

LOVE'S COMMENDATION

NO. 104

A SERMON
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BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“But God commended his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”
Romans 5:8.

I SHALL have nothing new to tell you. It will be as old as the everlasting hills and so simple that a child may understand it. Love's commendation, “God commended his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” God's commendation of Himself and of His love is not in words, but in deeds. When the Almighty God would commend His love to poor man, it is not written, “God commended his love towards us in an eloquent oration.” It is not written that He commended His love by winning professions, but He commended his love toward us by an act, by a deed, a surprising deed, the unutterable grace of which eternity itself shall scarce discover. He “commended his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Let us learn, then, upon the threshold of our text, that if *we* would commend ourselves, it must be by deeds and not by words. Men may talk fairly and think that thus they shall win esteem. They may order their words aright and think that they shall command respect, but let them remember, it is not the wordy oratory of the tongue, but the more powerful eloquence of the hand which wins the affection of “the world's great heart.” If you would commend yourself to your fellows, go and *do*—not go and *say*. If you would win honor from the excellent, talk not, but *act*. And if before God you would show that your faith is sincere and your love to Him real, remember, it is no fawning words, uttered either in prayer or praise, but it is the pious deed, the holy act, which is the justification of your faith and the proof that it is the faith of God's elect. Doing, not saying—acting, not talking—these are the things which commend a man.

*“No big words of ready talkers,
No fine boastings will suffice
Broken hearts and humble walkers,
These are dear in Jesus' eyes.*”

Let us imitate God, then, in this. If we would commend our religion to mankind, we cannot do it by mere formalities, but by gracious acts of integrity, charity, and forgiveness which are the proper discoveries of divine grace within. “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” “Let your conversation be such as becomes the gospel of Christ.” And so shall you honor Him and “adorn the doctrine” which you profess.

But now for this mighty deed whereby God commended His love. We think that it is two-fold. We believe the apostle has given us a double commendation of love. The first is, “*God commended his love toward us, in that Christ died for us.*” The second commendation arises from our condition, “*In that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*”

I. The first commendation of love then, is this, that “CHRIST DIED FOR US” and as the whole text is double, so this sentence, also, contains a two-fold commendation.

There is a commendation of love in the person who died—Christ and then in the act which He performed—“Christ died for us.”

1. First, then, it is the highest commendation of love, *that it was CHRIST who died for us*. When sinful man erred from his Maker, it was necessary that God should punish his sin. He had sworn by

Himself, "The soul that sins, it shall die," and God with reverence to His all-holy name, be it spoken, could not swerve from what He had said. He had declared on Sinai that He would by no means clear the guilty, but inasmuch as He desired to pardon the offending, it was necessary that someone else should bear the sufferings which the guilty ought to have endured, that so by the vicarious substitution of another, God might be "just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly."

Now, the question might have arisen, "Who is he that shall be the scapegoat for man's offense? Who is he that shall bear his transgressions and take away his sins?" If I might be allowed to picture in my imagination (and mark, it is nothing more than imagination), I could almost conceive a parliament in heaven. The angels are assembled the question is proposed to them, "Cherubim and Seraphim, cohorts of the glorified, you spirits that like flames of fire, swift at My bidding fly, you happy beings, whom I have created for My honor! here is a question which I condescend to offer for your consideration—Man has sinned. There is no way for his pardon, but by someone suffering and paying blood for blood. Who shall it be?" I can conceive that there was silence throughout the august assembly. Gabriel spoke not—he would have stretched his wings and flapped in the ether in a moment, if the deed had been possible, but he felt that he could never bear the guilt of a world upon his shoulders and therefore, still he sat.

And there the mightiest of the mighty, those who could shake a world if God should will it, sat still, because they all felt powerless to accomplish redemption. I do not conceive that one of them would have ventured to hope that God Himself would assume flesh and die. I do not think it could have entered even into angelic thought to conceive that the mighty Maker of the skies should bow His awful head and sink into a grave. I cannot imagine that the brightest and most seraphic of these glorified ones would for an instant have suffered such a thought to abide with them.

And when the Son of God, starting up from His throne, spoke to them and said, "Principalities and powers! I will become flesh. I will veil this Godhead of Mine in robes of mortal clay, I will die!" I think I see the angels for once astonished. They had seen worlds created. They had beheld the earth, like a spark from the incandescent mass of unformed matter hammered from the anvil of omnipotence and smitten off into space, and yet they had not wondered. But on this occasion, I conceive that they ceased not to marvel, "What! Will You die, O Word! Creator! Master! Infinite! Almighty! Will You become a man and die?" "Yes," said the Savior, "I will."

