IMMEASURABLE LOVE

NO. 1850

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 26, 1885
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON THE EVENING OF JUNE 7, 1885

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,
that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
John 3:16

I WAS very greatly surprised the other day, in looking over the list of texts from which I have preached, to find that I have no record of ever having spoken from this verse. This is all the more singular, because I can truly say that it might be put in the forefront of all my volumes of discourses as the sole topic of my life's ministry. It has been my one and only business to set forth the love of God to men in Christ Jesus.

I heard lately of an aged minister of whom it was said, "Whatever his text, he never failed to set forth God as love, and Christ as the atonement for sin." I wish that much the same may be said of me. My heart's desire has been to sound forth as with a trumpet the good news that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

We are about to meet around the communion table, and I cannot preach from this text anything but a simple Gospel sermon. Can you desire a better preparation for communion? We have fellowship with God and with one another upon the basis of the infinite love which is displayed in Jesus Christ our Lord. The Gospel is the fair white linen cloth which covers the table on which the Communion Feast is set.

The higher truths, those truths which belong to a more enlightened experience, those richer truths which tell of the fellowship of the higher life—all these are helpful to holy fellowship, but I am sure not more so than those elementary and foundation truths which were the means of our first entrance into the kingdom of God.

Babes in Christ and men in Christ here feed upon one common food. Come, you aged saints, be children again. And you that have long known your Lord, take up your first spelling book, and go over your A B C again, by learning that God so loved the world, that he gave his Son to die, that man might live through Him.

I do not call you to an elementary lesson because you have forgotten your letters, but because it is a good thing to refresh the memory, and a blessed thing to feel young again. What the old folks used to call the Christ-cross Row contained nothing but the letters, and yet all the books in the language are made out of that line.

Therefore do I call you back to the cross, and to Him who bled thereon. It is a good thing for us all to return at times to our starting place, and make sure that we are in the way everlasting. The love of our espousals is most likely to continue if we again and again begin where God began with us, and where we first began with God.

It is wise to come to Him afresh, as we came in that first day when, helpless, needy, heavy-laden, we stood weeping at the cross, and left our burden at His pierced feet. There we learned to look, and live, and love. And there would we repeat the lesson till we rehearse it perfectly in glory.

Tonight, we have to talk about the love of God, "God so loved the world." That love of God is a very wonderful thing, especially when we see it set upon a lost, ruined, guilty world. What was there in the

world that God should love it? There was nothing lovable in it. No fragrant flower grew in that arid desert. Enmity to Him, hatred to His truth, disregard of His law, rebellion against His commandments—those were the thorns and briars which covered the waste land, but no desirable thing blossomed there.

Yet, "God loved the world," says the text, "so" loved it, that even the writer of the book of John could not tell us how much. But so greatly, so divinely, did He love it that he gave his Son, His only Son, to redeem the world from perishing, and to gather out of it a people to His praise.

Whence came that love? Not from anything outside of God Himself. God's love springs from Himself. He loves because it is His nature to do so. "God is love." As I have said already, nothing upon the face of the earth could have merited His love, though there was much to merit His displeasure. This stream of love flows from its own secret source in the eternal Deity, and it owes nothing to any earth-born rain or rivulet. It springs from beneath the everlasting throne, and fills itself full from the springs of the infinite. God loved because He would love.

When we inquire why the Lord loved this man or that, we have to come back to our Savior's answer to the question, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in your sight." God has such love in His nature that He must let it flow forth to a world perishing by its own willful sin. And when it flowed forth it was so deep, so wide, so strong, that even inspiration could not compute its measure, and therefore the Holy Spirit gave us that great little word SO, and left us to attempt the measurement, according as we perceive more and more of love divine.

Now, there happened to be an occasion upon which the great God could display His immeasurable love. The world had sadly gone astray, the world had lost itself, the world was tried and condemned. The world was given over to perish, because of its offenses, and there was need for help. The fall of Adam and the destruction of mankind made ample room and verge enough for love almighty.

Amid the ruins of humanity there was space for showing how much JEHOVAH loved the sons of men, for the compass of His love was no less than the world. The object of it no less than to deliver men from going down to the pit, and the result of it no less than the finding of a ransom for them.

