. We have very plainly told you that there are many things you can do. To be found continually in the house of God is in your power, to study the Word of God with diligence is in your power, to renounce your outward sin, to forsake the vices in which you indulge, to make your life honest, sober, and righteous, is in your power. For these you need no help from the Holy Spirit, all these you can do yourself, but to come to Christ truly is not in your power, until you are renewed by the Holy Ghost. But mark you, your want of power is no excuse, seeing that you have no desire to come, and are living in willful rebellion against God. Your want of power lies mainly in the obstinacy of nature.

Suppose a liar says that it is not in his power to speak the truth, that he has been a liar so long, that he cannot leave it off, is that an excuse for him? Suppose a man who has long indulged in lust should tell you that he finds his lusts have so girt about him like a great iron net that he cannot get rid of them, would you take that as an excuse? Truly it is none at all. If a drunkard has become so foully a drunkard, that he finds it impossible to pass a public-house without stepping in, do you therefore excuse him? No, because his inability to reform lies in his nature, which he has no desire to restrain or conquer. The thing

that is done, and the thing that causes the thing that is done, being both from the root of sin, are two evils which cannot excuse each other. What though the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots? It is because you have learned to do evil that you cannot now learn to do well, and instead, therefore, of letting you sit down to excuse yourselves, let me put a thunderbolt beneath the seat of your sloth, that you may be startled by it and aroused. Remember, that to sit still is to be damned to all eternity. Oh! that God the Holy Spirit might make use of this truth in a very different manner! Before I have done I trust I shall be enabled to show you how it is that this truth, which apparently condemns men and shuts them out, is, after all, the great truth, which has been blessed to the conversion of men.

II. Our second point is THE FATHER'S DRAWINGS.

“No man can come to me except the Father which sent me draw him.” How, then, does the Father draw men? Arminian divines generally say that God draws men by the preaching of the Gospel. Very true, the preaching of the Gospel is the instrument of drawing men, but there must be something more than this. Let me ask to whom did Christ address these words? Why, to the people of Capernaum, where he had often preached, where he had uttered mournfully and plaintively the woes of the law and the invitations of the Gospel. In that city He had done many mighty works and worked many miracles. In fact, such teaching and such miraculous attestation had He given to them, that He declared that Tyre and Sidon would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes, if they had been blessed with such privileges.

Now if the preaching of Christ Himself did not avail to the enabling these men to come to Christ, it cannot be possible that all that was intended by the drawing of the Father was simply preaching. No, brethren, you must note again, He does not say no man can come except the *minister* draw him, but except the *Father* draw him. Now there is such a thing as being drawn by the Gospel, and drawn by the minister, without being drawn by God. Clearly it is a divine drawing that is meant, a drawing by the Most High God—the First Person of the most glorious Trinity sending out the Third Person, the Holy Spirit, to induce men to come to Christ.

Another person turns round and says with a sneer, “Then do you think that Christ drags men to Himself, seeing that they are unwilling!” I remember meeting once with a man who said to me, “Sir, you preach that Christ takes people by the hair of their heads and drags them to Himself.” I asked him whether he could refer to the date of the sermon wherein I preached that extraordinary doctrine, for if he could, I should be very much obliged. However, he could not. But said I, while Christ does not drag people to Himself by the hair of their heads, I believe that He draws them by the heart quite as powerfully as your caricature would suggest. Mark that in the Father's drawing there is no compulsion whatever, Christ never compelled any man to come to Him against his will. If a man be unwilling to be saved, Christ does not save him against his will.

How, then, does the Holy Spirit draw him? Why, by making him willing. It is true He does not use “moral suasion,” He knows a nearer method of reaching the heart. He goes to the secret fountain of the heart, and he knows how, by some mysterious operation, to turn the will in an opposite direction, so that, as Ralph Erskine paradoxically puts it, the man is saved “with full consent against his will,” that is, against his old will he is saved. But he is saved with full consent, for he is made willing in the day of God's power.

Do not imagine that any man will go to heaven kicking and struggling all the way against the hand that draws him. Do not conceive that any man will be plunged in the bath of a Savior's blood while he is striving to run away from the Savior. Oh, no. It is quite true that first of all man is unwilling to be saved. When the Holy Spirit has put His influence into the heart, the text is fulfilled—“Draw me and I will run after You.” We follow on while He draws us, glad to obey the voice which once we had despised. But the gist of the matter lies in the turning of the will. How that is done no flesh knows, it is one of those mysteries that is clearly perceived as a fact, but the cause of which no tongue can tell, and no heart can guess. The apparent way, however, in which the Holy Spirit operates, we can tell you.

The first thing the Holy Spirit does when He comes into a man's heart is this, He finds him with a very good opinion of himself, and there is nothing which prevents a man coming to Christ like a good opinion of himself. "Why," says man, "I don't want to come to Christ. I have as good a righteousness as anybody can desire. I feel I can walk into heaven on my own rights." The Holy Spirit lays bare his heart, lets him see the loathsome cancer that is there eating away his life, uncovers to him all the blackness and defilement of that sink of hell, the human heart, and then the man stands aghast. "I never thought I was like this. Oh! those sins I thought were little, have swelled out to an immense stature. What I thought was a molehill has grown into a mountain, it was but the hyssop on the wall before, but now it has become a cedar of Lebanon. Oh," says the man within himself, "I will try and reform, I will do good deeds enough to wash these black deeds out." Then comes the Holy Spirit and shows him that he cannot do this, takes away all his fancied power and strength, so that the man falls down on his knees in agony and cries, "Oh! once I thought I could save myself by my good works, but now I find that—

