

SUBSTITUTION NOS. 141-142

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 19, 1857
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AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS

*“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin;
that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”
2 Corinthians 5:21*

A BOOK is the expression of the thoughts of the writer. The book of nature is an expression of the thoughts of God. We have God’s terrible thoughts in the thunder and lightning. God’s loving thoughts in the sunshine and the balmy breeze. God’s bounteous, prudent, careful thoughts in the waving harvest and in the ripening meadow. We have God’s brilliant thoughts in the wondrous scenes which are beheld from mountaintop and valley. And we have God’s most sweet and pleasant thoughts of beauty in the little flowers that bloom at our feet.

But you will remark that God has in nature given most prominence to those thoughts that needed to have the pre-eminence. He has not given us broad acres overspread with *flowers*, for they were not needed in such abundance. But He has spread the fields with corn, that thus the absolute necessities of life might be supplied. We needed most of the thoughts of His providence. And He has quickened our industry, so that God’s providential care may be read as we ride along the roads on every side.

Now God’s book of grace is just like His book of nature. It is His thoughts written out. This great book, the Bible, this most precious volume, is the heart of God made legible. It is the gold of God’s love beaten out into gold leaf, so that therewith our thoughts might be plated and we might also have golden, good, and holy thoughts concerning Him.

And you will mark that, as in nature, so in grace—the most necessary is the most prominent. I see in God’s Word a rich abundance of flowers of glorious eloquence. Often I find a prophet marshalling his words like armies for might and like kings for majesty. But far more frequently I read simple declarations of the truth.

I see here and there a brilliant thought of beauty, but I find whole fields of plain didactic doctrine, which is food for the soul. And I find whole chapters full of Christ which is divine manna whereon the soul does feed. I see starry words to make the Scriptures brilliant, sweet thoughts to make them fair, great thoughts to make them impressive, terrible thoughts to make them awful. But necessary thoughts, instructive thoughts, saving thoughts, are far more frequent, because far more necessary. Here and there a bed of flowers, but broad acres of living corn of the Gospel of the grace of God.

You must excuse me, then, if I very frequently dwell on the whole topic of salvation. But last Sabbath, I brought you one shock of this wheat, in the fashion of Christ’s promise, which says, “He that calleth on the name of the Lord, shall be saved.” And then I sought to show how men might be saved. I bring you now another shock cut down in the same field, teaching you the great philosophy of salvation, the hidden mystery, the great secret, the wonderful discovery which is brought to light by the Gospel—how God is just and yet the justifier of the ungodly.

Let us read the text again and then at once proceed to discuss it. I intend to do today, as I did last Sunday. I shall just be as simple as ever I can. And I shall not attempt one single flight of eloquence or oratory, even if I am capable of it. But just go along the ground, so that every simple soul may be able to understand, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Note the doctrine. The use of it. The enjoyment of it.

I. First, THE DOCTRINE.

There are three persons mentioned here. “*He* (that is God) has made *him* (that is Christ) who knew no sin, to be sin for *us* (sinners); that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Before we can understand the plan of salvation, it is necessary for us to know something about the three persons, and certainly, unless we understand them in some measure, salvation is impossible to us.

1. Here is first, GOD. Let every man know what God is. God is a very different Being from what some of you suppose. The God of heaven and of earth—the JEHOVAH of Abraham, of Isaac, and Jacob, Creator and Preserver, the God of Holy Scripture, and the God of all grace, is not the God that some men make unto themselves and worship. There are men in this so called Christian land, who worship a god who is no more God than Venus or Bacchus! A god made after their own hearts. A god not fashioned out of stone or wood but fashioned from their own thoughts—out of baser stuff than ever heathen attempted to make a god of.

The God of Scripture has three great attributes and they are all three implied in the text. The God of Scripture is a *sovereign* God. That is, He is a God who has absolute authority and absolute power to do exactly as He pleases. Over the head of God there is no law, upon His arm there is no necessity. He knows no rule but His own free and mighty will.

And though He cannot be unjust and cannot do anything but good, yet is His nature absolutely free. For goodness is the freedom of God’s nature. God is not to be controlled by the will of man, nor the desires of man, nor by fate in which the superstitious believe. He is a God, doing as He wills in the armies of heaven and in this lower world.