And are you not astonished, mortal men? Do you not wonder? What, will *you* not marvel? The hosts of heaven still are wondering. Though it is many an age since they heard it, they have not yet ceased to admire and do not you *begin* to marvel yet? Shall the theme which stirs the marvel of the seraph not move your hearts? That God Himself should become man and then should die for you! "God commended his love toward us, in that *Christ* should die." Had it been an archangel who had died for us, it would have been a theme for gratitude. Had it been merely a good and holy man who had shed his blood, we might have kissed his feet and loved him forever. But seeing that He who groaned upon the cross was none other than the Almighty God and that He who sweat in the garden, while He was man, was still none other than one person of the all-glorious Trinity, it is indeed love's highest commendation that *Christ* should die.

Roll that thought over in your mind. Ponder it in your meditations. Weigh it in your hearts. If you have right ideas of the Godhead, if you know what Christ is, if you can conceive Him who is the everlasting God and yet the man, if you can picture Him, the pure, holy, perfect creature, and yet the everlasting Creator, if you can conceive of Him as the man who was wounded and yet the God who was exalted forever, if you can picture Him as the Maker of all worlds, as the Lord of providence, by whom all things exist and consist, if you can conceive of Him now, as robed in splendor, surrounded with the choral symphonies of myriads of angels then, perhaps, you may guess how deep was that stride of condescension, when He stepped from heaven to earth, from earth into the grave, from the grave down, it is said, into the lowest "*sheol*," that He might make His condescension perfect and complete. "He has commended His love" to you, my brethren, in that it was Christ, the Son of God, who died for us.

2. The second part of the first commendation lies here, that Christ *died for us*. It was much love when Christ became man for us, when He stripped Himself of the glories of His Godhead for awhile, to become an infant of a span long, slumbering in the manger of Bethlehem. It was no little condescension when He divested Himself of all His glories, hung His mantle on the sky, gave up His diadem, and the pleasures of His throne, and stooped to become flesh. It was, moreover, no small love when He lived a holy and a suffering life for us. It was love amazing, when God with feet of flesh did tread the earth and teach His own creatures how to live, all the while bearing their scoffs and jests with cool unangered endurance. It was no little favor of Him that He should condescend to give us a perfect example by His spotless life.

But the commendation of love lies here, not that Christ *lived* for us, but that Christ *died* for us! Come, dear hearers, for a moment, weigh those words, "Christ *died* for us!" Oh! how we love those brave defenders of our nation who but lately died for us in a far-off land! Some of us showed our sympathy to their sons and daughters, their wives and children, by contributing to support them, when the fathers were laid low. We feel that the wounded soldier is a friend to us and that we are his debtors forever. We may not love war—we may not, some of us, think it a Christian act to wield the sword, but nevertheless, I am sure we love the man who sought to defend our country with their lives and who died in our cause. We would drop a tear over the silent graves of Balaclava, if we were there now. And beloved, if any of our friends should dare danger for our sakes, and more especially, if it should ever come to pass that any one of them should be called to die for us, should we not henceforth love them?

Do any of us know what is contained in that great word, "die"? Can we measure it? Can we tell its depths of suffering or its heights of agony? "Died for us!" Some of you have seen death. You know how great and dread is its power. You have seen the strong man bowing down, his knees quivering. You have beheld the eye strings break and seen the eyeballs glazed in death. You have marked the torture and the agonies which appall men in their dying hours and you have said, "Ah! it is a solemn and an awful thing to die." But my hearers, "Christ *died* for us." All that death could mean, Christ endured. He yielded up the ghost, He resigned His breath, He became a lifeless corpse, and His body was interred, even like the bodies of the rest that died. "Christ died for us."

Consider the circumstances which attended His death. It was no common death He died, it was a death of shame, for He was put to death by a legal slaughter. It was a death of unutterable pain, for He was crucified and what more painful fate than to die nailed to a cross? It was a long protracted death, for He hung for hours, with only His hands and His feet pierced—parts which are far away from the seat of life, but in which are situated the most tender nerves, full of sensibility. He suffered a death which, for its circumstances, still remains unparalleled. It was no speedy blow which crushed the life out of the body and ended it, but it was a lingering, long, and doleful death, attended with no comforts and no sympathy, but surrounded with scorn and contempt.

