A MONUMENT FOR THE DEAD—AND A VOICE TO THE LIVING

NO. 1700

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 7, 1883
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

"For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law,
That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.
But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise,
Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)
Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)
But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart:
that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,
and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead,
thou shalt be saved."
Romans 10:59

YOU see by this mourning that our church has been bereaved. I have lost a friend tender and true to me, and my heart is too full for utterance. (*William Higgs, Esq., for many years a beloved deacon of the church in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, fell asleep on January 3rd, 1883, in his fifty-ninth year.*) I scarcely knew what to preach from this morning, but at last I settled in my mind that I would raise a memorial to my departed friend by preaching a sermon which should be connected with himself.

Therefore I cast about me, and I considered what subject he would wish me to preach from if he were sitting behind me this morning as he was last Lord's-day. I had no difficulty in answering that question. His life and death pointed in one direction. He was a man of rare common sense, straightforward, downright in his aims, and most pithy in his speech, with such a mixture of mother-wit that he might have been taken for John Ploughman's brother, as indeed he was.

He cared nothing for oratory, which I have heard him call "a flash in the pan." He delighted in the plain, solid Gospel of Jesus Christ. I know that he would have said to me—"Give them Christ crucified, and salvation by grace through faith, as plainly as ever you can," for when he was sore sick and in the very agony of death, he repeated as his dying creed—

"Nothing in my hands I bring:
Simply to Thy cross I cling."

And in his own quaint way, he added, "They may talk as much as ever they like, but the whole of it lies in Jack the Huckster's verse—

'I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all;;
But Jesus Christ is my all in all.'"

You will find that story in the first volume of my sermons. [*See No. 47, "Christ's Prayer for His People."*] In Park Street, early in my ministry, I told the story, and it did my friend good and helped to rest his soul all those years ago, so that he remembered it and repeated it at the last. For his sake let me tell it again.

This huckster Jack was a poor, wicked fellow, who had gone about from village to village, swearing, drinking, huckstering, and perhaps pilfering. Some thought him half-witted, but the story will show his mind to be sound enough. He heard a poor woman sing somewhere—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all;
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

He remembered the words, and what was better, he felt their sense. And he kept on humming them to himself till God's good Spirit engraved them on his heart. There they were recorded, and Jack was a new man and a saved man.

So he essayed to join himself unto the church, but the brethren looked suspiciously at him and inquired, "What is your experience?" He said he had no experience but this—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all;
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

The good elders very properly asked, "Are you converted? Have you been born again?" and Jack replied, "I do not know much about these things, but this I do know and am sure of—

'I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all;
But Jesus Christ is my all in all.'"

They put him back for awhile, to try if he would grow in his knowledge, but he never went an inch beyond the first standard. He knew what he did know, and to that he held fast—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all;
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

Well, they must take him into the church. They could not well refuse a man with such a confession of faith. And when he was in the church, walking with the brethren, he was happier than the rest of them, at which they greatly marveled, and one said to him, "Brother Jack, don't you sometimes feel doubts and fears? "Doubts," he said, "what do you mean? I never doubt that—

'I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all;'

for I have daily proofs of it, and why should I doubt that—

'Jesus Christ is my all in all'?

for He says He is, and I must believe Him." "Ah, well," said one, "sometimes I enjoy good frames and feelings, and feel very happy, and then I lose them, and sink in spirit." Jack answered, "I never get lower than I am, for I am down at the bottom—

'A poor sinner, and nothing at all;'

I cannot get lower than that, can I? But I am also at the top, for—

'for Jesus Christ is my all in all,'

and I cannot get higher than that, can I?"

They tried him many ways with their blessed experience, of which you and I have got cartloads, perhaps wagon-loads, but he could not be drawn out of his one firm position. They tried him with their various attainments, depressions, anxieties, quibbles, and questions. But still the huckster would not budge. He had bought the truth and would not sell it, and so he stuck to—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all;
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

The conies are a feeble folk, yet they have their habitations among the rocks—they are safe, but they keep to their hiding place.

