

NONE BUT JESUS—FIRST PART

NO. 361

A SERMON
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AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

“He that believeth on him is not condemned.”
John 3:18

THE way of salvation is stated in Scripture in the very plainest terms, and yet, perhaps, there is no truth about which more errors have been uttered than concerning the faith which saves the soul. Well has it been proved by experience that all doctrines of Christ are mysteries—mysteries not so much in themselves, but because they are hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world has blinded their eyes. So plain is Scripture that one would have said, “He that runs may read,” but so dim is man’s eye, and so marred is his understanding, that the very simplest truth of Scripture he distorts and misrepresents.

And indeed, my brethren, even those who know what faith is personally and experientially do not always find it easy to give a good definition of it. They think they have hit the mark, and then afterwards they lament that they have failed. Straining themselves to describe some one part of faith, they find they have forgotten another, and in the excess of their earnestness to clear the poor sinner out of one mistake, they often lead him into a worse error.

So that I think I may say that, while faith is the simplest thing in all the world, yet it is one of the most difficult upon which to preach, because from its very importance, our soul begins to tremble while speaking of it, and then we are not able to describe it so clearly as we would.

I intend this morning, by God’s help, to put together sundry thoughts upon faith, each of which I may have uttered in your hearing at different times, but which have not been collected into one sermon before, and which, I have no doubt, have been misunderstood from the want of their having been put together in their proper consecutive order.

I shall speak a little on each of these points, first, *the object of faith*, to what it looks. Next, *the reason of faith*, whence it comes. Thirdly, *the ground of faith*, or what it wears when it comes. Fourthly, *the warrant of faith*, or why it dares to come to Christ. And fifthly, *the result of faith*, or how it speeds when it does come to Christ.

I. First, then, THE OBJECT OF FAITH, or to what faith looks.

I am told in the Word of God to believe—What am I to believe? I am bidden to look—to what am I to look? What is to be the object of my hope, belief, and confidence? The reply is simple. The object of faith to a sinner is Christ Jesus.

How many make a mistake about this and think that they are to believe on *God the Father*! Now belief in God is an after-result of faith in Jesus. We come to believe in the eternal love of the Father as the result of trusting the precious blood of the Son. Many men say, “I would believe in Christ if I knew that I were elect.”

This is coming to the Father, and no man can come to the Father except by Christ. It is the Father’s work to elect. You cannot come directly to Him, therefore you cannot know your election until first you have believed on Christ the Redeemer, and then through redemption you can approach the Father and know your election.

Some, too, make the mistake of looking to the work of God *the Holy Spirit*. They look within to see if they have certain feelings, and if they find them their faith is strong, but if their feelings have departed from them, then their faith is weak, so that they look to the work of the Spirit which is not the object of a

sinner's faith. Both the Father and the Spirit must be trusted in order to complete redemption, but for the particular mercy of justification and pardon, the blood of the Mediator is the only plea.

Christians have to trust the Spirit after conversion, but the sinner's business, if he would be saved, is not with trusting the Spirit, nor with looking to the Spirit, but looking to Christ Jesus and to Him alone. I know your salvation depends on the whole Trinity, but yet the first and immediate object of a sinner's justifying faith is neither God the Father, nor God the Holy Ghost, but God the Son, incarnate in human flesh and offering atonement for sinners.

Have you the eye of faith? Then, soul, look you to *Christ as God*. If you would be saved, believe Him to be God over all, blessed forever. Bow before Him and accept Him as being "Very God of very God," for if you do not, you have no part in Him.

When you have thus believed, believe in Him as *man*. Believe the wondrous story of His incarnation, rely upon the testimony of the evangelists, who declare that the Infinite was robed in the infant, that the Eternal was concealed within the mortal. That He who was King of heaven became a servant of servants and the Son of man. Believe and admire the mystery of His incarnation, for unless you believe this, you cannot be saved thereby.

