A GREAT GOSPEL FOR GREAT SINNERS

NO. 1837

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 3, 1885
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON JUNE 2, 1884

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation,
that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.
Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy,
that in me, first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering,
for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.
Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever.
Amen."
1 Timothy 1:15-17

WHEN Paul wrote this ever-memorable text, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," he placed it in connection with himself. I would have you carefully notice the context.

Twelfth verse—"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

You see, the apostle had spoken of himself, and then it was that the Holy Spirit put it into his mind to write of the glorious salvation of which he was so notable a subject. Truly it was a seasonable and suggestive connection in which to place this glorious Gospel text. What he preached to others was to be seen in himself.

When I read to you the story of Saul's conversion, suppose I had finished it by making the remark, "This is a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"? You would all have said, "That is true and it is a natural inference from the narrative." Such a remark would have served as the moral of the whole story.

It is an easy and a simple inference, from such a conversion, that Christ Jesus must have come into the world to save sinners. See, then, why Paul uttered it in this particular place. He could not help bringing his own case forward, but when he did bring it forward, it was to add emphasis to this declaration that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

It is my conviction that our Lord in infinite wisdom intends that His ministers should themselves be proofs of the doctrines which they teach. If a young man, a very young man, stands up to tell you of the experience of an aged Christian, you say at once, "That may be very true, but *you* cannot prove it, for you are not an aged person yourself."

If one who has been privileged, in the providence of God, to enjoy the comforts of life, stands up to preach upon the consolations of the Spirit in poverty, you say, "Yes, that is very true, but you cannot speak from experience yourself." Hence the Lord likes His servants to have such an experience that their testimony shall have a man at the back of it. He would have their lives sustain and explain their testimonies.

When Paul said that Christ came into the world to save sinners, his own conversion, his own joy in the Lord, were proof positive of it. He was a witness who had tasted and handled the good Word of life to which he witnessed.

Paul went to heaven years ago, but his evidence is not vitiated by that fact, for a truthful statement is not affected by the lapse of time. If a statement was made yesterday, it is just as truthful as if you were hearing it today. And if it were made, as this was, eighteen hundred years ago, yet, if true, then (and nobody disputed it in Paul's day), it is true now.

The facts recorded in the gospels are as much facts now as ever, and they ought to have the same influence upon our minds as they had upon the minds of the apostles. At this moment, the statement that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners has Paul still at the back of it. "He being dead yet speaketh."

Oh, you who are burdened with your sins, I want you to see Saul of Tarsus before you at this moment, and to hear him say, with penitent voice, in your presence, "The Lord Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Doubt not the statement, for the man is the evidence of it. He who saved Paul can save you. Yea, He is willing now to display His power upon you. Be not disobedient to the heavenly message.

But beloved, if we have not Paul in our midst to bear his personal witness, we have still many living proofs—we have indisputable evidence in those that are still about us, that it "is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

I could summon to this pulpit scores who were literally the blackest of transgressors, but they are washed, and sanctified—and so they are living arguments of the Lord's power to save. Many also are now present who could not be numbered by their fellow men among the chief of sinners in certain aspects of the case, yet they most willingly put themselves down as the chief of sinners under some other way of viewing it—and they bear their testimony, as I do, tonight—that Jesus is able to save unto the uttermost.

I, who now stand before you, am a living witness that Christ Jesus can save sinners, and does still save them. The Lord has forgiven and justified me, and I have found grace in His sight. In my case, also, it is proven that it "is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

Oh, how I wish that my hearers would believe me! Many of you would accept any statement which I should make—why do you not accept this? You do not think of me as a liar—why, then, do you not believe my testimony concerning Jesus? He is as ready to save today as He was of old. He is ready to save *you* if you will trust Him.

The run of thought at this time will be, first, concerning those *who are the chief of sinners.* Secondly, we will inquire *why God has saved them.* And thirdly, *what they say when they are saved.*

I. First, then, WHO ARE THE CHIEF OF SINNERS?

Paul says that he was the chief. I think, however, that he was only one of the regiment. There are different classes of sinners, and some are greater and some less. All men are truly sinners, but all men are not equally sinners. They are all in the mire, but they have not all sunk to an equal depth in it. It is true they have all fallen deep enough to perish in sin, unless the grace of God prevent. Yet there are differences in the degrees of guilt, and there will doubtless be differences in the degrees of punishment.

