

MEMORY—THE HANDMAID OF HOPE

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A SERMON
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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.”
Lamentations 3:21.*

MEMORY is very often the servant of despondency. Despairing minds call to remembrance every dark foreboding in the past and every gloomy feature in the present. Memory stands like a handmaiden clothed in sackcloth, presenting to her master a cup of mingled gall and wormwood. Like Mercury, she hastens with winged heel to gather fresh thorns with which to fill the uneasy pillow, and to bind fresh rods with which to scourge the already bleeding heart. There is, however, no necessity for this. Wisdom will transform Memory into an angel of comfort. That same recollection, which may, in its left hand, bring so many dark and gloomy omens, may be trained to bear in its right hand a wealth of hopeful signs. She need not wear a crown of iron, she may encircle her brow with a fillet of gold, all spangled with stars. When Christian, according to Bunyan, was locked up in Doubting Castle, Memory formed the crab-tree club with which the famous giant beat his captives so terribly. They remembered how they had left the right road, how they had been warned not to do so, and how in rebellion against their better selves, they wandered into By-Path Meadow. They remembered all their past misdeeds, their sins, their evil thoughts and evil words, and all these were so many knots in the club, causing sad bruises and wounds, in their poor suffering bodies. But one night, according to Bunyan, this same Memory which had scourged them, helped to set them free; for she whispered something in Christian's ear, and he cried out as one half amazed, “What a fool I am to lie in a stinking dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty! I have a key in my bosom called Promise; that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle.” So he put his hand into his bosom, and with much joy he plucked out the key, and thrust it into the lock; and though the lock of the great iron gate, as Bunyan says, “went damnable hard,” yet the key did open it, and all the others, too; and so, by this blessed act of Memory, poor Christian and Hopeful were set free!

Observe that the text records an act of memory on the part of Jeremiah—“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.” In the previous verse, he tells us that memory had brought him to despair—“My soul has them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.” And now, he tells us that, this same memory brought him to life and comfort, yet again—“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.” We lay it down, then, as a general principle, that if we would exercise our memories a little more, we might, in our very deepest and darkest distress, strike a match which would instantaneously kindle the lamp of comfort. There is no need for God to create a new thing, in order to restore believers to joy. If they would prayerfully rake the ashes of the past, they would find light for the present; and if they would turn to the book of truth and the throne of grace, their candle would soon shine as before.

I shall apply that general principle to the cases of three persons.

I. First of all, to THE BELIEVER WHO IS IN DEEP TROUBLE.

This is no unusual position for an heir of glory. A Christian is seldom long at ease—the believer in Jesus Christ, through much tribulation inherits the kingdom. If you will kindly turn to the chapter which contains our text, you will observe a list of matters which recollection brought before the mind of the prophet Jeremiah, and which yielded him comfort. First stands the fact that *however deep may be our present affliction, it is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed*. This is a low beginning certainly. The comfort is not very great, but when a very weak man is at the bottom of the pyramid, if he is ever to climb it, you must not set him a long step at first; give him but a small stone to step upon, the first time, and when he gets more strength, then he will be able to take a greater stride. Now, consider, you sons of

sorrow, where you might have been. Look down now through the gloomy portals of the grave, to that realm of darkness which is as the Valley of the Shadow of Death, full of confusion, and without any order. Can you discern the sound as of the rushing to and fro of hosts of guilty and tormented spirits? Do you hear their sorrowful wailing, and their fearful gnashing of teeth? Can your ears endure to hear the clanking of their chains, or your eyes to see the fury of the flames? They are forever, forever, forever shut out from the presence of God, and shut in with devils and despair! They lie in flames of misery so terrible that the dream of a despairing maniac cannot realize their woe. God has cast them away, and pronounced His curse upon them, appointing them blackness of darkness forever. This might have been your lot. Contrast your present position with theirs, and you have cause rather to sing, than to lament! “Why should a living man complain?” Have you seen those foul dungeons of Venice? They are below the watermark of the canal, where, after winding through narrow, dark, stifling passages, you may creep into little cells in which a man can scarcely stand upright, where no ray of sunlight has ever entered since the foundations of the palace were laid! They are cold, foul, and black with damp and mildew—the fit nursery of fever and abode of death!

