

“ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED”
NO. 471

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“He has made us accepted in the Beloved.”
Ephesians 1:6. (NKJV)

“THE Beloved!” This was a golden name which the ancient Church, in her most joyous moments, was known to give to the Anointed of the Lord. When the time of the singing of birds was come, and the voice of the turtle was heard in her land, *her* love note was sweeter than either bird or turtle, as she sung, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His: He feeds among the lilies.” Ever in her song of songs does she call Him by that delightful name, “My Beloved!” Even in the long winter, when idolatry had withered the garden of the Lord, her prophets found space to cease from uttering the thunders of judgment, to lay aside the burden of the Lord for a little season, and to say, as Isaiah did, “Now will I sing to my Well-Beloved a song of my Beloved touching His vineyard.” Though the saints had never seen His face, though as yet He was not made flesh, nor had dwelt among us, nor had man beheld His glory—the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of divine grace and truth, yet, He was the consolation of Israel, the hope and joy of all the chosen, the Beloved of all those who were upright before the Most high! Brothers and sisters, in the summer days of the church, let us not fail to call Christ our Beloved! Both in our prayers, and public songs, and in those nearer and dearer approaches which we make to Him in private—when we may use more tender epithets than we would venture to do in a mixed assembly, we are likely to speak of Christ as the best Beloved of our soul—and to feel that He is to us very precious, the “chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.” So true is it that the Church loves Christ, and claims Him as her Beloved, that the apostle dares to defy the whole universe to separate her from the love of Christ, and declares that neither persecutions, distress, affliction, peril, or the sword, have been able to do it. No, he joyously boasts, “In all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who has loved us.” And he concludes his bold utterance by declaring that he is persuaded that “Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” We think we should not be trespassing into the realms of imagination if we ventured to say that Christ is also the Beloved of the angels! To Him, cherubim and seraphim continually cry, for in that thrice-repeated strain, there is a word for the second person of the Trinity, as well as for the first and the third—“Holy, *holy*, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.” And, certainly, the blood-bought call Him their Beloved, for their incessant strain is, “Unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever.”

Yet, my dear friends the main reason why Christ is thus styled by the Holy Spirit, “the Beloved,” doubtless is because He is the Beloved of the Father’s heart. “This,” said the mysterious voice from heaven in the midst of the waters of Jordan, “This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased.” And again, at the resurrection of Lazarus, there came the same voice from heaven, announcing the everlasting nature of the Father’s love! None of us can tell how dear Jesus must be to His Father. We have, however, abundant proofs of the fact that He is very near unto Him, for He is privy to all His Father’s counsels. From the counsels of the Most high, Christ was never absent. “When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, was I brought forth: while as yet He had not made the earth, the fields, or the highest part of the dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there: when He set a compass upon the face of the depth: when He established the clouds above: when He strengthened the fountains of the deep: when He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His command: when He appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.” “Let us make man,” said God, “in our own image”—calling Christ into creation’s work! “Without Him was not anything made that was made,” is the declaration of

John the divine. Besides this, we know that everything which is done of the Father, by His divine decree, is that He may glorify His Son; while, on the other hand, the Son lived and died, and lives again that He may glorify the Father! Such is their mutual interest in one another, that we cannot suppose a relationship closer, nor a love more intense than that which exists between the Father and the Son. It would be foolish and ridiculous of me to attempt to dive into the awful depths of the divine unity. We know that the Father is one with the Son, and that Jesus is one with Jehovah. The unity of essence is a well so deep, that I cannot expect to find its bottom! And the love which springs up from this essential Unity must be more deep and profound than the wit of man can guess, or than the language of man can utter. I repeat the confession of our ignorance—it is impossible for us to form even a *guess* of the intensity of the affection that must exist between the eternal Father and Jesus Christ, His Son—since their essential union, from which this affection springs, is a doctrine beyond our comprehension—and is meekly to be received of our faith. Certainly we know that never was the term “Beloved” so full of meaning! Never did human words become as divinely rich as when God Himself, by the Holy Spirit, applied it to Jesus, *the Beloved* of the Father.

No more, however, concerning this word, “the Beloved,” except that I trust there are many of us here who can thus salute our covenant Head. Yes, He is very dear to us. We love Him because He first loved us. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and it has kindled in our poor souls an undying flame, which neither life nor death shall quench, but which shall burn brighter and brighter till it consumes flesh and self, and we shall be all on flame with love for Christ!