The far-reaching purpose of that love was both negative and positive—that, believing in Jesus, men might not perish, but have eternal life. The desperate disease of man gave occasion for the introduction of that divine remedy which God alone could have devised and supplied. By the plan of mercy, and the great gift which was needed for carrying it out, the Lord found means to display His boundless love to guilty men.

Had there been no fall, and no perishing, God might have shown His love to us as He does to the pure and perfect spirits that surround His throne, but He never could have commended His love to us to such an extent as He now does. In the gift of His only-begotten Son, God commended His love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

The black background of sin makes the bright line of love shine out the more clearly. When the lightning writes the name of the Lord with flaming finger across the black brow of the tempest, we are compelled to see it. So when love inscribes the cross upon the jet tablet of our sin, even blind eyes must see that "herein is love."

I might handle my text in a thousand different ways tonight, but for simplicity's sake, and to keep to the one point of setting forth the love of God, I want to make you see how great that love is by five different particulars.

I. The first is the GIFT—"God so loved the world, *that he gave his only begotten Son*."

Men who love much will give much, and you may usually measure the truth of love by its self-denials and sacrifices. That love which spares nothing, but spends itself to help and bless its object, is love indeed, and not the mere name of it. Little love forgets to bring water for the feet, but great love breaks its box of alabaster, and lavishes its precious ointment.

Consider, then, *what this gift was* that God gave. I should have to labor for expression if I were to attempt to set forth to the full this priceless boon, and I will not court a failure by attempting the impossible. I will only invite you to think of the sacred Person whom the Great Father gave in order that

He might prove His love to men. It was His only-begotten Son—His beloved Son, in whom He was well-pleased.

None of us had ever such a son to give. Ours are the sons of men, His was the Son of God. The Father gave His other self, one with Himself. When the great God gave His Son, He gave God Himself, for Jesus is not in His eternal nature less than God. When God gave God for us He gave Himself. What more could He give? God gave His all—He gave Himself. Who can measure this love?

Judge, you fathers, how you love your sons—could you give them to die for your enemy? Judge, you that have an only son, how your hearts are entwined about your first-born, your only-begotten. There was no higher proof of Abraham's love to God than when he did not withhold from God his son, his only son, his Isaac whom he loved. And there can certainly be no greater display of love than for the Eternal Father to give His only-begotten Son to die for us.

No living thing will readily lose its offspring. Man has peculiar grief when his son is taken, has not God yet more? A story has often been told of the fondness of parents for their children. How in a famine in the East a father and mother were reduced to absolute starvation, and the only possibility of preserving the life of the family was to sell one of the children into slavery. So they considered it. The pinch of hunger became unbearable, and their children pleading for bread tugged so painfully at their heart-strings, that they must entertain the idea of selling one to save the lives of the rest.

They had four sons. Who of these should be sold? It must not be the first—how could they spare their first-born? The second was so strangely like his father that he seemed a reproduction of him, and the mother said that she would never part with *him*. The third was so singularly like the mother that the father said he would sooner die than that this dear boy should go into bondage. And as for the fourth, he was their Benjamin, their last, their darling, and they could not part with *him*. They concluded that it were better for them all to die together than willingly to part with any one of their children.

Do you not sympathize with them? I see you do. Yet God so loved us that, to put it very strongly, He seemed to love us better than His only Son, and did not spare Him that He might spare us. He permitted His Son to perish from among men "that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

If you desire to see the love of God in this great procedure you must consider *how He gave His Son*. He did not give His Son, as you might do, to some profession in the pursuit of which you might still enjoy his company. But He gave His Son to exile among men. He sent Him down to yonder manger, united with a perfect manhood, which at the first was in an infant's form. There He slept, where horned oxen fed! The Lord God sent the heir of all things to toil in a carpenter's shop, to drive the nail, and push the plane, and use the saw.

He sent Him down amongst scribes and Pharisees, whose cunning eyes watched Him, and whose cruel tongues scourged Him with base slanders. He sent Him down to hunger, and thirst, amid poverty so dire that He had not where to lay His head. He sent Him down to the scourging and the crowning with thorns, to the giving of His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to those that plucked off the hair.