Some are the chief of sinners in the same way as the apostle Paul, for *they have persecuted the church of God*. Paul, who was then called Saul, had given his vote against Stephen. And when Stephen was stoned, he kept the clothes of them that murdered him. He felt that blood lying upon his soul long afterward, and he bemoaned it.

Would not you, if you had been a helper at the murder of some child of God, feel that you were among the chief of sinners? If you had been willingly and willfully, maliciously and eagerly, a helper in putting a man of God like Stephen to death, you would write yourself down as a sinner of crimson dye?

Why, I think that I would say, "God may forgive me, but I will never forgive myself." It would seem such a horrid crime to lie upon one's soul.

Yet this was merely the beginning. Saul was like a leopard, who, having once tasted blood, must always have his tongue in it. His very breath was threatening, and his delight was slaughter. He harassed the people of God. He made great havoc of the saints. He compelled them, he says, to blaspheme. He had them beaten in the synagogues, driven from city to city, and even put to death.

This must have remained upon his heart as a dark memory, even after the Lord Jesus Christ had fully forgiven him. When he knew, as Paul did know, that he was a justified man through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, yet he must always have felt a smiting at his heart to think that these innocent lambs had been worried by him—that for no other reason but that they were lovers of the Crucified—he had panted for their blood. This matter of deadly persecution placed Saul head and shoulders above other sinners. This was the top stone of the pyramid of his sin, "because I persecuted the church of Christ."

I thank God that there is no man here who has that particular form of sin upon his conscience in having actually put to death or joined in the slaughter of any child of God. The laws of our country have happily prevented your being stained with that foul offense, and I bless the Lord that it is so. Yet if there should be such among those who are hearing these words, or among those who shall one day read them, I must confess that they are, indeed, numbered among the chief of sinners, and I pray God to grant that they may obtain mercy as Saul did.

But you can go very near to this—in all probability certain of you have done so. That husband who has threatened his wife so bitterly if she obeys her conscience, that man who has discharged his servant for no other reason but his fidelity to Christ, that landlord who has turned out his cottager from his home because he held a religious service beneath his roof, that man who has willfully and maliciously slandered a servant of God, not because he did him any harm, but because he cannot bear to hear of any truly following after Christ—these are the people who must be reckoned among the chief of sinners.

They have done no murder, but they have gone as far as they dare to go, and their heart is full of venom against the people of God—this is a grievous crime. Though it may seem a very small thing to grieve a pious child, or to vex a poor godly woman, God does not think so. He remembers jests and scoffs leveled at His little ones, and He bids those who indulge in them to take heed.

You had better offend a king, than one of the Lord's little ones. That poor man in the workshop, who has so hard a time of it with your jests and chaff, has a Friend in the heavens. That other man who, seeking the Lord, has found the cold shoulder in society, has an Advocate on high, who will not see him despised without espousing his cause.

It may appear a trifle to make a saint the target of ridicule, but his Father in heaven does not think so. I know this, that many patient men will bear a great deal, but if you strike their children, their blood is up, and they will not have it. A father will not stand by to see his child abused—and the Great Father above is as tender and fond as any other father.

You have seen among birds and beasts that they will put forth all their strength for their young. A hen, naturally very timid, will fight for her little chicks with all the courage of a lion. Some of the smallest of animals, and the least powerful, nevertheless become perfectly terrible when they are taking care of their offspring.

And think you that the everlasting God will bear to see His children maligned, and slandered, and abused, for their following of Him? Is the God of nature without natural affection? I know not. You shall rue the day, sir, in which you took up arms against the people of God. Humble yourself before God on account of it, otherwise you will be numbered among the chief of sinners, and the chief of punishments shall be meted out to you.

