

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN

NO. 449

A SERMON

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*“And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?
And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.
And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near.
And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.
Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves,
that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.”
Genesis 45:3-5*

JOSEPH is a very eminent type of Christ. When he was hated of his brethren because he protested against their sins, and when they sold him for twenty pieces of silver, he was doubtlessly a portrait of the despised and rejected of men whom His disciple betrayed. Afterwards in his temptations in the house of Potiphar, in the slander and consequent imprisonment in the round house of Pharaoh's prison, in his after advancement, till he became lord over all the land of Egypt, we clearly see our blessed Lord right well portrayed.

Indeed, so well is the picture drawn that there is scarcely a stroke even though it should seem to be a mere accidental incident of the picture which has not its symbolic meaning. You shall read the history of Joseph through twenty times, and yet you shall not have exhausted the type, you shall begin again and find still some fresh likeness between this despised son of Rachel, and the Son of Mary who is also God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

It is not however my business this morning to enter into a full description of Joseph as the type of Christ, I have a rather more practical object in hand. I shall endeavor in the Lord's strength to deal with tried and troubled consciences, and if it shall be my happy lot to be the means of cheering some sorrowing heart, and opening some blind eye to see the personal beauties, and the intense affection of the Lord Jesus, I shall be but too glad to have been God's messenger to your hearts.

To tarry no longer, but to proceed at once to so good an errand, hopeful that God will help us to accomplish it, I shall direct your attention to the picture before us as being a representation of the way in which the Lord Jesus Christ deals with His erring brethren, those whom His Father has given Him, and whom He has purchased with His blood.

It seems to me that the condition of Judah and his brethren is a very notable picture of *the state of sinners when they are awakened by the Holy Spirit*, that the disguise which Joseph assumed when he dealt so roughly with them, is *a masterly representation of the manner in which Jesus Christ, the loving one, seems to deal hardly and harshly with poor coming sinners*, and that thirdly, the manifestation which Joseph afterward made to his brethren is but a faint representation of the *declaration of love which Jesus makes to repenting spirits when at last He reveals Himself to them in mercy*.

I. We think that the condition and posture of Judah and his brethren at the feet of the throne of Joseph, trembling in alarm, well describe THE CONDITION AND POSITION OF EVERY TRULY AWAKENED SINNER.

By different methods Joseph had at last awakened the consciences of his ten brethren. The point which seemed to have been brought out most prominently before their consciences was this, “We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.” And though, in the speech which Judah

made, it was not necessary to accuse themselves of crime, yet in the confession, "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants," Joseph could see evidently enough, that the recollection of the pit and of the sale to the Ishmaelites was vividly before their mind's eye.

Now, beloved, when the Lord the Holy Ghost arouses sinners' consciences, this is the great sin which He brings to mind, "Of sin because they believed not on me." Once the careless soul thought it had very little to answer for, "I have not done much amiss," said he, "a speedy reformation may wipe out all that has been awry, and my faults will soon be forgotten and forgiven," but now, on a sudden, the conscience perceives that the soul is guilty of despising, rejecting, and slaughtering Christ.

What a sin is this, my brethren! And what pangs we endured when first this crime was laid to our charge, and we were compelled to plead guilty to it! O Lord Jesus, did I accuse You to Your enemies? Did I betray You? Did I adjudge You to the cross? Were my cries virtually heard in the streets, "Crucify him, crucify him"? Is it true that my sins were the nails which fastened You to the tree? Is it so, that I had a share in Your bloody murder—a tragedy by which the world became a deicide, and man the murderer of his own Redeemer?

It is even so, if our conscience be in a right state, we are forced to acknowledge it. Do you not know, sinner, every time you do prefer the pleasures of this world to the joys of heaven, you do spit in the face of Christ. Every time when to get gain in your business, you do an unrighteous thing, you are like Judas selling Him for thirty pieces of silver. Every time you make a false profession of religion, you give Him a traitor's kiss. Every sermon which you hear, which makes a temporary impression on your mind, which impression you afterwards blot out, makes you more and more Christ's despiser and rejecter.