Now, dear friends, having thus brought forward the title of Christ, I shall, in dependence upon the Eternal Spirit, call your attention, first of all, to the words, “*in the Beloved*,” or *positive union*. Secondly, to the words, “*accepted in the Beloved*,” or *glorious condition*; and then, to the whole text, “*He has made us accepted in the Beloved*,” or *divine operation*.

I. First then, here is a matter most worthy of your best and most profound thoughts—“IN THE BELOVED,” or POSITIVE UNION.

A thousand sermons would never exhaust the theme of the union of the Church with Christ. No theology is sound which does not recognize this; no experience can be very profound which does not lead the soul more clearly and more fully to rejoice in this most glorious truth of God! Probably, it is a doctrine more suitable to advanced Christians than to young believers; but where the Lord enables the heart to feed upon it, it will be found to be food at once nourishing, delicious, satisfying, and strengthening! They who feed upon it will be found like Daniel and his companions, to be fairer in countenance, and fatter in flesh than any others!

1. In explaining this positive union, let us begin by saying, “*in Christ*”—that is, *in His heart*, and in His heart from all eternity. With prophetic eye, Christ beheld His people before they were yet formed. He looked forward through eternity and the rolling years of time, and He foresaw that God would make man, and that man in Adam would fall, and be ruined. His eyes looked over all the sons of Adam, and selected those whom He saw fit according to the counsel of His will—and these, at once, were put into His heart to be His darlings, His favorites forever and ever! It was not in time that Christ first wrote the names of His people upon His heart—it was a *time before all times*, when there was no day, but the ancient of days; when creation’s first year had not commenced; when all things slept in the mind of God as a thought, but had not come forth from His hands as a deed! We look upon the rocks with their long deposits of sand and shells—we go deeper down and see the long ages that must have passed while the stony strata were being formed. We wonder at the period that the aqueous and igneous rocks must have occupied in their formation; and sometimes, we are staggered at the thought of what a great thing time is. We find we cannot grasp the idea of, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” It is so far back that the wings of our imagination flag before they reach it as a resting place! But, there was an eternity before all this; and all these ages are but as the drop in a bucket compared with the deep and bottomless sea of the eternity of God! Yet, when we fly back into the dread eternity, where thought is lost, and mind fails, we discover, in the breast of Christ, eternal thoughts of love towards His children. Is it not a joy that can make your spirits dance, like David before the ark, that we were always Jesus’ Beloved ones, always in the heart of Him whose heart was afterwards, in the fullness of time, pierced for us? Has He not said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you”? “As the Father has loved Me, even so have I loved you”? That is, without beginning—ever since there was a Father and a Christ!

It would be blasphemy to suppose that God’s love to Jesus was not always existent, or that Christ had a beginning in the Father’s affections. Even from that time, Jesus had chosen His people, and they were in His heart. Beloved, as they *were* in His heart, so they have been in His heart ever since! When they fell *in* Adam, they did not fall *out of* Christ! When they lived in this world a life of iniquity, yet still, there was His great love with which He loved them, even when they were dead in trespasses and sins! When they scorned His grace, defied His love, trampled on His cross, and despised His blood, yet still, never from His heart were they erased, for they had been engraved there too deeply by the nails for sin to destroy the remembrance! And now, today, now that we are continually backsliding, nothing has been as yet able to tear us from His heart. We are there, and we shall be there, in death’s dark gloom, and in eternity’s mysterious splendor—still near to Jesus, for is it not written—“He hates putting away”? “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” So, then, Beloved, we are in Christ in the sense that we are in Christ’s heart, and we always were so if we are His people!

2. But, secondly, we are also *in Christ’s book*. Having loved us, we were chosen in Him and elected by His Father. We were not chosen separately and distinctly, and as individuals alone and apart—we were chosen *in Christ*. As Watts well puts it—

*“Christ, is My first elect, He said;
Then chose our souls in Christ, our head.”*