At length He gave Him up to death—a felon's death, the death of the crucified. Behold that cross, and see the anguish of Him that dies upon it, and mark how the Father has so given Him, that He hides His face from Him, and seems as if He would not own Him! "Lama sabachthani" tells us how fully God gave His Son to ransom the souls of the sinful. He gave Him to be made a curse for us, gave Him that He might die, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God."

Dear sirs, I can understand your giving up your children to go to India on her Majesty's service, or to go out to the Cameroons or the Congo upon the errands of our Lord Jesus. I can well-comprehend your yielding them up even with the fear of a pestilential climate before you, for if they die they will die honorably in a glorious cause.

But could you think of parting with them to die a felon's death, upon a gibbet, execrated by those whom they sought to bless, stripped naked in body, and deserted in mind? Would not that be too much?

Would you not cry, "I cannot part with my son for such wretches as these. Why should he be put to a cruel death for such abominable beings, who even wash their hands in the blood of their best friend?"

Remember that our Lord Jesus died what His countrymen considered to be an accursed death. To the Romans, it was the death of a condemned slave, a death which had all the elements of pain, disgrace, and scorn mingled in it to the uttermost. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Oh, wondrous stretch of love, that Jesus Christ should die!

Yet, I cannot leave this point till I have you notice *when God gave His Son*, for there is love in the time. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." But when did He do that? In His eternal purpose He did this from before the foundation of the world. The words here used, "He gave his only begotten Son," cannot relate exclusively to the death of Christ, for Christ was not dead at the time of the utterance of this third chapter of John.

Our Lord had just been speaking with Nicodemus, and that conversation took place at the beginning of His ministry. The fact is that Jesus was always the gift of God. The promise of Jesus was made in the garden of Eden almost as soon as Adam fell. On the spot where our ruin was accomplished, a Deliverer was bestowed whose heel should be bruised, but who should break the serpent's head beneath His foot.

Throughout the ages the great Father stood to His gift. He looked upon His Only Begotten as man's hope, the inheritance of the chosen seed, who in Him would possess all things. Every sacrifice was God's renewal of His gift of grace, a reassurance that He had bestowed the gift, and would never draw back therefrom.

The whole system of types under the law betokened that in the fullness of time the Lord would in very deed give up His Son, to be born of a woman, to bear the iniquities of His people, and to die the death in their behalf.

I greatly admire this pertinacity of love, for many a man in a moment of generous excitement can perform a supreme act of benevolence, and yet could not bear to look at it calmly, and consider it from year to year—the slow fire of anticipation would have been unbearable. If the Lord should take away yonder dear boy from his mother, she would bear the blow with some measure of patience, heavy as it would be to her tender heart. But suppose that she were credibly informed that on such a day her boy must die, and thus had from year to year to look upon him as one dead—would it not cast a cloud over every hour of her future life?

Suppose also that she knew that he would be hanged upon a tree to die, as one condemned—would it not embitter her existence? If she could withdraw from such a trial, would she not? Assuredly she would. Yet the Lord God spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, doing it in His heart from age to age. Herein is love—love which many waters could not quench—love eternal, inconceivable, infinite!

Now, as this gift refers not only to our Lord's death, but to the ages before it, so it includes also all the ages afterwards. God "so loved the world that he gave"—and still gives—"his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." The Lord is giving Christ away tonight. Oh, that thousands of you may gladly accept the gift unspeakable! Will anyone refuse? This good gift, this perfect gift—can you decline it? Oh, that you may have faith to lay hold on Jesus, for thus He will be yours.

He is God's free gift to all free receivers, a full Christ for empty sinners. If you can but hold out your empty willing hand, the Lord will give Christ to you at this moment. Nothing is freer than a gift. Nothing is more worth having than a gift which comes fresh from the hand of God, as full of effectual power as ever it was. The fountain is eternal, but the stream from it is as fresh as when first the fountain was opened. There is no exhausting this gift.

"Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed church of God

Be saved to sin no more."