Every word you have spoken against Him, every hard thought you have had of Him, has helped to complete your complicity with the great crowd which gathered around the cross of Calvary, to mock and jeer the Lord of life and glory.

Now, if there be any sin which will make a man deeply penitent, I think that this sin when it is really brought home to the conscience will affect us. To slay Him who did me no hurt, the holy and the harmless One! To assist in hounding to the tree the man who scattered blessings with both His hands, and who had no thought, nor care, nor love, save for those who hated Him. To pierce the hands that touched the leper, and that broke the bread, and multiplied the fishes! To fasten to the accursed wood the feet which had often carried His weary body upon painful journeys of mercy! Oh! this is base indeed.

But when I think He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*, that He chose *me*, before the stars were made, or the heavens upreared upon their everlasting arches, and that I, when He came to me in the Gospel, should have rejected and despised, and even mocked Him, this is intensely, infinitely cruel. Jesus, You do forgive me, but I can never forgive myself for such a sin as this.

Dear friends, has the Holy Spirit made you feel that you are guilty? If so, I am glad of it, for when we once feel guilty concerning the death of Jesus our brother, it is not long before He will reveal Himself to us in mercy, blotting out our sin forever.

A second thought however, which tended to make Joseph's brethren feel in a wretched plight was this, that they now discovered that they were in Joseph's hands. There stood Joseph, second to none but Pharaoh in all the empire of Egypt. Legions of warriors were at his beck and command, if he should say, "Take these men, bind them hand and foot," or "Cut them in pieces," none could interpose, he was to them as a lion, and they were as his prey, which he could rend to pieces at his will.

Now, to the awakened sinner, this also is a part of his misery, that he is entirely in the hands of that very Christ whom he once despised, for that Christ who died has now become the judge of the quick and dead, He has power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to as many as His Father has given Him. The Father judges no man, He has committed all judgment to the Son.

Do you see this, sinner, He whom you despised is your Master? The moth beneath your finger, which you can crush, and that cannot escape from you, may well fear, but thus are you beneath the fingers of the crucified Son of God. Today He whom you have despised, has you absolutely at His will, He has but to will it and the breath is gone from your nostrils, and while yet in your seat you are a

corpse, and more, at His will, you are in hell amidst its flames. Oh! what an awful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, for even our God is a consuming fire.

Remember, sinner, you are in His hands in such a way that except you repent, and receive Him—except you “Kiss the Son,” at once He may be angry, and you may “perish in the way when his wrath is kindled but a little.” For lo! He comes riding upon the clouds of judgment. Jesus of Nazareth comes, robed in majesty, the books shall be opened, and He shall divide the nations as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats.

Then in vain shall you ask the pitiless rocks to give you shelter in their flinty bowels, or the stern mountains to conceal you in their hollow caverns, you shall seek to hide from the face of Him that sits upon the throne, but neither heaven nor earth, nor hell shall afford you shelter, for everywhere the eyes of Him that wept shall follow you like flames of fire, and the hand of Him that was once nailed to the tree shall crush you as a cluster in the hand of the gleaner of grapes. You shall feel that it is an awful thing to have turned longsuffering mercy into righteous hatred. You shall know that to have rejected mercy is to have drawn down upon your head the full fury of the justice of the avenger.

Yet further, there was another thought which combined to make Joseph’s brethren feel still more wretched, being in his hands, they felt also in their souls that they deserved to be there. We are verily guilty, said they. They offered no apologies, nor extenuations, for that one sin—that crying sin. They might for the matter of Benjamin, but they said we are verily guilty concerning our brother.

Oh! my brothers Christ, you know what it is to have the Holy Spirit in your heart, making you plead guilty. Well do I remember when I stood at the bar of God’s justice and heard the accusation read out against me. Nothing could I answer, but guilty only. Indeed, my guilt was so plainly before my eyes that my lips could not frame a denial, and had the judge put on the black cap that day and said, “Take him back to the place from whence he came, and give him his portion with the tormentors,” I should have been lost, but the great God would have been most just and righteous.

