

HOW TO PLEASE GOD NO. 2513

A SERMON
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*“But without faith it is impossible to please him:
for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”
Hebrews 11:6*

“WITHOUT faith,” says the text, “it is impossible to please God.” Yet all men have not faith. Even among those who have heard the Gospel, many have not obeyed it. Isaiah is not the only one who has had to cry, “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?” If it be so, that “without faith it is impossible to please God,” what becomes of the multitude who have heard, but believed not, to whom the Word of this salvation has come, but who have rejected it?

It is to be feared that God may again swear in His wrath, “They shall not enter into my rest.” The Israelites could not enter into Canaan because of unbelief—and men in this day cannot enter into the privileges of the Gospel because of unbelief. Let us pity and pray for those who have not faith. Oh, that God would hear the cries of His children and work faith in men, for this also is the gift of God. Not only the blessing which He promises, but even the hand whereby we receive it, must come from Him.

There are some men who have a kind of faith, and these are, perhaps, in a more dangerous condition than those who have none at all, because they are apt to deceive themselves and fancy that they are in a state of grace, whereas they are still in a state of nature. The faith which pleases God is no mock faith, no dead faith, no false faith, no faith in a lie. It is faith in the truth, it is true faith, it is spiritual faith. The faith that saves the soul and makes it pleasing before God is real faith.

Many say that they believe a thing, but they do not truly believe it—it is not real to them. They say, “Yes, such and such a doctrine is true,” and they write it down in their creed and then put the creed away on the top shelf of their bookcase—and it lies there covered with dust. A man only believes that which affects his life.

If it be an important truth, if he has really believed it, it will touch every nerve of his being. It will often hold him back from one course, and with equal force, impel him to another. True faith is the most active motive power in the whole world. “Faith, which worketh by love,” works all sorts of marvels, and where there is this true faith, it will prove its reality by its practicalness.

The faith of God's elect is not a dead faith. “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” Neither is He the God of dead faith, but He is the God of living faith. God grant that we may each one of us possess this real God-given blessing! But if we have merely a notional, nominal, historical faith, which does not affect our lives at all, we are in the same condition as those who have no faith—and we come under the description of the text, “without faith”—and “without faith it is impossible to please God.”

Ere I enter upon the consideration of the text, I should like to make a sort of search through this place to find out any who are without faith. Without faith, you are without God, for God is only apprehended by faith. Without faith, you are without hope, for a true hope can only spring out of a true faith. And you are without Christ—consequently, without a Savior, without the means of the removal of your sin, without a help with which to daily fight the battle of life against sin.

Without Christ? Oh, it were infinitely better to be without your eyes, without your hearing, without wealth, without bread, without garments, without a home, rather than to be without the faith which brings everything that the soul requires! Without faith we are, indeed, spiritually naked, and poor, and miserable, and lost, and condemned, and without a hope of escape.

“Without faith.” Could that be written as a correct label and hung upon your back, you might not, perhaps, be ashamed to wear it. But if an angel can see it on your brow as the description of your character, I am sure that he is greatly concerned about you. But your brother-man, who would gladly speak that you shall not leave this place without faith, feels troubled that there should be anyone in this land of Bibles, this land of Sabbaths, this land of revivals, this land of the Gospel, who should have come to years of discretion, and yet should be so dolefully indiscreet as to live “without faith.”

The text says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” And I am going to keep to the text. So note, first, dear friends, the *necessity of faith asserted*. After we have asserted it, we shall pass onto *the necessity of faith proven*, that you may see, each one with his own mental eye, that it must be so, that, “without faith it is impossible to please God.” And then, we will close with *the necessity of faith used for profit*—we will try to gather some lessons from it for our own practical guidance.

I. First, then, here is THE NECESSITY OF FAITH ASSERTED—“Without faith it is impossible to please God.”

You notice that there is no limit put to this assertion, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” *This law applies universally to every person under the Gospel dispensation.* There are a great many people who are very anxious to know about the future of the heathen, but we may well leave them to the great Judge of all, earnestly desiring to bring them to the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

It is much more practical for us to think of those to whom faith is possible, because the Gospel has come to them and they have heard it. The declaration of our text, “without faith it is impossible to please God,” applies to every person, whoever that person may be. See how men are buried nowadays. A man has been a king, so of course he must be “his most religious majesty.” And though his soul, loaded with a thousand crimes, has sunk deep into the pit of woe, yet there are many who suppose that it must be well with him because he was a king.