Picture Him! They have hurled Him on His back, they have driven nails through His hands and His feet. They have lifted Him up. See! They have dashed the cross into its place. It is fixed. And now behold Him! Mark His eyes, all full of tears. Behold His head, hanging on His breast. Ah! mark Him, while suffering, with her black wings, fans His cheeks with flame. Behold Him, while He seems all silently to say, "I am poured out like water; all my bones are out of joint; I am brought into the dust of death." Hear Him, when He groans, "I thirst." Above all, listen to Him, while He cries, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" My words cannot picture Him. My thoughts fail to express it. No painter ever accomplished it, nor shall any speaker be able to perform it. Yet I beseech you, regard the Royal Sufferer. See Him with the eye of your faith, hanging on the bloody tree. Hear Him cry, before He dies, "It is finished!"

*"See from His head, His hands, His feet
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did ever such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"*

Oh, how I wish I could stir you! If I would tell you some silly story of a love sick maid, you would weep. If I would turn novelist and give you some sad account of a fabled hero who had died in pain, if it were a fiction, I should have your hearts, but this is a dread and solemn reality, and one with which you are intimately connected, for all this was done for as many of you as sincerely repent of your sins.

*“All you that pass by, to Jesus draw nigh:
To you is it nothing that Jesus should die?”*

Do you think, that if you are saved, it is something to you, for the blood which trickles from His hands, distils for *you*. That frame which writhes in torture, writhes for *you*. Those knees, so weak with pain, are weak for *you*. Those eyes, dripping with showers of tears, drop for *you*. Ah! think of Him, then, you who have faith in Him, look to Him and as many of you who have not yet believed, I will pray for you, that you may now behold Him as the expiation of your guilt, as the key which opens heaven to all believers.

II. Our second point is this, “God commended his love towards us,” not only because Christ died for us, but that CHRIST DIED FOR US WHEN WE WERE YET SINNERS.

Let us, for a moment, consider what sort of sinners many of us have been, and then we shall see it was marvelous grace that Christ should die for men, not as penitents, but as sinners. Consider how many of us have been *continual* sinners. We have not sinned once, nor twice, but ten thousand times. Our life, however upright and moral it has been, is stained by a succession of sins. If we have not revolted against God in the outward acts which proclaim the profligate to be a great sinner, yet the thoughts of our heart and the words of our lips are swift witnesses against us that we have continually transgressed. And oh! my brethren, who is there among us who will not likewise confess to sins of act? Who among us has not broken the Sabbath-day? Who among us has not taken God's name in vain? Who of us shall dare to say that we have loved the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength? Have we never by any act whatsoever showed that we have coveted our neighbor's goods? Verily, I know we have. We have broken His commands and it is well for us to join in that general confession, “We have done those things which we ought not to have done. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done and there is no health in us.”

Now, the sweet thought is that Christ died for us while He knew that we would be continual transgressors. Men, brethren, and fathers, He did not die for you as those who have committed but one fault, but as those who were emphatically “sinners,” sinners of years' standing, some of you sinners with grey heads, sinners who have persevered in a constant course of iniquity. As sinners, we are redeemed, and by it we become saints. Does not this commend Christ's love to us, that He should die for sinners, who have dyed themselves with sin as with crimson and with scarlet, great and continual sinners.

Note again, He has died for us, although our sins were *aggravated*. Oh! there are some of us here who are great sinners, not so much in the acts we have performed, as in the aggravation of our guilt. I reckon that when I sin, I sin worse than many of you, because I sin against better training than many of my hearers received in their youth. Many of you, when you sin, sin against faithful ministers and against the most earnest warnings. It has been your desire to sit under truthful pastors. You have often been told of your sins. Remember, sirs, when you sin, you do not sin so cheaply as others. When you sin against the convictions of your consciences, against the warnings of your friends, against the enlightenment of the times, and against the solemn admonitions of your pastors, you sin more grossly than others do. The heathen sin not as the Briton does. He who has been brought up in this land may be openly more righteous, but he may be inwardly more wicked, for he sins against more knowledge. But even for such, Christ died, for men who have sinned against the wooings of His love, against the strivings of their conscience, against the invitations of His Word, against the warnings of His providence, even for such Christ died, and therein He commended his love towards us, that He died for sinners. My hearer, if you have so sinned, do not therefore despair, it may be He will yet make you rejoice in His redemption.

Reflect again. When we were sinners, *we were sinners against the very person who died for us.* "'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis wonderful," that the very Christ against whom we have sinned, died for us. If a man should be injured in the street, if a punishment should be demanded of the person who attacked him, it would be passing strange if the injured man should for love's sake bear the penalty, that the other might go free. But 'twas even so with Christ. He had been injured, yet He suffers for the very injury that others did to Him. He dies for His enemies, dies for the men that hate and scorn Him.