Of course our new Perfection brethren, spick and span saints as they are, are not like Jack, they are not "poor sinners, and nothing at all," and I am afraid lest some of them should find out that Jesus Christ is not their all in all. But if you and I are as he was, "poor sinners, and nothing at all," we may, with firm and resolute grip, lay hold upon the other line, "But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

Christ's fullness is meant for our emptiness. Christ's righteousness is meant for our sin, salvation is for the lost. When you and I are no longer sinners, Christ is no longer our Savior. When you and I no more need Him, then we shall not have Him. Our need is our warrant, and if that be gone, all is gone.

Jesus did not bleed and die to be a superfluity to us—He came to meet a grim necessity. As long as we are nothing, Christ is our all in all. We may be sure of that, and that is the Gospel in a nutshell. I want to preach that same Gospel this morning, in the hope that in after days this Word may be scattered far and wide—and some Jack the Huckster, or some other like him—may find himself to be utterly empty and undone, and may he then know that Christ is ordained to be his salvation.

Jesus came into the world to save real sinners, not sham sinners, for He is a real, and not a pretended Savior. He saves those who are always confessors of sin, always needy in themselves, and therefore always glad of Him. Even in their best estate, the saved ones need their Lord. Even if we walk in the light as God is in the light, and have fellowship with Him, we still sin, and still the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.

I now plunge into my text. Notice, first, *what Moses said*. Moses said, "That the man which doeth those things shall live by them." Next, *what the Gospel says*—"But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise," and so on. Thirdly, we shall consider *what the Scripture says*—"Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." Then, fourthly, we will hear *what experience says*, for we may bring in the experience of believers to back up the declarations of God.

I. I invite your earnest attention to the first point—WHAT MOSES SAYS—"Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them."

This is a clear statement. There is no mystery or obscurity about it. You need not go to the universities and earn a degree of Doctor of Divinity in order to understand this declaration—it is as plain as words can make it. If you wish to be saved by the law, you must do its commands and you shall live. The law is written in the Ten Commandments. You know them, and if you desire to live by them, you must keep them.

It will not suffice for you to learn those commandments by heart, or to write them up in your churches, or to read them over and say, "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law"—all that may be well enough, but it is not to the point. If you are to be saved by the commandments, you must do them. That is clear.

Moses does not allow any person to dream that under the law he can be saved in any other way than by perfect obedience thereto. "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." Whatever it is that God has commanded, you must do. Whatever He forbids, you must avoid—and only by such obedience can you live.

Mark you, Moses does not tone down the law to suit our fallen state, or talk of our doing our best and God's being satisfied with our imperfect obedience. No, he says only, "He that doeth those things shall live by them." He demands perfect and entire obedience, if life is to come of it. He does not say that if you have broken the law, you may still live by some other means.

No, if the law is once broken, it is all over with you as to salvation—one single fault takes away the possibility of your ever being justified by the law. "He that doeth those things," that is, always, without

exception, with all his heart and soul and strength—"He shall live by them"—but nobody else. Be he Jew or be he Gentile, his only righteousness by law must come through the doing of the law.

Moses says nothing about wearing phylacteries, or washing hands, or offering incense, or performing ceremonies in order to righteousness. No. Clear, straight, cutting like a sharp razor, he puts before us the single sentence, "He that doeth those things shall live by them."

Judge you whether any of us has fulfilled the whole law. To my mind this word of Moses is conclusive that none of us can possibly live by the works of the law. We cannot keep the law now, for we have already broken it—the vase is fractured, and to talk of keeping it entire is nonsense. But even if it were not already broken, should we get through tomorrow with its temptations—bearing such a heart as we have within us—without breaking that perfect and spotless law? I am sure we should not.

You that hope to be saved by your works are indulging a forlorn hope. Whatever you may do or be in the future, the past has already ruined you. The way to heaven up the steep sides of Sinai is inaccessible to trembling feet like ours. If you were to be saved by the law, you should have begun without sin, continued without sin, and then it would be needful to end without sin.