And yet, those places it would be luxury to inhabit compared with the everlasting burnings of hell. It were an excess of luxury to lost spirits, if they could lie there with moss growing on their eyelids, in lonely misery, if they might but escape for a little season from a guilty conscience, and the wrath of God. Friend, you are neither in those dungeons nor yet in hell; therefore pluck up courage and say, “It is of the Lord’s mercy we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.” Slender comfort this may be, but then, if this flame shall yield but little heat, it may lead to something better. When you are kindling your household fire, before which you hope to sit down with comfort, you do not first expect to kindle the lumps of coal, you set some lighter fuel in a blaze, and soon the more solid material yields a genial glow. So this thought, which may seem so light to you, may be as the kindling of a heavenly fire of comfort for you who now are shivering in your grief.

Something better awaits us, for Jeremiah reminds us that there are some mercies, at any rate, which are still continued. “*His compassions fail not, they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.*” You are very poor and have come down from wealth. This is very difficult; still, you are in good health. Just walk into the hospital, ask to be permitted to witness the work done in the operating room; sit down by one bedside and listen to the story of pain and weariness; and surely you will leave the hospital feeling, “I thank God that with all my poverty, I have not sickness to complain of, and therefore I will sing of the mercies which I enjoy.” Are you sick, and have you dragged your weary body to this house this morning? Then I shall invite you to accompany me to those dark cellars and miserable attics, where poverty pines away in wretched unpitied obscurity in the heart of this great city; and if you note the hard-earned meal, too scant to yield sufficient refreshment, and the miserable heap of straw which is their only rest, you will escape from the foul den of filthy poverty, and say, “I will bear my sickness, for even that is better than filth, starvation, and nakedness.” Evil your plight may be, but there are others in a still worse condition. You can always, if you open your eyes and choose to do so, see at least this cause for thankfulness—that you are not yet plunged into the lowest depth of misery.

There is a very touching little story told, of a poor woman with two children who had not a bed for them to lie upon, and scarcely any clothes to cover them. In the depth of winter they were nearly frozen, and the mother took the door of a cellar off the hinges, and set it up before the corner where they crouched down to sleep that some of the draft and cold might be kept from them. One of the children whispered to her when she complained of how badly off they were, “Mother, what do those dear little children do, who have no cellar door to put up in front of them?” Even there, you see, the little heart found cause for thankfulness; and we, if we are driven to our worst extremity, will still honor God by thanking Him that His compassions fail not, but are new every morning. This, again, is not a very high step, but still, it is a little in advance over the other, and the weakest may readily reach it.

The chapter offers us a third source of consolation. “*The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in Him.*” You have lost much Christian, but you have not lost your portion. Your God is your all; therefore, if you have lost all but God, still you have your all left, since God is all. The text does not say that God is a part of our portion, but the whole portion of our spirit. In Him we have all the riches of

our heart concentrated. How can we be bereaved since our Father lives? How can we be robbed since our treasure is on high? It is daylight and the sun is shining bright, and I have a candle lit, but someone blows it out. Shall I sit down and weep because my candle is extinguished? No, not while the sun shines. If God is my portion, if I lose some little earthly comfort I will not complain, for heavenly comfort remains. One of our kings, high and haughty in temper, had a quarrel with the citizens of London, and thought to alarm them by a dreadful threat that would cow the spirits of the bold citizens, for if they did not mind what they were doing, he would remove his Court from Westminster. Whereupon, the Lord Mayor begged to inquire whether His Majesty meant to take the Thames away, for so long as the river remained, His Majesty might take himself wherever he pleased! Even so, the world warns us, “You cannot hold out, you cannot rejoice—this trouble shall come and that adversity shall befall.” We reply, “So long as you cannot take our Lord away, we will not complain.” “Philosophers,” said the wise man, “can dance without music.” And true believers in God can rejoice when outward comforts fail them. He who drinks from the bottle, as did the son of the bondwoman, may have to complain of thirst; but he who dwells at the well as did Isaac, the child according to promise, he shall never know lack! God grant us grace, then, to rejoice in our deepest distress, because the Lord is our sure possession, our perpetual heritage of joy. We have now advanced to some degree of hope, but there are other steps to ascend.