There is an old tradition that the very man who pierced Christ's side was converted and I sometimes think that peradventure in heaven we shall meet with those very men who drove the nails into His hands and pierced His side. Love is a mighty thing. It can forgive great transgressors. I know my Master said, "Begin at Jerusalem," and I think He said that because there lived the men who had crucified Him and He wanted them to be saved.

My hearer, have you ever blasphemed Christ? Have you ever mocked Him and scoffed at His people? Have you done all you could to emulate the example of those who spat in His holy face? Do you repent of it? Do you feel you need a Savior? Then I tell you, in Christ's name, He is your Savior. Yes, your Savior, though you have insulted Him, your Savior, though you have trampled on Him, your Savior, though you have spoken evil of His people, His day, His Word, and His Gospel.

Once more let us remember that many of us, as sinners, have been persons who for a long time have heard this good news and yet *have despised it.* Perhaps there is nothing more terrible in the depravity of man than that he is able to forget the love of Christ. If we were not so sinful as we are, there is no one here this morning who would not weep at the thought of the Savior's love. And I believe there is not a solitary man, woman, or child here who would not say, "I love You, O my God! because You have done so much for me." It is the highest proof of our depravity that we do not at once love the Christ who died for us.

There is a story told of the covenanters, of one named Patrick Welwood, whose house was surrounded at a time when a minister had, for security, been hidden there. Claverhouse's dragoons were at the door and the minister had fled. The master of the house was summoned and it was demanded of him, "Where is the minister?" "He is gone. I cannot tell where, for I know not." But they were not satisfied with that. They tortured him and since he could not tell them where he was (for in reality he did not know), they left him, after inflicting upon him the torture of the thumbscrew, and they took his sister, a young girl who was living in the house. I believe she did know where the minister was concealed, but on taking her, they asked her and she said, "No, I can die myself, but I can never betray God's servant and never will, as He may help me."

They dragged her to the water's edge and making her kneel down, they determined to put her to death. But the captain said, "Not yet. We will try to frighten her." And sending a soldier to her, he knelt down and applying a pistol to her ear, she was bidden to betray the minister or die. The click of the pistol was heard in her ear, but the pistol was not loaded. She slightly shivered and the question was again asked of her. "Tell us now," they said, "where he is or we will have your life." "Never, never," said she. A second time the endeavor was made. This time a couple of carbines were discharged, but into the air, in order to terrify her. At last they resolved upon really putting her to death, when Trail, the minister, who was hidden somewhere near, being aroused by the discharge of guns and seeing the poor girl about to die for him, sprang forward and cried, "Spare that maiden's blood and take mine. This poor innocent girl, what has she done?" The poor girl was dead even there with the fright, but the minister had come prepared to die himself, to save her life.

Oh, my friends, I have sometimes thought that her heroic martyrdom was somewhat like the blessed Jesus. He comes to us and says, "Poor sinner, will you be My friend?" We answer, "No." "Ah, I will make you so," says He, "I will die for you." And He goes to die on the cross. Oh! I think I could spring forward and say, "Nay, Lord Jesus, nay, You must not die for such a worm." Surely such a sacrifice is a price too large to pay for poor sinful worms! And yet, my hearers, to return again to what I have uttered before, you will hear all this, and nine out of ten will retire from this place and say, "It was an old, old

story,” and while you can drop a tear for anything else, you will not weep one tear for Jesus, nor sigh one sigh for Him, nor will you afford Him even a faint emotion of love. Would it were different! Would to God He would change your hearts, that so you might be brought to love Him.

Further, to illustrate my text, let me remark again, that inasmuch as Christ died for sinners, it is a special commendation of His love for the following reasons—it is quite certain that God did not consider *man's merit* when Christ died. In fact, no merit could have deserved the death of Jesus. Though we had been holy as Adam, we could never have deserved a sacrifice like that of Jesus for us. But inasmuch as it says, “He died for sinners,” we are thereby taught that God considered our sin and not our righteousness. When Christ died, He died for men as vile, as wicked, as abominable, not as good and excellent. Christ did not shed His blood for us as saints, but as sinners. He considered us in our loathsomeness, in our low estate and misery, not in that high estate to which grace afterwards elevates us, but in all the decay into which we had fallen by our sins. There could have been no merit in us and therefore, God commended His love by our ill-desert.