There would not be a moment of your life in which you could be at peace, for there would always be the fear that in some unguarded instant you would transgress, and lose all. But why do I talk so? It is no longer in our power to dream of a perfect, life-long obedience. We went astray from the womb, speaking lies. We were rebellious to our parents in our childhood, and wayward in our youth.

In our early manhood we were carried about with this passion and with that. And since then all kinds of evils have led us astray. We are as full of evil as an egg is full of meat, and our heart is like a cage of unclean birds. I can say no less. The hope of salvation by works is black despair.

Yet we have a set of men on the face of the earth who are always wanting us to preach up this hopeless hope, and urging us to lay this heavy burden upon the shoulders of dying men. They would have us proclaim salvation by the works of the law. This, they say, would at least make men moral and keep them sober, whereas even in this, they err against the light. For it has been proved by history that such preaching makes men worse and worse.

The idea of salvation by works sits like an awful incubus upon the breast of humanity, and presses out of the soul all hope, thus robbing man of strength to attempt true holiness. When a man has lost all hope, he throws the reins upon his neck and runs into all manner of iniquity, judging that he may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb.

Clear, then, as possible, it must be to every man among us who will think, that if the only way of salvation by the works of the law is by the keeping of the law in its entirety—then that road is closed against us, and the sooner we have done with it, the better. For then we shall turn our thoughts in the right direction, and travel on the way which the Lord, in great mercy, has prepared for us This is what Moses says—hear it and be humbled.

II. Now I ask you to listen to WHAT THE GOSPEL SAYS.

"The righteousness which is of faith," or believing, "speaks on this wise, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (That is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (That is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Now observe, first, that *the Gospel claims to be like the law in its clearness*. Moses claimed for the law which God had given to the people through him that it was clear and within the range of their knowledge and understanding. I will read his exact words to you. Turn to Deuteronomy 30:11. "For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and

bring it to us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very near unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

Now Paul, here, very adroitly takes these words out of the mouth of Moses, alters them somewhat, and as good as says, "It was the boast of the law that it was clear, known, and accessible to the people, but much more is this the glory of the Gospel." Did I not show you just now that when Moses spoke he did not mystify the matter, but put it plainly, "The man that doeth those things shall live by them." So also the Gospel, by no means involves itself in obscurity, but says, "Believe and live," quite as distinctly as Moses said, "Do and live." Here you have it, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Moses' utterance was single and by itself. He did not say, "Do and thou shall live, but yet there is another way." No. Under the law it was nothing but, "Do and live; leave undone and die." So the Gospel does not propose a second way, and suggest, "a larger hope," but it declares with solemn decision, "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

It is just as clear as ever the law was, and quite as sharply distinct. Herein is no mystery—Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

Wrapping everything up into one, the Gospel says, "Trust thou in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thy sins shall be forgiven thee, and thou shalt be saved." This believing, or trusting, is the whole of the matter, and neither heaven above nor the abyss beneath will ever reveal another salvation.

I want to call your special attention to the fact that Paul borrows the words of Moses, for his intent was the ending of all fears. No man among us doubts that if he had performed the law of God, the Lord would give him life. But it is equally certain that if we have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have eternal life. No trembling sinner doubts but that by the breaking of the law we are condemned—be equally sure of it—by not believing you are condemned.

As no keeper of the law would have been lost on any ground whatever, so no believer in Christ shall be lost on any ground whatever. As no breaker of the law could escape punishment, so no unbeliever in Christ can be saved. The Gospel states its message as clearly as the law. As positively as the law utters its promises and threats, so positively and unalterably does the Gospel deliver its decrees. The believer in Jesus shall be saved because He is a believer, and Christ's veracity is staked thereon—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

Oh, but this is a very blessed thing to have to say to you. I do not come today with a Gospel veiled in mystery and shrouded in doubt. I do not bring a message which you cannot understand or receive. Neither do I come with "ifs" and "buts" and "peradventures," but with this—"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." "Whosoever believeth in him hath everlasting life." This is as certain and clear as the utterance of that dreadful roll of thunder which has just now left on your minds the thought, "He that doeth these things shall live by them."