And if a man be a poet and can write fine verses, though they are steeped in lust, yet there are some who suppose that such a “cultured” person cannot be lost. “Surely,” said a profane man once, “God will think twice before He damns such a gentleman as that.” And what the skeptic spoke sarcastically is, no doubt, a common notion of many people, that if men happen to be in what are called the higher ranks of society, or happen to be largely gifted with a certain faculty, or happen to have been eminently successful in life, or to have been great inventors, and so forth, it must be well with them. But be it known to one and all that “without faith it is impossible to please God.”

“But” says someone, “men have been very sincere in the pursuit of external religion, and they have been moral and amiable and benevolent—have not these pleased God?” It is not for me to use flattering speeches, for my text is very sweeping. “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” He who has missed this faith has missed the vital point—had he begun with that, his amiability, his morality, his benevolence, had been acceptable, because in them there would have been the flower of life, the faith that makes them live. But without this, they are cold, soulless, dead, mere carcasses of virtue, devoid of life. “Without faith,” in any case, and in every case, “it is impossible to please God.”

And as the text is universal as to persons, so is it *universal as to every form of work and worship*. No matter what is done, “without faith it is impossible to please God.” It was a fine row of alms houses that sprang out of that man’s munificent bequest, but those alms houses never pleased God, for they were not built with any faith in Him.

It was a generous gift that was bestowed upon the church—yes, and those who received it were grateful for such help—but God never accepted it, for he who gave it hoped to buy pardon thereby, or purchase a place in heaven, or make some atonement for his oppressions of the poor. Without faith,

though it were millions that were poured into the treasury of the church, “without faith, it is impossible to please God.”

I may say of faith what Paul said of love, “Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not faith, it profiteth me nothing.” The most self-sacrificing and most heroic deeds, whenever they have been performed from any other motive than that of pleasing God, and without confidence in God, have remained outside His acceptance.

“Without faith it is impossible to please God.” This is not popular teaching, but we never wish to teach a popular theology. It is not one that will commend itself to the natural mind of men—we never thought it would—we should have been thunderstruck if our preaching had been admired by such persons, and we should have gone home and felt that we were not sent of God to preach at all. But nevertheless, this is true, “without faith it is impossible to please God.”

Observe that the text mentions two things. It says, “He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” That is to say, in coming to God and in seeking out God, there must be faith. In coming to God, if there be prayer, what is that prayer worth which is offered without any faith in God? If a man prays to a God whom he does not know as really existing, is he not, even from his own point of view, engaged in a very senseless exercise? And to God Himself, it must be a piece of dreadful mockery. O sirs, there must be faith, or else prayer certainly becomes the most meaningless waste of time!

And as to praise, how can we praise an unknown God? If we have no faith that there is a God, how can we praise Him? How can our lives extol a being about whose very existence we raise a question? Nay, more than that, I cannot praise God unless I know that he is mine. How can I bless another man’s God? How can I offer to another man’s God thanksgivings for mercies that I have never tasted and for favors in which I have never had a share? There must be a sense of personal relationship to God, personal obligation, and personal confidence, and laying hold upon Him—or else in vain is the psalm sung even to the noblest music.

And I believe, dear friends, that if I come to God in the matter of preaching and bearing testimony, yet if I do it without faith, my work cannot be acceptable to God. I do not think that it would long be acceptable to you. To me, it would seem a slavery to have to preach what I did not believe. If I had a shadow of a doubt about it, I would hide myself until I had something to say about which I felt sure.

How can we expect the blessing of God upon the testimony of His Son, even though it should be in the very words of Scripture and be doctrinally correct to a hair’s breadth, unless faith be mixed with it by him who preaches it and by him who hears it? “Without faith” in any act whatsoever, however religious, devout, and self-denying, “it is impossible to please God.”