Again it is quite certain, because Christ died for us as sinners, that God had *no interest* to serve by sending His Son to die. How could sinners serve Him? Oh! if God had pleased, He might have crushed this nest of rebels and have made another world all holy. If God had chosen, the moment that man sinned, He might have said unto the world, “You shall be burned,” and like as a few years ago astronomers told us that they saw the light of a far-off world burning myriads of miles away, this world might have been consumed with burning heat and sin scorched out of its clay. But no, while God could have made another race of beings and could have either annihilated us or consigned us to eternal torment, He was pleased to veil Himself in flesh and die for us. Surely, then, it could not have been from any motive of self-interest. God had nothing to get by man's salvation. What are the attractions of human voices in Paradise? What are the feeble symphonies which mortal lips can sing on earth compared with the death of our Lord? He had angels enough. Do they not, day without night, circle His throne rejoicing? Are not their golden harps sufficient? Is not the orchestra of heaven large enough? Must our glorious Lord give up His blood to buy poor worms, that they may join their little notes with the great swell of a choral universe? Yes, He must, and inasmuch as we are sinners and could by no possibility repay Him for His kindness, “God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

But there is another commendation of love. Christ died for us *unasked*. Christ did not consider me as an awakened heir of heaven, but as a dead, corrupt, lost, and ruined heir of hell. If He had died for me as an awakened heir of heaven, then I could have prayed for Him to die, for then I have power to pray and will to pray. But Christ died for me when I had no power, nor will to lift my voice in prayer to Him. It was entirely unasked. Where did you ever hear that man was first in mercy? Did man ask God to redeem? No, rather, it is almost the other way, it is as if God did entreat man to be redeemed. Man never asked that he might be pardoned, but God pardons him and then turns round and cries, “Return unto Me, backsliding children of men, and I will have mercy upon you.”

Sinners! if you should go down on your knees and were for months to cry for mercy, it would be great mercy if mercy should look upon you. But without asking, when we are hardened and rebellious, when we will not turn to Christ, He still comes to die for us. Tell it in heaven, tell it in the lower world. God's amazing work surpasses thought, for love itself did die for hatred. Holiness did crucify itself to save poor sinful men, and unasked for and unsought, like a fountain in the desert sparkling spontaneously with its native waters, Jesus Christ came to die for man, who would not seek His grace. “God commended his love towards us.”

And now, my dear hearers, I want to close up, if the Spirit of God will help me, by endeavoring to commend God's love to you, as much as ever I can and inviting as many of you as feel your need of a Savior, to lay hold of Him and embrace Him now as your all-sufficient sacrifice. Sinner! I can commend Christ to you for this reason, *I know that you need Him*. You may be ignorant of it yourself, but you do need Him. You have a leprosy within your heart, you need a physician. You say, “I am rich.” But sinner,

you are not, you are naked, and poor, and miserable. You say, "I shall stand before God, accepted at last," but sinner, without Christ you will not, for whoever believes not on Christ, "has not life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Hear that, my dear hearers, "The wrath of God abides on him." Oh! that wrath of God! Sinner, you need Christ, even though you do not think so. Oh! that the Lord would impress this upon you!

Again, a day is coming when *you will feel your need* of Christ if you do not now. Within a few short years, perhaps months or days, you will lie upon the last bed that shall ever bear your weight. Soon you shall be stayed up by soft pillows. Your frame will be weak and your soul full of sorrow. You may live without Christ now, but it will be hard work to *die* without Him. You may do without this bridge here, but when you get to the river, you will think yourself a fool to have laughed at the only bridge which can carry you safely over. You may despise Christ now, but what will you do in the swellings of Jordan? Can you face death and not be afraid? Nay, man, you are frightened now if the cholera is in the city. Or if some little sickness is about you, you shake for fear. What will you do when you are in the jaws of death, when his bony hand is squeezing you and when his dart is in your vitals? What will you do, then, without a Savior? Ah! you will want Him then.

And what will you do when you have passed that black stream, when you find yourself in the realm of spirits in that day of judgment, when the thunders shall be loosed and the wings of the lightning shall be unbound, when tempests shall herald with trumpet voice the arrival of the great judgment? What will you do when you shall stand before His bar, before whom, in astonishment, the stars shall flee, the mountains quake, and the sea be licked up with tongues of forked flame? What will you do, when from His throne, He shall exclaim, "Come here, sinner," and you shall stand there alone, to be judged for every deed done in the body? You will turn your head and say, "Oh! for an advocate!" And He shall look on you and say, "I called, and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no man regarded. I also will now laugh at your calamity and mock when your fear comes."