Let us go a little further. What says the Gospel? Why, next, *it forbids the questions of despair*. "The righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? or, Who shall descend into the deep?" When a man is at length awakened to a sense of sin, he cries, "I long to be saved! All that I have and all that I am I would give to escape from the righteous wrath of God.

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved? Surely it would need that I mount to heaven to own my sin, or dive to hell to bear its punishment. I want a righteousness which would need as much labor to produce as a climb to heaven would need. And I require an expiation for sin as great as though a man were plunged into the abyss itself, and there were made to suffer the divine anger. How is it possible that I can be saved?"

This wail of despair takes many forms. One man puts it, thus, "What things can I perform by which I can be saved?

'Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone.'"

Another, despairing of deliverance by his doings, runs upon his feelings and cries, "If I am to be saved, surely I shall need to experience joys like those which are felt by spirits before the throne. If I had a sense of sin as deep as that of lost souls in hell, I could hope that I should be saved." Thus the second man looks to excitement and feelings just as the first looked to works and self-denials. Now, the Gospel forbids us to dream in this fashion. Talk not thus. Say not even in your heart that by these works or feelings you can be saved.

Perhaps you would be ashamed to say it with your lips, but do not say it at all. Do not say that the way to heaven is hard, or mysterious, or in any degree apart from the simple act of believing. Do not suppose that anything is wanted as to works or feelings in order to complete the righteousness which is wrought out by the Lord Jesus, and imputed by God to the believer.

Ah, then the heart foolishly cries, "I must know a great deal. As much as if I had been to heaven and seen for myself, or as if I had dived into the depths and made discoveries there." No, you must not. The Gospel is simple. Salvation is as plain as a pikestaff—familiar as homespun, easy as the A B C of your childhood. Say not in your heart that you must be educated, trained, and made into a scholar. No, confess yourself a sinner—trust in the sinner's Savior—and you are saved.

"Ah, well," says one, "I know I must undergo a singular experience—either I must be carried right away to heaven with delirious delight, or be plunged into the waves of hell in frightful despair." No, my dear friend, do not say that even in your thought. The righteousness of faith lies not in dreams and visions, delusions or depressions—it lies only in reliance upon the work of Jesus Christ finished for you.

Go not to the loom to weave a righteousness. The garment is woven already. Put it on—Christ gives it to you. Dig not into the bowels of the earth to find the gold of salvation. Christ holds it out to you—take it freely, and be rich forever. So one of the first works of the Gospel is silencing the questions of our unbelief.

Next, this precious Gospel *translates these questions, and then answers them*. Listen. A voice cries, "Who shall ascend into heaven?" The Gospel replies, if you did ascend to heaven what would you do there, without Christ, the anointed Savior? You say, "Who shall descend into the deep?" Listen, man. If you were to descend there, what would you do without Him whom God has anointed to save?

If you find Him, it will not much matter where you find Him, in heaven or in the deep, for He must be almighty everywhere. Now hearken. You say, "Who shall ascend into heaven?" the top and bottom of such an ascent must be, "to bring Christ down." Hear this! Jesus has come down—years ago He left the glories of His Father.

Have you not heard the tale? Being pure, blazing, glorious Godhead, "Light of lights, very God of very God," on a sudden they found Him in a stable hanging on a woman's breast. Angels saw Him and wondered. He came down, indeed, when He was born, and being down so low as that, He descended to the carpenter's shop, to the weariness of the well's brink, and to a thirst which made Him say, "Give me to drink."

Lower than that, He descended to being "despised and rejected of men." He was Lord of heaven and earth, and yet they called Him Beelzebub, and talked of Him as a drunken man and a wine-bibber. Having descended all that length, He went lower, still.

Listen—angels, you will not weary while I tell the story over again—He went into Gethsemane where He put on the crimson garment of His own bloody sweat. And then to Pilate's hall, where they did falsely accuse Him, and spit on Him, and scourge Him, and make a jest of Him.