By Christ’s love, we were one with Him. The Father’s election chose the whole Christ, both the head and the members, too. Christ can well say, “In Your book all My members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.” We all know that Christ is elect and precious. God singled out the humanity of Christ from many thousands of forms that He might have created. He ordained that the seed of the woman—the child that was born in Bethlehem, and laid in the manger—should become the Body and the human soul which should be taken into union with divinity. Here was election; and as Christ was thus chosen both in the divine and human natures, so are all His people chosen—chosen in Him. Blessed fact! The same register which includes Christ as first-born includes all the brothers and sisters! And until the flames of hell can consume the record which certifies Christ as the Son of God, our sonship in Christ towards God must remain safe from all the attacks of satanic craft. Disprove Christ’s Sonship, and you disprove ours! Prove the union of Christ with God as His Son; and since Christ’s people are in Him, you prove their sonship, too! Look down the red roll which God wrote with His eternal finger, according to the counsel of His will, and you see the names of all who will enter into eternal life! They are all there secure, because the first one is secure; and until the pen of hell can run through the first one in the catalog, it shall never be able to run through any of the others—for there stand the names of all the elect, covered, protected, and defended, by the name of Christ, which stands at the head. We are in that book which is sealed with seven seals, which none but the Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed to open!

3. Thirdly, we are *in Christ’s hands*. We are in Christ’s heart as our heavenly lover. We are in Christ’s book as the medium of our election. We are in Christ’s hands as our surety. You will remember, Beloved, that when Laban gave up his flock to Jacob, Jacob took them upon the condition of suretyship. Jacob said unto Laban, “That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto you; I bore the loss of it; of my hands did you require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night.” Now, all those who the Father gave to Christ were bestowed upon Christ as surety, and at the last great day, at the Redeemer’s hands will God require the souls of all that were given to Him! He is the great Shepherd of the sheep, responsible as the Mediator, responsible to Him who possesses all. Sponsor for His people, surety for all the chosen, He stands at this hour before the eternal throne. And do you think, Beloved, He will lose us? Never! He has made us the choicest objects of His care. Shall His eyes sleep? Shall His heart forget? Shall His hands grow weary? Shall He lose the force and strength which anciently He possessed? He has sworn by Himself that He will bring us safely to the Father—will He be defeated? He has said, “I give unto My sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hands.” And shall the infernal lion rend that which He has deigned to keep? What? Shall He put His hands upon His people and shelter them there, and clutch them as the choicest treasure and the rarest jewel that He ever had, and shall death or hell unlock His fingers or wrench His chosen from His mighty grasp? Who shall defeat Omnipotence, or pluck the sinner from the Almighty grasp? Rejoice, believers, you are saved just because you are in the hands of Christ! I marvel at those who try to slip from that text, “None shall pluck them out of My hand,” and think that souls can be lost after that—for the text does

not admit of any other meaning than their safety! “They shall never perish,” and “I give unto them *eternal life*,” are plain, literal, positive statements, which none can misunderstand. Happy are the men who are thus *in Christ!*

4. But, fourthly, we are *in Christ's loins*. This may convey a thought somewhat different from being in Christ's hands. We were all of us in the loins of Adam, and have all sprung from him by natural generation. Adam was our federal head. All his acts were *representative* acts. While he was obedient, we were obedient in him; had he continued obedient, we, his descendants, would have been partakers of the privileges which accrue to obedience. Adam offended; we offended in him. Being the inheritors of his nature, we have partaken of his original corruption; and being moreover in him, as our representative, we became partakers of his condemnation. In Adam all die! “By the offense of one man, condemnation came upon all men.” As being, then, in the loins of Adam, we fell—and we would have fallen into everlasting hell, if we, as God's chosen, had not been also in the loins of Christ. But all the chosen were in the loins of Christ from all eternity, so that what was done, He did for them! When He obeyed the law and made it honorable, they are regarded before God as having kept the law, and having honored it in every jot and tittle. When He did hang upon the cross, the chosen, who were in Him, were virtually suffering the wrath of God. Justice looks upon the chosen as though they themselves had suffered all that Christ suffered, as though they had drunk the wormwood and the gall, and had descended into the lowest depths! When He was buried, we were buried with Him; for we are dead with Christ unto the world, and buried in baptism with Him unto death. When Christ ascended from the tomb, we rose in Him; He rose again, not as a private individual, but for our justification! Virtually every elect soul rose from the eternal death of its deserved perdition in the day when Christ startled the keepers, and rolled away the stone! And when Christ ascended up on high, we ascended in Him. Up with Him, we entered into the spheres; and with Him, today; we are risen in Christ, and made with Him to sit in heavenly places, even in Christ Jesus! Today, Beloved, the language of the psalmist is truer than he thought concerning man, “You made Him to have dominion over the works of Your hands, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatever passes through the paths of the seas.” We see not all things yet put under man on earth, but we see Jesus, who as the representative man sits in heaven, triumphant over all things, having all things put forever under His feet; and representatively under our feet, too, since we are in Christ! Just as the apostle Paul argues concerning Levi, that Levi is inferior to Christ, for, he says, Abraham was less than Melchisedek, for without doubt the less is blessed of the greater, so also Levi was less than Melchisedek, for he was in the loins of Abraham when Melchisedek met him. So Beloved, as Levi was in the loins of Abraham, who paid tithes to Melchisedek, so we were in the loins of Christ and paid the debt due to divine justice, gave to the law its fulfillment, and to wrath its satisfaction! In the loins of Christ, we have already passed through the tomb, and have entered into that which is within the veil, and are made to sit down in heavenly places, even in Him. This day, the chosen of God are one with Christ and in the loins of Christ!