See, then, what is the love of God, that He gave His Son from of old, and has never revoked the gift. He stands to His gift, and continues still to give His dear Son to all who are willing to accept Him. Out of the riches of His grace He has given, is giving, and will give the Lord Jesus Christ, and all the priceless gifts which are contained in Him, to all needy sinners who will simply trust Him.

I call upon you from this first point to admire the love of God, because of the transcendent greatness of His gift to the world, even the gift of His only begotten Son.

II. Now notice secondly, and I think I may say, with equal admiration, the love of God in THE PLAN OF SALVATION.

He has put it thus, "That whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The way of salvation is extremely simple to understand, and exceedingly easy to practice, when once the heart is made willing and obedient. The method of the covenant of grace differs as much from that of the covenant of works as light from darkness.

It is not said that God has given His Son to all who will keep His law, for that we could not do, and therefore the gift would have been available to none of us. Nor is it said that He has given His Son to all that experience terrible despair and bitter remorse, for that is not felt by many who nevertheless are the Lord's own people. But the great God has given His own Son, that "whosoever believeth in him" should not perish. Faith, however slender, saves the soul. Trust in Christ is the certain way of eternal happiness.

Now, what is it to believe in Jesus? It is just this—it is to trust yourself with Him. If your hearts are ready, though you have never believed in Jesus before, I trust you will believe in Him now. O Holy Spirit graciously make it so.

What is it to believe in Jesus?

It is, first, to give your *firm and cordial assent* to the truth, that God did send His Son, born of a woman, to stand in the room and stead of guilty men, and that God did cause to put on Him the iniquities of us all, so that He bore the punishment due to our transgressions, being made a curse for us. We must heartily believe the Scripture which says—"The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

I ask for your assent to the grand doctrine of substitution, which is the marrow of the Gospel. Oh, may God the Holy Spirit lead you to give a cordial assent to it at once. For wonderful as it is, it is a fact that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.

Oh that you may rejoice that this is true, and be thankful that such a blessed fact is revealed by God Himself. Believe that the substitution of the Son of God is certain, cavil not at the plan, nor question its validity, or efficacy, as many do. Alas! They kick at God's great sacrifice, and count it a sorry invention.

As for me, since God has ordained to save man by a substitutionary sacrifice, I joyfully agree to His method, and see no reason to do anything else but admire it and adore the Author of it. I joy and rejoice that such a plan should have been thought of, whereby the justice of God is vindicated, and His mercy is set free to do all that He desires. Sin is punished in the person of the Christ, yet mercy is extended to the guilty. In Christ mercy is sustained by justice, and justice satisfied by an act of mercy.

The worldly-wise say hard things about this device of infinite wisdom, but as for me, I love the very name of the cross, and count it to be the center of wisdom, the focus of love, the heart of righteousness. This is a main point of faith—to give a hearty assent to the giving of Jesus to suffer in our place and stead, to agree with all our soul and mind to this way of salvation.

The second thing is that you do *accept this for yourself*. In Adam's sin, you did not sin personally, for you were not then in existence—yet you fell. Neither can you now complain thereof, for you have willingly endorsed and adopted Adam's sin by committing personal transgressions. You have laid your hand, as it were, upon Adam's sin, and made it your own, by committing personal and actual sin.

Thus you perished by the sin of another, which you adopted and endorsed—and in like manner must you be saved by the righteousness of another, which you are to accept and appropriate. Jesus has offered

an atonement, and that atonement becomes yours when you accept it by putting your trust in Him. I want you now to say,

"My faith doth lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine,
While, like a penitent, I stand,
And here confess my sin."

Surely this is no very difficult matter. To say that Christ who hung upon the cross shall be my Christ, my Surety, needs neither stretch of intellect, nor splendor of character—and yet it is the act which brings salvation to the soul.

One more thing is needful, and that is *personal trust*. First comes assent to the truth, then acceptance of that truth for yourself, and then a simple trusting of yourself wholly to Christ, as a substitute. The essence of faith is trust, reliance, dependence. Fling away every other confidence of every sort, save confidence in Jesus.

Do not allow a ghost of a shade of a shadow of a confidence in anything that you can do, or in anything that you can be, but look alone to Him who God has set forth to be the propitiation for sin. This I do at this very moment, will you not do the same? Oh, may the sweet Spirit of God lead you now to trust in Jesus!