I have no doubt that there may be some of that kind here, and if there are, I can only pray that the story of Saul of Tarsus may be repeated in them by boundless grace. May they even yet come to preach the Gospel which now they despise. It is no new thing for the priest to be converted to Christ. It is no new thing for the opposer to become the advocate, and to be all the better and more powerful a pleader

because of the mischief which he formerly did. Oh that the Lord would turn His foes into friends! God send it! For Christ's sake may He send it now!

Further, among the chief of sinners we must of course reckon *those who are guilty of the coarser and grosser sin*s. I will not occupy a moment in mentioning what they are, for it is a shame even to speak of them. God keep us from unchastity and dishonesty—from any one of those sins which are censurable even under the head of common morality. For, if not—if we indulge in these—we shall certainly come by them to be numbered among the chief of sinners.

I must, however, mention blasphemy and lewd speaking, because these are unhappily far too common. Does a man think that he can go on damning his own body and soul in so many words, and never provoke the Lord to anger? Does he dream that he can use foul and filthy words, and wicked oaths, without incurring sin? I believe that these things bring the blackest guilt on the conscience, for God has expressly said that He will by no means hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain.

It is true of every sin that God will not hold a man guiltless who does it, but it is especially said about this sin, because men are apt to fancy that words are of no great importance, or that God takes no notice thereof. Even the thoughtless, or trifling repetition of the name of the Lord involves great sin, for thus a man takes the sacred name in vain.

Yet men trifle with that name in common conversation—and that with fearful frequency. There is no excuse for this wanton wickedness, because it brings neither profit nor pleasure to the person who so offends. What practical end can it serve? As George Herbert said long ago,

"Lust and wine plead a pleasure, avarice gain:
But the cheap swearer through his open sluice
Lets his soul run for nought, as little fearing
Were I an Epicure, I could bate swearing."

I am unable to frame an excuse for profane language—it is needless, willful wickedness. Men talk so as to horrify us. They chill our blood with fear lest God should take them at their word—and all for nothing at all. I would to God that every blasphemer here (if such there be, and I have no doubt that there are), would abandon that vile, inexcusable, useless habit, which lowers men in society, defiles them before God, and ensures their condemnation.

Filthy speech puts those who are guilty of it among the chief of sinners, and to them will certainly be meted out a terrible vengeance in that day when God shall solemnly curse those who have so glibly cursed themselves. It will be an awful thing for the man who used profane imprecations to find out at last that his prayers were heard, and that they will be answered.

O swearer, beware lest the Lord God hear your prayers at once to your everlasting confusion! Sit down at this moment in deep contrition, and weep to think of the many times in which you have defied the God of heaven, and uttered words of provocation against the God in whose hand your breath is. Not yet has He cut you down. Oh, wonder of mercy! Take heed to yourself. Above all, marvel that there should be mention of mercy for such a one as you are.

Now, dear friends, there are other chiefs among sinners who do not go in for these grosser sins at all. Let me mention them, for in this line I shall have to place myself and many of you. Those are among the chief of sinners *who have sinned against great light*, and against the influences of holy instruction, and gracious example.

Children of godly parents, who have been brought up and instructed in the fear of God from their youth, are among the chief of sinners if they turn aside from the way of life. When they transgress, there is a heavy weight about their fault, which is not to be found in the common sin of the children of the slums, or the arabs of the gutter. The offspring of the degraded know no better, poor souls, and hence their transgressions are sins of ignorance. But those who know better, when they transgress, transgress with an emphasis. Their sin is as a talent of lead and it shall hang about their necks like a millstone.

I remember how this came home to my heart when I was convinced of my sin. I had not engaged in any of the grosser vices, but then I had not been tempted to them, but had been carefully guarded from vicious influences. But I lamented that I had been disobedient to my parents, proud in spirit, forgetful of God's commands—I knew better—knew better from the very first, and this put me, in my own estimation, among the chief of sinners. It had cost me much to do evil, for I had sinned against the clearest light. Especially is this the case when the possession of knowledge is accompanied by much tenderness of conscience.

There are some of you unconverted people, who, when you do wrong, feel that you have done wrong, and feel it keenly too, even though no one rebukes you for it. You cannot be unjust, or hasty in temper, or faulty in speech, or break the Sabbath, or do anything that is forbidden, without your conscience troubling you.