And then to that cross whereon they nailed Him in His nakedness, so that He hung in agony, to die in fever and in thirst, till He cried, "It is finished." He descended into the grave, so that He dwelt among the dead! We know not how low He went, but we are told that, "He descended into the lower parts of the earth."

Oh, my hearer, our salvation lies in this! Not in *our* descending, but in Christ's descending our hope is to be found. Listen to it, lost ones. You need not climb to heaven—Christ has come down from heaven to you. And if you lie among the spiritually dead today, or think you do, He has come down to you, and you need not inquire how you can go up to Him. No prayers, or tears are wanted to bring Him down. He has already come and is near at hand.

You asked, "Who shall descend into the deep?" Now listen. Here is your answer. You need not "bring up Christ, again, from the dead," for the Lord has risen indeed. His soul scarce descended among the shades before it quit them forever. That day He died, He was in Paradise, and the thief was with Him there as a trophy.

Up also His body rose on the light of the third day, and He sojourned for forty days among His disciples. At the close of that period He rose into the air, ascending on high. As they watched Him rising higher, and yet higher, at last a cloud received Him—He has gone up to the Father's throne, as the sinner's Savior—at the throne He stands today to intercede for sinners, and from that throne He bends to comfort those who come to Him.

Now, your hope lies wholly in what this Son of God did in His descent and ascent. God has brought Him again from the dead and exalted Him at His own right hand. And this is not for Himself, but for all those who trust in Him. His death is instead of the death of our souls. His life is the life of our spirits.

Now, soul, you have nothing to do with asking vain questions. You have to accept the result of the Savior's actual performances. The saving work is done, done by Him who was anointed of the Lord to do it. Look to Him and salvation is yours. Your salvation rests in Jesus—rest you in Jesus. Throw yourself upon Him now, even as a babe casts itself upon its mother's breast. Have done with every other confidence. What can you need more than to rely upon the Anointed of the Lord?

Now, Paul declares, or rather the Gospel speaking for itself declares, *this word of life by faith in the risen Christ to be near us, that is, to be accessible to us*. As your next door neighbor's house is not hard to get at, so neither is salvation by the Gospel. It is nigh you. It is nigh you *now*. It will never be nigher than it is at this moment.

You may now believe in Christ and live eternally. Difficulty there is none—only believe and you are saved. It is not a mystical, obscure thing—it is near and familiar. Believe in Christ as you would believe in your friend. Believe that He died for sinners, and trust in Him for salvation. If God has made you feel yourself a sinner, then Christ is such a Savior as you need, and you may have Him at once.

The only difficulty lies in the way being so easy that you can hardly think it can be so. Have done with doings, and feelings, and trust yourself with Christ. "The word is nigh thee." It is simple, indeed—so simple that people try to obscure it in order to understand it. It is such milk for babes that I have known people refuse such plain truth, because they were not willing to be treated like little children.

Just as I lean all my weight upon this rail, so do I lean my soul wholly upon Christ. If what Christ has done will not save a sinner, I am damned, for I have nothing else to depend upon. But if it will save, and I am sure that it will, I am saved as surely as Christ has risen from the dead. This is the substance of the matter—Christ saves and we trust.

This is what that word of faith says, even the Gospel which we preach. I am afraid we say a great deal at times which rather lumbers and cumbers the Gospel than makes it clear. Perhaps I am doing the same this morning, but I do not mean to do it. I mean to let it stand out simply before you, that the incarnation, the life, the death, and the resurrection of Christ are the one foundation upon which we must depend for eternal salvation, and upon that, alone. And if we so depend, we shall most assuredly be saved.

Yet note, that *Paul opens this up into two things*. He says, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." So there must be confession with the mouth. Do not leave that out. Do not suppose that you can be a believer and conceal your faith.

As I said the other day, do not behave like a rat behind the wainscot, only daring to come out in the dark. That is not Christ's way. If you trust in Him with your heart, trust Him openly, and confess Him with your mouth, owning that He is your Lord, and your Savior.

He has put the two things together—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." The believing and the confession of that believing in God's own way are never to be separated, for, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." See you well to this.