Further, dear friends, notice that while the text is thus sweeping in its universality, it is also *very positive in its assertion*. It does not say, “Without faith it is difficult to please God,” or “Without faith it must require great monastic self-denial, rigid discipline, austerity, and misery in order to please God.” No, for those things do not please him at all.

But it says, “Without faith *it is impossible* to please God.” It does not, as I have sometimes seen it done in the country, put a five-barred gate across the road and paint on it the word, “Private.” No, but it bricks the road right up, or it digs a gulf across this wrong road and says, “*It is impossible.*” “Without faith it is impossible.”

Our Savior speaks of what is nearly impossible—the difficulty of a rich man entering the kingdom of heaven—and compares it to a camel going through the eye of a needle, and then He says, “With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.” But our text deals with something which is an impossibility with God Himself.

“Without faith it is impossible to please God.” It is a double impossibility—for an unbelieving man to please God and for God to be pleased with an unbelieving man. It is not possible that He should be pleased with works done in unbelief or with men abiding in unbelief.

Notice, also, that there is another strong word in the text, an imperative word—“for he that cometh to God *must*—*must believe*.” It is not, “He that cometh to God *should* believe, and in proportion as he believes he will get a blessing, but if he is unbelieving he will only get a smaller blessing.” No, but it is, “He that cometh to God *must*.”

“Must” is the word of a king or an emperor—it is an imperial truth and an imperious truth that—“he that cometh to God *must* believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” We are sometimes styled dogmatic—is there any dogmatism that can be more intense than we have it in our text?

It says, “*impossible*.” It says, “*must*.” These are words that are not to be bent and twisted. Some men have a great gift in wresting words and twisting expressions—they seem to bend them across their knee and snap their meaning in two—but this text does not go to be bent or snapped. “Without faith it is impossible to please God: for he that cometh to God *must believe*.”

Further, observe that the text not only makes this positive assertion, but it is intended to be a *message perpetually in force*. “Without faith it is impossible to please God,” evidently refers to the past. Read the previous verse and you will see that it is so. “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him.”

It was always so, under all that ancient dispensation—with those mighty patriarchs, and kings, and prophets—it was impossible to please God without faith. So is it now and so it always will be till time shall be no more. Still stands the immutable decree, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”—that being the Gospel equivalent of this apostolic declaration, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” It is always so, dear friends, and it always will be so—there is no hope of any other gate ever being opened for those who refuse to enter the door of faith.

Yet once more, the text speaks *most instructively*. It tells us that there are certain things that really are, and certain things which are imperative. “He that cometh to God *must believe* that he is.” If you would come to God, you must believe that there is a God, and you must believe that God is what He says He is.

Otherwise, if you make God to be other than He says He is, you make God to be an idol—your god is an imaginary being. You must accept God as He is revealed in Scripture. What He says He is, that he is. And what He is, you must believe, believing that he is, and that he is God.

Oh, but how easy it is for a man to get away from that elementary truth of God and to say, “Oh, yes, I believe in God!” But do you believe in inflexible justice? Do you believe in infinite mercy? Do you believe in an omniscience that cannot fail to see? Do you believe in the omnipresence that can never fail to be where you are? Do you believe all this? Because if not, you do not believe in God.

You may believe in your own idea of God, but you do not really believe in God. If you would come to God, you must believe that he is what He says He is. In His Word, He reveals Himself as one God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—will you accept His statements about Himself? Then, when you pray, will you cease delivering an oration to the air and speak into God’s ear, believing that He hears every word you utter, and more, that he is reading the thoughts that lie at the back of your words? That is the way to seek him aright—to come to Him we must come to Him as the living God, having a real existence, a true personality. Otherwise we cannot come to Him at all.

And further, we must believe that “he is a rewarder of them that seek him”—for that is the meaning of the Greek word. We must believe that God will reward the man who seeks Him, and that therefore God is worth seeking. That although it may be costly to follow after God and do His bidding, yet it will pay you—that there is a great reward in keeping His commandments—that He does hear prayer, that He does grant great blessings to those who truly seek him. We must believe this or else there is no real seeking of Him. It is imperative, if we would come to God, that we must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that seek Him out.