The prophet then reminds us of another channel of comfort, namely, that God is forevermore good to all who seek Him. *“The Lord is good unto them who wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him.”* Let Him smite ever so hard, yet if we can maintain the heavenly posture of prayer, we may rest assured that He will turn from blows to kisses. When a beggar wants alms, and is very needy, if he sees another beggar at the door of some great man, he will watch while he knocks, and when the door is opened and the man is liberally entertained, and generously helped, he who has been looking on knocks with boldness in his turn. My soul, are you very sad and very low this morning? The Lord is good to them who seek Him. Thousands have come from His door, but none have had reason to complain of a cold reception, for in every case, He has filled the hungry with good things. Therefore, my soul, go boldly and knock, for He gives liberally and upbraids not. In all states of dilemma or of difficulty, prayer is an available source. Bunyan tells us that when the City of Mansoul was besieged, it was the depth of winter and the roads were very bad, but even then, prayer could travel them; and I will venture to affirm that if all earthly roads were so bad that they could not be traveled, and if Mansoul were so surrounded that there was not a gap left through which we could break our way to get to the king, yet the road upwards would always be open. No enemy can barricade that; no blockading ships can sail between our souls and the haven of the mercy seat. The ship of prayer may sail through all temptations, doubts and fears, straight up to the throne of God; and though she may be outward bound with only griefs, and groans, and sighs, she shall return freighted with a wealth of blessings. There is hope then, Christian, for you are allowed to pray—

*“The mercy seat is open still,
Here let our souls retreat.”*

We are getting into deeper water of joy, let us take another step, and this time we shall win still greater consolation, from the fact that it is good to be afflicted! *“It is good that a man should bear the yoke in his youth.”* A little child needs to be coaxed to take its medicine. It may be very ill, and mother may assure it that this medicine will work its cure; but the child says, “No, it is so bitter, I cannot take it.” But men need not thus to be persuaded. The bitter is nothing to them; they think of the health which it will bring, and so they take the draught, and do not even wince. Now we—if we are little children, and have not called to remembrance the fruit which affliction bears—may cry and murmur. But if we are men and women in Christ Jesus, and have learned that “All things work together for good to them who love God,” we shall take the cup right cheerfully and willingly, and bless God for it. Why should I dread to descend the shaft of affliction if it leads me to the gold mine of spiritual experience? Why should I cry out if the sun of my prosperity goes down, if in the darkness of my adversity I shall be the better able to count the starry promises, with which my faithful God has been pleased to gem the sky? Go sun, for in your absence we shall see ten thousand suns! And when your blinding light is gone, we shall see worlds in the dark which were hidden from us by your light. Many a promise is written in sympathetic ink which you cannot read till the fire of trouble brings out the letters. “It is good for me that I have been

afflicted that I might learn Your statutes.” Beloved, Israel went into Egypt poor, but they came out of Egypt with jewels of silver and jewels of gold. They had worked, it is true, at the brick kilns, and suffered bitter bondage, but they were bettered by it; they came out enriched by all their tribulations.

A child had a little garden in which it planted many flowers, but they never grew. She put them in, as she thought, tenderly and carefully, but they would not live. She sowed seeds and they sprang up, but very soon they withered away. So she ran to her father’s gardener, and when he came to look at it, he said, “I will make it a nice garden for you that you may grow whatever you want.” He fetched a pick, and when the little child saw the terrible pick, she was afraid for her little garden. The gardener struck his tool into the ground, and began to make the earth heave and shake, for his pickaxe had caught the edge of a huge stone which lay under almost all the little plot of ground. All the little flowers were turned out of their places and the garden spoiled for a season so that the little maid wept much. He told her he would make it a fair garden yet, and so he did, for having removed that stone which had prevented all the plants from striking root he soon filled the ground with flowers which lived and flourished. And so the Lord has come, and has turned up all the soil of your present comfort, to get rid of some big stone that was at the bottom of all your spiritual prosperity, and would not let your soul flourish. Do not weep with the child, but be comforted by the blessed results, and thank your Father’s tender hand.