III. Thirdly, let us consider, WHAT THE SCRIPTURE SAYS—"Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." "Whosoever." Whatever man in all the world, throughout all the ages, shall come and trust himself on Christ shall never be ashamed of having done so.

You, dear friend, down the aisle there, it you trust in Christ, you shall never be ashamed of your hope. You up there in the gallery, however guilty you may have been, or however moral you may have been, it matters not—if your one hope is in what Christ has done—you shall never turn round on your dying bed, and cry, "I made a mistake in trusting Christ."

You know what Cardinal Bellarmine said—he was a great antagonist of Luther, and thought that we might trust in our works. But looking it all over, he admitted that inasmuch as no man could be quite sure that he had done enough good works, it was perhaps best on the whole and safest to trust altogether to the blood and merits of Jesus Christ. I have always felt obliged to the Cardinal for that admission, because the best is good enough for me. And since trusting in Jesus is the safest, I intend to stick to it even to the end.

There is really no other hope, for if you get a little bit of your own works put into the building of your hope, you have just so much rotten timber in the fabric—and that rot will plague the whole house, and turn it into dust at the last. No man that rested in Christ, and Christ alone, was ever ashamed of his hope, and none ever shall be. There is sure ground here. The Rock of Ages never fails.

What else does the Scripture say? It says that *no man is forbidden to believe*, "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." There never was a sinner yet to whom God said, "You must not trust My Son". On the contrary, it is written, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

What about the doctrine of election? I need not speak about it this morning—I believe it, and rejoice in it—but it is not at all contrary to this precious truth. Read this verse, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Whoever will in the whole world believe in Christ may do so. He is neither too old or too young, or too rich, or too poor, or too wicked, or too moral—if he will but trust Christ, he shall be saved—and he is fully allowed and permitted, yea, commanded to believe and live.

Once, again, *though your faith should only be strong enough to lead you to pray, yet it shall save you*, for, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Suppose your faith cannot work miracles. Never mind about miracles. Suppose you cannot walk on the sea, like Peter. Never mind. You are not called to do it.

Can your faith pray? Can it cry? Then call upon the Lord, and you shall be saved. Poor dear heart, if you can but trust Christ, even though the feeblest possible manifestation of it should be the only thing visible, namely, your calling upon God in prayer, it must and shall save you.

IV. Now, I hope I have put it plainly. I have tried my best, and so I close by bidding you hear WHAT EXPERIENCE SAYS.

What does experience say about believing in Christ. Experience says, and we are some of us here to say it, that *it is the grandest way of living in the world*. I assure you that I daily find the value of living

by faith. In hours of dire distress and great heaviness of spirit, of which I know enough, I prove the power of faith in Jesus. Ah, my Lord, what should I do then if I could not as, "a poor sinner, and nothing at all," find Christ to be my "all in all."

Fair-weather sailors, who go out in their little painted perfection boats, are people who have had small temptation and little soul-trouble. They are generally gentlemen in good health, with regular incomes and sweet tempers, and so they soon reach their imaginary sinlessness—vain creatures that they are.

But you never get any of that among the poor, suffering, tried people of God. In stormy weather our beauty and glory soon turn pale. When the devil meets us face to face, he cracks up our tinsel perfection with a blow. He laughs at all our comeliness. He knows that it is a hollow cheat, a vile sham. In the moments when the soul is in the lowest depths, faith is the only way to live. That mode of living which will do for the depths is safe for the heights.

How blessed it is when a child of God has actually fallen into sin—God keep us so that we never may—but if guilt is on the soul, what is a poor creature to do? He can do nothing unless he has learned this precious truth, that he is nothing at all, and Jesus Christ is his all in all. Then he knows that Jesus will blot out his transgressions, and create in him a clean heart, and restore him to Himself again, though now, like David, his sin is ever before him.