Then, specially, if you would be saved, let your faith behold Christ in His *perfect righteousness*. See Him keeping the law without blemish, obeying His Father without error, preserving His integrity without flaw. All this you are to consider as being done on your behalf. You could not keep the law—He kept it for you. You could not obey God perfectly—lo! His obedience stands in the stead of your obedience—by it, you are saved.

But take care that your faith mainly fixes itself upon Christ *as dying and as dead*. View the Lamb of God as dumb before His shearers, view Him as the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Go with Him to Gethsemane and behold Him sweating drops of blood. Mark, your faith has nothing to do with anything within yourself—the object of your faith is nothing within you, but a something without you.

Believe on Him, then, who on yonder tree with nailed hands and feet pours out His life for sinners. There is the object of your faith for justification—not in yourself, nor in anything which the Holy Spirit has done in you, or anything He has promised to do for you, but you are to look to Christ, and to Christ Jesus alone.

Then, let your faith behold Christ *rising from the dead*. See Him—He has borne the curse and now He receives the justification. He dies to pay the debt. He rises that He may nail the handwriting of that discharged debt to the cross. See Him ascending up on high, and behold Him this day pleading before the Father's throne. He is there pleading for His people, offering up today His authoritative petition for all who come to God by Him. And He, as God, as man, as living, as dying, as rising, and as reigning above—He, and He alone, is to be the object of your faith for the pardon of sin.

On nothing else must you trust. He is to be the only prop and pillar of your confidence, and all you add thereunto will be a wicked antichrist, a rebellion against the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus. But take care if your faith save you, that while you look to Christ in all these matters, you view Him as being a *substitute*. This doctrine of substitution is so essential to the whole plan of salvation that I must explain it here for the thousandth time.

God is just, He must punish sin. God is merciful, He wills to pardon those who believe in Jesus. How is this to be done? How can He be just and exact the penalty—merciful, and accept the sinner? He does it thus—He takes the sins of His people, and actually lifts them up from off His people to Christ, so that they stand as innocent as though they had never sinned, and Christ is looked upon by God as though He had been all the sinners in the world rolled into one. The sin of His people was taken from their persons, and really and actually, not typically and metaphorically, but really and actually, laid on Christ.

Then, God came forth with His fiery sword to meet the sinner and to punish Him. He met Christ. Christ was not a sinner Himself, but the sins of His people were all imputed to Him. Justice, therefore, met Christ as though He had been the sinner—punished Christ for His people's sins—punished Him as far as its rights could go—exacted from Him the last atom of the penalty and left not a dreg in the cup.

And now, he who can see Christ as being his substitute, and puts his trust in Him, is thereby delivered from the curse of the law. Soul, when you see Christ obeying the law—your faith is to say, “He obeys that for His people.” When you see Him dying, you are to count the purple drops, and say, “Thus He took my sins away.”

When you see Him rising from the dead, you are to say, “He rises as the head and representative of all His elect.” And when you see Him sitting at the right hand of God, you are to view Him there as the pledge that all for whom He died shall sit at the Father’s right hand.

Learn to look on Christ as being in God’s sight as though He were the sinner. “In him was no sin.” He was “*the just*,” but He suffered for the unjust. He was the righteous, but He stood in the place of the unrighteous. And all that the unrighteous ought to have endured, Christ has endured once for all, and put away their sins forever by the sacrifice of Himself.

Now this is the great object of faith. I pray you, do not make any mistake about this, for a mistake here will be dangerous, if not fatal. View Christ, by your faith, as being in His life, and death, and sufferings, and resurrection, the substitute for all whom His Father gave Him—the vicarious sacrifice for the sins of all those who will trust Him with their souls. Christ, then, thus set forth, is the object of justifying faith.