He is a God, too, who gives no account of His matters. He makes His creatures just what He chooses to make them and does with them just as He wills. And if any of them resent His acts, He says unto them, “Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?”

God is good. But God is sovereign, absolute, knowing, nothing that can control Him. The monarchy of this world is no constitutional and limited monarchy—it is not tyrannical, but it is absolutely in the hands of an all-wise God. But mark, it is in no hands but His—no cherubim, not seraphim can assist God in the dispensation of His government.

*“He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be.”*

He is the God of predestination. The God upon whose absolute will the hinge of fate does turn.

*“Chain’d to His throne, a volume lies,
With all the fates of men,
With every angel’s form and size,
Drawn by th’ eternal pen.
His providence unfolds the book,
And makes His councils shine,
Each opening leaf, and every stroke,
Fulfils some deep design.”*

This is the God of the Bible, this is the God whom we adore—no weak, pusillanimous God, who is controlled by the will of men, who cannot steer the boat of providence. But a God unalterable, infinite, unerring. This is the God we worship. A God as infinitely above His creatures as the highest thought can fly. And higher still than that.

But again, the God who is here mentioned is a *God of infinite justice*. That He is a sovereign God, I prove from the words, that He *hath made* Christ to be sin. He could not have done it if He had not been

sovereign. That He is a just God, I infer from my text—seeing that the way of salvation is a great plan of satisfying justice.

And we now declare that the God of Holy Scripture is a God of inflexible justice. He is not the God whom some of you adore. You adore a god who winks at great sins. You believe in a god who calls your crimes peccadilloes and little faults. Some of you worship a god who does not punish sin. But who is so weakly merciful, and so mercilessly weak, that he passes by transgression and iniquity, and never enacts a punishment.

You believe in a god, who, if man sins, does not demand punishment for his offense. You think that a few good works of your own will pacify Him, that He is so weak a ruler, that a few good words uttered before Him in prayer will win sufficient merit to reverse the sentence, if, indeed, you think He ever passes a sentence at all.

Your god is no God. He is as much a false god as the god of the Greeks or of ancient Nineveh. The God of Scripture is one who is inflexibly severe in justice and will by no means clear the guilty. “The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power; and will not at all acquit the wicked.” The God of Scripture is a ruler, who, when His subjects rebel, marks their crime, and never forgives them until He has punished it, either upon them, or upon their substitute.

He is not like the god of some sectaries, who believe in a god without an atonement, with only some little show upon a cross, which was not, as they say, a real suffering of sin. Their god, the god of the Socinian, just blots out sin without exacting any punishment. He is not the God of the Scriptures. The God of the Bible is as severe as if He were unmerciful and as just as if He were not gracious. And yet He is as gracious and as merciful as if He were not just—yea, more so.

And one more thought here concerning God, or else we cannot establish our discourse upon a sure basis. The God who is here meant, is a *God of grace*—think not that I am now contradicting myself. The God who is inflexibly severe, and never pardons sin without punishment, is yet a God of illimitable love. Although as a Ruler He will chastise, yet as the Father-God, He loves to bestow His blessing. “As I live, saith the LORD, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; but had rather that he should turn unto me and live.”

God is love in its highest degree. He is love rendered more than love. Love is not God, but God is love. He is full of grace, He is the plenitude of mercy—He delights in mercy. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His thoughts of love above our thoughts of despair—and His ways of grace above our ways of fear.

This God, in whom these three great attributes harmonize—illimitable sovereignty, inflexible justice, and unfathomable grace—these three make up the main attributes of the one God of heaven and earth whom Christians worship. It is this God before whom we must appear. It is He who has made Christ to be sin for us, though He knew no sin.

2. Thus, we have brought the first person before you. The second person of our text is *the Son of God*—Christ, who knew no sin. He is the Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds—begotten, not made. Being of the same substance with the Father, co-equal, co-eternal, and co-existent. Is the Father Almighty? So is the Son Almighty. Is the Father infinite? So is the Son infinite. He is very God of very God—having a dignity not inferior to the Father, but being equal to Him in every respect—God over all, blessed forevermore.

