

THE SINNER'S SAVIOR

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A SERMON
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*“And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying,
That he was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner.”
Luke 19:7*

PUBLICANS, or tax-gatherers, among the Jews were objects of intense aversion. The nation was always restless under the Roman yoke, for the Israelite's pride of lineage made him boast that he was born free and was never in bondage unto any man. Moreover, they had hopes of great future under a Messiah who would lead them on to conquest. And therefore the Roman yoke galled their shoulders exceedingly, and the payment of taxes to a foreign power was a heavy grievance.

That the people of God should pay tribute to a heathen power was a bone of continual contention. And the persons of the tax-gatherers were held in bitter hatred. While they abhorred the collectors of customs as a class, they reserved their most intense contempt for any of their own countrymen who lent themselves to this obnoxious business. They regarded such as almost abjuring their relationship to Israel, and sharing the guilt of the oppressor.

As a usual rule it would only be the lowest class of people among the Jews who would become collectors of tribute from their own countrymen. The outcasts and scapegoats of society would sometimes take to this detested business, but very rarely would a man of wealth and position, such as Zacchaeus evidently was, encounter the scorn which such an office brought upon him.

Zacchaeus was not, perhaps, the actual tax collector who called upon individuals, but he was the superintendent of the custom house officers of the district, for “he was the chief of the publicans, and he was rich.” He came, perhaps, under even greater odium than others because he occupied a more prominent position and carried on the unsavory business on a larger scale.

Jewish society drew a cordon around the *publicans*, and set them aside as moral lepers, with whom respectable people must not associate if they studied their souls' health. And so Zacchaeus, with all his wealth, was regarded as a pariah by his fellow countrymen. He may have been a thoroughly honest and upright man, but that mattered little to those who had taken a prejudice against all publicans. He was regarded by the Pharisaic party as one of the offscouring of society, a man not to be acknowledged in the street, and into whose house no one would enter, a man to be shunned if he had the impertinence to enter the synagogue or the temple, and only to be tolerated because it was not possible to rid the world of him.

From the very first our Lord had broken through this hard and fast rule. He disregarded all the traditional and fashionable rules of caste. Constantly did He address publicans as if they had the same feelings as other men, and talked with them and went into their houses, so that He came to be commonly called by those who wished to show their contempt of Him, “the friend of publicans and sinners.”

A man who could be a friend to publicans was reckoned to be as evil as publicans themselves, and further a man could not go. For if the Jew mentioned publicans and sinners, he always gave publicans the first place, as being decidedly the worse of the two. “Friend of publicans and sinners,” who can tell what a mass of contempt was condensed into that title!

Our Lord did not at all deviate from His course because of this scoffing, but He went on befriending sinners, even open sinners, sinners of the most avowed and undoubted degree of sin. He almost commenced His ministry by talking to an unchaste woman at the well of Sychar, and He finished it by dispensing pardon to a thief while hanging on the cross, and between that calling of the woman of

Samaria who had had five husbands and was living unlawfully at the time, right along to the thief who died upon the gallows tree for his crime, the Savior had been receiving sinners and eating with them. He had been seeking and saving that which was lost.

The old contempt of the sinner's Savior lingers in the world still among the self-righteous. Taking different shapes and speaking with other voices, it is still among us, and still in one way or the other the old charge is repeated, that Christianity is too lenient on the sinner. That it tends to discourage the naturally amiable and virtuous, and looks too favorably upon the vicious and disreputable. That it is always talking about pardon without merit, and speaking slightly of human goodness.

And therefore some even say they regard Christianity as a foe to society, and an enemy to good morals. How easily could we turn the tables upon these slanderers, for usually those who talk thus have but a scant supply of morals and virtues themselves.

First, brethren, it was said that Jesus had gone to be a guest to a man that was a sinner, and we shall *admit the truth of the charge*. Secondly, we shall *deny the insinuation which that charge is meant to cover*. And thirdly, *we shall rejoice in the fact which has been the subject of the objection*.

I. First, then, we shall ADMIT THE TRUTH OF THE CHARGE.

We do so most cheerfully, and without the slightest reserve. Jesus did go to be guest to a man that was a sinner, and did so not only once, but as often as He saw need. He went after the sheep which had gone astray, and He had a wonderful attraction for the disreputable classes, for it is written, "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him." His ministry was aimed at those who were as sheep without a shepherd, and it succeeded among such, for we read that the publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom.