See, then, the love of God in putting it in so plain, so easy a way. Oh, you broken, crushed, and despairing sinner, you cannot work, but can you not believe that which is true? You cannot sigh, you cannot cry, you cannot melt your stony heart, but can you not believe that Jesus died for you, and that He can change that heart of yours, and make you a new creature? If you can believe this, then trust in Jesus to do so, and you are saved—for he that believes in Him is justified. "He that believeth in him *hath* everlasting life." He is a saved man. His sins are forgiven him. Let him go his way in peace, and sin no more.

I admire, first, the love of God in the great gift, and then in the great plan by which that gift becomes available to guilty men.

III. Thirdly, the love of God shines forth with transcendent brightness in a third point, namely, in THE PERSONS FOR WHOM THIS PLAN IS AVAILABLE, and for whom this gift is given.

They are described in these words—"Whosoever believeth in him." There is in the text a word which has no limit—"God so loved the world," but then comes in the descriptive limit, which I beg you to notice with care, "He gave his only begotten Son *that whosoever believeth in him* might not perish."

God did not so love the world that any man who does not believe in Christ shall be saved—neither did God so give His Son that any man shall be saved who refuses to believe in Him. See how it is put—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish."

Here is the compass of the love—while every unbeliever is excluded, every believer is included. "Whosoever believeth in him." Suppose there be a man who has been guilty of all the lusts of the flesh to an infamous degree, suppose that he is so detestable that he is only fit to be treated like a moral leper, and shut up in a separate house for fear he should contaminate those who hear or see him. Yet if that man shall believe in Jesus Christ, he shall at once be made clean from his defilement, and shall not perish because of his sin.

And suppose there be another man who, in the pursuit of his selfish motives, has ground down the poor, has robbed his fellow traders, and has even gone so far as to commit actual crime of which the law has taken cognizance, yet if he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ he shall be led to make restitution, and his sins shall be forgiven him.

I once heard of a preacher addressing a company of men in chains, condemned to die for murder and other crimes. They were such a drove of beasts to all outward appearances that it seemed hopeless to

preach to them. Yet were I set to be chaplain to such a wretched company I should not hesitate to tell them that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

O man, if you will believe in Jesus as the Christ, however horrible your past sins have been, they shall be blotted out. You shall be saved from the power of your evil habits, and you shall begin again like a child new born, with a new and true life, which God shall give you.

"Whosoever believeth in him"—that takes you in, my aged friend, now lingering within a few tottering steps of the grave. O grey-headed sinner, if you believe in Him, you shall not perish. The text also includes you, dear boy, who has scarcely entered your teens as yet. If you believe in Him, you shall not perish. That takes you in, fair maiden, and gives you hope and joy while yet young.

That comprehends all of us, provided we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Neither can all the devils in hell find any reason why the man that believes in Christ shall be lost, for it is written, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Do they say, "Lord, he has been so long in coming"? The Lord replies—"Has he come? Then I will not cast him out for all his delays." But Lord, he went back after making a profession. "Has he at length come? Then I will not cast him out for all his backslidings." But Lord, he was a foul-mouthed blasphemer. "Has he come to Me? Then I will not cast him out for all his blasphemies."

But says one, "I take exception to the salvation of this wicked wretch. He has behaved so abominably that in all justice he ought to be sent to hell." Just so. But if he repents of his sin and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, whosoever he may be, he shall not be sent there. He shall be changed in character, so that he shall never perish, but have eternal life.

Now, observe, that this "whosoever" makes a grand sweep, for it encircles all degrees of faith. "Whosoever believeth in him." It may be that he has no full assurance. It may be that he has no assurance at all, but if he has faith, true and childlike, by it he shall be saved. Though his faith be so little that I must put on my spectacles to see it, yet Christ will see it and reward it.

His faith is such a tiny grain of mustard seed that I look and look again but hardly discern it, and yet it brings him eternal life, and it is itself a living thing. The Lord can see within that mustard seed a tree among whose branches the birds of the air shall make their nests.

"My faith is feeble, I confess,
I faintly trust Thy Word;
But wilt Thou pity me the less?
Be that far from Thee, Lord!"

