

THE MISSION OF THE SON OF MAN
(Particular Redemption)
NO. 204

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 AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
Luke 19:10.

How fond our Master was of the sweet title, the “Son of Man”! If He had chosen, He might always have spoken of Himself as the Son of God, the Everlasting Father, the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Prince of Peace. He has a thousand gorgeous titles, resplendent as the Throne of Heaven, but He cares not to use them. To express His humility and let us see the lowliness of Him whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light, He calls not Himself the Son of God, but He speaks of Himself evermore as the Son of Man who came down from Heaven. Let us learn a lesson of humility from our Savior. Let us never court great titles, nor proud degrees. What are they, after all, but beggarly distinctions whereby one worm is known from another? He who has the most of them is still a worm and is in nature no greater than his fellows. If Jesus called Himself the Son of Man when He had far greater names, let us learn to humble ourselves unto men of low estate, knowing that he who humbles himself shall in due time be exalted! I think, however, there is a sweeter thought than this in that name, Son of Man. It seems to me that Christ loved manhood so much that He always desired to honor it. And since it is a high honor and, indeed, the greatest dignity of manhood that Jesus Christ was the Son of Man, He desires to display this name that He may, as it were, put rich stars upon the breast of manhood and put a crown upon its head! *Son of Man*—whenever He said that word—He seemed to put a halo round the head of Adam’s children!

Yet there is perhaps a still more lovely thought. Jesus Christ called Himself the Son of Man because He loved to be a man! It was a great stoop for Him to come from Heaven and to be Incarnate. It was a mighty stoop of condescension when He left the harps of angels and the songs of cherubim to mingle with the vulgar herd of His own creatures. But condescension though it were, He loved it. You will remember that when He became Incarnate He did not become so in the dark. When He brings forth the Only-Begotten into the world, He said, “Let all the angels of God worship Him.” It was told in Heaven. It was not done as a dark secret which Jesus Christ would do in the night that none might know it, but all the angels of God were brought to witness the advent of a Savior a span long, sleeping upon a Virgin’s breast and lying in a manger! And ever afterwards and even now He never blushed to confess that He was Man—never looked back upon His Incarnation with the slightest regret. He always regarded it with a joyous recollection, thinking Himself thrice happy that He had ever become the Son of Man. All hail blessed Jesus! We know how much You love our race! We can well understand the greatness of Your mercy towards Your chosen ones, inasmuch as You are evermore using the sweet name which acknowledges that they are bone of Your bone and flesh of Your flesh and You are one of them, a Brother and a near kinsman!

Our text announces as a declaration of our Savior, that He, the Son of Man, is come to seek and to save that which was lost. In addressing you this morning I shall simply divide my discourse thus—First, I shall lay it down as a self-evident Truth, that *whatever was the intention of Christ in His coming into the world, that intention most certainly shall never be frustrated*. We shall then, in the second place, look into *the intention of Christ*, as announced in the text, viz., “to seek and to save that which was lost.” Then, in concluding, we shall derive *a word of comfort* and perhaps one of *warning* from the intention of our Savior in coming into the world—“to seek and to save that which was lost.”

I. You are aware that there has been a very great discussion among all Christians about the Redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is one class of men who believe in what is called *general redemption*, affirming it to be an undoubted truth that Jesus Christ has shed His blood for every man and that the intention of Christ in His death was the salvation of men considered as a whole. They have, however, to overlook the fact that in this case Christ’s intention would be frustrated in a measure. There are others of us who hold what is called the doctrine of *Particular Redemption* or *Limited Atonement*. We conceive that the blood of Christ was of an infinite value, but that the intention of the death of Christ

never was the salvation of *all* men, for if Christ had designed the salvation of *all* men, we hold that *all* men would have been saved! We believe that the intention of Christ's death is just equal to its effects and, therefore, I start this morning by announcing what I regard to be a self-evident Truth—that whatever was the intention of Jesus Christ in coming into the world—that intention most certainly shall be fulfilled.

But I shall make use of a few arguments to strengthen this Doctrine, although I believe that on the very first announcement it commends itself to every thinking mind.