We are not going for a single moment to deny what is so evidently true, Jesus was and is the sinner's friend. We admit most fully and freely that the Gospel which now represents Christ upon earth bears the most kindly relationship towards the guilty. That in fact it contemplates their salvation, and finds its greatest triumphs amongst them.

To begin with, *the object of Christ and the design of the Gospel is the saving of sinners*. If there be any man in this world who is not guilty, the Savior is nothing to him. If there be anyone who has never transgressed God's law, but has kept His commandments from his youth up, and is excellent and meritorious in himself, Jesus Christ did not come into the world to call such a man to repentance. Why should He? "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick."

Christ comes not to proffer His needless services to those who are not sin-sick or needy! A Savior for those who are not lost! A redeemer for those who are not enslaved! Alms for the rich! Medicine for the whole! Pardon for the innocent! These are all needless things. A physician does not at all hesitate to say that he comes into a town with his eye upon the sick. It would be ridiculous for him to come there with a view to anybody else. And so to guilty sinners Jesus comes.

Gospel promises are addressed to the guilty. Who else would need abundant pardon? Gospel invitations are addressed to the sinful. Who should be entreated to wash but those who are foul? Gospel blessings are intended for those who have transgressed and are under condemnation, for who else would value forgiveness and justification?

I know myself of no Gospel for men who have not sinned. I know of no New Testament promises intended for those who have never broken the law. But I perceive all through the wondrous pages of the Gospel that mercy's eye and heart are set upon those who are guilty and self-condemned. The Eternal Watcher is looking over the vast ocean of life, not that He may spy out the vessels which sail along proudly in safety, but that He may see those who are almost wrecks. "He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profiteth me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light."

Our Lord was more moved at the sight of sickness than of health, and wrought His greatest wonders among fevers, leprosy, and palsies. This is the end and object of the Gospel, namely, to save the unrighteous. The God of the Gospel is He that "justifieth the ungodly," "for when we were yet without

strength, Christ died for the ungodly.” “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

As the Gospel's eye is thus fixed on sinners, we have to notice that *our Lord does actually call sinners into its fellowship*. Zacchaeus did not come to Jesus first, but Jesus went after Him while he was yet a sinner, and said to him, “Today I must abide in thy house.” So does the Gospel, by the Holy Spirit's power, continually call to itself the guilty. The drunkard, the thief, the harlot, the profane, the careless, the prayerless are called out, those who are consciously guilty are led to faith and pardon. Not merely those guilty of open sin, but those guilty of secret sin, sins of the heart, sins of the imagination, sins which stain the inmost soul, are converted and saved.

Jesus Christ causes His ministers, in the preaching of the word, to gather out of the world and into the church those who were enemies and alienated in their minds by wicked works. The Spirit of God does not effectually call those who are without sin, but He calls sinners to repentance. The Spirit of God does not quicken those living, living in their own natural goodness, but He quickens the dead in trespasses and sins.

The eternal love of God does not go forth towards those who dream of their own superiority and wrap themselves up in the mantle of their own righteousness, but it goes forth unto those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound in affliction and iron, because they have rebelled against the Lord and contemned the counsel of the Most High. These are they upon whom this mighty love fixes itself, and upon whom sovereign grace exerts its power.

The great founder of Zion has found inhabitants for her, even as Romulus peopled Rome. It is said of that renowned builder that when he walled his city he peopled it by permitting the offscouring of all other cities to use it as a refuge. Glorious things are spoken of you, O Zion, city of God, and yet all your citizens confess that they were guilty and defiled till Jesus washed and renewed them.

Today Jesus, the Son of David, enlists under His banner men who are in debt, and are discontented, and out of such as are these He makes heroes of the cross. Fain would I invite to the cave Adullam of His church those who are willing to enlist under the banner of the Son of David.

Moreover, while we are about it we will make a further confession, *the man Christ Jesus does very readily come to be guest with a man who is a sinner, for He stands on no ceremony with sinners*, but makes Himself at home with them at once.