Careless sinners may talk about the harshness of God in condemning man to punishment, but once let the Holy Ghost show man the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and you will never hear a word about that. No! the sinner cries, “Lord, whatever You can do with me, You cannot chastise me more than I deserve. Though You should crush me beneath Your feet, or though you should pile up the fires of Tophet, and Your breath should be as the stream of brimstone to kindle it, yet You could not curse too heavily or consume too fiercely Your traitorous, rebellious, depraved, and infamous creature. I deserve everything except Your love and Your pity, and if You give me these, I shall be compelled to say, forever and ever, that You gave grace to the most undeserving—the most unworthy rebel that ever profaned Your universe.”

Brethren, when conscience goes against a man, he has a stern enemy to contend with. When it is written, “David’s heart smote him,” such blows come home. So is it with every sinner that is truly led to see his own state. He will feel that he is not only guilty, and that he is in the hands of one from whom he cannot escape, but he will feel that it is right he should be so, and the only wonder he will have in his own mind is that he has been out of hell so long, that the longsuffering and mercy of God have been so marvelously extended to him.

Under a sense of all these things—note what the ten brethren did. They began to plead. Ah! nothing makes a man pray like a sense of sin. When we stand before God guilty, then our groans and sighs and tears make true and real supplication.

I fear there are some of you present here who have from infancy repeated a form of prayer who have never prayed in your lives, ay, and some of you too who use an extemporary utterance and yet who never pray.

I do not think men generally pray as a matter of duty. When men fall down in the streets and break their limbs they do not cry out as a matter of duty, they cry because they cannot help it, and it seems to me that such a prayer God hears, that comes out of a man because he cannot help praying—when the deep agony of his spirit makes him groan, when he cannot be kept from his secret chamber, when he

would sooner pray behind a hedge, or in a field, or in an garret, or even in the streets, than not pray at all. If there were an edict issued that no man should pray at all, the really praying man would go into Daniel's lions' den, for he could no more cease to pray than cease to breathe. Can the hart in the wilderness cease from panting for the water brooks?

Can a sick child cease from crying for its mother? So the living soul cries after God because he cannot help panting after Him. He must pray or he must die, he must find grace or perish and therefore in his sore extremity—from an intense and awful agony of heart he cries again and again, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” This is the prayer that God hears, such are the petitions which are acceptable to the Lord JEHOVAH.

Brethren, will you look at your own selves and at your own experience this morning and see if you ever were brought down to the spot where Judah and his brethren stood, for I fear we have never been brought rightly unless we have been brought here. He that was never condemned I think was never forgiven, he who never confessed his guilt cannot have had a pardon, and if we have never trembled before Jesus the judge, we can never have rejoiced before Jesus the elder brother.

II. We turn, however, now to remark that THE SINGULARLY ROUGH BEHAVIOR OF JOSEPH IS A NOTABLE REPRESENTATION OF THE WAY IN WHICH CHRIST DEALS WITH SOULS UNDER CONVICTION OF SIN.

Joseph always was their brother, always loved them, had a heart full of compassion to them even when he called them spies. Kind words were often hastening to his lips, yet for their good he showed himself to be as a stranger and even as an enemy, so that he might bring them very low and prostrate before the throne.

My dear friends, our Lord Jesus Christ often does this with truly awakened souls whom He means to save. Perhaps to some of you who are today conscious of guilt but not of mercy, Christ seems as a stern and angry judge, you think of Him as one who can by no means spare the guilty, your only idea of Him is of one who would say to you, “Get thee behind me, Satan, thou savorest not the things that be of God.”

When you read the Scriptures, your mind perhaps is led to dwell upon His denunciations rather than upon His promises. Such dreadful chapters as the twenty-fifth of Matthew are more upon your mind than those blessed portions in John, such as, “Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me.” When you do think of Jesus it is not as of one who is saying, “Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” But you rather think you hear Him say, “Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.”