Now let me further remark that there are some of you, no doubt, saying, “Oh, I should believe, and I should be saved if”—if what? If Christ had died? “Oh no, sir, my doubt is nothing about Christ.” I thought so. Then what is the doubt? “Why, I should believe *if I felt this, or if I had done that.*” Just so, but I tell you, you could not believe in Jesus if you felt that, or if you had done that, for then you would believe in yourself and not in Christ. That is the English of it.

If you were so-and-so, or so-and-so, then you could have confidence. Confidence in what? Why, confidence in your feelings, and confidence in your doings, and that is just the clear contrary of confidence in Christ? Faith is not to infer from something good within me that I shall be saved, but to say in the teeth, and despite the fact that I am guilty in the sight of God and deserve His wrath, yet I do, nevertheless, believe that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses me from all sin. And though my present consciousness condemns me, yet my faith overpowers my consciousness, and I do believe that, “He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him.”

To come to Christ as a saint is very easy work. To trust a doctor to cure you when you believe you are getting better, is very easy. But to trust your physician when you feel as if the sentence of death were in your body, to bear up when the disease is rising into the very skin, and when the ulcer is gathering its venom—to believe even then in the efficacy of the medicine—that is faith.

And so, when sin gets the mastery of you, when you feel that the law condemns you, then, even then, as a sinner, to trust Christ, this is the most daring feat in all the world. And the faith which shook down the walls of Jericho, the faith which raised the dead, the faith which stopped the mouths of lions, was not greater than that of a poor sinner, when in the teeth of all his sins he dares to trust the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Do this, soul, then you are saved, whosoever you may be. The object of faith, then, is Christ as the substitute for sinners. God in Christ, but not God apart from Christ, nor any work of the Spirit, but the work of Jesus only must be viewed by you as the foundation of your hope.

II. And now, secondly, THE REASON OF FAITH, or why does any man believe, and whence does his faith come?

“Faith cometh by *hearing.*” Granted, but do not all men hear, and do not many still remain unbelieving? How, then, does any man come by his faith? To his own experience his faith comes as the result of a *sense of need*. He feels himself needing a Savior. He finds Christ to be just such a Savior as he wants, and therefore because he cannot help himself, he believes in Jesus. Having nothing of his own, he feels he must take Christ or else perish, and therefore he does it because he cannot help doing it.

He is fairly driven up into a corner, and there is but this one way of escape, namely, by the righteousness of another. For he feels he cannot escape by any good deeds or sufferings of his own, and

he comes to Christ and humbles himself, because he cannot do without Christ and must perish unless he lay hold of Him.

But to carry the question further back, where does that man get his sense of need? How is it that *he*, rather than others, feels his need of Christ? It is certain he has no more necessity for Christ than other men. How does he come to know, then, that he is lost and ruined? How is it that he is driven by the sense of ruin to take hold on Christ the restorer? The reply is, this is *the gift of God*, this is the work of the Spirit.

No man comes to Christ except the Spirit draws him, and the Spirit draws men to Christ by shutting them up under the law to a conviction that if they do not come to Christ they must perish. Then by sheer stress of weather, they tack about and run into this heavenly port. Salvation by Christ is so disagreeable to our carnal mind, so inconsistent with our love of human merit, that we would never take Christ to be our all in all, if the Spirit did not convince us that we were nothing at all, and did not so compel us to lay hold on Christ.

But then, the question goes further back still. How is it that the Spirit of God teaches some men their need and not other men? Why is it that some of you were driven by your sense of need to Christ, while others go on in their self-righteousness and perish? There is no answer to be given but this, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

It comes to divine sovereignty at the last. The Lord has “hidden those things from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes.” According to the way in which Christ put it, “My sheep hear my voice.” “Ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.”

Some divines would like to read that, “Ye are not my sheep, because ye do not believe.” As if believing made us the sheep of Christ, but the text puts it, “Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep.” “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.” If they come not, it is a clear proof that they were never given, for those who were given of old eternity to Christ, chosen of God the Father, and then redeemed by God the Son—these are led by the Spirit, through a sense of need to come and lay hold on Christ.