Jesus Christ also is the son of Mary, a man like unto ourselves. A man subject to all the infirmities of human nature, except the infirmities of sin. A man of suffering and of woe, of pain and trouble, of anxiety and fear. A man of trouble and of doubt, of temptation and of trial, of weakness and death. He is a man just as we are, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

Now, the person we wish to introduce to you is this complex being, God and man. Not God humanized, not man Deified, but God, purely, essentially God—man, purely man. Man, not more than man. God, not less than God—the two standing in a sacred union together, the God-Man.

Of this God in Christ, our text says that He knew no sin. It does not say that He did not sin. That we know—but it says more than that. He did not *know* sin. He knew not what sin was. He saw it in others, but He did not know it by experience. He was a perfect stranger to it. It is not barely said that He did not take sin into His heart, but He did not know it. It was no acquaintance of His.

He was the acquaintance of grief. But He was not the acquaintance of sin. He knew no sin of any kind—no sin of thought, no sin of birth, no original, no actual transgression. No sin of lip, or of hand did ever Christ commit. He was pure, perfect, spotless. Like His own divinity, without spot or blemish, or any such thing.

This gracious person is He who is spoken of in the text. He was a person utterly incapable of committing anything that was wrong. It has been asserted lately, by some ill-judged one, that Christ was capable of sin. I think it was Irving who started some such idea, that if Christ was not capable of sinning, He could not have been capable of virtue, “For,” say they, “if a man must necessarily be good, there is no virtue in his goodness.” Out upon their ridiculous nonsense. Is not God necessarily good? And who dares deny that God is virtuous?

Are not the glorified spirits in heaven necessarily pure? and yet are they not holy because of that very necessity? Are not the angels, now that they are confirmed, necessarily faultless? And shall anyone dare to deny angelic virtue! The thing is not true. It needs no freedom in order to create virtue. Freedom and virtue generally go together. But necessity and virtue are as much brother and sister as freedom and virtue.

Jesus Christ was not capable of sin. It was as utterly impossible for Christ to have sinned, as for fire to drown or for water to burn. I suppose both of these things might be possible under some peculiar circumstances, but it never could have been possible for Christ to have committed or to have endured the shadow of the commission of a sin. He did not know it. He knew no sin.

3. Now I have to introduce the third person. We will not go far for him. The third person is *the sinner*. And where is he? Will you turn your eyes within you and look for him, each one of you? He is not very far from you.

He has been a drunkard—he has committed drunkenness and reveling and such like, and we know that the man or woman who commits these things has no inheritance in the kingdom of God. There is another, he has taken God’s name in vain. He has sometimes, in his hot passion, asked God to do most fearful things against his limbs and against his soul.

Ah! there is the sinner. Where is he? I hear that man, with tearful eye and with sobbing voice exclaim, “Sir, he is here!” Methinks I see some woman here, in the midst of us, some of us have accused her perhaps, and she stands alone trembling and says not a word for herself. Oh! that the Master might say, “Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.”

I believe, I must believe, that somewhere amongst these many thousands, I hear some palpitating heart, and that heart, as it beats so hurriedly, cries, “Sin, sin, sin, wrath, wrath, wrath—how can I get deliverance?” Ah, you are the man, a born rebel. Born into the world a sinner, you have added to your native guilt your own transgressions.

You have broken the commandments of God, you have despised God’s love, you have trampled on His grace, you have gone on until now the arrow of the Lord is drinking up your spirit. God has made you tremble. He has made you to confess your guilt and your transgression. Hear me, then, if your convictions are the work of God’s Spirit—you are the person intended in the text, when it says, “He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we”—that is you—“might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

I have introduced *the persons* and now I must introduce you to *a scene* of a great exchange which is made according to the text. The third person whom we introduce is *the prisoner at the bar*. As a sinner, God has called him before Him—he is about to be tried for life or death. God is gracious and He desires to save him. God is just and He must punish him. The sinner is to be tried.