One step more, and surely we shall then have good ground to rejoice. The chapter reminds us that these troubles do not last forever. When they have produced their proper result they will be removed, for “*The Lord will not cast off forever.*” Who told you that the night would never end in day? Who told you that the sea would ebb out till there should be nothing left but a vast track of mud and sand? Who told you that the winter would proceed from frost to frost, from snow, and ice, and hail, to deeper snow, and yet more heavy tempest? Who told you this, I say? Do you not know that day follows night? That flood comes after ebb? That spring and summer succeed winter? Then have hope! Hope forever! God fails you not! Do you not know that your God loves you in the midst of all this? Mountains, when hidden in darkness, are as real as in daylight, and God’s love is as true to you now as it was in your brightest moments. No father chastens always—he hates the rod as much as you do! He only cares to use it for that reason which should make you willing to receive it, namely, that it works your lasting good. You shall yet climb Jacob’s ladder with the angels, and behold Him who sits at the top of it—your covenant God. You shall yet, amidst the splendors of eternity, forget the trials of time, or only remember them to bless the God who led you through them, and worked your lasting good by them! Come, sing on your bed! Rejoice amidst the flames! Make the wilderness blossom like the rose! Cause the desert to ring with your exalting joys! These light afflictions will soon be over, and then “Forever with the Lord,” your bliss shall never wane!

Thus, dear friends, memory may be as Coleridge calls it, “The bosom spring of joy,” and when the Holy Spirit bends it to His service, it may be chief among earthly comforters.

II. For a short time, we will speak TO THE DOUBTING CHRISTIAN WHO HAS LOST HIS EVIDENCES OF SALVATION.

It is our habit, in our ministry, to avoid extremes as much as possible, and to keep to the narrow path of the truth of God. We believe in the doctrine of predestination, we believe in the doctrine of free agency, and we follow the narrow path between those mountains; so in all other truths of God. We know some who think that doubts are not sins—we regret their thinking that. We know others who believe doubts to be impossible where there is any faith—we cannot agree with them. We have heard of persons ridiculing that very sweet and admirable hymn, beginning—

“Tis a point I long to know.”

We dare not ridicule it ourselves, for we have often had to sing it—we wish it were not so, but we are compelled to confess that doubts have vexed us. The true position, with regard to the doubts and fears of believers, is just this—that they are sinful, and are not to be cultivated, but to be avoided; but that, more or less, most of Christians do suffer them, and that they are no proof of a man’s being destitute of faith, for the very best of Christians have been subject to them. To you who are laboring under anxious thought I now address myself.

Let me *bid you to remember in the first place matters of the past*. Shall I pause and let your heart talk to you? Do you remember the place, the spot of ground where Jesus first met with you? Perhaps you do not. Well, do you remember happy seasons when He has brought you to the banqueting house? Cannot you remember gracious deliverances? “I was brought low and He helped *me*.” “You have been *my help*.” When you were in those past circumstances, you thought yourselves in overwhelming trouble. You have passed through them, and cannot you find comfort in them? At the south of Africa the sea was generally so stormy that when the frail boats of the Portuguese went sailing south, they named it the Cape of Storms; but after that cape had been well rounded by bolder navigators, they named it the Cape of Good Hope. In your experience you had many Capes of Storms, but you have weathered them all, and now, let them be a, Capes of Good Hopes, to you. Remember, “You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.” Say with David, “Why are you cast down, O my soul, why are you disquieted in me? Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him.” Do I not remember this day some Hill Mizars, where my soul has had such sweet fellowship with God, that she thought herself in heaven? Can I not remember moments of awful agony of soul, when in an instant my spirit leaped to the topmost heights of ecstasy at the mention of my Savior’s name? Have there not been times with me at the Lord’s table, in private prayer, and in listening to His Word, when I could say—

*“My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away,
To everlasting bliss”?*

Well, let me remember this, and have hope, for—

*“Did Jesus once upon me shine,
Then Jesus is forever mine!”*

He never loved where He afterwards hates; His will never changes. It is not possible that He who said, “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands,” should ever forget or cast away those who once were dear to Him.