In the first place, it seems to be *inconsistent with the very idea of God that He should ever intend anything which would not be accomplished*. When I look at man, I see him to be a creature so distracted with folly and so devoid of power that I do not wonder that he often begins to build and is not able to finish! I do not marvel that full often he stops short because he has not counted the cost. I wonder not, when I think how much there is that is above man's control, that he should sometimes propose but that God should dispose far differently from his proposition! I see man to be the insect of a day, a mere speck upon the bay leaf of existence. And when I see him as a mere drop in the great sea of Creation, I do not wonder that when he is ambitious he sometimes fashions in himself great designs which he is unable to accomplish because the wheels of Providence and destiny will often run quite contrary to all the frolic of his will. But when I think of God whose name is, "I AM that I AM," the self-existent One—in whom we live and move and have our being, who is from everlasting to everlasting, the Almighty God—when I think of Him as filling immensity, having all power and strength, knowing all things, having a fullness of wisdom, I cannot associate with such an idea of God the supposition of His *ever* failing in any of His intentions!

It would seem to me that a God who could intend a thing and fail in His intention would not be God—but be a thing like ourselves—perhaps superior in strength, but certainly not entitled to worship! I cannot think of God as a true and real God like Jehovah, except as a Being who wills and it is accomplished; who speaks and it is done; who commands and it stands fast—forever—settled in Heaven! I cannot imagine, since Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that in His Atonement and Redemption His real intention and desire can in any way be frustrated. If I were a Socinian and believed Jesus Christ to be a mere man, I could, of course, imagine that the result of His Redemption would be uncertain. But believing that Jesus Christ is very God of very God, equal and co-eternal with the Father, I dare not, lest I should be guilty of presumption and blasphemy, associate with that name of Jehovah Jesus any suspicion that the design of His death shall remain unaccomplished!

But again, we have before us the fact that *up to now, all the works of God have accomplished their purpose*. Whenever God has uttered by the lips of His servants a prophecy, it has surely come to pass! The instruments of accomplishing that purpose have often been the most factious and rebellious of men—they had no intention whatever of serving God. They have run contrary to His Laws, but you will observe that when they have dashed wildly along, His bit has still been in their mouth and His bridle in their jaws! A great monarch has acted like leviathan in the sea—he has moved himself wherever he pleased. He has seemed mighty among the sons of men—all the rest of mankind were as minnows, while he was a huge leviathan! But we discover that God has been overruling his thoughts, that He has been in his council chamber, that the wildest speculations of his ambition have, after all, been but the fulfilling of Jehovah's stern decrees! Look abroad through all the nations of the earth and tell me—is there one prophecy of God that has failed? May He not still say, "Not one of them has lost her mate"? Every Word of God has certainly been accomplished! The kings of the earth stood up and took counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break His bands asunder and cast His cords from us." But He who sits in the heavens did laugh at them! The Lord did have them in derision. Still He worked His own Sovereign will. Let them do as they pleased, God was over them all, reigning and ruling evermore! If, then, God's purpose in Providence certainly never has been frustrated, am I to imagine that God's purpose in the glorious Sacrifice of Jesus Christ shall be null and void?

If there are any of you who have arrived at such a contortion of intellect as to conceive that a less work being accomplished, a greater one shall fail, I must leave you to yourselves. With you I could not argue—I should think you incapable of an argument! Surely, if God the Master, the Judge, the King, has in all things done according to His own pleasure in this lower world, in the mere Creation and preservation of men, it is not to be dreamed of for a moment that when He stoops Himself from the highest Heaven, to give His own heart's blood for our Redemption, He shall in that be foiled! No, though earth and Hell are against Him, every purpose of Jesus on the Cross shall be consummated and as the price was "finished," so shall the purchase be! As the means were fully provided, so shall the end be accomplished to its utmost jot and tittle!