If a Pharisee had gone to Zacchaeus' house and been allowed to do exactly what he liked he would have said, “Well, I may perhaps condescend to enter your profane abode, Zacchaeus, but I must wash first and wash afterwards also. And moreover, you also must wash, and also have your house specially purified—it must be whitewashed, scrubbed, and perfumed with incense. And then, if you will take a seat up in the far corner of the room I do not mind coming near the door, where the fresh air may perhaps remove any exhalations from your guilty person, for I being so transcendently holy am exceedingly sensitive and cannot come into contact with your unholiness.”

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ did not ask Zacchaeus even to wash his little finger, but He said, “Make haste, and come down, for today I must abide in thy house.” Why, Zacchaeus had the green of the tree all over him, he was not in a very elegant condition to receive the Lord. And worse still, there was his sin about him, and yet Jesus Christ said to him before he had brushed off a grain of dust, “Make haste, and come down, for today I must abide in thy house.” To his house Jesus came, and with him He sojourned, and all without ceremony and preparation.

Yes, I have known the Lord Jesus meet with a man as black as hell and wash him white in five minutes, and sit at his side and eat bread with him at once. I have known Him meet with the very vilest of offenders, and almost in the twinkling of an eye He has made the transgressor to be His companion and His friend. Did not the father in the parable at once receive his returning son? How many minutes did he wait before he kissed him? How many times did the prodigal wash his face before his father pressed him to his bosom? He did not even tell him to wash his hands, though he had been feeding swine, but fell upon his neck and kissed him there and then

Our Lord Jesus not only has pity upon sinners, but treats them with love, comes under their roof, and brings salvation to their homes. We confess the impeachment, and rejoice that our Lord is indifferent to the censures of the proud, and continues still to provoke the question, “Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?”

Our Lord goes further. He not only stands on no ceremony with sinners, but *within a very little time He is using those very sinners* who had been so unfit for any holy service—using them in His most hallowed work.

Note how He makes Zacchaeus to be His host, “Today I must abide in thy house.” Was not this going too far? Might we not have prudently suggested, Good Master, forgive Zacchaeus, but do it privately! Good Master, accept Zacchaeus as a secret disciple, but do not publicly go into such society.

To sit at his table, and let him wait upon You, is too great an honor for the like of him, and surely, brethren, it seemed to the first Christians to be almost impossible that Saul of Tarsus could be allowed to be a preacher. They heard that he now preached the faith which he had persecuted, but they could hardly believe in his apostleship. What, when his hands were just now blood-red with putting saints to death, is he to stand up and preach, and to be an apostle—how can it be!

We all have a measure of this legal hardness, and are scarcely prepared to allow the guilty to become heralds of grace too soon after their conversion. The Gospel knows nothing of a purgatory at the church doors, or a quarantine before its pulpit. Only be it, indeed, seen that a man has really accepted Christ and we may both receive him into fellowship and employ him in holy service. Jesus permits the man who was a sinner to become His host, even as He allowed the woman who was a sinner to anoint His head, and Peter, who had denied Him, to feed His sheep.

Ay, and the Lord favored Zacchaeus, the sinner, by *granting him that day the full assurance of salvation*. The very day that He called him by His grace He gave him full assurance—at any rate I should not want any better assurance than Zacchaeus received when the Lord Himself said to him, “This day is salvation come to thy house.”

*“Oh, might I hear Thine heavenly tongue
But whisper, ‘Thou art Mine!’
Those gentle words should raise my song
To notes almost divine.”*

How often have we sung this wish, but Zacchaeus had it granted him, for the Lord said plainly, “Salvation has come to thy house,” and Zacchaeus could not doubt it! How happy he must have felt, how free from all trouble—“I am a saved man, and salvation having once entered the house there is no telling where it will go—it will be upstairs, downstairs, among the servants, among the children. It will embrace all my descendants, and I and my house shall be saved.”

He obtained that choice blessing within the first day of his believing on Christ. And is it not wonderful, poor sinner, that though you even now have not believed in Jesus as yet, and are sitting down in sorrow, burdened with sin, yet if you now believe, before this service shall be over, you may not only be saved but know it, and shall go home and say to your wife and children, “Salvation has come to our house!”

Blessed be the name of Jesus, all this is true, and we have no wish to conceal it, He has gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

II. Secondly, we are going to DENY THE INSINUATION WHICH IS COVERTLY INTENDED BY THE CHARGE brought against our Lord.

Jesus is the friend of sinners, but He is not the friend of sin. Jesus does forgive sin altogether apart from human merit, but Jesus does not therefore treat virtue and vice as if they were indifferent things, or in any way discourage purity and righteousness. Far from it.