O Lord Jesus, if I cannot take You up in my arms as Simeon did, I will at least touch Your garment's hem as the poor diseased woman did to whom Your healing virtue flowed. It is written, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

That means me. I cannot preach at length to you tonight, but I would preach with strength. Oh that this truth may soak into your souls. Oh you that feel yourselves guilty, and you that feel guilty because you do not feel guilty, you that are broken in heart because your heart will not break, you that feel that you cannot feel, it is to you that I would preach salvation in Christ by faith.

You groan because you cannot groan, but whoever you may be, you are still within the range of this mighty word, that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Thus have I commended God's love to you in those three points—the divine gift, the divine method of saving, and the divine choice of the persons to whom salvation comes.

IV. Now fourthly, another beam of divine love is to be seen in the negative blessing here stated, namely, in THE DELIVERANCE implied in the words, "that whosoever believeth in him should *not perish."*

I understand that word to mean that whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall not perish, though he is ready to perish. His sins would cause him to perish, but he shall never perish. At first, he has a little hope in Christ, but its existence is feeble. It will soon die out, will it not? No, his faith shall not perish, for this promise covers it—"Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish."

The penitent has believed in Jesus, and therefore he has begun to be a Christian. "Oh," cries an enemy, "let him alone. He will soon be back among us, he will soon be as careless as ever." Listen. "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish," and therefore he will not return to his former state. This proves the final perseverance of the saints, for if the believer ceased to be a believer he would perish, and as he cannot perish, it is clear that he will continue a believer.

If you believe in Jesus, you shall never leave off believing in Him, for that would be to perish. If you believe in Him, you shall never delight in your old sins, for that would be to perish. If you believe in Him, you shall never lose spiritual life. How can you lose that which is everlasting? If you were to lose it, it would prove that it was not everlasting, and you would perish, and thus you would make this word to be of no effect.

Whosoever with his heart believes in Christ is a saved man, not for tonight only, but for all the nights that ever shall be, and for that dread night of death, and for that solemn eternity which draws so near. "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish," but he shall have a life that cannot die, a justification that cannot be disputed, an acceptance which shall never cease.

What is it to perish? It is to lose all hope in Christ, all trust in God, all light in life, all peace in death, all joy, all bliss, all union with God. This shall never happen to you if you believe in Christ. If you believe, you shall be chastened when you do wrong, for every child of God comes under discipline, and what son is there whom the father chastens not? If you believe, you may doubt and fear as to your state, as a man on board a ship may be tossed about, but you have gotten on board a ship that never can be wrecked.

He that has union with Christ has union with perfection, omnipotence, and glory. He that believes is a member of Christ—will Christ lose His members? How should Christ be perfect if He lost even His little finger? Are Christ's members to rot off, or to be cut off? Impossible. If you have faith in Christ you are a partaker of Christ's life, and you cannot perish.

If men were trying to drown me, they could not drown my foot as long as I had my head above water. And as long as our Head is above water, up yonder in the eternal sunshine, the least limb of His body can never be destroyed. He that believes in Jesus is united to Him, and he must live because Jesus lives.

Oh what a word is this, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." I feel that I have a grand Gospel to preach to you when I read that whosoever believes in Jesus shall not perish.

I would not give two pins for that trumpery, temporary salvation which some proclaim, which floats the soul for a time, and then ebbs away to apostasy. I do not believe that the man who is once in Christ may live in sin and delight in it, and yet be saved. That is abominable teaching, and none of mine.

But I believe that the man who is in Christ will *not* live in sin, for he is saved from it. Nor will he return to his old sins and abide in them, for the grace of God will continue to save him from his sins. Such a change is wrought by regeneration that the newborn man cannot abide in sin, nor find comfort in it, but he loves holiness and makes progress in it.

The Ethiopian may change his skin, and the leopard his spots, but only grace divine can work the change. And when divine grace has done the deed the blackamore will remain white, and the leopard's spots will never return.

It would be as great a miracle to undo the work of God as to do it, and to destroy the new creation would require as great a power as to make it. As only God can create, so only God can destroy, and He

will never destroy the work of His own hands. Will God begin to build and not finish? Will He commence warfare, and end it before He has won the victory?