You know what it is to go to bed and lie awake in misery after some questionable amusement, or after having spoken too frivolously. Yours is a tender conscience—do not violate it, or you will be doubly guilty. When God puts the bit into your mouth, if you try to get it between your teeth, and it does not check you at all, you must mind what you are at, for you may be left to dash onward to destruction.

"He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." It puts men among the chief of sinners, when against light and against conscience, they deliberately choose the way of evil, and leave the commandments of the Lord.

Especially is it a grievous offense *to sin against the gentle checking of the Holy Spirit*. Have you not been sad offenders upon this point? You felt the other Sunday night that if you could once get out of the chapel, and get home, you would bow the knee in prayer—*but you did not*. You have felt like that many times, and you have shaken off the feeling—and now a sermon scarcely moves you—it had need be full of thunder and lightning to make you turn a hair. Truths which used to make you shake from head to foot scarcely affect you now.

Take care, I pray you, for he that sins against the Holy Ghost may find himself waterlogged by sin, so as to be no longer able to move his vessel towards the shores of salvation. Nothing hardens like the Gospel when it is long trifled with. To lie soaking in the truth without receiving it into the heart is sure destruction. To die on holy ground is to die indeed. God grant that it may not be so with any here!

Yet if you be this day the chief of sinners, do not despair, nor turn away in sullen anger, for we are going to say to you, at this hour, in the name of the merciful God, that His Son, Jesus Christ, has come into the world to save sinners, even the very chief.

I think that I must put down those among the chief of sinners *who have led others into sin*. Ah, this is a sad, sad, sad, sad subject! If you have led others astray—if you yourself seek the Lord, and are saved—yet you cannot save them. If it be young persons whom you have polluted with evil, you cannot take the wretched stain out of their minds. You can leave off sowing the devil's seed, but you cannot gather up what you have sown, nor prevent its growing and ripening.

Fire is easily kindled, but not so soon extinguished when it has taken hold upon the fuel. It is an awful fact that there may be souls in hell whom you have sent there! It was a wise penitential prayer of a converted man who had exercised influence for evil—"Lord, forgive me my other men's sins."

When you lead others to sin, their sins are to a large extent your sins. They do not cease to be the sins of those who commit them, but they are also the sins of those who promoted or suggested them by precept or example. A bad example, a lewd expression, an unholy life, may be the means of drawing others down to perdition—and those that destroy others, and so are soul-murderers, are among the chief of sinners. He who uses dagger or pistol to the body is abhorred. What shall we say of those who poison human minds, and stab at the heart of piety? These are guiltiest of the guilty. Woe unto them!

Especially must I rank him among the chief of sinners who has preached falsehood—who has denied the deity of Christ—who has undermined the inspiration of Scripture—who has struggled against the faith, fought against the atonement, and done evil even as he could in the scattering of skepticism. He

must take his place among the ringleaders in diabolical mischief—he is a master destroyer, a chosen apostle of the prince of darkness.

Oh, that he might be brought by sovereign grace to be among the foremost teachers of that faith which hitherto he has destroyed! I think that we should do well as Christian people if we prayed more for any who make themselves notorious by their infidelity. If we talked less bitterly against them, and prayed more sweetly for them, good would come of it.

Of political argument against atheists we have had enough—let us carry the case into a higher court, and plead with God about them. If we use the grand artillery of heaven by importunate prayer, we would be using much better weapons than are commonly employed. God help us to pray for all false teachers that they may be converted to God, and so display the omnipotence of His love.

I shall not say more upon this mournful matter, for, indeed, I have only mentioned these examples in the hope that some here present may confess, "I am sorry to say that the preacher means me. Under some aspect or other I must take my place among the chief of sinners."

II. Now, secondly, WHY ARE THE CHIEF OF SINNERS SO OFTEN SAVED?

The Lord Jesus Christ, when He went into heaven, took with Him one of the chief of sinners as a companion—the dying thief entered Paradise the selfsame day as our Lord. After our Lord Jesus had gone to heaven, so far as I know, He never saved more than one person by His own immediate instrumentality—and that one person was this very apostle Paul who has given us our text.