But God cannot reward them that seek him on the ground of their merit, for they have none. It must therefore be upon the ground of grace. This introduces into our faith, as a point of necessary belief, that we believe in Jesus Christ by whose merit we are accepted—that diligently seeking God, we find Him in Christ—and this brings to us the great Gospel reward. God bestows upon us His favor, His grace, and the blessings of His covenant as a gracious reward, not because of our merit, but because of the merit of His Son Jesus Christ. This we must believe, or we have not really come to God aright. That is the doctrine asserted in our text, “without faith it is impossible to please God.”

II. Now I want to dwell for a few minutes upon THE NECESSITY OF FAITH PROVEN. What is the reason why there is such a necessity for faith in order to pleasing God?

Our answer is, first, *God has said so*. Let it be enough that these are the words of inspiration, supported by many other similar words throughout the sacred and infallible Book. Here it stands—“Without faith it is impossible to please God.” God says so. He knows what is the truth, He can speak about what pleases Himself, and we are therefore not to doubt what He declares.

Still, as a confirmation of our faith, be it observed that *in the nature of things it must be so*. No man can be pleased with another who does not believe in him. If a person does not give you credit for uprightness and honesty, he may profess to do your will and wish to please you, but you feel at once that, whatever he does, he misses the cardinal necessity for really pleasing you.

Let a person have the conviction upon him that you are unkind and unjust, let him feel that he could not trust you—well, I do not see how he can be a pleasing person to you, or how you are likely to get on with him in your household, whatever he may do. Distrust has divided men and women whose hearts seemed one—where trust has died out, love has always died out, too.

And a more intolerable misery than for a man and woman, who have no trust in one another, to be bound together, I can hardly conceive. In the very nature of things, if we are to be united with God by His grace, one of the essential terms of the union must be, on our part, the fullest belief in God. I do not see how we can ever hope to be on speaking terms with God, how we can run on the same lines with God, how we can at all be reconciled to God, unless as a very preliminary step we are resolved that we will believe God and that we will trust Him. “Without faith, it is,” in the nature of things, “impossible to please God.”

And dear friends, *the person who has no faith is unaccepted with God*. All through Scripture, faith is spoken of as the great method of justification. We are justified by faith through Jesus Christ. If, then, I have no faith, I am not accounted just before God—and all the works of an unaccepted man must be unaccepted.

If that man is an enemy to God, what matters it what he does, for how can he please God? You cannot expect that God should receive anything at your hands, when you begin by declaring that you will not trust Him. It cannot be. However much you multiply your good works with a view of saving yourself and pleasing God thereby, you are distinctly aiming at a purpose which God has declared is not according to His mind. “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.”

If, then, you persist in working with a view to salvation, you are pursuing a plan which God has declared He never will accept. You must come to Him as sinners to be justified by another righteousness better than your own, or else it will happen to you as happened unto ancient Israel. They had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge—and going about to establish themselves by their own righteousness, they did not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God. And hence they stumbled over that stone of stumbling and rock of offense—and were broken in pieces and perished. God save us from attempting to do what He says cannot be done! “Without faith it is impossible to please God.”

Observe, further, that the man who is without faith in God *puts a gross slight upon God* and therefore cannot be pleasing to Him. He does, in effect, deny God’s truth. “He that believeth not God hath made him a liar.” So says John, the softest-speaking and most tender-hearted of all the apostles. “He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.” Now, if a man begins by making God a liar, how can God be pleased with him?

Perhaps you say, “I do not doubt the truthfulness of God, but I question His power to fulfill His promise to such a sinner as I am.” But my friend, do you not see that you have committed a gross insult against the Lord by such a statement? He claims to be omnipotent. He asks, “Is there any thing too hard for me?” He says, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God and there is none else.” Yet you dare to say that He cannot save you? You have insulted His power, how can you please him?

“Oh, but!” say you, “I—I have no doubt that God can keep His promise and that God will. But still I cannot think that He could forgive such a sinner as I am.” Now you have insulted His goodness. He is so good that you cannot suppose Him to be better, He is so ready to forgive that He swears with an oath that He has no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but that he turn unto Him and live.