*'Could my tears forever flow,
 Could my zeal no respite know,
 All for sin could not atone,
 You must save and You alone.'*

Then the heart sinks, and the man is ready to despair. And says he, "I never can be saved. Nothing can save me." Then comes the Holy Spirit and shows the sinner the cross of Christ, gives him eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve, and says, "Look to yonder cross, that Man died to save sinners, you feel that you are a sinner, He died to save you." And He enables the heart to believe, and to come to Christ. And when it comes to Christ, by this sweet drawing of the Spirit, it finds "a peace with God which passes all understanding, which keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now, you will plainly perceive that all this may be done without any compulsion. Man is as much drawn willingly, as if he were not drawn at all, and he comes to Christ with full consent, with as full a consent as if no secret influence had ever been exercised in his heart. But that influence must be exercised, or else there never has been and there never will be, any man who either can or will come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. And now, we gather up our ends, and conclude by trying to make a practical application of the doctrine, and we trust, a comfortable one.

"Well," says one "if what this man preaches be true, what is to become of my religion? For do you know I have been a long while trying, and I do not like to hear you say a man cannot save himself. I believe he can, and I mean to persevere, but if I am to believe what you say, I must give it all up and begin again." My dear friends, it will be a very happy thing if you do. Do not think that I shall be at all alarmed if you do so. Remember, what you are doing is building your house upon sand, and it is but an act of charity if I can shake it a little for you.

Let me assure you, in God's name, if your religion has no better foundation than your own strength, it will not stand you at the bar of God. Nothing will last to eternity, but that which came from eternity. Unless the everlasting God has done a good work in your heart, all you may have done must be unraveled at the last day of account. It is all in vain for you to be a church-goer or chapel-goer, a good keeper of the Sabbath, an observer of your prayers, it is all in vain for you to be honest to your neighbors and reputable in your conversation, if you hope to be saved by these things, it is all in vain for you to trust in them.

Go on, be as honest as you like, keep the Sabbath perpetually, be as holy as you can. I would not dissuade you from these things. God forbid, grow in them, but oh, do not trust in them, for if you rely upon these things you will find they will fail you when most you need them. And if there be anything else that you have found yourself able to do unassisted by divine grace, the sooner you can get rid of the hope that has been engendered by it the better for you, for it is a foul delusion to rely upon anything that flesh can do.

A spiritual heaven must be inhabited by spiritual men, and preparation for it must be wrought by the Spirit of God. “Well,” cries another, “I have been sitting under a ministry where I have been told that I could, at my own option, repent and believe, and the consequence is that I have been putting it off from day to day. I thought I could come one day as well as another, that I had only to say, ‘Lord, have mercy upon me,’ and believe, and then I should be saved. Now you have taken all this hope away for me, sir, I feel amazement and horror taking hold upon me.”

Again, I say, “My dear friend, I am very glad of it. This was the effect which I hoped to produce. I pray that you may feel this a great deal more. When you have no hope of saving yourself, I shall have hope that God has begun to save you. As soon as you say, ‘Oh, I cannot come to Christ. Lord, draw me, help me,’ I shall rejoice over you. He who has got a will, though he has not power, has grace begun in his heart, and God will not leave him until the work is finished.” But, careless sinner, learn that your salvation now hangs in God’s hand. Oh, remember you are entirely in the hand of God. You have sinned against Him, and if He wills to damn you, damned you are. You can not resist His will nor thwart His purpose. You have deserved His wrath, and if He chooses to pour the full shower of that wrath upon your head, you can do nothing to avert it.

If, on the other hand, He chooses to save you, He is able to save you to the very uttermost. But you lie as much in His hand as the summer’s moth beneath your own finger. He is the God whom you are grieving every day. Does it not make you tremble to think that your eternal destiny now hangs upon the will of Him whom you have angered and incensed? Does not this make your knees knock together, and your blood curdle? If it does so I rejoice, inasmuch as this may be the first effect of the Spirit’s drawing in your soul. Oh, tremble to think that the God whom you have angered, is the God upon whom your salvation or your condemnation entirely depends. Tremble and “Kiss the Son lest He be angry and you perish from the way while His wrath is kindled but a little.”

Now, the comfortable reflection is this—some of you this morning are conscious that you are coming to Christ. Have you not begun to weep the penitential tear? Did not your closet witness your prayerful preparation for the hearing of the Word of God? And during the service this morning, has not your heart said within you, “Lord, save me, or I perish, for save myself I cannot”? And could you not now stand up in your seat and sing—

*“Oh, sovereign grace my heart subdue;
I would be led in triumph, too,
A willing captive of my Lord,
To sing the triumph of His Word”?*

And have I not myself heard you say in your heart—“Jesus, Jesus, my whole trust is in You, I know that no righteousness of my own can save me, but only You, O Christ—sink or swim, I cast myself on You”? Oh, my brother, you are drawn by the Father, for you could not have come unless He had drawn you. Sweet thought! And if He has drawn you, do you know what is the delightful inference? Let me repeat one text, and may that comfort you, “The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you.”

Yes, my poor weeping brother, inasmuch as you are now coming to Christ, God has drawn you, and inasmuch as He has drawn you, it is a proof that He has loved you from before the foundation of the world. Let your heart leap within you, you are one of His. Your name was written on the Savior’s hands when they were nailed to the accursed tree. Your name glitters on the breastplate of the great High Priest today, ay, and it was there before the daystar knew its place, or planets ran their round.

Rejoice in the Lord you that have come to Christ, and shout for joy all you who have been drawn of the Father. For this is your proof, your solemn testimony, that you from among men have been chosen in eternal election, and that you shall be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto the salvation which is ready to be revealed.

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