No man yet ever did, or ever will believe in Christ, unless he feels his need of Him. No man ever did, or will feel his need of Christ, unless the Spirit makes him feel, and the Spirit will make no man feel his need of Jesus savingly, unless it be so written in that eternal book, in which God has surely engraved the names of His chosen. So then, I think I am not to be misunderstood on this point, that the reason of faith, or why men believe, is God’s electing love working through the Spirit by a sense of need, and so bringing them to Christ Jesus.

III. But now I shall want your careful attention, while I come to another point upon, which you, perhaps, will think I contradict myself, and that is THE GROUND OF THE SINNER’S FAITH, or on what ground does he dare to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?

My dear friends, I have already said that no man will believe in Jesus unless he feels his need of Him. But you have often heard me say, and I repeat it again, that I do not come to Christ pleading that I feel my need of Him. My reason for believing in Christ, is not that I *feel* my need of Him, but that I *have* a need of Him.

The ground on which a man comes to Jesus is not as a sensible sinner, but as a sinner, and nothing but a sinner. He will not come unless he is awakened, but when he comes, he does not say, “Lord, I come to you because I am an awakened sinner, save me.” But he says, “Lord, I am a sinner, save me.” Not his awakening, but his sinnership, is the method and plan upon which he dares to come.

You will, perhaps, perceive what I mean, for I cannot exactly explain myself just now. If I refer to the preaching of a great many Calvinistic divines, they say to a sinner, “Now, *if you feel* your need of Christ, *if you have repented* so much, *if you have been harrowed* by the law to such and such a degree, then you may come to Christ on the ground that you are an awakened sinner.” I say that is false.

No man may come to Christ on the ground of his being an awakened sinner. He must come to Him *as a sinner*. When I come to Jesus, I know I am not come unless I am awakened, but still, I do not come

as an awakened sinner. I do not stand at the foot of His cross to be washed because I have repented. I bring nothing when I come but sin. A sense of need is a good feeling, but when I stand at the foot of the cross, I do not believe in Christ because I have got good feelings, but I believe in Him whether I have good feelings or not.

*“Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God I come.”*

Mr. Roger, Mr. Sheppard, Mr. Flavell, and several excellent divines in the Puritanic age, and especially Richard Baxter, used to give descriptions of what a man must feel before he may dare to come to Christ.

Now, I say in the language of good Mr. Fenner, another of those divines, who said he was but a babe in grace when compared with them, “I dare to say it, that all this is not Scriptural. Sinners do feel these things before they come, but they do not come on the ground of having felt it. They come on the ground of being sinners, and on no other ground whatever.”

The gate of mercy is opened and over the door it is written, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*.” Between that word “save” and the next word “sinners,” there is no adjective. It does not say, “penitent sinners,” “awakened sinners,” “sensible sinners,” “grieving sinners,” or “alarmed sinners.”

No, it only says, “sinners,” and I know this, that when I come, I come to Christ today, for I feel it is as much a necessity of my life to come to the cross of Christ today as it was to come ten years ago—when I come to Him I dare not come as a conscious sinner or an awakened sinner, but I have to come still as a sinner with nothing in my hands.

I saw an aged man this week in the vestry of a chapel in Yorkshire. I had been saying something to this effect. The old man had been a Christian for years, and he said, “I never saw it put exactly so, but still I know that is just the way I come. I say, ‘Lord,

*“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, look to Thee for dress,
Helpless, come to Thee for grace;
Black’ —*

(“Black enough,” said the old man)

*‘I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.’”*

Faith is getting right out of yourself and getting into Christ. I know that many hundreds of poor souls have been troubled because the minister has said, “If you feel your need, you may come to Christ.” “But” say they, “I do not feel my need enough. I am sure I do not.” Many a score of letters have I received from poor troubled consciences who have said, “I would venture to believe in Christ to save me if I had a tender conscience, if I had a soft heart—but oh, my heart is like a rock of ice which will not melt. I cannot feel as I would like to feel, and therefore I must not believe in Jesus.”