To him our Lord spake personally from heaven, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" To him He revealed Himself by the way, and called Him to be His apostle, even to this man who truthfully called himself the chief of sinners. It is wonderful to think that it should be so, but grace delights in dealing with great and glaring sin, and putting away the crying crimes of great offenders.

The Lord Jesus not only saved the chief of sinners, but He was related to some of them by blood. Look through the long line of our Lord's genealogy. You know that doctrine, the last invention of Rome, concerning the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary. I am going to tell you a doctrine which is about as far apart from that as the east is from the west.

In the genealogy of our blessed Lord, we find the names of certain of the chief of sinners. Three women especially hold a position in it, who were each notorious for sin. Not many women are mentioned, but among the first is Tamar, guilty of incest. The next is Rahab the harlot, and a third is Bathsheba the adulteress. This is a crooked pedigree, an ancestral tree whose branches are more than a little gnarled and twisted.

Admire the condescension of our Lord in coming of such a stock. He came *of* sinners, because He came *for* sinners. According to the flesh He comes of sinners that sinners may come to Him. There was mixed in the veins through which flowed His ancestry, the blood of Ruth the Moabitess, a heathen, brought in on purpose that we Gentiles might see how truly He was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

I say not that there was any defilement in His humanity, God forbid, for He was not born after the manner of men, so as to be polluted in that fashion. But still I say that His genealogy includes many great sinners in order that we may see how closely He allied Himself with them, how thoroughly He undertook their cause.

Read the roll of His ancestry, and you will see that David is there, who cried, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned." And Solomon, who loved strange women, and Rehoboam, his foolish son. And Manasseh, "who shed innocent blood very much," and worse men than they, if worse could be. Such sinners as these are in the genealogy of the Savior of sinners. "He was numbered with the transgressors." He was called "The friend of publicans and sinners." It was said of Him, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Still He delights to save great sinners. O my hearer, it will delight Him to save *you*!

Why does He do it? The apostle says, in the sixteenth verse, "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering." What, is that His reason for saving a sinner? It

is that He may show in that sinner His long-suffering, revealing His patience and forgiveness. In a great sinner like Paul, He shows *all* His long-suffering, not little grains of it, nor portions of it, but *all* His long-suffering.

Is Jesus Christ willing to show forth all His long-suffering? Does He delight to unveil all His love? Yes, for remember that He calls His mercy, His riches—"He is rich in mercy." I do not find that He calls His power His riches, but He calls His grace His riches, "in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

Oh, dear friends, the Lord, who is rich in mercy, seeks a treasury in which to put His riches. He wants a casket for the sacred jewelery of His love, and these atrocious criminals, these great offenders, these who think themselves black as hell—these are the very men in whom there is space for His rare jewels of goodness.

Where sin has abounded, there is elbow-room for the infinite mercy of the living God. Ought you not to be encouraged, if you feel yourself greatly guilty, that God delights to show forth all His patience by saving great sinners? Will you not at once seek that *all* long-suffering may be shown in your case? Believe on the Lord Jesus, and it shall be so.

And what does Paul say next? He says that the Lord saved him *for a pattern* to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting. For a pattern. It means for a type or specimen. Paul was a "proof before letters." The first prints of an engraving are sharp and clear, and therefore they are very valuable—they exhibit the productive power of the plate at its highest point, before the surface is worn down in the least degree.

Paul was one of the proof-engravings taken off the plate in the earliest days, and under the most favorable circumstances for bringing out every line of grace. All God's long-suffering was seen in him for a pattern. I would to God that we could put some of *you* under that same engraved plate, and issue more impressions at this very hour, for the plate is not worn out—the type that God uses is as new as ever.

When a printer sets his type, he sends the author a sheet to let him see what the type is, and he calls it his proof. So also Paul was God's proof—one of the first taken off by the glorious machinery of grace to let us all see what God has to say to us concerning long-suffering love. That printing machine is at work at this very moment—it is making impressions at this hour—most clear, sharp, and readable.

I would to God that some great sinner here would be like the paper laid under the type to take the impression of almighty grace. A grand edition of the Work of Love was issued before Paul was printed off and published. I refer to the time when Peter preached at Pentecost. Many large and splendid editions have been issued from that press since. I see before me a whole library that God has printed in this house—the proofs that God has taken of late years from the old standing type. But Paul stands at the head of the list as a fine first proof of what God can do.