5. As we are in the heart of Christ, in the book of Christ, in the hands of Christ, and in the loins of Christ, there is yet another thought still dearer and sweeter! We are *in the person of Christ*, for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. When the Spirit of God comes into the sinner and convicts him of sin, that sinner is led to look to Christ, only, for his salvation. Christ then becomes unto him the Way and the life. By the mysterious operations of the quickening Spirit, the sinner begins to live a spiritual life. Now, in the moment when the spiritual life was first given, there commenced in that soul a vital and personal union with the person of Christ Jesus. There had always been in that soul a secret mystical union *in the divine purpose*; but now, there comes to be a union *in effect*, and the soul is in Christ from that hour, in a sense in which it never was before. Oh, do you understand what it is to be vitally in Christ? Beloved, no explanations can set this forth! “The natural man discerns not the things which are of the Spirit of God.” These are things which must be known experientially by each man for himself. Have you felt a life in you that is far superior to the vital principle which you inherit from your parents? Have you known that regeneration has given you another existence which generation did not confer upon you? Have you felt principles alive within which no education could have developed, and which no persuasion could have implanted? Have you within you the living and incorruptible seed of God, which abides forever? Have you been made partakers of the divine nature, having “escaped that corruption which is in the world through lust”? Have you been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? If so, the life in you is Christ in you, the hope of glory; and

your life is sustained by the fact that you are one with Christ. Suck the nourishment of your life from Him just as the branch draws from the trunk the sap whereby it is invigorated and made to live—

*“I can do nothing without Thee,
My strength is wholly Thine.
Withered and barren should I be
If severed from the vine.”*

I trust, brethren, that we are in union with Christ, not in theory, but in fact—not as a matter of doctrine, but as a matter of experience, till we can say, “Christ is in me, and I am in Him; the life that I live in the flesh is no more I, but Christ who lives in me.”

“In the Beloved,” then, is a thought which is not very easy for us to bring out in so short a space of time. Now, I want to put you to the test, this morning, by appealing to you all whether you know anything about this. A great many will say, “Well, it is a very odd thing, we do not understand it.” Take heed to yourselves, then; deal honestly with your spirits; inasmuch as you do not know what it is to be in Christ, then you are without Christ! And then, you are without hope, and there remains nothing for you but a fearful looking for judgment, and of fiery indignation. No man out of Christ can be saved! In Christ, the branch lives; but divided from Christ, men gather up the useless branches and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. Come, now, I want to try you! The first question I ask you, to ascertain whether you are in Christ, is this—is He all your *dependence*? For the union of the saint with Christ is set forth by the union of the stone with the building. Now, the stone in the building lies upon the foundation; there it rests and abides, being cemented fast to it. Do you rest upon Christ? I ask you, is He all your trust? There is a blessed text in one of the prophets, “I will fasten him as a peg in a sure place, and they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father’s house, as well the cups as the flagons, they shall all hang on him.” Do you so hang on Him? Can you feel today that, without a falsehood, all your trust on Him is set, that you bring from Him all your standing, all your confidence, all your peace? If so, let us hope that your union is a true one. And if it is so, then, as I have sometimes seen stones in the old walls of Roman castles which could scarcely have been separated from the fabric, even by gunpowder itself, without the blasting of the fabric, too; so is it with you, unless the foundations can be removed, you cannot be moved, for if you depend on Him by a living faith, you are so a part of Christ that the living stone has grown into the living foundation, and separated from Him, you never can be in time or in eternity! I have another question. If you are today in Christ, then do you bring forth some *fruit* unto Him; for Christians are represented as being in Christ, as the branch is in the vine. “Every branch in Me,” said Christ, “that bears fruit, He purges it that it may bring forth more fruit.” What do you say? What are your fruits? Is there humility of mind? Holiness? Do you seek to walk like Jesus did? My dear hearers, this is a very sharp question to put to you, but I put it to each of you personally, for by your works you must be judged at the last great day. His servants you are, whom you obey; if you give yourselves up to the pleasures of this world, to the lusts of the flesh, to your own selfishness—then, you are the servants of sin. “Be not deceived, God is not mocked.” “Whatever a man sows that shall he also reap.” Do you of the Spirit bring forth fruits of the Spirit? Do you walk and act as the elect of God, putting on a heart of mercy and compassion? Have you a single eye to Christ’s glory, and do you live to His service? If so, then thanks to God, no pruning knife shall cut away the branch that brings forth fruit! It is the branch which brings forth no fruit, which is not vitally in Christ that is to be severed, cast away! But if you are in Him so as to bring forth fruit unto Him, then fruit to eternal life shall you bear evermore!