Oh! down with it, down with it! It is a wicked anti-Christ, it is flat Popery! It is not your soft heart that entitles you to believe. You are to believe in Christ to renew your hard heart and come to Him with nothing about you but sin.

The ground on which a sinner comes to Christ is that he is black. That he is dead, and not that he knows he is dead. That he is lost, and not that he knows he is lost. I know he will not come unless he does know it, but that is not the ground on which he comes. It is the secret reason why, but it is not the public positive ground which he understands.

Here was I, year after year, afraid to come to Christ because I thought I did not feel enough, and I used to read that hymn of Cowper's about being insensible as steel—

*“If aught is felt 'tis only pain
To find I cannot feel.”*

When I believed in Christ, I thought I did not feel at all. *Now* when I look back, I find that I had been feeling all the while most acutely and intensely, and most of all because I thought I did not feel. Generally the people who repent the most, think they are impenitent, and people feel most their need when they think they do not feel at all, for we are no judge of our feelings, and hence the Gospel invitation is not put upon the ground of anything of which we can be a judge. It is put on the ground of our being sinners and nothing but sinners.

“Well,” says one, “but it says, ‘Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest’—then we must be weary and heavy-laden.” Just so. So it is in that text, but then there is another. “Whosoever will let him come.” And that does not say anything about “weary and heavy-laden.” Besides, while the invitation is given to the weary and heavy-laden, you will perceive that the promise is not made to them *as* weary and heavy-laden, but it is made to them *as coming* to Christ.

They did not know that they were weary and heavy-laden when they came. They thought they were not. They really were, but part of their weariness was that they could not be as weary as they would like to be, and part of their load was that they did not feel their load enough. They came to Christ just as they were, and He saved them, not because there was any merit in their weariness, or any efficacy in their being heavy-laden, but He saved them as sinners, and nothing but sinners, and so they were washed in His blood and made clean. My dear hearer, do let me put this truth home to you. If you will come to Christ this morning, as nothing but a sinner, He will not cast you out.

Old Tobias Crisp says in one of his sermons upon this very point, “I dare to say it, but if you do come to Christ, whosoever you may be, if He does not receive you, then He is not true to His word, for He says, ‘Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.’”

If you come, never mind qualification or preparation. He needs no qualification of duties or of feelings either. You are to come just as you are, and if you are the biggest sinner out of hell, you are as fit to come to Christ as if you were the most moral and most excellent of men. There is a bath—who is fit to be washed? A man's blackness is no reason why he should not be washed, but the clearer reason why he should be.”

When our City magistrates were giving relief to the poor, nobody said, “I am so poor, therefore I am not fit to have relief.” Your poverty is your preparation, the black is the white here. Strange contradiction! The only thing you can bring to Christ is your sin and your wickedness. All He asks is that you will come empty. If you have anything of your own, you must leave all before you come. If there be anything good in you, you cannot trust Christ, you must come with nothing in your hand.

Take Him as all in all, and that is the only ground upon which a poor soul can be saved—as a sinner and nothing but a sinner.

IV. But not to stay longer, my fourth point has to do with THE WARRANT OF FAITH, or why a man dares to trust in Christ.

Is it not imprudent for any man to trust Christ to save him and especially when he has no good thing whatever? Is it not an arrogant presumption for any man to trust Christ? No, sirs, it is not. It is a grand and noble work of God the Holy Spirit for a man to give the lie to all his sins, and still to believe and set

to his seal that God is true, and believe in this virtue of the blood of Jesus. But why does any man dare to believe in Christ, I will ask you now.

“Well,” says one man, “I summoned faith to believe in Christ because I did feel there was a work of the Spirit in me.” You do not believe in Christ at all. “Well,” says another, “I thought that I had a right to believe in Christ, because I felt somewhat.” You had not any right to believe in Christ at all on such a warrant as that.