Then God can save *me*. I came to that conclusion a year ago, and putting it to the test, I found it true. Dear fellow sinners, come to the same conclusion! Who are you? No, I do not ask you to tell me. I do not want to know. God knows. But I want you to come to this conclusion—"If Paul is a specimen of saved ones, then why should not I be saved? If Paul had been unique, a production quite by himself, then we might justly have doubted as to ourselves. But since he is a pattern, we may all hope to see the Lord's long-suffering repeated in ourselves."

Nowadays, by the Parcels' Post, people are sending you patterns of all sorts of things, and many articles are bought according to sample. When you buy from a pattern, you expect the goods to be like the pattern. So God sends us Paul for a pattern of His great mercy to great sinners. He thus says, in effect—"That is the kind of thing I do. I take this rough, bad material of the chief of sinners, and I renew it, and show forth all My mercy in it. This is what I am prepared to do with you."

Poor soul, will you not accept the mercy of God? Enter into this salvation business with the Lord, that you, too, like the apostle, being a sinner, may become like he in obtaining the glorious salvation which is in Christ Jesus, who came into the world to save sinners.

I am talking very plainly and simply to you, but if you love your own souls, you will be all the better pleased to listen. I do not want to amuse you, but to see you saved. Do, I pray you, bend your minds to this subject, and learn that there is good hope for the worst of you if you will cry unto the Lord.

That is why Jesus saves those who have most grievously erred, that He may display them as specimens of what His grace can do.

"But I belong to such a wicked family," cries one. Oh, yes, and many have been saved who belonged to the most depraved and degraded of families. They have entered into relationship with Christ and their own base condition has been swallowed up in His glory. The children of criminals when converted belong to the family of God. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

"Oh, but I have indulged in such horrible vices." This is a sad confession, but it does not doom you to despair, for the blood of Jesus washes away the worst of filth. Blasphemers, adulterers, drunkards, thieves—"such," O you saints—"such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified." And why should not others of like character be washed and sanctified too?

III. I must close by dwelling a moment on the third head, which is this—WHAT THE CHIEF OF SINNERS SAY WHEN THEY ARE SAVED.

What they say is recorded in the text. It reads like a hymn—"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." See, the first word is, "*Now*." As soon as ever they are saved, they begin praising the Lord. They cannot endure to put off glorifying God.

Someone might whisper to them, "You will praise God when you get to heaven." "No," replies the gracious soul, "I am going to praise Him now. *Now* unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, be glory for ever and ever." Grateful love cannot be restrained—it is like fire in the bones. Our heart would break for love if it could not find a means of expressing itself at once.

Does another person whisper, "When you praise God, do not be too long about it. Leave off as soon as you have moderately praised and adored. Do not be forever engaged in the work of praise." "No," says the saved man, "I cannot have done while life lasts—'To him be honour and glory *for ever and ever*.'"

Not only forever—that might seem to be long enough—but "for ever and ever." It is a redundant expression, such as enthusiasm delights to use. It indicates a sort of double eternity. The saved sinner can never have enough of glorifying the Lord. He will praise Him throughout eternity. As soon as a man is cleansed from sin, he is clothed with praise. A new song is put into his mouth, and he must sing it—he cannot help doing so. There is no stopping him.

Notice what titles Paul here heaps together. First, he calls the Lord Jesus Christ *a King*. "Now unto the King eternal." Or apply it to God the Ever-Blessed, in His sacred unity, if you will. He calls the Lord, King, for he would give Him the loftiest name and pay Him the lowliest homage. He calls Him a King, for he had found Him so. For it is a king that distributes life and death, a king that pardons rebels, a king that reigns and rules over men.

Jesus was all this to Paul and much more—and so he must give Him the royal title—he cannot speak of Him as less than majestic. If Jesus is not King to all the world, at least He is King to the man whose sins have been forgiven him. "Now," he says, "unto the King eternal be honour and glory for ever and ever."