But again, I invite you to stand at *the foot of the Cross* and take a view of Jesus Christ. And then I will put it to you whether you can imagine that Jesus Christ could in any measure have died in vain. Come, Believer, place yourself in the Garden of Gethsemane! Hide yourself among those dark olives and listen to yonder Man who is in agony! Do you hear those groans? They are the groans of an Incarnate God! Do you hear those sighs? They are the sighs of the Son of Man, God over all, blessed forever! Do you hear those strong cries and do you see those tears? They are the crying and the tears of Him who is equal with His Father, but who condescended to be a Man! Rise, for He has risen—Judas has betrayed Him and taken Him away. Look on that ground. Do you see those clots of gore? It is the bloody sweat of the Man, Christ Jesus! I beseech you, answer this question—standing in the Garden of Gethsemane, with those blood clots staining the white frost of that cold midnight, can you believe that one of those clots of blood shall fall to the ground and not effect its purpose? I challenge you, O Christian, whatever your doctrinal opinions, to say to me, “Yes,” to such a question as that! Can you imagine that a sweat of blood from the veins of Incarnate Deity shall ever fall to the ground and fail? Why, Beloved, the *Word* of God which comes forth out of His mouth shall not return unto Him void, but it shall accomplish that which He pleases! How much more shall the Great WORD of God, which came forth from the loins of Deity, accomplish the purpose whereunto God has sent Him and prosper in the thing for which it pleased God to ordain Him!?

But now come with me to *the hall of judgment*. See there your Master placed in mock state in the midst of a ribald band of soldiers. Do you see how they spit on those blessed cheeks; how they pluck His hair; how they buffet Him? Do you see the crown of thorns with its ruby drops of gore? Listen! Can you hear the cry of the multitude as they say, “Crucify Him, crucify Him”? And will you now stand there and look at this Man whom Pilate has just brought forth, still bleeding from the lash of the scourge; covered with shame and spit and mockery and as this “*Ecce Homo*” is presented to you, will you believe that *this*, the *Incarnate Son of God*, shall be made such a spectacle to men, to angels and to devils—and yet fail of His design? Can you imagine that one lash of that whip shall have a fruitless aim? Shall Jesus Christ suffer this shame and spitting and yet endure what was far worse—a disappointment in the fulfillment of His intentions? No, God forbid! No! By Gethsemane and Gabbatha we are pledged to the strong belief that what Christ designed by His death must certainly be accomplished!

Then again, see him *hanging on His Cross*. The nails have pierced His hands and feet and there, in the broiling sun He hangs—He hangs to die! The mockery has not ceased. Still they put out the tongue and wag the head at Him. Still they taunt Him with, “If you are the Son of God, come down from the Cross.” And now His bodily pains increase while His soul’s anguish is terrible even unto death! Christian, can you believe that the blood of Christ was shed in vain? Can you look at one of those precious drops as it trickles from His head or His hands or His feet and can you imagine that it shall fall to the ground and perish there? Trust the waters may fail from the sea, the sun may grow dim with age, but I never can imagine that the value, the merit, the power of the blood of Jesus ever shall die out, or that its purpose shall be unaccomplished! It seems to me as clear as noonday that the design of the Savior’s death must certainly be fulfilled—be it what it may.

I might use a hundred other arguments. I might show that every attribute of Christ declares that His purpose must be accomplished. He certainly has love enough to accomplish His design of saving the lost, for He has a love that is bottomless and fathomless, even as the abyss itself! He certainly has no objection to the accomplishment of His own design, for, “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live.” And certainly the Lord cannot fail for want of *power*, for where there is Omnipotence, there can be no deficiency of strength. Nor again can the design be unaccomplished because it was *unwise*, for God’s designs cannot be unwise, simply because they are of God—that is to say—they are of Infinite Wisdom. I cannot see anything in the Character of Christ, nor anything the wide world over, that can for one moment make me imagine that Christ should die and yet it should be said afterwards, “This Man died for a purpose which He never lived to see accomplished—the objective of His death was only partially fulfilled. He saw of the travail of His soul, but He was *not* satisfied, for He did not redeem all whom He intended to redeem.”

Now, some persons love the doctrine of universal atonement because they say it so beautiful. It is a lovely idea that Christ should have died for *all* men. It commends itself, they say, to the instincts of humanity. There is something in it full of joy and beauty. I admit there is. But beauty may be often associated with lies. There is much which I might well admire in the theory of universal redemption but let me just tell you what the supposition necessarily involves. If Christ on His Cross intended to save every man, then He intended to save those who were damned before He died. If the doctrine is true, that He died for *all* men, He died for some who were in Hell before He came into this world, for doubtless there