If there be a verdict of guilty brought in against him, how will the two conflicting attributes work in God's mind? He is loving, He wants to save him. He is just, He must destroy him! How shall this mystery be solved and the riddle be solved? Prisoner at the bar, can you plead, "Not guilty?" He stands speechless. Or if he speaks, he cries, "I am guilty!"

***"Should Thou smite my soul to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well."***

Then, you see, if he has pleaded guilty himself, there is no hope of there being any flaw in the evidence. And even if he had pleaded "Not guilty," yet the evidence is most clear, for God, the Judge, has seen his sin and recorded all his iniquities—so that there would be no hope of his escaping. The prisoner is sure to be found guilty.

How can he escape? Is there a flaw in the indictment? No! It is drawn up by infinite wisdom and dictated by eternal justice. And there is no hope there. Can he turn king's evidence? Ah! if we could be saved by turning king's evidence, we should all of us be saved. There is an anomaly in our law which often allows the greater criminal to escape, whilst the lesser criminal is punished.

If the one is dastard and coward enough by betraying his comrade, he may save himself. If you turn to the *Newgate Calendar*—if any of you have patience enough to read so vile a piece of literature—you will see that the greater of two murderers has escaped, whilst the other has been hanged, because he turned king's evidence

You have told on your fellows. You have said, "Lord, I thank You I am not as other men. I am not as that adulterer, or even as that publican. I bless You, I am not like my neighbor who is an extortioner, a thief, and so on." You are telling against your neighbor. You are joint sinners and you are telling a tale against him. There is no hope for you. God's law knows of no such injustice as a man escaping by turning informer upon others.

How then shall the prisoner at the bar escape? Is there any possibility? Oh, how did heaven wonder! How did the stars stand still with astonishment! and how did the angels stay their songs a moment, when for the first time, God showed how He might be just and yet be gracious!

Oh, I think I see heaven astonished and silence in the courts of God for the space of an hour. when the Almighty said, "Sinner, I must and will punish you on account of sin! But I love you. The heart of My love yearns over you. How can I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My justice says, 'Smite,' but My love stays my hand and says, 'Spare, spare the sinner!'

"Oh, sinner, My heart has devised it—My Son, the pure and perfect, shall stand in your stead and be accounted guilty, and you, the guilty, shall stand in My Son's stead and be accounted righteous." It would make us leap upon our feet in astonishment if we did but understand this thoroughly—the wonderful mystery of the transposition of Christ and the sinner.

Let me put it so plainly that everyone can understand—Christ was spotless—sinners were vile. Says Christ, "My Father, treat Me as if I were a sinner. Treat the sinner as if He were I. Smite as sternly as You please, for I will bear it, and thus the heart of Your love may overflow with grace and yet Your justice be unsullied, for the sinner is no sinner now." He stands in Christ's stead, and with the Savior's garments on, he is accepted.

Do you say that such an exchange as this is unjust? Will you say that God should not have made His Son a substitute for us and have let us go? Let me remind you it was purely voluntary on the part of Christ. Christ was willing to stand in our stead. He had to drink the cup of our punishment, but He was quite willing to do it.

And let me tell you yet one more unanswerable thing—the substitution of Christ was not an unlawful thing, because the sovereign God made Him a substitute. We have read in history of a certain wife whose attachment to her husband was so great that the wife has gone into the prison and exchanged

clothes with him. And while the prisoner was escaping, the wife has remained in the prison-house. And so the prisoner has escaped by a kind of surreptitious substitution.

In such a case there was a clear breach of law, and the prisoner escaping might have been pursued and again imprisoned. But in this case the substitution was made by the highest authority. The text says, God “hath made him to be sin for us.” And inasmuch as Christ did stand in my room, place, and stead, He did make the exchange lawfully. It was with the full determinate counsel of Almighty God, as well as with His own consent, that Christ stood in the sinner’s place, as the sinner does now in Christ’s place.

Old Martin Luther was a man for speaking a thing pretty plainly and sometimes he spoke the truth so plainly that he made it look very much like a lie. In one of his sermons he said, “Christ was the greatest sinner that ever lived.” Now, Christ was never a sinner, but yet Martin was right. He meant to say, all the sins of Christ’s people were taken off them and put on Christ’s head, and so Christ stood in God’s sight as if He had been the greatest sinner that ever lived.