Another question—do you *love* Christ? Does your heart go out after Him? Do you pant to be in His arms? Is His company your heaven? Is His absence your hell? Remember, another figure which is used, is the union of the husband with the wife. Marriages that are made in heaven are cemented not by gold or beauty, but by love. In Christ, there is an infinite love towards His people, insomuch that He left His Father and did cleave unto His wife, and they two became one flesh. “This is a great mystery,” said Paul, when he spoke concerning Christ and His Church. Are you wedded to Him by an affection which no time can alter except it is to deepen it? Are there ties which bind your heart to Him which torture and racks cannot separate? If there are, then you are married to one who will never put you away, one who will never leave you a widow, for your Maker is your husband, and He loves faithfully. He is one who calls you His Hephzibah, His soul delights in you! And your land, He calls Beulah, for He has married it. Is there such a union? Are you thus in Christ? Then a last question and I will leave this point. Is there a *life* in you? Is Christ the life of your spirit? If you tell me you have nothing more in you than what na-

ture gave you, then, you are in nature’s death! There is a supernatural life which is imparted by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we read in Scripture that believers are one with Christ as the members are one with the head. They are one in living union. If you cut away the head, the whole dies. Yes, and mark you, the head dies, too. So Christ is one with us if we are really His. Because He lives, we shall live also; if we die, Christ dies, and if Christ lives, we live! And since He ever lives to make intercession for us, our eternal life is sure! But, oh, we must have this life! “Except a man eats My flesh,” says He, “and drinks My blood, there is no life in him,” as if there could not be spiritual life till Christ Himself were there, and Christ not there without becoming life to our souls.

II. I now turn very briefly to our second point. The text tells us we are “ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED.”