Possibly, however, that may not be the means of comfort to some of you. Recall, I pray, the fact that *others have found the Lord true to them*. They cried to God and He delivered *them*. Do you not remember your mother? She is now in heaven, and you her son are toiling and struggling onward here below. Do not you recollect what she told you before she died? She said God had been faithful and true to her. She was left a widow, and you were but a child then, and she told you how God provided for her, and for you, and the rest of that little needy family in answer to her pleadings. Do you believe your mother’s testimony, and will you not rest with your mother’s faith upon your mother’s God? There are gray heads here who would, if it were the proper season, testify to you that in an experience of 50 and 60 years in which they have walked before the Lord in the land of the living, they cannot put their finger upon any date and say, “Here God was unfaithful,” or, “Here He left me in the time of trouble.” I, who am but young, have passed through many and sore tribulations after my sort, and can say and must say it, for if I speak not, the timbers of this house might cry out against my ungrateful silence—He is a faithful God, and He remembers His servants, and leaves them not in the hour of their trouble. Hearing our testimonies, cannot you say in the words of the text, “This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope”?

Remember, again, and perhaps this may be consolatory to you, that though you think you are not a child of God at all now, yet *if you look within, you will see some faint traces of the Holy Spirit’s hand*. The complete picture of Christ is not there, but cannot you see the crayon sketch—the outline—the charcoal marks? “What,” you say, “do you mean?” Do you want to be a Christian? Have you not desires after God? Cannot you say with the psalmist, “My heart and my flesh pants after God—after the living God”? Oh, I have often had to console myself with this, when I could not see a single Christian grace beaming in my spirit, I have had to say, “I know I shall never be satisfied until I get to be like my Lord.” One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see—see enough, at least, to know my own defects, and emptiness, and misery; and I have just enough spiritual life to feel that I want more, and that I cannot be satisfied unless I have more. Well, now, where God the Holy Spirit has done as much as that, He will do more. Where He begins a good work, we are told He will carry it on and perfect it in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Call that to mind, brethren, and you may have hope.

But I would remind you that *there is a promise in this book that exactly describes and suits your case*. A young man had been left by his father heir of all his property, but an adversary disputed his right. The case was to come on in the court, and this young man, while he felt sure that he had a legal right to the whole, could not prove it. His legal adviser told him that there was more evidence needed than he could bring. How to get this evidence he did not know. He went to an old chest where his father had kept his papers, turned all out, and as he turned the writings over, and over, and over, there was an old parchment. He undid the red tape with great anxiety and there it was—the very thing he needed—his father’s will—in which the estate was spoken of as being left entirely to himself. He went into court boldly enough with that! Now, when we get into doubts, it is a good thing to turn to this old book, and read until at last we can say, “That is it—that promise was made for me.” Perhaps it may be this one—“When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them; I the God of Jacob will not forsake them.” Or this one—“Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” May I beg you to rummage the old book through? And you, poor doubting, despairing Christian, will soon stumble on some precious parchment, as it were, which God the Holy Spirit will make to you the title-deed of immortality and life.

If these recollections should not suffice, I have one more. You look at me, and you open your ears to find what new thing I am going to tell you. No, I am going to tell you nothing new, but yet it is the best thing that was ever said out of heaven, “*Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.*” You have heard that a thousand times—and is the best music you have ever heard! If I am not a saint, I am a sinner; and if I may not go to the throne of grace as a child, I will go as a sinner. A certain king was accustomed on set occasions to entertain all the beggars of the city. Around him sat his courtiers, all clothed in rich apparel; the beggars sat at the same table in their rags of poverty. Now, it came to pass, that on a certain day, one of the courtiers had spoiled his silken apparel so that he dared not put it on, and he felt, “I cannot go to the king’s feast today, for my robe is foul.” He sat weeping till the thought struck him, “Tomorrow, when the king holds his feast, some will come as courtiers happily decked in their beautiful array, and others will come and be made quite as welcome, who will be dressed in rags. Well, well,” he said, “as long as I may see the king’s face and sit at the king’s table, I will enter with the beggars.” So, without mourning because he had lost his silken habit, he put on the rags of a beggar, and he saw the king’s face as well as if he had worn his scarlet and fine linen.