He was never a sinner. He never knew sin—but good Martin, in his zeal to make men understand what it was, said, “Sinner, you became Christ. Christ, You became a sinner!” It is not quite the truth. The sinner is treated as if he were Christ and Christ is treated as if He were the sinner. That is what is meant by the text, God “hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Let me just give you two illustrations of this. The first shall be taken from the Old Testament. When of old, men did come before God with sin, God provided a sacrifice which should be the representative of Christ, inasmuch as the sacrifice died instead of the sinner. The law ran, “He that sins shall die.”

When men had committed sin, they brought a bullock or a sheep before the altar. They put their hand on the bullock’s head and acknowledged their guilt. And by that deed their guilt was typically removed from themselves to the bullock. Then, the poor bullock, which had done no wrong, was slaughtered and cast out as a sin offering, which God has rejected.

That is what every sinner must do with Christ, if he is to be saved. A sinner, by faith, comes and puts his hand on Christ’s head. and confessing all his sin—it is not his any longer, it is put on Christ. Christ hangs upon the tree. He bears the cross and endures the shame. And so the sin is all gone and cast into the depths of the sea.

Take another illustration. We read in the New Testament, that “the church (that is, the people of God) is Christ’s bride.” We all know that, according to the law, the wife may have many debts. But no sooner is she married than her debts cease to be hers and become her husband’s at once. So if a woman is overwhelmed with debt, so that she is in daily fear of the prison, let her but once stand up and give her hand to a man and become his wife, and there is none in the world can touch her.

The husband is liable for all and she says to her creditor, “Sir, I owe you nothing. My husband did not owe you anything. I incurred the debt. But inasmuch as I have become his wife, my debts are taken off from me and become his.”

It is even so with the sinner and Christ. Christ marries the sinner and puts forth His hand and takes the church to be His. She is in debt to God’s justice immeasurably. She owes to God’s vengeance an intolerable weight of wrath and punishment. Christ says, “You are My wife—I have chosen you and I will pay your debts.” And He has paid them and got His full discharge. Now, whosoever believes in Christ Jesus has peace with God because, “He hath made Christ to be sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

And now, I shall have finished the explanation of the text, when I just bid you *remember the consequences of this great substitution*. Christ was made sin. We are made the righteousness of God. It was in the past, long further back than the memory of angels can reach—it was in the dark past, before cherubim or seraphim had flapped the un navigated ether—when as yet worlds were not and creation had not a name—God foresaw the sin of man and planned his redemption.

An everlasting covenant was formed between the Father and the Son, wherein the Son did stipulate to suffer for His elect. And the Father on His part, did covenant to justify them through the Son. Oh,

wondrous covenant, you are the source of all the streams of atoning love. Eternity rolled on, time came, and with it soon came the fall, and then when many years had run their round—the fullness of time arrived and Jesus prepared to fulfill His solemn engagement.

He came into the world and was made man. From that moment, when He became man—mark the change that was wrought in Him. Before, He had been entirely happy. He had never been miserable, never sad. But now as the effects of that terrible covenant which He had made with God, His Father, begins to pour wrath upon Him.

What, you say does God actually account His Son to be a sinner? Yes, He does. His Son agreed to be the substitute, to stand in the sinner's stead. God begins with Him at His birth. He puts Him in a manger. If He had considered Him as a perfect man, He would have provided Him a throne—but considering Him as a sinner, He subjects Him to woe and poverty from beginning to end.

And now see Him grown to manhood. See Him—griefs pursue Him, sorrows follow Him. Stop, griefs, why follow you the perfect? why pursue you the immaculate? Justice, why do you not drive these griefs away?—"The pure should be peaceful and the immaculate should be happy." The answer comes, "This man is pure in Himself, but he hath made himself impure by taking His people's sin."

Guilt is imputed to Him and the very imputation of guilt brings grief with all its reality. At last, I see death coming with more than his usual horrors. I see the grim skeleton with his dart well-sharpened. I see behind him, hell. I mark the grim prince of darkness and all the avengers rising up from their place of torment. I see them all besetting the Savior.