For, first, Christ was a guest with a man that was a sinner, but *He never flattered a sinner yet*. Direct me to a single passage in His Word in which He ever justifies a sinner in sinning, or ever treats sin as if it were a trifle, or looks at it as a mere misfortune and not as a crime. No religion under heaven is so strong in its denunciation of sin as the religion of Jesus Christ. His words do not only condemn acts of sin, but even words and thoughts, in such words as these—“For every idle word that man shall speak he shall give an account in the day of judgment.” “God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.”

The Savior's lips were too truthful, and too pure to pander to the vices of men, He denounced sin in every form and shape, and threatened it with everlasting fire. You do not find Jesus Christ anywhere asserting that the result of sin is a merely temporal evil, that the souls of sinners will be annihilated, or that they will by and by in another state obtain forgiveness and be delivered, but “these shall go away into everlasting punishment” rolls like thunder from His honest lips.

He sweeps away from men all their empty confidences wherein they entrenched themselves, and makes them see that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He who lives in sin is declared to be the servant of sin, and he who brings forth evil fruit is judged to be an evil tree.

Christ's fan is in His hand, and He sweeps away the chaff. He sits as a refiner and consumes the dross. He lays the axe at the root of tree, and demands that the heart and spirit be right before God. If He sets forth obedience to the law, our Lord declares that it must be obedience in every point, or a man cannot be saved by it. If He accepts a follower He bids him count the cost and forsake all that he has, or he cannot be His disciple. His moral standard is—“Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

If you want the law of God lowered you must not go to Christ, and if you wish to see the penalties of sin mitigated you must not go to Christ. For He is of all teachers the most severe against sin of every sort, and the most clear in foretelling its penalty. The friend of sinners is too much their friend to befriend their sin—that He utterly abhors, and He will never rest till He has driven it out of them.

Neither does the Lord Jesus Christ screen sinners from that proper and wholesome rebuke which virtue must always give to vice.

The Pharisees, no doubt, meant to say, “This man Jesus does mischief. We keep ourselves aloof from all low company, and in this way we do a good deal for these publicans, because we let them see the difference between holy and unholy men. When they look at our phylacteries between our eyes, and observe the broad borders of our garments, and see how we wash our hands, and know how we pay tithes on mint and cumin, it must greatly edify them. No doubt they will go home and feel greatly ashamed that they cannot associate with such blessed and holy people as we are.

Now, that man Christ goes in among them and eats and drinks with them, and thus in some measure our protest is broken down. They will think a great deal of themselves now that the proper distance is no longer kept up, for they will say, if this man, who is, no doubt, a good man, associates with us, then after all we are not so bad as we were thought to be.”

That is how the Pharisees argued, and there are some around us who still think that the best thing you can possibly do with the degraded is to isolate them. Turn your back on them. The sight of a good man's back will be a fine moral lesson to them. Give them to feel that you are disgusted with them, and they will be brought to repent. But it does not turn out to be so.

This process has generally been carried out by proud formalists and loathsome hypocrites, and has ended in making bad worse. Jesus never sanctions this mode of reformation. Look at Him and admire. Did He say a word to Zacchaeus about his having taken taxes by false accusation, or about his being cruel to the poor? No, not a syllable. Christ's presence was enough rebuke for the man's sin.

No sooner does a man perceive the love of Christ, and the perfection of His blessed person, than straightway sin receives its death warrant and is ashamed to show itself anymore. Jesus is the best rebuke to sin. The Gospel of Jesus Christ does not say to you who live in sin, “You are fit company for Christians.” Nor does it turn to godly people and say, “Make these your daily associates and join in their

mirth." Quite the reverse, but it does nevertheless say to Christians, "Go and seek out the lost and bring them to a better mind."

We go not among the sin-smitten to catch their disease, but to cure it. Going in such a spirit a good man's presence is a far better rebuke to sin than a cold self-righteous isolation. The Gospel does not aim so much at rebuking sinners as at reclaiming them. Its business is not to make men feel remorse for having sinned, but to rid them from the power of sin.

Again, *it is not true*, as I have heard some say, *that the Gospel makes pardon seem such a very easy thing, and therefore sin is thought to be a small matter.* "Oh," says one, "if men have only to believe and be saved, you put a premium upon sin by making deliverance from it to be so speedy a business." These cavilers know better, some of them, and if they do not know better let us teach them.