You must know that you dare not mistrust the truth, the power, or the goodness of God, or if you do so, then you cannot please Him. What would you think of a child who was always doubting his father saying, “Father said so-and-so, but I do not suppose it will come true. My father promised to give me such and such, but I do not expect that he will.”

If a child stands up and says, “I find it hard work to believe my father—oh, dear, dear, dear—God save us from having such children as that! I do not see how they could possibly please us. They would be in a state of mind which would be radically displeasing because radically unjust and wrong. How dare you distrust your God. How dare you say that His testimony is not true.

Let Him say what He wills, here is one who is ready to believe Him. God grant that I may never doubt Him in the slightest degree! I do feel that of all sins that I could ever commit against the majesty of heaven, one of the most heinous would be that of doubting one single syllable that comes from those divine lips. “Let God be true, and every man a liar.” He must keep His promise. There is no “if” or “but” about it. Otherwise, He would cease to be God.

*“As well might He His being quit
As break His promise, or forget.”*

He must be true.

*“His very word of grace is strong
As that which built the skies;
The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises;”*

and we must not dare to doubt anything that He says.

Brethren, in a word, faith is so much the root, the source, the mother of every good, that *he who is without faith is without anything that can please God*. How shall I love Him in whom I do not believe? How can I be patient under the rod of Him whom I do not trust? How can I have zeal for Him whose veracity I doubt? How can I rejoice in Him whose promise I mistrust? No, this would lay the axe at the root of the fruit-bearing tree and utterly destroy it. “If ye will not believe, neither shall ye be established.” There are no good works except those that spring from a living, loving, lasting faith in God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

III. Now, lastly, we are to consider THE NECESSITY OF FAITH USED FOR PROFIT.

What are the lessons this truth should teach us? When we have spoken of them, we have done, only may God bless our testimony to your hearts!

The first lesson is, I think, *let us look carefully to our faith*. Is it the faith of God’s elect? Is it childlike faith? Is it really faith in God, or is it faith in our own knowledge, or our own judgment? Is it confidence in God’s Word, or is it confidence in our own thinkings and inventions?

I do not quarrel with modern theology merely because of what it teaches. I believe that it teaches a lie from top to bottom, but I have another quarrel with it, that it teaches a false principle. It takes man

away from what is written to what is thought—it does not allow the sovereign authority of revelation, and in disallowing that, the very foundations are removed.

And much of the abounding vice of this day is, I believe, the direct result of this abounding unbelief of God, this philosophical mistrust of infinite wisdom. Is it philosophy? It is philosophy falsely so-called—mere madness put into some sort of shape. As for us, let us come “to the law and to the testimony,” to God and to His Spirit, and test and try everything by what is here spoken and by our personal proving of it before God in our own experience, making that to be true to ourselves which God says is true to His chosen.

The next lesson I would give you is, *let us mix faith with all that we do*. “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” So, dear friend, you are going to teach in your Sunday school class next Sabbath-day. Well, then, teach with faith. Brother-minister, you are going to preach next Lord’s-Day, then say to yourself, “By God’s grace, I will try to preach in faith,” because preaching in doubt does not come to much.

You remember the story I have often told you, of my very first student going out to preach. And he came to me and said that he had preached earnestly several times and yet he had not seen any conversions. I said to him, “And do you suppose that God is going to bless the people every time you choose to open your mouth?” He answered, “Oh, no, sir! I don’t expect that.” “Ah, then!” I replied, “that is why God did not bless you, because you had not faith in Him. You have confessed it.” I had caught him with guile.

So, dear brother, you should believe that if you preach the Gospel, God must bless you. That it is not a may-be or a mere possibility that He will, but that, if you deliver His message in the full conviction that somebody or other is going to get a blessing, there will be a blessing for someone. Very often, just in proportion to our faith, is it done unto us.