Ah! what will you do then, sinner, when the judgment seat is set? Oh! there will be weeping, there will be weeping at the judgment seat of Christ. And what will you do in that day when He shall say, "Depart, you cursed," and when the black angel, with a countenance more fierce than lightning and with a voice louder than ten thousand thunders shall cry, "Depart!" and smite you down where lie forever those accursed spirits bound in fetters of iron, who, long ago, were cast into perdition? Say not, I tell you terrible things. If it is terrible to speak of, how terrible it must be to bear! If you believe not what I say, I shall not wonder if you laugh at me, but as the most of you believe this, I claim your most solemn attention to this subject.

Sirs! Do you believe there is a hell *and that you are going there*? And yet do you still march heedless on? Do you believe that beyond you, when the stream of life is ended, there is a black gulf of misery? And do you still sail downwards to it, quaffing still your glass of happiness, still merry as the live-long day? O stop, poor sinner, stop! Stop! It may be the last moment you will ever have the opportunity to stop. Therefore stop now, I beseech you.

And if you know yourself to be lost and ruined, if the Holy Spirit has humbled you and made you feel your sin, let me tell you how you shall be saved. "He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ and is baptized, shall be saved. He that believes not," says the Scripture "shall be damned." Do you not like that message? Ought I to have said another word instead of that? If you wish it, I shall not, what God says, I will say, far be it from me to alter the messages from the Most High. I will, if He helps me, declare His truth without altering. He says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, he that believes not shall be damned." What is it to believe? To tell you as simply as possible, to believe is to give up trusting in yourself and to trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior. The slave said, "Massa, dis here is how I believe, when I see a promise, I do not stand on de promise, but I say, dat promise firm and strong, I fall flat on it, if de promise will not bear me, den it is de promise fault, but I fall flat on it."

Now, that is faith. Christ says, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Faith is to say, "Well, then, sink or swim, that is my only hope. Lost or saved, that is my only refuge. I am resolved, for this my last defense,

***"If I perish there and die
At His cross I still will lie."***

"What!" says one, "No good works?" Good works will come afterwards, but they do not go with it. You must come to Christ, not with your good works, but with your sins, and coming with your sins, He will take them away and give you good works afterwards. After you believe, there will be good works as the effect of your faith, but if you think faith will be the effect of good works, you are mistaken. It is, "believe and live." Cowper calls them the soul-quickening words, "*believe and live.*" This is the sum and substance of the Gospel.

Now, do any of you say this is not the Gospel? I shall ask you one day what it is. Is not this the doctrine Whitefield preached? Pray what else did Luther thunder, when he shook the Vatican? What else was proclaimed by Augustine and Chrysostom, but this one doctrine of salvation in Christ, by faith alone? And what did Paul write? Turn you to his epistles. And what did our Savior Himself say when He left these words on record, "Go you and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And what did He command His disciples to teach them? To teach them this the very words I have now repeated to you were his last commission, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, he that believes not shall be damned."

But again, you say, "How can I believe that Christ died for me?" Why, thus, He says He died for *sinners*—can you say you are a sinner? I do not mean with that fine complimentary phrase which many of you use, when you say, "*Yes, I am a sinner.*" and if I sit down to ask you, "Did you break that commandment?" "*Oh, no,*" you will say. "Did you commit that offense?" "*Oh, no.*" You never did anything wrong and yet you are sinners? Now that is the sort of sinners I do not think I shall preach to.

The sort of sinners I would call to repentance are those whom Christ invited, those who mean what they say when they confess that they are sinners, those who know that they have been guilty, vile, and lost. If you know your sinnership, so truly Christ died for you. Remember that striking saying of Luther. Luther says Satan once came to him and said, "'Martin Luther, you are lost, for you are a sinner.' Said I to him, 'Satan, I thank you for saying I am a sinner, for inasmuch as you say I am a sinner, I answer you thus, Christ died for sinners. And if Martin Luther is a sinner, Christ died for him.'" Now, can you lay hold on that, my hearer? It is not on my authority, but on God's authority. Go away and rejoice, for if you are the chief of sinners, you shall be saved, if you believe.

***"Jesus, Your blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress
'Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed
With joy shall I lift up my head.***

***Bold shall I stand in that great day
For who to my charge shall lay,
While, thro' Your blood, absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame?"***

Sing that, poor soul, and you have begun to sing the song of Paradise. May the Lord, the Holy Spirit, apply these simple statements of truth to the salvation of your souls.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.