What is a man’s warrant then for believing in Christ? Here it is. Christ tells him to do it, that is his warrant. Christ’s word is the warrant of the sinner for believing in Christ—not what he feels nor what he is, nor what he is not, but that Christ has told him to do it.

The Gospel runs thus, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned.” Faith in Christ then is a commanded duty as well as a blessed privilege, and what a mercy it is that it is a duty, because there never can be any question but that a man has a right to do his duty.

Now, on the ground that God commands me to believe, I have a right to believe, be I who I may. The Gospel is sent to every creature. Well, I belong to that tribe. I am one of the every creatures, and that Gospel commands me to believe and I do it. I cannot have done wrong in doing it for I was commanded to do so. I cannot be wrong in obeying a command of God.

Now it is a command of God given to every creature that he should believe on Jesus Christ whom God has sent. This is your warrant, sinner, and a blessed warrant it is, for it is one which hell cannot gainsay and which heaven cannot withdraw. You need not be looking within to look for the misty warrants of your experience, you need not be looking to your works, and to your feelings to get some dull and insufficient warrants for your confidence in Christ. You may believe Christ because He tells you to do so. That is a sure ground to stand on and one which admits of no doubt.

I will suppose that we are all starving, that the city has been besieged and shut up, and there has been a long, long famine, and we are ready to die of hunger. There comes out an invitation to us to repair at once to the palace of some great one there to eat and drink, but we have grown foolish and will not accept the invitation.

Suppose now that some hideous madness has got hold of us, and we prefer to die and had rather starve than come. Suppose the king’s herald should say, “Come and feast, poor hungry souls, and because I know you are unwilling to come, I add this threat, if you come not, my warriors shall be upon you. They shall make you feel the sharpness of their swords.”

I think, my dear friends, we should say, “We bless the great man for that threatening, because now we need not say, ‘I may not come,’ while the fact is we may not stay away. Now I need not say I am not fit to come for I am commanded to come, and I am threatened if I do not come—and I will even go.”

That awful sentence, “He that believeth not shall be damned” was added not out of anger, but because the Lord knew our silly madness, and that we should refuse our own mercies unless He thundered at us to make us come to the feast, “Compel them to come in.” This was the Word of the Master of old, and that text is part of the carrying out of that exhortation, “Compel them to come in.”

Sinner, you cannot be lost by trusting Christ, but you will be lost if you do not trust Him, ay, and lost for not trusting Him. I put it boldly now—sinner, not only may you come, but oh! I pray you, do not defy the wrath of God by refusing to come. The gate of mercy stands wide open, why will you not come? Why will you not? Why so proud? Why will you still refuse His voice, and perish in your sins?

Mark, if you perish, any one of you, your blood lies not at God’s door, nor Christ’s door, but at your own. He can say of you, “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” Oh! poor trembler, if you be willing to come, there is nothing in God’s Word to keep you from coming, but there are both threatenings to drive you and powers to draw you.

Still I hear you say, “I must not trust Christ.” You *may*, I say, for every creature under heaven is commanded to do it, and what you are commanded to do, you may do. “Ah! well,” says one, “still I do not feel that I may.” There you are again. You say you will not do what God tells you, because of some

stupid feelings of your own. You are not told to trust Christ because you feel anything, but simply because you are a sinner.

Now, you know you are a sinner. “I am,” says one, “and that is my sorrow.” Why your sorrow? That is some sign that you do feel. “Ay,” says one, “but I do not feel enough, and that is why I sorrow. I do not feel as I should.” Well, suppose you do feel, or suppose you do not, you are a sinner, and “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

“Oh, but I am such an old sinner, I have been sixty years in sin.” Where is it written that after sixty you cannot be saved? Sir, Christ could save you at a hundred—ay, if you were a Methuselah in guilt. “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” “Whosoever will let him come.” “He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him.”