were myriads there that had been cast away. Once again, if it were Christ's intention to save *all* men, how deplorably has He been disappointed! We have His own evidence that there is a lake that burns with fire and brimstone and into that pit must be cast some of the very persons who, according to that theory, were bought with His blood! That seems to me a thousand times more frightful than any of those horrors which are said to be associated with the Calvinistic and Christian Doctrine of Particular Redemption! To think that my Savior died for men in Hell seems a supposition too horrible for me to imagine—that He was the Substitute for the sons of men and that God having first punished the Substitute, punished men again, seems to me to be in conflict with any idea of justice! That Christ should offer an Atonement and satisfaction for the sins of men and that afterwards those very men should be punished for the sins which Christ had already atoned for, seems to me to be the most marvelous monstrosity that ever could have been imputed to Saturn, to Janus, yes, to the god of the Thugs, or the most diabolical heathen demons! God forbid that we should ever think thus of Jehovah, the Just and Wise. If Christ has suffered in man's place, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and save us from all unrighteousness.

II. I have thus stated the first thought that the intention of Christ's death cannot be frustrated. And now I think everyone will anxiously listen and every ear will be attentive and the question will arise from every heart, "WHAT, THEN, WAS THE INTENTION OF THE SAVIOR'S DEATH? AND IS IT POSSIBLE THAT I CAN HAVE A PORTION IN IT?" For whom, then, did the Savior die—and is there the slightest probability that I have some lot or portion in that great Atonement which He has offered? Beloved, my text is the answer to the question—"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Now, our text tells us two things—first, the subjects of the Savior's Atonement, the lost. And, secondly, the purpose of it—He came to seek and save.

I must now endeavor to pick out the objects of the Savior's Atonement. He came "to seek and to save that which was *lost*." Some of you may turn your heads away at once and conclude that up to now you have given no evidence that you have any portion in the death of Christ. You are very good sort of people. You never did much that was wrong—perhaps a little now and then. But nothing particular ever troubles your conscience. You have a notion that you shall certainly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, for you are no worse than your neighbors and if you are not saved, God help other people! If you do not go to Heaven, who will? You are trusting in your own good works and believing you are righteous! Now let us decide your case at once. Since you are ashamed to put yourselves among those who are lost, I have no Christ to preach to you till you are ready to come and confess that you are lost—for Christ himself tells us that He came, "not to call the righteous, but *sinner*s to repentance." And inasmuch as you belong to the righteous and trust in yourselves that you are good and excellent, you may turn upon your heels and go. In the blood of Christ there is no portion for men who live and die trusting in their own self-righteousness!

But I may dismiss another part of you. Some of you are saying, "Well, Sir, I know I am guilty, but I am still persuaded that by attention to the Law of God, I shall certainly be able to take away the demerit of my guilt. I intend henceforward to reform and I believe that by a consistent course of attention to religious ordinances and by carefully regarding that which is right and wrong between God and man, and man and man, I shall, without doubt, make an atonement for the sins of the past." Ah, my Friend, up to now you give me no hope that you have any portion in the death of Christ! Christ came not to die for men who can *save themselves* without Him. If you think you can save yourself, remember the door of Mercy is shut in your face! Christ came to bring robes from Heaven, but not for you who can spin for yourselves! He came to bring bread for the hungry, but He will give none of it to you who can sow and reap and make bread for yourselves! Christ helps the helpless, but they who can help themselves and have sufficient of their own strength and merit to carry them to Heaven, may fight their way there alone, if they can—they shall have no help from Him! Whom, then, did Christ die to save? It is said, He came to save "that which was lost."

Now, you must bear with me while I run over the different ways in which a man may be lost. And then I will conclude by noticing the term as it is used in the proper sense. We may affirm that Christ died for the lost. We know that all men are lost in Adam—as soon as we are born into this world, we are lost. When the tiny boat of the infant is launched upon the river of life, it is lost. Unless Sovereign Grace shall stretch forth its hand and save it in infancy and carry it to Heaven or save it afterwards, when it shall have grown up—that infant is lost. "Behold," says David, "I was born in sin and shapen in iniquity. In sin did my mother *conceive* me." "In Adam all die." The Fall of Adam was the fall of the human race. Then you and I and *all of us* fell down!