My soul has done this full many a time, and I bid you do the same; if you cannot come as a saint, come as a sinner, only come, and you shall receive joy and peace. There was a lamentable accident which occurred in the North in one of the coal pits, when a considerable number of miners were down below, when the top of the pit fell in, and the shaft was completely blocked up. Those who were down below sat together in the dark, and sang and prayed. They gathered to a spot where the last remains of air below could be breathed. There they sat and sang after the lights had gone out, because the air would not support the flame. They were in total darkness, but one of them said he had heard that there was a connection between that pit and an old pit that had been worked years ago. He said it was a low passage, through which a man might get by crawling all the way, lying flat upon the ground—he would go and see—the passage was very long, but they crept through it, and at last they came out to light at the bottom of the other pit and their lives were saved. If my present way to Christ as a saint gets blocked up, if I cannot go straight up the shaft, and see the light of my Father up yonder, there is an old working, the old fashioned way by which sinners go, by which poor thieves go, by which harlots go—come, I will crawl along lowly and humbly, flat upon the ground—I will crawl along till I see my Father, and cry, “Father, I am not worthy to be called Your son; make me as one of Your hired servants, as long as I may but dwell in Your house.”

In your very worst case you can still come as *sinner*s. Jesus “Christ came into the world to save sinners,” call this to mind and you may have hope.

III. I must have a few words with SEEKERS.

Always in this congregation we have some who are seeking the Lord—would to God we had many more! It were glorious preaching if all were either seeking or had found. If it were not for the mixed multitude who neither seek nor find, our work were easy work, indeed. Some of you are seeking God

today, and you are very much troubled with the fear that you cannot be saved. I will have a few words with you, to recall to mind, some commonplace truths of God which may give you hope.

First of all, some of you are troubled about the *doctrine of election*. I cannot this morning explain it to you. I believe it and receive it with joy, and you may rest assured, however much it troubles you, it is true. Though you may not like it, it is true, and remember, it is not a matter of opinion as to what you like or do not like, as to what you think or do not think, you must turn to the Bible, and if you find it there you must believe it. Listen to me. You have got an idea that some persons will be sent to hell, merely and only because it is the will of God that they should be sent there. Throw the idea overboard, because it is a very wicked one, and is not to be found in Scripture. There could not be a hell inside the man's conscience, who knew that he was wretched merely because God willed he should be, for the very essence of hell is sin, and a sense of having willfully committed it. There could not be the flames of hell if there were not this conviction on the mind of the person suffering it, "I knew my duty, but I did it not—I willfully sinned against God, and I am here not because of anything He did or did not do, but because of my own sin." If you drive that dark thought away, you may be on the road to comfort. Remember again, that whatever the doctrine of election may be or may not be, there is a free invitation in the gospel given to needy sinners, "Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

Now you may say, "I cannot reconcile the two." There are a great many other things that you cannot do. God knows where these two things meet though you do not, and I hope you do not intend to wait till you are a philosopher before you will be saved, because it is likely enough that while you are trying to be wise by persistently remaining a practical fool, you will find yourself in hell, where your wisdom will not be of any use to you. God commands you to trust Christ, and promises that all believers shall be saved. Leave your difficulties till you have trusted Christ, and then you will be in a capacity to understand them better than you do now. In order to understand gospel doctrine, you must believe in Christ first. What does Christ say, "No man comes unto the Father but by Me." Now election is the Father's work. The Father chooses sinners; Christ makes the atonement. You must go, then, to Christ the atoning Sacrifice before you can understand the Father as the electing God. Do not persist in going to the Father first. Go to the Son as He tells you.

Once more, remember that even if your own idea of the doctrine of election were the truth, yet if it were so, you can but perish should you seek the Lord—

*"I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away I know,
I must forever die.
But if I die with mercy sought,
When I the King have tried,
That were to die, delightful thought,
As sinner never died."*

Trust Christ even if you should perish, and you shall never perish if you trust in Him.