Oh, how many churches there are that I know of where they hope that they may have some conversions, and dear souls, if they have two or three converts in a year, some of the old members are frightened at the quantity! They are afraid they cannot be all right, because so many are coming in! If they were ever to hear a brother preach so that three thousand were converted at once, these dear old saints would rise up and say, “Now Peter, you are a regular revivalist sort of preacher. You are as bad as Moody and Sankey. Why, look at all these people brought in—we cannot possibly think of receiving so many into the church.” I am afraid that their god is a little god, but oh, to believe in a great God and to preach in faith! When everything is done in faith, it will be accepted.

A sister says, “Oh, that my dear children were converted!” She does not at all expect that they will be—she is sure they will all grow up bad—and she is teaching them with a view to their turning back when they get to be fifty years old. Ah, my dear friend, perhaps it will be so, but if you had faith and would believe that those dear children of yours need never go out into the world of sin at all, but by God’s grace might be brought to Him while they are yet at your knee, would not that be a great deal better? Without faith, you see, in bringing up your children, it will be impossible for you to please God by the way that you talk.

Let us put plenty of faith into all we do. There is a good prescription in the Old Testament, you can find it out when you are at home—“Salt, without prescribing how much.” That is, you may put as much of the salt of faith as ever you like into all your work and you will never overdo it. But it is leaving the salt out that prevents it from being pleasing to God. Oh, for more true confidence in God who deserves to be confided in to the uttermost!

And lastly, *let us take care to trust God most when the weather is worst*. There is a brother here who is in a world of trouble. All his money is gradually melting away, he does not know how he is to make ends meet. Now, brother, whatever you lose, say, “If I do not please anybody else, or do not please myself, I will please my Master.” Walk with God, as Enoch did.

How are you to do this? Listen—“without faith it is impossible to please God.” You had not any room for faith about temporals once, they came in so regularly. Now there is an opportunity for you to exercise your faith—now you can trust in God—you have elbow-room now.

Young fellows who enter the army or the navy rather like getting into a skirmish or even a great battle. There is no chance of rising, they say, if there be no war. And you who enter Christ’s service may justifiably say the same. If I have no troubles, where is room for my faith? How can I trust if I have nothing to trust about? You cannot swim, you know, when the water is only up to your ankles. You may go paddling about, but there can be no swimming.

But plunge into deep water and then strike out like a man—now you will learn what faith is, when the last foot is off the ground—and you are just trusting in the eternal God. This will make a man of you, this will educate you for higher and grander doings in times to come, it will make you more fit to sing the song of angels before the eternal throne of God.

I remember, before I came to London, a man praying a very extraordinary prayer for me. I did not understand it at the time and I hardly think that he ought to have prayed it in public in that shape. He prayed that I might be able to swallow bush-faggots cross-ways. It was a very strange prayer, but I have many a time done just what he asked that I might, and it has cleared my throat wonderfully. And there is many a man who cannot now speak out for God, who will be obliged to have some of those bush-faggots thrust down his throat yet. And when those great troubles come and he is obliged to swallow them, then he will grow to be a man in Christ Jesus.

Thus have I tried, as well as I can, to show you God’s remedy for sin’s malady. And although I always feel as if this talking about faith in Christ was saying the same thing over and over again, yet we must keep to this one theme. You know that when men tell us that they have fifty cures for a disease, we shake our heads and say, “Is there one specific? Because, if you will give me one thing that will cure me, you may keep the other forty-nine if you please.”

So is it with the Gospel of the grace of God. According to what some say, there are a great many ways of being saved—but is there one sure way? Because, if there is, you may, if you will, have the doubtful ones—I will be content with the one that is not doubtful. I like that cry of the monk, who had, somehow or other, found out the Gospel even in his cell—when his mind could not get consolation from extreme unction, and from all the paraphernalia of the Roman church, he was heard to cry, “Tua vulnera, Jesu! Tua vulnera, Jesu!”—“Thy wounds, Jesus! Thy wounds, Jesus!” With that cry upon his lips and that doctrine in his heart, he could die in peace—but he could find comfort nowhere else.

Someone has contemptuously said that this is the Gospel for old women and children. Well, I am quite willing to be classed with them in this matter, for it exactly suits me. Somebody wrote to me, the other day, to say that he had met with some Negroes who had read and enjoyed my sermons. And he evidently thought it was no compliment to me when he added, “I should think that uneducated black people are just the sort that you are fit to preach to.” I felt so glad to have such a compliment as that. I like to preach to uneducated black people, because if the Gospel can save them, it can also save the white-faced people who are so wonderfully well-instructed.