Yes, and I find a self-denying, Christ-exalting faith to be good in times of jubilation and success. The only way to keep right and humble is to be nothing, and let Jesus be all in all. If God has blessed your ministry or other holy work, the devil whispers, "You are a pretty fellow—you have done wonders"—and up you will go if you are not steadied by the firm conviction that you may not glory, since you are nothing at all in yourself, and your sole help is in Jesus your Lord.

When God gives you growth in grace and fruitfulness in good works, it will be your safety to be as little as ever you were, and to trust in nothing but the work of the Lord. This blessed faith keeps men down when they are apt to go up, and up when otherwise they would be apt to go down. It is a holy balancing pole. We can walk the narrowest line with this in our hands, and fear no fall. Ourselves nothing, Christ everything—that is it. Keep to it.

Now, as to *the test of death*. Does this sort of faith enable men to face death with courage? I have had almost thirty years among you, and God has been very gracious to us, so that we have lost very few comparatively by death. But now many are going home, and according to the course of nature, many of our honored brethren and sisters will soon follow.

As to those who have been called home, how have they died? I have the deep satisfaction of saying that when our dear brethren and sisters fall asleep, they reflect honor upon the Gospel which we have preached. Ask those who have seen them die. These dear ones at this hour look back upon me and say, "Go on, preach the same Gospel to others, for we found it blessed truth to die upon."

Look at our dear, departed brother, Mr. Higgs, the last who has crossed the stream. His sons and daughters will tell you that his death was sad to them, but not to him. He suffered agonizing pain, but his peace was as deep as the sea. He had no uncertainty. He was as sure of his safety as if it had been a matter of calculation by the rules of arithmetic.

He knew whom he had believed, and knew what the Lord had done for him—and he could not see a weak point in it all. He spent the whole night in trying to cheer and comfort others—he had no trembling thought about himself. He did not say, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O my friends, for the hand of the Lord has touched me." No. He knew that Christ was the resurrection and the life, and he was ready to depart.

He wished his beloved ones to go to their beds, and since they would stay with him, he desired them to sing." "What shall we sing?" "Sing," said he—

"Forever with the Lord,
Amen, so let it be."

It is hard singing when your father is dying, but it was not hard to him. He bade them read that chapter, "Let not your hearts be troubled," and as they read it, he did not take the verses, and apply them to himself. No, he directed the comfort to his dear wife, for she had greater need of it than he had. His faith was firm. It was for her he cared, and for those about him.

As for himself, all was rest. One said, somewhat roughly to him a fortnight before, "Don't be down-hearted, you may get better yet." "Stop a minute," said he. "What do you mean? I have never been down-hearted at anything in my life, certainly not at the thought of dying. If it was the Lord's will that I should die in the street at this moment, I would cheerfully go."

He never said a word more than he felt, yet that was the style of man. God send us more like him—men to whom religion is for home consumption. Not a pretty toy for Sundays, but food to live upon—a common-sense hope—a blunt man's religion that he can carry into business.

One reported to me, the other day, a word which cheered me much. An Italian gentleman, who has known me since I have been at Mentone, was asked, "Are you a Catholic?" "No, I am not." "Are you a Protestant?" I am not sure, for I know little about it." "What are you?" "I am of Mr. Spurgeon's religion, which makes people happy themselves, and causes them to do good to others."

I thank God he could say that of my religion—it did this for my dear friend—it made him a happy man, whose pleasure it was to please others—and now he has passed away in full sunlight into a still brighter noon. Amen, so let it be.

The top and bottom of the matter is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." Be nothing. Be nobody, and trust HIM. Do not believe in yourself, but believe in Jesus. Have as many good works as you can cram into your life, but never tell anybody about them, or think anything of them. The best of them are but filthy rags—stow them all away in the coal cellar, and look to the merits of your Lord for salvation. Go to Jesus for everything. He says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed." Take His counsel.

As he whom we sorrow for today could die peacefully, and even merrily, so shall you and I if we rely on the same Savior. When our time comes to depart, we shall just step aside and say, "Good-bye, dear friends, for awhile—we will meet again in the home of the blessed." I hear *him* say so at this moment. And I answer him, "Dear brother, we will be with you speedily."

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.