“Yes,” says one, “but I have been a drunkard, a swearer, or lascivious, or profane.” Then, you are a sinner, you have not gone further than the uttermost and He is able to save you still. “Ay,” says another, “but you do not know how my guilt has been aggravated.” That only proves you to be a sinner, and that you are commanded to trust Christ and be saved. “Ay,” cries yet another, “but you do not know how often I have rejected Christ.” Yes, but that only makes you the more a sinner. “You do not know how hard my heart is.” Just so, but that only proves you to be a sinner, and still proves you to be one whom Christ came to save.

“Oh, but sir, I have not any good thing. If I had, you know, I should have something to encourage me.” The fact of your not having any good thing just proves to me that you are the man I am sent to preach to. Christ came to save that which was lost, and all you have said only proves that you are lost, and therefore He came to save you. Do trust Him. Do trust Him.

“But if I am saved,” says one, “I shall be the biggest sinner that ever was saved.” Then the greater music in heaven when you get there, the more glory to Christ, for the bigger the sinner, the more honor for Christ when at last he shall be brought home. “Ay, but my sin has abounded.” His grace shall much more abound. “But my sin has reached even to heaven.” Yes, but His mercy reaches above the heavens.

“Oh! but my guilt is as broad as the world.” Yes, but His righteousness is broader than a thousand worlds. “Ay, but my sin is scarlet.” Yes, but His blood is more scarlet than your sins, and can wash the scarlet out by a richer scarlet. “Ay! but I deserve to be lost, and death and hell cry for my damnation.” Yes, and so they may, but the blood of Jesus Christ can cry louder than either death or hell. And it cries today, “Father, let the sinner live.”

Oh! I wish I could get this thought out of my own mouth and get it into your heads, that when God saves you, it is not because of anything in you, it is because of something in Himself. God’s love has no reason except in His own bowels. God’s reason for pardoning a sinner is found in His own heart and not in the sinner. And there is as much reason in you why you should be saved as why another should be saved, namely, no reason at all. There is no reason in you why He should have mercy on you, but there is no reason wanted, for the reason lies in God and in God alone.

V. And now, I come to the conclusion, and I trust you will have patience with me, for my last point is a very glorious one, and full of joy to those souls who as sinners dare to believe in Christ—THE RESULT OF FAITH, or how it speeds when it comes to Christ.

The text says, “He that believeth is not condemned.” There is a man there who has just this moment believed, he is not condemned. But he has been fifty years in sin, and has plunged into all manner of vice. His sins, which are many, are all forgiven him. He stands in the sight of God now as innocent as though he had never sinned. Such is the power of Jesus’ blood, that “He that believeth is not condemned.”

Does this relate to what is to happen at the day of judgment? I pray you look at the text, and you will find it does not say, “He that believeth *shall* not be condemned,” but he *is* not—he is not now. And if he is not now, then it follows that he never shall be. For having believed in Christ, that promise still stands, “He that believeth is not condemned.” I believe today I am not condemned. In fifty years’ time, that promise will be just the same, “He that believeth is not condemned.”

So that the moment a man puts his trust in Christ, he is freed from all condemnation—past, present, and to come, and from that day he stands in God’s sight as though he were without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. “But he sins,” you say. He does indeed, but his sins are not laid to his charge. They were laid to the charge of Christ of old, and God shall never charge the offense on two—first on Christ and then on the sinner.

“Ay, but he often falls into sin.” That may be possible, though if the Spirit of God be in him, he sins not as he was wont to do. He sins by reason of infirmity, not by reason of his love to sin, for now he hates it. But mark, you shall put it in your own way if you will, and I will answer, “Yes, but though he sin, yet is he no more guilty in the sight of God, for all his guilt has been taken from him and put on Christ—positively, literally, and actually lifted off from him and put upon Jesus Christ.”