I notice their terrible war upon Him in the garden. I note Him as He lies there wallowing in His blood in fearful soul-death. I see Him as in grief and sorrow, He walks to Pilate's bar. I see Him mocked and spit upon. I behold Him tormented, maltreated and blasphemed. I see Him nailed to the cross. I behold the mocking continued and the shame unabated. I mark Him shrieking for water and I hear Him complaining of the forsakings of God!

I am astonished. Can this be just that a perfect being should suffer thus?—Oh, God, where are You, that You can thus permit the oppression of the innocent? Have You ceased to be King of Justice, else why do You not shield the perfect One? The answer comes, "Be still. He is perfect in Himself, but He is the sinner now—He stands in the sinner's stead.

The sinner's guilt is on Him, and therefore, it is right, it is just, it is what He has Himself agreed to, that He should be punished as if He were a sinner, that He should be frowned upon, that He should die, and that He should descend to *Hades* unblessed, uncomforted, not helped, not honored and unowned." This was one of the effects of the great change which Christ made.

And now, take the other side of the question and I have done with the explanation. What was the effect on *us*? Do you see that sinner there dabbling his hand in lust, defiling his garments with every sin the flesh had ever indulged in? Do you hear him cursing God? Do you mark him breaking every ordinance that God has rendered sacred? But do you see him in a little while pursuing his way to heaven? He has renounced these sins. He has been converted and has forsaken them. He is going on the way to heaven.

Justice, are you asleep? That man has broken your law. Is he to go to heaven? Hark, how the fiends come rising from the pit and cry, "That man deserves to be lost. He may not be now what he used to be, but his past sins must have vengeance." And yet there he goes safely on his way to heaven and I see him looking back on all the fiends that accuse him. He cries out, "Behold, who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

And when one would think all hell would be up in arms and accuse, the grim tyrant lies still and the fiends have nothing to say. And I see him turning his face heavenward to the throne of God and hear him cry, "Who is he that condemns?" As with unblushing countenance he challenges the Judge.

Oh! justice, where are you? This man has been a sinner, a rebel—why not smite him to the dust for his impertinent presumption in thus challenging the justice of God? Nay, says Justice, he has been a

sinner, but I do not look upon him in that light now. I have punished Christ instead of him—that sinner is no sinner now—he is perfect.

How? Perfect! Perfect, because Christ was perfect and I look upon him as if he were Christ. Though in himself all black as the gates of Kedar, I consider him to be fair as the curtains of Solomon. I made Christ the sinner and I punish Christ. I make the sinner Christ, and I magnify and exalt him. And I will put a crown of pure gold upon his head, and by and by I will give him a place among them that are sanctified, where he shall, harp in hand, forever praise the name of the Lord.

This is the grand result to sinners of the great exchange. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

II. Now, I have to come towards the close, to my second point, upon which I shall be brief but laborious. WHAT IS THE USE OF THIS DOCTRINE?

Turn to the Scriptures and you will see. “Now, then, we are ambassadors for God, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead to be reconciled to God, for”—here is our grand argument—“he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin.” Men and brethren, I am about to pray to you. I am about to beseech and exhort you—may the Spirit of God help me to do it with all the earnestness which becomes me.

You and I shall face each other soon before the bar of the great Judge and I shall be responsible in the day of account for all I preach to you. Not for my style or talent, or want of talent—I shall only be responsible for my earnestness and zeal in this matter. And now, before God I entreat you most earnestly to be reconciled to Him.

You are by nature at enmity with God. You hate Him, you neglect Him, your enmity shows itself in various ways. I beseech you now to be reconciled to God. I might entreat you to be reconciled, because it would be a fearful thing to die with God for your enemy. Who among us can dwell with devouring fire? Who can abide with the eternal burnings? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for our God is a consuming fire. Beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver. I beseech you, therefore, be reconciled to God.

I might, on the other hand, use another argument and remind you that those who are reconciled to God are thereby proved to be the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. There are crowns for God’s friends. There are harps for them who love Him. There is prepared a mansion for every one that seeks unto Him. Therefore, if you would be blessed throughout eternity, be reconciled to God.