Again, we are all lost by practice. No sooner does the child become capable of knowing right and wrong than you discover that he chooses the evil and abhors the good! Early passions soon break out like weeds immediately after the

shower of rain—speedily the hidden depravity of the heart makes itself manifest and we grow up to sin and so we become lost by *practice*. But mark, a man may be lost in Adam and lost by practice and yet be saved by Christ! Christ is able to save you—though you are twice lost—His salvation is able to redeem you from death!

Then there are some who still go further. The deadly tree of sin grows taller and taller and some become lost to the Church. After having been trained up religiously in our midst, they turn aside—they give up all outward regard to the worship of God. The ministry of the Gospel is neglected, the House of Prayer is forsaken and the Church tolls its bell and says of such an one, “He is lost to the Church.” Some go still further. They are lost to society. I have seen many who are dead while they live. We have in the midst of us the harlot and the drunkard who, like the lepers in the camp of Israel, have to be put away lest the contagion should spread. And those who seek after right are obliged to turn away from them lest the evil should spread in the midst of the flock! Now there are many who are lost to society whom Jesus Christ came to save and whom He *will* save! But a man may be lost to society and may be lost everlastingly. It is no proof that Christ will save him, because he is thus lost—while at the same time it is no proof that He will *not* save him, for Christ came to save even men who are lost like this. Again, the man may go further and be lost to the family. We have known those who have become so vile that even after society has shut them out, a parent has been obliged to shut them out, too. That must be a Hell of sin, indeed, which can make a father say to his son, “My Son, you shall not need bread while I have any, but I must forbid you my house, for your brothers and sisters cannot endure your society. I feel you would destroy their souls if I should allow you to associate with them.” Now, a man may be lost thus to his own family and yet Sovereign Grace will save him! But mark, a man may be lost to his family and yet not be saved. Yes, that may be the increase of his condemnation—that he sinned against a mother’s prayers and against a father’s exhortations.

Now I will tell you the people whom Christ will save—they are those who are *lost to themselves*. Just imagine a ship at sea passing through a storm—the ship leaks and the captain tells the passengers he fears they are lost. If they are far away from the shore and have sprung a leak, they pump with all their might as long as they have any strength remaining. They seek to keep down the devouring element. They still think that they are not quite lost while they have power to use the pumps. At last they see the ship cannot be saved. They give it up for lost and leap into the boats. The boats are floating for many a day, full of men who have but little food to eat. “They are lost,” we say, “lost out at sea.” But *they* do not think so! They still cherish a hope that perhaps some stray ship may pass that way and pick them up. There is a ship in the horizon. They strain their eyes to look at her. They lift each other up. They wave a flag. They tear their garments to make something which shall attract attention. But she passes away—black night comes and they are forgotten. At length the very last mouthful of food has been consumed. Strength fails them and they lay down their oars in the boat and lay themselves down to die. You can imagine, then, how well they understand the awful meaning of the term, “lost.” As long as they had any strength left, they felt they were not lost. As long as they could see a sail, they felt there was yet hope. While there was yet a moldy biscuit left, or a drop of water, they did not give up all for lost. Now the biscuit is gone and the water is gone—now strength has departed and the oars lie still. They lie down to die by each other’s side, mere skeletons—things that should have been dead days ago if they had died when all enjoyment of life had ceased! Now they know, I say, what it is to be lost and across the shoreless waters they seem to hear their death-knell pealing forth that awful word, Lost! Lost! Lost!

Now, in a *spiritual* sense, these are the people Christ came to save. Sinner, you, too, are condemned. Our Father Adam steered the ship awry and she split upon a rock and she is now filling even to her bulwarks! And pump as philosophy may, it can never keep the waters of her depravity so low as to prevent the ship from sinking! Seeing that human nature is of itself lost, it has taken to the boat. She is a fair boat, called the boat of Good Endeavor and in her you are striving to row with all your might to reach the shore. But your strength fails you. You say, “Oh, I cannot keep God’s Laws. The more I try to keep them, the more I find it to be impossible for me to do so. I climb. But the higher I climb, the higher is the top above me. When I was in the plains, I thought the mountain was but a moderate hill, but now I seem to have ascended half-way up its steps—there it is, higher than the clouds—and I cannot discern the summit.” However, you gather up your strength, you try again. You row once more and at last, unable to do anything, you lay down your oars, feeling that if you are saved, it cannot be by your own works. Still you have a little hope left. There are a few small pieces of moldy biscuits remaining. You have heard that by attention to certain ceremonies you may be saved and you munch your dry biscuit. But at last that fails you and you find that neither Baptism, nor the Lord’s Supper, nor any other outward rites can make you clean—for the leprosy lies deep within! That done, you still look out. You are in hopes that there may be a sail coming and while floating upon that deep of despair, you think you detect in the distance some new dogma,