Do you see the Jewish host? There is a scapegoat brought out. The high priest confesses the sin of the people over the scapegoat’s head. The sin is all gone from the people and laid upon the scapegoat. Away goes the scapegoat into the wilderness. Is there any sin left on the people? If there be, then the scapegoat has not carried it away. Because it cannot be *here* and *there* too. It cannot be carried away and left behind too.

“No,” say you, “Scripture says the scapegoat carried away the sin. There was none left on the people when the scapegoat had taken away the sin.” And so, when by faith we put our hand upon the head of Christ, does Christ take away our sin, or does He not? If He does not, then it is of no use our believing in Him. But if He does really take away our sin, then our sin cannot be on Him and on us too. If it be on Christ, we are free, clear, accepted, justified, and this is the true doctrine of justification by faith.

As soon as a man believes in Christ Jesus, his sins are gone from him, and gone away forever. They are blotted out now. What if a man owe a hundred pounds, yet if he has got a receipt for it, he is free. It is blotted out, there is an erasure made in the book, and the debt is gone. Though the man commit sin, yet the debt having been paid before even the debt was acquired, he is no more a debtor to the law of God.

Does not Scripture say that God has cast His people’s sins into the depths of the sea? Now, if they are in the depths of the sea, they cannot be on His people too. Blessed be His name, in the day when He casts our sins into the depth of the sea, He views us as pure in His sight, and we stand accepted in the Beloved.

Then He says, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” They cannot be removed and be here still. Then if you believe in Christ, you are no more in the sight of God a sinner. You are accepted as though you were perfect, as though you had kept the law—for Christ has kept it and His righteousness is yours. You have broken it, but your sin is His, and He has been punished for it.

Mistake not yourselves any longer, you are no more what you were. When you believe, you stand in Christ’s stead, even as Christ of old stood in your stead. The transformation is complete, the exchange is positive and eternal. They who believe in Jesus are as much accepted of God the Father as even His Eternal Son is accepted. And they that believe not, let them do what they will, they shall but go about to work out their own righteousness, but they abide under the law, and still shall they be under the curse.

Now, you that believe in Jesus, walk up and down the earth in the glory of this great truth. You are sinners in yourselves, but you are washed in the blood of Christ. David says, “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” You have lately seen the snow come down—how clear! How white! What could be whiter!

Why, the Christian is whiter than that. You say, “He is black.” I know he is as black as anyone—as black as hell—but the blood-drop falls on him, and he is as white—“whiter than snow.” The next time you see the snow-white crystals falling from heaven, look on them and say, “Ah! though I must confess within myself that I am unworthy and unclean, yet, believing in Christ, He has given me His righteousness so completely, that I am even whiter than the snow as it descends from the treasury of God.”

Oh! for faith to lay hold on this. Oh! for an overpowering faith that shall get the victory over doubts and fears, and make us enjoy the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free. Go home, you that believe in Christ, and go to your beds this night and say, “If I die in my bed, I cannot be condemned.” Should you wake the next morning, go into the world and say, “I am not condemned.”

When the devil howls at you, tell him, “Ah! you may accuse, but I am not condemned.” And if sometimes your sins rise—say, “Ay, I know you, but you are all gone forever. I am not condemned.” And when your turn shall come to die, shut your eyes in peace.

***“Bold shall you stand in that great day,
For who aught to your charge can lay?”***

Fully absolved by grace, you shall be found at last, and all sin’s tremendous curse and blame shall be taken away, not because of anything you have done. I pray you to do all you can for Christ out of gratitude, but even when you have done all, do not rest there. Rest still in the substitution and the sacrifice.

Be you what Christ was in His Father’s sight, and when conscience awakens, you can tell it that Christ was for you all that you ought to have been, that He has suffered all your penalty, and now neither mercy nor justice can smite you, since justice has clasped hands with mercy in a firm decree to save that man whose faith is in the cross of Christ. The Lord bless these words for His 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.