Poor hearts, you discern all the sternness of His upbraidings, but not the softness and gentleness of His compassion. You see Him dealing fiercely with Pharisees, and reason that He will be even more severe with you, nay, you think you have had some proofs that the Lord is not willing to bless you.

As Joseph took Simeon before their eyes and put him in prison, as he laid heavy things to his brethren's charge, and said to them, “Ye are spies, to see the nakedness of the land are you come; by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies,” and as he demanded of them to bring Benjamin down or else he would never see their face again, so you think that Jesus Christ has treated you. You went to Him in prayer, but instead of getting an answer He seemed to shut up your prayer in prison and keep it like Simeon bound before your eyes.

Yea, instead of telling you that there was mercy, He said to you as with a harsh voice, “It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs.” He appeared to shut His ear to your petitions and to have none of your requests, and to say to you, “Except ye renounce a right eye sin and a right arm pleasure, and give up your Benjamin delights, ye shall see My face no more.”

And you have come to think, poor soul, that Christ is hard and stern, and whereas He is ever the gentle Mediator receiving sinners and eating with them, whereas His usual voice is, “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest,” to you He seems no such person, for He has put on a disguise, and you understand not who and what He is.

But you will perceive, brethren, in reading the narrative, that even when Joseph disguised himself there was still much kindness discoverable in his conduct, so to the awakened sinner, even while Jesus appears to deal hardly, there is something sweet and encouraging amid it all. Do you not remember what Joseph did for his brethren? Though he was their judge he was their host too, he invited them to a great feast, he gave to Benjamin five times as much as to any of them, and they feasted even at the king's table. And so, poor sinner under an awakened conscience, you have occasional feastings at the table of hope.

I know while I was under distress myself I did have some glimpses of hope. Oh, there were times when His name was very sweet! There were seasons in the thick darkness when some few rays of light flashed in, when like the dog that eats the crumbs under the table, now and then there fell a big crust, and my soul was feasted for a while. So has it been with you. Christ has rebuked and chastened you, but still He has sent you messes from His royal table.

Ay, and there is another thing He has done for you, He has given you corn to live upon while under bondage. You would have despaired utterly if it had not been for some little comfort that He afforded you, perhaps you would have put an end to your life—you might have gone desperately into worse sin than before, had it not been that He filled your sack at seasons with the corn of Egypt.

But mark, He has never taken any of your money yet, and He never will. He has always put your money in the sack's mouth. You have come with your resolutions and with your good deeds, but when He has given you comfort He has always taken care to show you that He did not confer it because of any good thing you had in your hands. When you went down and brought double money with you, yet the double money too was returned. He would have nothing from you, He has taught you as much as that, and you begin to feel now that if He should bless you, it must be without money and without price.

Ay, poor soul, and there is one other point upon which your eye may rest with pleasure, He has sometimes spoken to you comfortably. Did not Joseph say to Benjamin, "God be gracious unto thee, my son"? And so, sometimes, under a consoling sermon, though as yet you are not saved, you have had a few drops of comfort.

Oh! you have gone sometimes out of the house of prayer as light as the birds of the air, and though you could not say, "He is mine and I am his," yet you had a sort of inkling that the match would come off one day. He had said—"God be gracious to thee, my son." You half thought, though you could not speak it loud enough to let your heart distinctly hear it, you half thought that the day would come when your sins would be forgiven, when the prisoner should leap to lose his chains, when you should know Joseph your brother to have accepted and loved your soul.

I say then, Christ disguises Himself to poor awakened sinners just as Joseph did, but even amidst the sternness of His manner, for awhile there is such a sweet mixture of love, that no troubled one need run into despair.