Is it not still true, that often, simple souls find their way to heaven while others are fumbling for the latch? But whatever men say or do not say, this is the truth of God, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” Get away from all trust in yourself. You are full of sin and you will never find any remedy in the disease. Go your way to Christ and to none but Christ, for in Him and in Him alone, is salvation provided for you.

Human nature’s way of salvation is, “Do, do, do.” God’s way of salvation is, “Done, done. It is all done.” You have but to rely by faith upon the atonement which Christ accomplished on the cross. You have but to accept God’s way of salvation and then Christ has saved you—and you may go in peace and rejoice for evermore.

The Lord will give grace to that man who looks to Christ upon the cross and trusts alone in Him. There are hundreds of us here who can at this moment say, “He is all my salvation and all my desire.”

The great Searcher of hearts knows that we have not a shadow of a shade of confidence anywhere but in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, and who rose again, and ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high. I am sure it is so and it may be so with you also, dear friends.

A good man was once explaining to a poor humble Christian that in that precious text, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” there are five negatives. He said, “The Lord seems to say, five times over, ‘I will not, not, not, leave you; I will never, never forsake you.’ There,” said the learned divine, “is not that delightful, to find God saying that five times over?” “Yes,” said the listener, “so it is. But I should have believed it if He had only said it once.”

What a blessed thing it is to have a faith that takes God at His first word and does not want Him to say it over five times, but is perfectly satisfied that what He has promised He is able to perform, and what He is able to perform He will perform to the praise and glory of His grace wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved!

Is not this a sensible course which I am commending to you? Is not this a reasonable thing to say to a rational man? One might have supposed that if men once believed the Bible to be God’s Word, and Jesus Christ to be God’s atoning sacrifice, they would be eager to have Christ as their Savior. But it is not so.

And often, as I preach, I am driven back to this conclusion, at which I arrived long ago—It is not your power, sir preacher, that can save men. You may preach, and argue, and reason as best you can, but until the arm of the Lord is revealed, and the power of the Holy Ghost sends home the argument, that which is a mere matter of argument would be irresistible to a rational man, yet as a spiritual force fails to have any influence over the carnal mind. It is not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord that the work of salvation is accomplished. O Spirit of the living God, send home the truth by Your own almighty power, for Jesus’ sake!

I have heard of a doctor who was somewhat severe in his method of treating his patients, but he healed a great many persons. A man who had a bad leg came to him. “Well,” said the doctor, “I will adopt such and such a course with that leg, and I will restore the use of it to you, so that you shall go away from this place perfectly whole.” He told the patient what he was going to do, but the man said, “No. I could not bear to have that done, I shall have to go to someone else.” “Just so,” said the doctor, “you are not bad enough for me to cure you yet. When you get bad enough for me, you will come back and say, ‘Do what you like with me, doctor, so long as you guarantee my restoration.’”

There is many a soul that is not, in this sense, bad enough for Christ yet. That is to say, he thinks himself still too good to be saved in Christ’s way. I have heard of a swimmer who went to rescue a man who was drowning. The man was sinking and the spectators wondered why he did not strike out at once and lay hold of the man. He swam near him, but kept clear of him, and let him go down a second time, and after that, he swam to him and brought him out.

Someone asked him, “Why did you let the man sink?” He answered, “He was too strong for me to rescue him at the first. While he was strong, he would have pulled me down with himself, so I let him begin to sink and lose all strength—and then I knew that I could get him ashore.” In like manner, some of you will have to go down again a second time before you get weak enough to be saved. It is not your strength, it is your weakness. It is not your righteousness, it is your sin that qualifies you for Christ.

I mean this—that just as poverty is the best qualification for alms, as misery is the best qualification for mercy—so, the lower you are lying before Christ’s cross, the more sure may you be that the grace of God will come to you as soon as you trust in Christ’s atoning work.

May God bless you all with this faith which pleases Him, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.