some fresh doctrine that may comfort you. It passes, however, like the wild phantom ship—it is gone and there you are left at last with the burning sky of God's vengeance above you—with the deep waters of a bottomless Hell beneath you! Fire in your heart and emptiness in that ship which once was so full of hope, you lie down despairing and you cry—"Lord save me, or I perish!"

Is that your condition this morning, my Friend, or has that *ever* been your condition? If so, Christ came into the world to seek and to save *you!* And you He *will* save and no one else! He will save only those who can claim this for their title—"Lost"—who have understood in their own souls what it is to be lost as to all self-trust, all self-reliance and all self-hope. I can look back to the time when I knew myself to be lost. I thought that God meant to destroy me. I imagined that because I felt myself to be lost, I was the special victim of Almighty Vengeance, for I said unto the Lord, "Have You set me as the target of all Your arrows? Am I a seal or a whale, that You have set a mark upon *me!* Have You sewed up my iniquities in a bag and sealed my transgressions with a seal? Will You never be gracious? Have You made me to be the center of all sorrow, the chosen one of Heaven to be cursed forever?" Ah, fool that I was! I little knew, then, that those who have the curse in themselves—those who have the sentence of death in themselves—those who trust not in themselves, but in Him who died for us and rose again—are the men whom God will bless! Come, I will put the question once again—can you say that you are lost? Was there a time when you traveled with the caravan through this wild wilderness world? Have you left the caravan with your companions and are you left in the midst of a sea of sand—a hopeless, arid waste? And do you look around you and see no helper? And do you cast your eyes around and see no trust? Is the death bird wheeling in the sky, screaming with delight because he hopes soon to feed upon your flesh and bones? Is the water bottle dry and does the bread fail you? Have you consumed the last of your dry dates and drunk the last of that brackish water from the bottle? And are you now without hope, without trust in yourself—ready to lie down in despair?

Listen! The Lord your God loves you! Jesus Christ has bought you with His blood! You *are*, you *shall* be His! He has been seeking you all this time and He has found you at last in the vast howling wilderness and now He will take you upon His shoulders and carry you to His house rejoicing! And the angels shall be glad over your salvation! Now, such people must and shall be saved and this is the description of those whom Jesus Christ came to save. Whom He came to save He will save. You, you lost ones—lost to all hope and self confidence, shall be saved. Though death and Hell should stand in the way, Christ will perform His vow and accomplish His design!

I shall be very brief in concluding my discourse. But we have now to notice THE OBJECTS OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST—He came "to *seek* and to *save* that which was lost." I am so glad that these two words are both there, for if they were not, what hope would there be for any of us? The Arminian says Christ came to save those that *seek Him*. Beloved, there is a sense in which that is true, but it is a lie! Christ did come to save those who seek Him, but no one ever sought the Lord Jesus Christ unless the Lord Jesus first sought him! Christ does not leave it to ourselves to seek Him, or else it would be left, indeed, for so vile is human nature that although Heaven is offered and though Hell thunders in our ears, yet there never was and there never will be any man uncompelled by Sovereign Grace, who will run in the way of salvation and so escape from Hell and flee to Heaven! It is all in vain for me to preach to you and all in vain for the most earnest exhortations to be addressed to any of you unless the Holy Spirit shall be pleased to back them up. Man is so infatuated—his disease is one which causes such a madness of the brain—that he refuses the remedy and puts away from him the healing draught which alone can give him life from the dead. "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." Let man alone—and with the Cross of Christ before him and all Hell behind him—he will shut his eyes and prefer to be damned rather than enter into eternal life by the blood of Christ the Lord!