But dear friends, I am met by a question. Someone asks, "Why does Jesus thus deal with some coming sinners? Why does He not always meet them at once as He does with some, while they are yet a great way off, and fall upon their necks and kiss them?" Perhaps we can answer this question by another. Why did Joseph thus hide himself, and not manifest himself to his own flesh? The answer is here, Joseph knew there was a prophecy to be fulfilled, the sun, and moon, and eleven stars must make obeisance to him, and their sheaves must bow down before his sheaf.

So there is a prophecy concerning us—"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth," and were it not that Christ does thus deal roughly with us, perhaps we should never bow ourselves with that deep humiliation and prostration of spirit, which is necessary for *our* good as well for *His* glory.

I am sure that any of us who have passed through this state of mind, feel it a privilege to bow down before Him. All hail, Jesu! We bring forth the royal diadem and crown You, Lord of all. We wish not to dispute Your sovereignty, nor to interfere with Your absolute dominion. Give Him all the glory, give

Him all the honor. Our spirit bows down with even deeper reverence than the cherubim, who bow before Him with veiled faces, crying, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.”

Besides, my dear friends, Joseph’s brethren would not have been convinced of their sin at all, if it had not been for this. It was needful that they should know the greatness of the wrong, that they might know the value of the free pardon. The delay of manifested mercy has done much good to many of the saints, it compelled them to search the fountains of the great deep of their natural depravity, and led them to admire the freeness and richness of divine grace.

We should have been but poor fools in Christ’s school, if it had not been for the rod with which He whipped us, and the ruler with which He knocked our knuckles in our early days. That blackboard of conviction was a useful implement enough in the school house. If He had not ploughed deep, there never would have been a hundredfold harvest. Since He would build a high house of joy in our hearts, there was a “needs be” that He should dig out deep foundations of sorrow, and He did it for our lasting and perpetual good.

Could John Bunyan have ever written “Pilgrim’s Progress,” if he had not felt abounding sin, and rejoiced in “Grace abounding?” Could he have ever compiled such a wondrous work as the “Holy War,” if he had not himself felt all the attacks which the Town of Mansoul knew, and heard the beating of the hell drum in his own ears, just as the Mansoulians did, whose tale he tells?

Masters of divinity are not to be made by shallow experience. We make not sailors on dry land, nor veterans in times of peace. Christ’s rugged warriors who shall do great exploits for Him, must be like the Spartan youths, they must be brought up by a Spartan training, and flogged, and made to bear the yoke in their youth, that afterwards they may be good soldiers of Christ, able to endure hardness and to achieve great victories. This that looks so cruel in Christ is only masked mercy. He puts the vizard on His face, and looks like an enemy, but a friendly heart is there still towards His chosen.

Let us remember then, if we are today guilty and moaning our guiltiness—we ought not to forget that Christ is a brother though He seems to be an enemy, that He loves us with a pure and perfect love though He speaks hardly to us. If He does not answer our prayers He still intends to do it, if no pity or compassion are expressed, yet beyond a doubt He is not flinty of soul, nor is He hard to be moved to commiserate His children.

III. I now come to the last point, and here may God be pleased to let light break in upon darkened souls. JOSEPH AFTERWARDS REVEALED HIMSELF TO HIS BRETHREN, AND SO THE LORD JESUS DOES IN DUE TIME SWEETLY REVEAL HIMSELF TO POOR CONSCIENCE-STRICKEN PENITENT SINNERS.

The reading of the chapter which we heard this morning is enough to bring tears to all eyes that are connected with tender hearts. I must acknowledge that when reading the chapter in my own study, I could not resist weeping copiously at the picture which the Holy Ghost has so admirably drawn. Those ten poor trembling brothers, Judah’s speech just finished, and all of them on their knees supplicating the clearing of the court house, and then Joseph, whose soul was swelling with such grief and love, bursting out with that “I am Joseph.”

What a scene for tender souls! Though he must have spoken in deep affection, yet, “I am Joseph,” must have fallen on their ears like thunder. “*Joseph!* Where are we now? Better for us that we were in a lion’s den, than here with him whom we mocked, saying, ‘Behold, this dreamer cometh,’ with him whom we sold, and dipped his coat of many colors in blood, and then took it to his father, saying, ‘See whether this be thy son’s coat or no.’” Well might they tremble!