When the Lord Jesus Christ forgave me, He taught me at the same moment to dread sin. I never had such a sense of the terrible evil of sin as I had in the moment of my forgiveness. For where, think you, did I read my pardon?

I read it on His cross, written in crimson lines. I understood that, though the pardon was free to me, it cost Him cries and groans to bring me near to God. It cost His soul an agony never to be described ere He could redeem one poor sinner from going down into the pit. It is a gross injustice to charge the preaching of the Gospel to sinners with making sin to appear a trifle. The accusation is a baseless slander.

They who know no atoning blood, they who know nothing of the sufferings of Christ, these are the men who can toy with sin, but those who gaze upon the wounds of Christ cannot but tremble at sin. The great doctrine of the substitutionary sacrifice, whenever it is fully received by the soul, makes sin to be exceeding sinful. Oh, sin, I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but on the cross mine eye seeth you slaying the incarnate God, wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes as I never should have done else.

Nor, though Christ be the friend of sinners, is it true that He makes men think lightly of personal character. "Oh," say some, "these Christians teach that believing a creed saves the soul, and that it does not matter at all how we live." This is an old libel. I remember reading much the same charge in a book which leveled its artillery at Wilberforce and his evangelical friends. The author said, "in a cant unmeaning jargon they talk much of vital faith, but they say little of vital benevolence." He goes on to remark that to teach men to be honest, clean, kind, and truthful, was far more important.

Now, it is time that such a slander as that came to an end, but a lie has many lives and though you kill it fifty times over, it soon restores itself to vitality.

Look at the matter of fact. Jesus Christ did not teach Zacchaeus by going to his house that character was of no consequence. On the contrary, Zacchaeus perceived at once that character was of the greatest consequence, and so he stood forth and said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." Let who will, deny the logic of it, the fact is that when a man comes to believe in Jesus he has a higher appreciation of the excellence of character than any other man in the world. And he does not merely appreciate it in theory, but begins to seek after it for himself.

Man's nature becomes renewed by the faith which some say will cause him to become indifferent to holiness. A man's whole life is changed by his believing in Jesus, and that which thus happily affects the character cannot honestly be said to lead to indifference concerning it. Even the remark I quoted now about Wilberforce was signally false, because it was through him and the party which gathered around him that benevolence gained one of her very noblest victories.

How would the slave in the West Indies have obtained his liberty if it had not been for these very men, Wilberforce and the like, who while they held that faith in Christ alone could save the soul, felt that benevolence was the essential spirit of Christianity and liberty the natural right of every man! They spent their whole strength in fighting against the mercenary feeling of the times, till the fetters of England's slaves were broken forever.

It has been said that if we tell men that good works cannot save them, but that Jesus saves the guilty who believe in Him, we take away all *motives for morality and holiness*. We meet that again by a direct denial, it is not so, we supply the grandest motive possible, and only remove a vicious and feeble motive. We take away from man the idea of performing good works in order to salvation, because it is a lie. Good works will not save a sinner, nor is he able to perform them if they could save him. Works done with a view to salvation are not good, because they are evidently selfish, and so are not acceptable to God. The selfishness of the motive poisons the life of the work, and takes its goodness out of it.

But when we tell men, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," if they exercise faith they are saved, and being saved there grows up in their hearts gratitude to God, and from this springs a loving desire to serve God on account of what He has done. And this motive is not only very powerful but it is very pure, because the man does not then serve God with a view to self, but he serves Him out of love, and works done out of love to God are the only good works possible to men. It supplies a motive which is clean, clear, pure, a motive moreover which is proven by the lives of saved men to be potent enough to keep them in the way of righteousness all their days.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ gives men something more than motive, it supplies them with power and life, for wherever men believe on the Lord Jesus the Holy Spirit is surely at work with all His wondrous power. He enters the heart and changes it, turns the whole current of the soul, and creates within the man a new, living, conquering principle, akin to the nature of God Himself, so that the man becomes and continues to be a new creature in Christ Jesus.

This indwelling Spirit is not a theory, nor a doctrine, but a person, and His work is not a dream, but a conscious fact, a phenomenon to which all believers bear witness, for we have known Him and felt His power, and bowed before the might and majesty of His influences.