What would the devil say if Christ were to begin to save a soul and fail in the attempt? If there should come to be souls in hell that were believers in Christ, and yet did perish—it would cast a cloud upon the diadem of our exalted Lord. It cannot, shall not, be. Such is the love of God, that whosoever believes in His dear Son shall not perish, in this assurance we greatly rejoice.

V. The last commendation of His love lies in *the positive*—IN THE POSSESSION.

I shall have to go in a measure over the same ground again. Let me therefore be far shorter. God gives to every man that believes in Christ everlasting life. The moment you believe, there trembles into your bosom a vital spark of heavenly flame which never shall be quenched. In that same moment when you do cast yourself on Christ, Christ comes to you in the living and incorruptible Word which lives and abides forever. Though there should drop into your heart but one drop of the heavenly water of life, remember this—He has said it who cannot lie—"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

When I first received everlasting life I had no idea what a treasure had come to me. I knew that I had obtained something very extraordinary, but of its superlative value I was not aware. I did but look to Christ in the little chapel, and I received eternal life. I looked to Jesus, and He looked on me—and we were one forever.

That moment my joy surpassed all bounds, just as my sorrow had aforetime driven me to an extreme of grief. I was perfectly at rest in Christ, satisfied with Him, and my heart was glad. But I did not know that this grace was everlasting life till I began to read in the Scriptures, and to know more fully the value of the jewel which God had given me.

The next Sunday I went to the same chapel, as it was very natural that I should. But I never went afterwards, for this reason, that during my first week the new life that was in me had been compelled to fight for its existence, and a conflict with the old nature had been vigorously carried on. This I knew to be a special token of the indwelling of grace in my soul.

But in that same chapel I heard a sermon upon, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And the preacher declared that Paul was not a Christian when he had that experience. Babe as I was, I knew better than to believe so absurd a statement. What but divine grace could produce such a sighing and crying after deliverance from indwelling sin?

I felt that a person who could talk such nonsense knew little of the life of a true believer. I said to myself, "What! am I not alive because I feel a conflict within me? I never felt this fight when I was an unbeliever. When I was not a Christian I never groaned to be set free from sin. This conflict is one of the surest evidences of my new birth, and yet this man cannot see it. He may be a good exhorter to sinners, but he cannot feed believers."

I resolved to go into that pasture no more, for I could not feed therein. I find that the struggle becomes more and more intense—each victory over sin reveals another army of evil tendencies, and I am never able to sheathe my sword, nor cease from prayer and watchfulness.

I cannot advance an inch without praying my way, nor keep the inch I gain without watching and standing fast. Grace alone can preserve and perfect me. The old nature will kill the new nature if it can, and to this moment the only reason why my new nature is not dead is this—because it cannot die. If it could have died, it would have been slain long ago. But Jesus said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life." "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life," and therefore the believer cannot die.

The only religion which will save you is one that you cannot leave, because it possesses you, and will not leave you. If you hold a doctrine which you can give up, give it up. But if the doctrines are burnt into you so that as long as you live you must hold them, and so that if you were burnt every ash would hold that same truth in it, because you are impregnated with it, then you have found the right thing.

You are not a saved man unless Christ has saved you forever. But that which has such a grip of you that its grasp is felt in the core of your being is the power of God. To have Christ living in you, and the truth ingrained in your very nature—O sirs, *this* is the thing that saves the soul, and nothing short of it.

It is written in the text, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." What is this but a life that shall last through your three-score years and ten, a life that shall last you should you outlive a century, a life that will still flourish when you lie at the grave's mouth, a life that will abide when you have quitted the body, and left it rotting in the tomb, a life that will continue when your body is raised again, and you shall stand before the judgement seat of Christ, a life that will outshine those stars and yon sun and moon, a life that shall be co-eval with the life of the Eternal Father?

As long as there is a God, the believer shall not only exist, but live. As long as there is a heaven, you shall enjoy it. As long as there is a Christ, you shall live in His love, and as long as there is an eternity, you shall continue to fill it with delight.

God bless you and help you to believe in Jesus.—Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 3

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—291, 538, 539

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.