But I shall not urge that. I shall urge the reason of my text. I beseech you, my hearer, be reconciled to God, because if you repent, it is proof that Christ has stood in your stead. Oh, if this argument do not melt you, there is none in heaven or earth that can. If your heart melts not at such an argument as this, then it is harder than the nether millstone—sure you have a soul of stone and a heart of brass, if you will not be reconciled to God who has written this for your encouragement.

I beseech you be reconciled to God, because in this there is proof that God is loving you. You think God to be a God of wrath. Would He have given His own Son to be punished if He had hated you? Sinner, if God had anything but thoughts of love towards you, I ask, would He have given up His Son to hang upon the cross?

Think not my God a tyrant. Think Him not a wrathful God, destitute of mercy. His Son, torn from His bosom and given up to die, is the best proof of His love. Oh, sinner, I need not blame you if you did hate your enemy, but I must blame you, call you mad, if you do hate your friend. Oh, I need not wonder if you would not be reconciled to one who would not be reconciled to you. But inasmuch as you will not by nature be reconciled to the God who gave His own Son to die, I must marvel at the stupidity into which your evil nature has hurried you.

God is love—will you not be reconciled to love? God is grace—will you not be reconciled to grace? Oh, rebel that you are of deepest dye if still you are unreconciled. Remember, too, oh soul, that the way is open for your reconciliation. You need not be punished. Yea, you shall not be. If you know yourself to

be a sinner, by the Spirit's teaching, God will not punish you to maintain His justice—that justice is sufficiently maintained by the punishment of Christ.

He says, "Be reconciled." The child runs away from his father when he has sinned, because he fears his father will punish him. But when his father burns the rod and with a smiling face says, "Child, come hither," sure it must be an unloving child that would not run into such a father's arms. Sinner, you deserve the sword—God has snapped the sword across the knee of Christ's atonement and now He says, "Come to Me." You deserve infinite, eternal wrath, and the displeasure of God—God has quenched that wrath for all believers and now He says, "Come to Me and be reconciled."

Do you tell me that you are not sinners? I was not preaching to you. Do you tell me that you have never rebelled against God? I warn you that though *you* cannot find out your own sins, *God* will find them out. Do you say, "I need no reconciliation, except that which I can make myself?" Be warned that if you reject Christ, you reject your only hope, for all that you can do is less than nothing and vanity.

I was not preaching to you, when I said, "Be reconciled." I was preaching to you, poor afflicted conscience. I was preaching to you—you that have been a great sinner and transgressor, you that feel your guilt. To you, you adulterer, trembling now under the lash of conviction. To you, you blasphemer, quivering now from head to foot.

I preach to you, you thief, whose eye is now filled with the tear of penitence. You feel that hell must be your portion unless you are saved through Christ. I preach to you, you that know your guilt. I preach to you and to every one such, and I beseech you to be reconciled to God, for God is reconciled to you. Oh, let not your heart stand out against this.

I cannot plead as I wish. Oh! if I could I would plead with my heart, with my eyes, and my lips, that I might lead you to the Savior. You need not rail at me and call this an Arminian style of preaching. I care not for your opinion—this style is Scriptural. "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Poor broken-hearted sinner, God is as much preaching to you this morning and bidding you be reconciled as if He stood here Himself in His own person. And though I am a mean and puny man by whom He speaks, He speaks now as much as if it were by the voice of angels, "Be reconciled to God."

Come, friend, turn not your eye and head away from me. But give me your hand and lend me your heart whilst I weep over your hand and cry over your heart, and beseech you not to despise your own mercy, not to be a suicide to your own soul, not to damn yourself.

Now that God has awakened you to feel that you are an enemy, I beseech you now to be His friend. Remember, if you are now convinced of sin, there is no punishment for you. He was punished in your stead. Will you believe this? Will you trust in it and so be at peace with God? If you say, "No!" then I would have you know that you have put away your own mercy.

If you say, "I need no reconciliation," you have thrust away the only hope you can ever have. Do it at your own hazard. I wash my hands of your blood.