Well, if that difficulty were removed, I can suppose another, saying, "Ah, but my case is of *great sin*." Recall this to mind, and you will have hope, namely, that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom," Paul says, "I am chief." "I am chief." Paul was the chief of sinners, and he went through the door of mercy; and now there can be none greater than the chief, and where the chief went through you can go through! If the chief of sinners has been saved; why not you? Why not you?

We heard Mr. Offord say the other day that he knew a good woman who, when the Salt-Ash Bridge was made down at Plymouth, would not go on it. She said she did not believe it was safe. She saw locomotive engines and trains go over it so that the bridge sustained hundreds of tons at a time, but she shook her head and said she wondered people were so immensely presumptuous as to cross it. When the bridge was totally clear and not an engine on it, she was asked if she would not walk on it then. Well, she did venture a little way, but she trembled all the while for fear her weight should make it fall. It could bear hundreds of tons of steel, but it could not bear her. You great sinner, it is much the same case with you. The stupendous bridge which Christ has flung across the wrath of God will bear the weight of

your sin, for it has borne ten thousands of thousands across before, and will bear millions of sinners yet to the shore of their eternal rest. Call that to remembrance, and you may have hope.

“Yes,” says one, “but I believe I have committed *the unpardonable sin*.” My dear brother, I believe you have *not*, but I want you to call one thing to remembrance, and that is that the unpardonable sin is a sin which is unto death. Now a sin which is unto death means a sin which brings death on the conscience. The man who commits it never has any conscience afterwards—he is dead there. Now, you have some feeling; you have enough life to wish to be saved from sin; you have enough life to long to be washed in the precious blood of Jesus. You have *not* committed the unpardonable sin, therefore have hope. “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” “But,” you reply, “Oh, *I cannot repent!* My heart is so hard.” Call to remembrance that Jesus Christ is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins, and you may come to Him to get repentance, and need not bring it to Him. Come without any repentance, and ask Him to give it to you, and He will give it. Rest assured there is no fear whatever that if the soul seeks softness and tenderness, it has that softness and tenderness in a measure even now, and will have it to the fullest extent before long. “Oh, but,” you say, “I have a *general unfitness* and incapacity for being saved.” Then, dear friend, I want you to call this to remembrance, that Jesus Christ has a general fitness and a general capacity for *saving* sinners. I do not know what you need, but I do know Christ has it. I do not know the full extent of your disease, but I do know Christ is the Physician who can cure it. I do not know how hard, and stubborn, and stolid, and ignorant, and blind, and dead your nature may be, but I do know that “Christ is able to save unto the uttermost those who come unto God by Him.”

What you are has nothing to do with the question, except that it is the mischief to be undone. The true answer to the question of how you are to be saved lies yonder in the bleeding body of the immaculate Lamb of God! Christ has all salvation in Himself. He is Alpha, He is Omega. He does not begin to save, and leave you to perish, nor does He offer to complete what you must first begin. He is the foundation as well as the pinnacle. He commences with you as the green blade, and He will finish with you as the full corn in the ear.

O, that I had a voice like the trumpet of God that shall wake the dead at last! If I might only have it to utter one sentence, it would be this one, “Your help is found in Christ.” As for you, there never can be found anything hopeful in your human nature; it is death itself, it is rottenness and corruption. Turn, turn your eyes away from this despairing mass of black depravity, and look to Christ! He is the Sacrifice for human guilt. His is the righteousness that covers men, and makes them acceptable before the Lord. Look to Him as you are—black, foul, guilty, leprous, condemned. Go as you are! Trust Jesus Christ to save you, and remembering this, you shall have “a hope that makes not ashamed,” which shall endure forever.

I have labored to speak comfortable words and words in season, and I have tried to speak them in homely language, too. But, O Comforter, what can we do without You? YOU must cheer our sadness. To comfort souls is God’s own work! Let us conclude, then, with the words of the Savior’s promise, “If I go away, I will send you another Comforter, who shall abide with you forever.” And let our prayer be that He would abide with us to His own glory and to our comfort forevermore. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Lamentations 3:1-33.

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

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