And then, look at the tenderness of Joseph when he says to them again, while they are retiring from him afraid, “I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt, I pray you come near to me.” You hear his pathetic speech as he discovers his brotherhood and relationship, and then you see that generous embrace when, beginning with Benjamin, his next of kin, his own uterine brother, he afterwards weeps with all the rest, and sends them home with favors, enriched and happy.

Dear friends, I say this is but a picture of what Christ does to some of us, and of what He is prepared to do to others of you who are trembling at His feet. Notice that this discovery was made *secretly*. Christ does not show Himself to sinners in a crowd, every man must see the love of Christ for himself, we go to hell in bundles, but we go to heaven one by one. Each man must personally know in his own heart his own guilt, and privately and secretly, where no other heart can join with him, he must hear words of love from Christ. “Go and sin no more.” “Thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee.”

Mark, that as this was done in secret, the first thing Joseph showed them was *his name*. “I am Joseph.” Blessed is that day to the sinner when Christ says to him, “I am Jesus, I am the Savior,” when the soul discerns instead of the lawgiver, the Redeemer, when it looks to the wounds which its own sin has made, and sees the ransom-price flowing in drops of gore, looks to the head its own iniquity had crowned with thorns, and sees beaming there a crown of glory provided for the sinner.

Sinner, poor troubled sinner, Jesus speaks to you this morning, from His very cross where He bled for you, He says, “I am Jesus, look to Me, trust Me and be saved, repose your confidence wholly upon Me, I will wash you from your sin, carry you safely through time, and land you gloriously in eternity.”

Having revealed his name, the next thing he did was to reveal his relationship, “I am Joseph, *your brother*.” Oh, blessed is that heart which sees Jesus to be its brother, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, the son of Mary as well as the Son of God. Sinner, whom the Holy Ghost has awakened, Christ is your brother, He feels for you, He has a fellow sympathy with you in the present pangs that wring your heart. He loves you, He loved you before you knew anything of Him, He has given you the best proof of that love in that He has redeemed you with His blood.

And revealing his relationship, he also displays *his affection*. “Does my father yet live?” As a brother does he remembers the head of the household. Jesus tells you that the brotherhood between His soul and yours is not fanciful or metaphorical, but lets His heart go out to you. Penitent sinner, can you believe it? Jesus loves you—loves you though you hated Him. Poor awakened sinner, do you think it possible? *It is*. It is not only possible, but certain. He who is heaven’s Lord, before whom the angels bow, loves you.

I remember one man who was converted to God, who told me that the means of his conversion was hearing a hymn read one Sabbath morning in the congregation, when we were worshipping in Exeter Hall, and that hymn was this—“Jesus, *lover of my soul*,” and just those words struck him. “Does He love my soul? Oh!” said he, “nothing had ever broken me before, but the thought that Jesus loved me was too much for me. I could not help giving my heart to Him.”

The old school men used to teach that it was impossible for any man to know that another loved him without returning the love in some degree. And surely, sinner, though you feel yourself to be the vilest wretch on earth, when we tell you that it is, “a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief,” this should be a reason why your heart should go out to Him. He loves you, oh quickened, convinced sinner. Oh, trust Him, and taste that love in your own heart.

And then will you please notice, that having thus proved his affection, he gave them *an invitation to approach*. “Come near to me, I pray you.” You are getting away in the corner. You want to hide away in the chamber alone, you do not want to tell anybody about your sorrow. Jesus says, “Come near to Me, I pray you. Do not hold your griefs away from Me. Tell Me what it is you want. Confess to Me your guilt, ask Me for pardon if you want it. Come near to Me, do not be afraid. I could not smite with a hand that bought you, I could not spurn you with the foot that was nailed for you to the tree. Come to Me!”