As the anointing on Aaron's head went where Aaron went, so where Christ is received the Holy Spirit comes, the new creation commences and men are delivered from living as they did aforetime under the bondage of corruption. Thus we repel with indignation the charge that Christ is the abettor of sin, and yet we preach with unabated eagerness this good news for sinners, whatever sin you may have committed, and however stained you may be with habits of evil, there is immediate pardon to be had, and complete salvation to be obtained, now, on this very spot, if you will but accept it and trust Jesus for it.

We assure you of this from our own experience. We also assure you that all your good works, and prayers, and tears, and almsgivings, will go for nothing if you trust in them. But though you may be covered with ten thousand times ten thousand sins, if you believe in Jesus you shall be saved from them all.

He is a Savior and a great one, and He is able to deliver great sinners. This will not make you think lightly of sin, nor cause you to continue in sin that grace may abound, but it will give you the power which you want, it will supply you with a strength you have never been able to find, notwithstanding all your efforts. It will enable you to rejoice that you are saved, and in the strength of such an assurance you will find within your heart a love for holiness and an abhorrence of sin such as you never knew before.

You will go to the door of your heart and say to the devil, "Get thee gone!" and to the lusts of the flesh, "Get ye behind me!" and as to all the temptations which arise from old companions you will shut the door in their faces and say, "Depart hence."

III. In the third place, WE REJOICE IN THE VERY FACT WHICH HAS BEEN OBJECTED TO, that Jesus Christ comes to be guest with men who are sinners.

And first, dear brethren, we rejoice in it because it *affords hope to ourselves*. It often happens that we should never have a hope of His coming to be guest with us if He was not guest to sinners. To me such gracious facts are needed to save me from despair. Oh, it is mighty easy to build up a fine experience and a pretty sanctification, and to imagine that you are getting on wonderfully and becoming strong and pure, and very superior saints indeed.

Let the devil deal with you five minutes and he will show you something of quite another color. Let your old corrupt nature only bubble up for a quarter of an hour, and you will find such a condition of things in your soul that you will cry out in bitterness of anguish. Then will you find that fine words about experience do not fit your mouth, and all your notions of being somebody will evaporate like dew in the summer's sun.

Oh the thousands of times when I have looked for any mouse hole through which I might creep if I might but enter into a little hope. I love to preach a sinner's Gospel, for it suits myself. I delight to preach holiness, and will aim at it as long as I live, and can never be content until I am perfect, but still my soul needs and must have the sinner's Savior. Nothing else will do for me!

Whenever I get nearest to my Lord and feel most of His preciousness, and enjoy most communion with Him, I lay lower before Him than ever, and feel it to be an unspeakable privilege to creep to His feet and wash them with my tears. I have at this moment no sort of hope but in mercy, great mercy rendered to a great sinner, through the sacrifice of Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, what is there to depend upon, except the sinner's Savior? If He does not save sinners, as sinners, by an act of free, rich, sovereign mercy, altogether apart from anything that is in them and of them, where will you and I ever appear? We do not wish to make any excuses for our own sin, we would loathe it and abhor ourselves before God on account of it, but still a wash in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness suits us today as well as it did seven and twenty years ago, when for the first time we looked to Jesus and lived.

Do you not find it so, my beloved brethren? After half a century of knowing Christ, do you not find that you need a sinner's Savior as much as ever. You will need Him when you come to die even as you need Him now, and while you are languishing into everlasting life He will be your strength and your song, and you will be glad to think that "this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."

Again, we rejoice that it is true for another reason, because this *affords us hope for all our fellow men*. Suppose that our Lord did not visit any but the good, and moral, and excellent, then, alas, for poor London's back streets and crowded courts! Alas for the casual ward! Alas for the penitentiary and alas for the jail! Alas for the fallen woman and alas for the thief! But now there is hope for even these, and every philanthropist ought to feel deep down in his soul the profoundest gratitude to the Lord for this fact.

This is earth's brightest star, her well of hope, her dawn of joy. Since Jesus Christ receives the guilty and saves the vile, despondency and despair have henceforth no right to haunt the abodes of men. Hope smiles on all, and invites the most fallen to look up and live. Yes, and let me tell you Pharisees, if there be any representatives of that section here today, though you do not like the idea of grace to the guilty, but cling to the idea of your being rewarded for your supposed merit, that it is a great mercy for you that Jesus receives great offenders, because *you* must be numbered among them.