To be brief and yet explicit, let me notice that I think the acceptance here meant, includes first of all, *justification before God*. We stand on trial. When we stand in Christ, we are acquitted; while standing in ourselves, the only verdict must be condemnation! The term “acceptance,” in the Greek, means more than that. It signifies that we are the objects of *divine satisfaction*. When God looked upon the world of old, He said it was “Very good”—and when the Lord looks upon His people in Christ, He says the same. But, I think if there could be anything better than “Very good,” He would say His people in Christ were better than the work of His own hands, since they wear not a created righteousness, but the righteousness of the Creator, Jesus Christ Himself! They are, then, accepted by His justice, and they are viewed with satisfaction by His holiness. But this is not all. When it is written, “Accepted in the Beloved,” it means that those accepted are the objects of the *divine delight*. Friends, whenever I get to this thought, (and many a time in this house of prayer I have got to it), I always feel inclined to sit down and let you think it over, for it is such an extravaganza of divine grace that we—worms, mortals, sinners—should be the objects of divine love! When princes wed with beggars, the world marvels; but when God sets His affections upon sinful men and women in Christ, oh, this is the wonder of wonders! Even the angels might desire to look into it! I believe that when we have been in heaven 10,000 years, this will still be a subject of rapture and surprise—that He should ever have found anything in us in which He could take delight! To pity us, to show mercy to us—that I can understand. But to *love* us! The big heart of God to love a creeping thing like man! The infinite soul of the Most high to pour itself out on such a mean, worthless creature as man! The everlasting God who fills all in all—to concentrate as it were, the powers of His Spirit, and set the whole upon a creature that His own hands have made—a creature that had revolted and rebelled, and at the best is still worthless! Oh, sing of this, you spirits before the throne; we cannot speak of it today as we should. All this is, “in the Beloved.” We are not accepted any way else but, “in the Beloved.” Let me show you that this is the best way in the world to be accepted. Each of us knows it is the only way; but even if there were another, it is the best way. Suppose we could be accepted in ourselves. Adam was, while he was obedient—he was accepted in his own works. Yes, but how soon he fell! And then, his acceptance fell, too. He stood on his own feet, and therefore, he soon fell to the ground. Suppose you and I had kept the law up till now. I think I hear you say, “Oh, I wish I had! I wish I could come before God as a perfectly righteous man.” O soul! You would not be half as safe as you are now in Christ! But if I had no sin, yet I would ask that I might be in Christ—for I might have sin some day—and then down would go the goodly structure! That which is built upon a fallible creature is built upon the sand; and if the structure had up to now been without one rotten timber, yet, since the basis is the will of man—and that might change—damnation might shortly overtake us. After all, we had done better, surely, to stand in Christ, who cannot fall. Now, I know some professors who seem to me to stand in their own experience, to be accepted in their own experience. At least, that is their apprehension. Just now, they had such visits from Christ’s faith, such gleams of His love; and now, they think God accepts them, for they feel so high, so heavenly-minded, so drawn above the earth! I have seen these same persons, the next day, feel their souls cleave to the earth, and they have said, “Now, I am not accepted.” O that these Beloved ones would but know that God never did accept them in *their* experience—He accepted them in Christ! And He can never reject them till He rejects them in Christ, which cannot be, since He cannot reject Christ! I would that they would see that their “ups” make them no higher before God, and their “downs” make them no lower—that all their high joys do not exalt them, and all their low despondencies do not really depress them in their Father’s sight. They stand accepted in one who never changes, in one who is always the Beloved of God, always perfect, always complete, always without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing! Blessed faith, that walks above experience! Joyous

trust that, in the dark nights, still sings of heaven’s unclouded noon, and in the midst of blackness and vileness consciously felt, still boasts of pardon bought with blood, of righteousness complete and without flaw!

The Arminians say our being accepted before God, if I understand it correctly, is also an acceptance in *our* graces. This is the English of their doctrine of falling away—while a man walks worthily, God accepts him; if he walks sinfully, then God accepts him no more. Those of you who like this way of being accepted, may choose it! For my part, I feel there is nothing can ever satisfy the craving of my spirit but an acceptance which lies utterly and wholly *out of me* and only and entirely in *Christ Jesus!* Why, brothers and sisters, we would be accepted one day and rejected the next! No, more—we might be accepted one *minute* and rejected the next! If it lay in anything whatever in *our* walk, or in *our* work, we would be in the covenant and out of the covenant 50 times a day. But I suppose the Arminians have a difference between sin and sin. Surely, they must have the old Romish distinction between venial and mortal sin; for if sin puts a man out of Christ, I wonder when he is in—since we are sinning day by day! Perhaps there is a certain quantity of sin required to do it; then that is only the old Romish dogma revived; some sins, mortal on the Arminian theory, so as to put a man out of divine grace, and other sins venial, so that they can keep in grace and sin, too! I glory in my God that I know—

*“Once in Christ in Christ forever,
Nothing from His love can sever.”*

If my good works had put me into Christ, then my bad works might turn me out of Him; but since He put me in when I was a sinner, vile and worthless—He will never take me out, though I am still a vile and worthless sinner —

*“Unchangeable His will,
Though dark may be my frame;
His loving heart is still
Eternally the same—
My soul through many changes goes,
His love no variation knows.”*

Now, Christian, I want you this morning, to rejoice in this—you are accepted “in the Beloved.” You look within, and you say, “There is nothing acceptable here!” man, look at Christ, and see if there is not *everything* acceptable *there!* Your frame depresses you; but look to Jesus and hear Him cry, “It is finished!” Will not that death-note reassure you? Your sins trouble you, but remember, they were laid upon the scapegoat’s head of old, and they no more exist, for He has cast your sins behind His back, and thrown them into the depths of the sea—

*“In your surety you are free! His dear blood was shed for thee!
With your Savior’s garments on, holy as the Holy One.”*