Hence Christ came first to *seek* men and *then* to save them! Ah, what a task that is of seeking men! There are some of you today on the tops of the mountains of pride and others of you in the deep glens of despair. I think I see the Savior coming forth to seek you. He finds you today in the green pastures of the sanctuary. He comes near to you and by these hands of mine He seeks to lay hold of you—but no sooner do you discern His approach than you run far away into the wild desert of sin! Perhaps this evening you will be spending the remnant of the Sabbath in profaning God's Day. At least one of you, I know who will be in the public house as soon as the evening sermon is over and most probably will go home very late. If Christ intends to save you, He will go to you there. And while you are in that wild waste of sin, He will send some Providence after you and save you there. Away you fly, then, to the marshes of reformation and you say, "The Shepherd cannot overtake me! I shall be beyond His reach, now, for I have left off my drunkenness; I have given up my cursing!" But He will come to you there and wade for you ankle deep in your own self-righteousness. And then you will run away again and jump into the deep pit of despair and there you will say to yourself, "He can never find me here." But

I see Him coming with that crook of His—He enters the pit, takes you by the feet and casts you round His neck and carries you home rejoicing, saying, “I have found him at last! Wherever he wandered, I sought him and now I have found him.” It is strange what strange places Christ finds some of His people! I knew one of Christ’s sheep who was found out by his Master while committing robbery! I knew another who was found out by Christ while he was spiting his old mother by reading the Sunday newspaper and making fun of her! Many have been found by Jesus Christ even in the midst of sin and vanity. I knew a preacher of the Gospel who was converted in a theater! He was listening to a play, an old-fashioned piece that ended with a sailor’s drinking a glass of gin before he was hung and he said, “Here’s to the prosperity to the British Nation and the salvation of my immortal soul.” Down went the curtain. And down went my friend, too, for he ran home with all his might! Those words, “The salvation of my immortal soul,” had struck him to the quick! And he sought the Lord Jesus in his chamber. Many a day he sought Him and at last *Jesus found him* to his joy and confidence.

But for the most part, Christ finds His people in His own house. He finds them often in the worst of tempers, in the most hardened conditions. So He softens their hearts, awakens their consciences, subdues their pride and takes them to Himself. But never would they come to Him unless He came to them! Sheep go astray, but they do not come back again of themselves. Ask the shepherd whether his sheep come back and he will tell you, “No, Sir, they will wander, but they never return.” When you find a sheep that ever came back of himself, then you may hope to find a sinner that will come to Christ of himself. No, it must be Sovereign Grace that must seek the sinner and bring him home!

And when Christ seeks him, He SAVES him! Having caught him at last, like the ram of old, in the thorns of conviction, He does not take a knife and slay him as the sinner expects—but He takes him by the hand of mercy and begins to comfort and to save. Oh, you lost Sinners, the Christ who seeks you today in the ministry and who has sought you many a day by His Providence will save you! He will first find you when you are emptied of self and then He will save you! When you are stripped, He will bring forth the best robe and put it on you. When you are dying, He will breathe life into your nostrils. When you feel yourselves condemned, He will come and blot out your iniquities like a cloud and your transgressions like a thick cloud. Fear not, you hopeless and helpless souls, Christ seeks you today and seeking, He will save you—save you here, save you living, save you dying, save you in time, save you in eternity and give you, even you, the lost ones, a portion among them who are sanctified! May the Lord now bless these words to your consolation!

III. I shall not say more, as I intended to have done, lest I should weary you. Let me only remind you that the time is coming when that word, “lost,” will have a more frightful meaning to you than it has today. In a few more months, some of you, my Hearers, will hear the great bell of eternity tolling forth that awful word—lost, lost, lost! The great sepulchers of Hell will toll out your doom—lost, lost, lost! And through the shades of eternal misery this shall forever assail your ear, that you are lost forever! But if that bell is ringing in your ears today—that you are lost—oh, be of good cheer, it is a good thing to be so lost—it is a happy thing to be lost to self and lost to pride and lost to carnal hope! Christ will save you! Believe that! Look to Him as He hangs upon His Cross! One look shall give you comfort. Turn your weeping eyes to Him as He bleeds there in misery. He can, He will save you! Believe on Him, for He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not must be damned. But whoever among the lost ones will now cast himself on Christ Jesus, he shall find everlasting life through His death and righteousness! May the Lord now gather in His lost sheep, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

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