But, but, but, if you know yourself to need a Savior, if you would escape the hellish pit, if you would walk among them who are sanctified—I again, in the name of Him that will condemn you at the last day if you reject this invitation—implore and beseech you to be reconciled to God. I am His ambassador. When I have done this sermon, I shall go back to court.

Sinner, what shall I say of you? Shall I go back and tell my Master that you intend to be His enemy forever? Shall I go back and tell Him, "They heard me, but they regarded not"? They said in their hearts, "We will go away to our sins and our follies, and we will not serve your God, neither fear Him!" Shall I tell Him such a message as that? Must I be driven to go back to His palace with such a fearful story?

I beseech you, send me not back so, lest my Master's wrath wax hot and He say—

*"They that despised My promised rest,
Shall have no portion there."*

But oh! may I not go back to court today and tell the Monarch on my knees, “There be some, my Lord, that have been great rebels, but when they saw themselves rebels, they threw themselves at the foot of the cross and asked for pardon. They had strangely revolted, but I heard them say, ‘If He will forgive me, I will turn from my evil ways, if He will enable me!’ They were gross transgressors and they confessed it. But I heard them say, ‘Jesus, Your blood and righteousness are my only trust.’”

Happy ambassador! I will go back to my Master with a gladsome countenance and tell Him that peace is made between many a soul and the great God. But miserable ambassador who has to go back and say, “There is no peace made.”

How shall it be? The Lord decide it. May many hearts give way to omnipotent grace now and may enemies of grace be changed into friends, that God’s elect may be gathered in and His eternal purpose accomplished.

III. And now, I close up by noticing the SWEET ENJOYMENT which this doctrine brings to a believer.

Mourning Christian! dry up your tears. Are you weeping on account of sin? Why weep you? Weep because of your sin, but weep not through any fear of punishment. Has the evil one told you that you shall be condemned? Tell him to his face that he lies.

Ah! poor distressed believer, are you mourning over your own corruptions? Look to your perfect Lord and remember—you are complete in Him—you are in God’s sight as perfect as if you had never sinned. Nay, more than that—the Lord our righteousness has put a divine garment upon you, so that you have more than the righteousness of man—you have the righteousness of God.

Oh! you who are mourning by reason of in-bred sin and depravity—remember, none of your sins can condemn you. You have learned to hate sin. But you have learned to know that sin is not yours—it is put on Christ’s head. Come, be of good cheer—your standing is not in yourself—it is in Christ. Your acceptance is not in yourself, but in your Lord. With all your sin, you are as much accepted today as in your sanctification. You are as much accepted of God today, with all your iniquities, as you will be when you stand before His throne, rendered free from all corruption.

Oh! I beseech you, lay hold on this precious thought—perfection in Christ! For you are perfect in Christ Jesus. With your Savior’s garment on, you are holy as the holy ones. You are now justified by faith. You have now peace with God. Be of good cheer. Do not fear to die. Death has nothing terrible in it for you. Christ has extracted all the gall from the sting of death.

Tremble not at judgment—judgment will not bring you another acquittal to add to the acquittal already given in your cause.

*“Bold shalt thou stand at that great day,
For who aught to thy charge can lay?
Fully absolved by Christ thou art,
From sin’s tremendous guilt and smart.”*

Ah, when you come to die, you shall challenge God, for you shall say, “My God, You can not condemn me, for You have condemned Christ for me. You have punished Christ in my stead.” “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who also sitteth at the right hand of God and maketh intercession for us.”

Christian, be glad. Let your head lack no oil and your face no ointment. “Go your way. Eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has accepted your works.” Do as Solomon bids us do—live happily all the days of your life. For you are accepted in the Beloved—you are pardoned through the blood and justified through the righteousness of Christ.

What have you to fear? Let your face ever wear a smile. Let your eyes sparkle with gladness. Live near your Master. Live in the suburbs of the celestial city, as by and by when your time has come, you shall borrow better wings than angels ever wore, and outsoar the cherubim and rise up where your Jesus

sits—sit at His right hand, even as He has overcome and has sat down at His Father’s right hand. And all this because the divine Lord “was made to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

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.