See how he puts it, "the King *eternal*." Not a king who will lose his kingdom, not a king who will cease to reign, or abdicate, or die. Oh, dear brethren, the King that pardoned Paul is a King today, equally mighty to save. Eighteen hundred years after His great deed of grace to the chief of sinners He is still a King.

"Jesus sits on Zion's hill:
He can save poor sinners still."

He sits upon the throne of mercy in the sovereignty of His grace, in the splendor of His love, in the majesty of His power, passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin. Will you not bow before Him? Here at this moment, I pause to do Him reverence—glory be to the Lord Jesus, for He is the King eternal!

Then he calls Him the King *immortal*. He is the King that ever lives by His own power, and is therefore able to give life to dead souls. Blessed be the name of the Savior that He died for sinners, but equally blessed be His name that He ever lives to make intercession for sinners, and is therefore able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.

The quickened, raised-up spirit cries aloud, "Glory be unto the King immortal, for He has made me immortal by the touch of His life-giving hand!" Because He lives, we shall live also. Our life is hidden in Him, and throughout eternity we shall reign with Him.

Then Paul styles Him the King *invisible*, for as yet we see not all things put under Him, and His reign is perceived rather by faith than by sight. The Lord Jesus is to mortal eyes invisible, and therefore our service must be rendered by the spirit rather than through the senses. He must be trusted if we are to draw near to Him, and we must say of Him, "whom having not seen we love."

An unseen Lord, who can only be known to our faith, has saved us, and will save us, world without end. We have not a King that we have seen or touched, or whose voice we have audibly heard, but ours is a King who is invisible, and yet moves to and fro among us, mighty to save. Thanks be unto the Holy Spirit for giving us eyes of faith to see Him that is invisible, and hearts to trust and to rest upon an invisible Lord!

"Now, now, now, now, now, now, now," that is the word for every saved soul. *Now* unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, be endless glory. Do you not respond to the call by immediate praise? Do you not say, "Awake my glory! Awake, psaltery and harp"? Oh, for a seraph's coal to touch these stammering lips! As a sinner saved by my Lord and King, I would fain pour out my life in a continual stream of praise to my redeeming Lord.

Furthermore, our apostle speaks of *the only wise God*. He is so wise that He saves great sinners to make them patterns of His mercy. He is so wise that He takes bigots and persecutors to make them into apostles. So wise that He makes the wrath of man to praise Him, and the very wickedness of man He uses as a foil to set forth the brightness of the glory of His grace.

Unto the only wise God, wise enough to turn a lion into a lamb, wise enough to make a sinner a saint, a persecutor a preacher, an enemy a friend—to Him be glory. Oh, the wisdom of God in the plan of redemption! It is a deep unfathomable. Compared with it, there is no wisdom elsewhere, and only God is seen to be "only wise."

To Him *be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen*. Unto Him be glory on earth and glory in heaven, honor from all of us poor imperfect beings—and glory from us when He shall have made us perfectly meet to behold His face. Come, lift up your hearts, you saved ones! Begin at once the songs which shall never cease. The saints shall never have done singing, for they remember that they were sinners.

Come, poor sinner, out of the depths extol Him who descended into the depths for you! Chief of sinners, adore Him who is to you the Chief among ten thousand and the Altogether Lovely! You black sinners, who have gone to the very brink of damnation by your abominable sins, rise to the utmost heights of enthusiastic joy in Jesus your Lord! Put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven you—and at the receipt of such a pardon—you shall burst out into new-made doxologies to God your Savior.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." O you guiltiest of the guilty, the apostle Paul speaks to you, and stands before you as the bearer of God's white flag of mercy. Surrender to the King eternal, and there is pardon for you, and deliverance from the wrath to come.

Thirty-five years Paul lived in sin. Twenty years after that, when he was older than I am, he wrote these words, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the

world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Is there not some thirty-five years' old fellow here tonight who had better turn over a new leaf? Is there not some woman here of that age who has had more than enough of sin? Is it not time that you turned unto the Lord and found a new and better life?

Turn them. Lord—turn them, and they shall be turned! Make them live and they shall live unto You, world without end. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ACTS 9:1-31

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—546, 588, 551

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.