Ah! this is the hardest work in the world, to get a sinner to come near to Christ. I thought myself that He was such a hard, hard Christ, and that He wanted me to do so much before I might come to Him. When I heard that gracious message, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth,” my heart ventured to look, and oh! joy of joys, the burden rolled away, the sin was blotted out, my soul stood accepted in Christ. “Come near to Me I pray thee.”

Oh, that I knew where a broken heart was this morning! I think I would point him out, and look him in the face, and say in Jesu’s name, “Poor sinner, come near to Me, I pray thee.” Oh, wherefore do you

stay when Jesus invites? Wherefore do you tarry in your despair when Jesus bids you come to Him? Shall the prisoner hug his chains? Shall the captive cleave to his dungeon? Arise! be free! arise, He calls you—sinner, come near to Jesus. Salvation is in Him, and as He bids you, take it.

I want you to notice again, having given the invitation, what *consolation* Joseph gave! He did not say, “I am not angry with you, I forgive you,” he said something sweeter than that—“Be not angry *with yourselves*,” as much as to say, “As for me, you need not question about that, be not grieved nor angry with *yourselves*.”

So my blessed, my adorable Master, says to a poor, cast down, dejected sinner—“As for My forgiving you, that is done. My heart is made of tenderness, My bowels melt with love, forgive yourself, be not grieved nor angry with yourself, it is true you have sinned, but I have died, it is true you have destroyed yourself, but I have saved you. Weep no more, dry those eyes and sing aloud—

*‘I will praise Thee every day,
Now Thine anger’s turned away:
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding sacrifice.*

*“Jesus has become at length
My Salvation and my strength;
And His praises shall prolong,
While I live, my pleasant song.”*

Dear friends, last of all, having thus given them the consolation, he gave a quietus for their understanding in *an explanation*. He says, “It was not you, it was God that sent me hither.” So does Christ say to the poor soul that feels itself guilty of the Lord’s crucifixion. “It was not you,” says He, “It was God that sent Me to preserve your lives with a great deliverance.”

Man was the second agent in Christ’s death, but God was the great first worker, for He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, man did it to destroy righteousness, but God did it to save even the ungodly. Man has the crime, but God has the triumphing—man rules, but God overrules. The gall has become honey, out of the eater has come forth sweetness. Death is destroyed by Jesus’ death, hell upturned by hell’s blackest deed.

Sinner, Christ died to save you with a great deliverance, what say you? Are you willing to come to Him? if so, He made you willing. Do you say, “But what is it to come?”—to come to Christ is to trust Him. Are you willing to renounce yourself, and your sin, and trust Christ, and take Him to have and to hold, for better for worse, through life and through death, in time and in eternity?

Does your heart say, “Yes”? Will you come to this man? Shall there be a match made of it this morning? Shall your heart be affianced and married into Christ? Ah! then, put this ring of promise on your finger and go away affianced unto Christ, and this is the ring, “Though thy sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool, though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow.”

I feel this morning as though my Master had given me such a sweet message that I cannot tell it as I would, but it may be that there is some soul here that is like a little flower which has opened its cup to catch the dew drop, and it will be good for such a soul. It may be there is a heart here that has been in darkness, and though it be but a candle I can bring, yet that light shall be pleasant to its poor eyes so long used to this horrid gloom.

Oh! that some heart here would trust the Lord Jesus. Is there none? Must we go back, and say in the closet, “LORD, who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?” Surely, there is one. Perhaps it is a stranger here, of whom I shall never hear again in this world. Well, but the Lord shall hear of it, and He shall have the praise. Perhaps it is one that has long sat in this house of prayer, invulnerable up till now. Perhaps the arrow has found a joint in the harness.

O soul! by Him that stretches out His arms of love to you, and by the grace that moves you now to run into those arms, come to Him. “Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves.” It was God that put Christ to death, that He might save you with a great deliverance. Trust Jesus, and you are saved, and you shall give Him praise, world without end. Amen.

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.