What is your heart but a raging sea of pride and enmity against God, and even against your fellow men? You despise God's ordained plan of grace, and you look with contempt upon the guilty whom He deigns to save. Is it not the spirit of the devil which makes you think yourself so much above your fellow men? Is it not an intolerable inhumanity which makes you wish that the Gospel were molded to suit you and to shut out poor sinners?

Who are you to carry your head so high? If you have never sinned as open transgressors have done, yet it is very probable that you would have done worse if you had been placed in the positions which they have occupied. With all their faults there are greater faults in you, and if somebody were to set to work to read the secrets of your soul aloud you would be much ashamed.

Ah, there are many who are pluming themselves upon their virtues who, in the sight of God, are as rotten at the core as even the unchaste and the profane. There are more thieves, I doubt not, outside our jails than there are inside. And there are more double-dyed sinners than we ever dreamed of who appear respectable, and yet are abominable. Yes, even among nominal Christians there are plenty of scarlet

sinners, they are always at the place of worship, very regular in all acts of outward devotion, and yet they indulge in secret uncleanness and are as bad as any in the felons' prison.

If my Master were to repeat today a certain scene in which He figured so wonderfully, some of those now present would be placed in an awkward position. A woman taken in adultery was brought before Him. He did not for a moment justify her crime, but He said with great power and point, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." I say to you who pretend that you are righteous, that if your consciences speak you must own that you have no righteousness, but are so sinful that you have not a stone to fling, even against the grossest sinner.

Convicted by your own conscience you may go out, but it were better still, if you were to stay here and say, "Yes, in my heart I am guilty too, and I bless Christ that He is a sinner's Savior, and that I may look to Him this day and live."

We rejoice that this is the fact, because when we are working for the Lord *it cheers us up with the hope of fine recruits*. Many become very cold, stale, and mechanical in their work for Jesus within a short time after they are converted. The enthusiasm dies out, the warmth chills, new converts rebuke this declension.

I remember a sailor who, before conversion used to swear, and I warrant you he would rattle it out, volley after volley. He became converted and when he prayed it was much in the same fashion. How he woke everybody up the first time he opened his mouth at the prayer meeting. The little church had quite a revival, for their old jog-trot pace would not do for the new comer, so full of love and zeal.

The prayers offered in the meetings had become quite stereotyped, and so had everything else about them. There were the same sleepy people, the same long prayers, and the same dreary addresses. But Jack's conversion was like an earthquake, and startled everybody, and their zeal revived. They even began to think that perhaps sailors might be saved, and started a service on the quay, and did many other good things.

The conversion of a great sinner is the best medicine for a sick church. In all the churches, you good people who are settled on your lees need stirring up every now and then, and one of the best stirrings up you can have is to open the door of the church and see a Saul of Tarsus standing there to be admitted.

The porter inquires, "Who is this that seeks admission here?" "A recruit," says he, and we look at him. Why, he is one of the devil's most famous soldiers, one of the men who carried the black flag in the battle, one who ridiculed us most! We are apt to look a little askance at him, for we feel dubious, and we refer him to the elders, that they may inquire and sift him, to see whether he is really a changed character.

Perhaps these earnest men are not quite sure and hesitate till they see more of him, and they are quite right to do so. But if the Lord has really called the sinner by His grace, no sooner does the church receive such a man than they find that he has brought with him fresh fire and throws a fresh impetus into the whole work. Our Lord Jesus, then, when He goes to be guest to a man that is a sinner, brings additional strength to the church, and finds her recruits of the very sort she most needs. We will therefore rejoice and bless the sinner's Savior.

I wonder, this morning, where Zacchaeus is, whether he is up in the gallery there! Has there come in here a man who is a sinner and knows it, who if I were to pass a label up to him inscribed with the word "SINNER," would hang it round his neck and say, "I am the man"? Where are you, Zacchaeus? for Jesus calls you. He means to save you at once. He says to you, "I must abide in your house today." Make haste down and open the door, and say, "Come in, my Lord, I am honored to receive Thee." Will any hesitate? Will any delay? May my Master cause today many a great sinner's heart to open and receive Jesus joyfully.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
LUKE 18:31-43 AND 19:1-10**

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—257, 543, 544

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.