While you have still to bear groans, and doubts, and fears, to fight with corruption, and to wrestle with temptation, you are *still* accepted in the Beloved! You are never accepted in yourself—you are but a condemned sinner in yourself; you are never anything but accursed, both of God and of the law, out of Jesus! But in Christ, you are never accursed; in Christ, never condemned; for he who believes in Him is not condemned, and he who believes not is condemned already, because he believes not on the Son of God! “Accepted in the Beloved!” This sentence seems to me to be such a mouthful; it is a dainty all your own. Let it lie in your mouth like a wafer made with honey! “Accepted in the Beloved!” How I pity you who cannot say this. How I rejoice with you who can! You have troubles, you say—what are your troubles? You are accepted in the Beloved! You tell me you have to fight with flesh and blood—what of it—as long as you are accepted in the Beloved? But you are so poor, you say, and you have to go home to a miserable meal today—but then, how rich you are—you are accepted in the Beloved! The devil is tempting you—never mind, he cannot destroy you, for you are accepted in the Beloved! Even the glorified souls are no more accepted than we are! They are only accepted in heaven in the Beloved, but so are we! I have often thought that if the children of God could fall from grace on earth, they could certainly fall from glory in heaven. What is there that keeps them holy in heaven? Is it their own will? If so, the heavenly saints may become hellish fiends! Brothers and sisters, it is *Christ* who keeps them! They are in Christ, therefore, they cannot fall—so are we in Christ—therefore, shall we never fail nor fall away, but unto the end shall we endure.

III. Now, one minute upon the last point. That is, DIVINE OPERATIONS. “*He has made us accepted in the Beloved.*”

Do not you see, Beloved, the whole way through, it is *all* of God and not of man? It was Christ who at first put us in His heart to be accepted there. It was the Father who put us in His book, according to the good pleasure of His own will to be accepted there. It was Christ who took us into His hands, according to His suretyship engagement, that we might be accepted there. It is Christ who took us into His loins, begetting us again unto a lively hope that we might be accepted there. And it is grace that has united us with the person of Christ that we may stand accepted there. You see, it is all of God from first to last! Jonah learned sound divinity when he went into the whale’s belly, for he said, “salvation is of the Lord.” And before the throne of God in heaven, they always sing sound theology, for a part of the song is, “salvation unto God and unto the Lamb.” Not *of* man, neither *by* man—not of the will of man, nor blood, nor birth; but according to the counsel of Him who works all things according to the good pleasure of His will! Sinner, does that suit you? You who are not in Christ in your own experience, does that suit you? It ought to. If you had to put yourself into Christ, you could not do it! Men and women, if God asked anything of you to qualify you for Christ, you could not do it! But He asks nothing of you whatever. His mercy comes to you, not when you have made yourselves alive, but while you are yet dead! It comes to you, not merely when you seek it, but it first *seeks you* and then makes you seek it—

***“No sinner can be beforehand with Thee—
Your grace is most sovereign, most rich and most free.”***

This is the good point about it, that it is most free. And this is the gospel I am sent to preach to you, this morning—“He who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life.” Sinner, if you trust in Christ, this morning, that act of faith shall be a point of union between you and Christ, and you shall be vitally in Him! Trust Christ, then, soul! “Well,” you say, “I have nothing; I have no reason to be satisfied, for I have no good works; but here, evidently, is a plan of salvation that does not need anything from me. I accept it.” Say in your heart, this morning, “If the Lord had asked any doings, or willings, or feelings of me, in order that I might be in Christ, such a lost soul as I am, I could do none of these things; but when He tells me to believe in Christ, my soul perceives that He is able to save, and I know Christ is willing, and therefore, I will trust Him this day.” Soul, if you have done this, you are in Christ! You are accepted in the Beloved this morning! There may be a man that came in here a drunk, or a thief that may yet go out of this place accepted in the Beloved! There may have come in here a woman of evil name, but if she believes in Christ, she shall go out accepted in the Beloved! She came in here condemned in her own conscience; she shall go out justified, if she believes in Christ! If you can see Christ die and trust Him, and if you can see Christ risen and trust Him; if you can see Him pleading and can trust Him, then, you are one with Him—God has made you accepted in the Beloved! Oh, precious salvation that comes all the way to where you are! Let you be where you may, so long as you are not in torments and not in hell, this salvation comes to your door. God give you grace to lay hold of it now, or rather, that it may lay hold of you—and then, you may say—

***“I do believe, I will believe
That Jesus died for me!
That on the cross He shed His blood
From sin to set me free.”***

And if you believe in Him, by His grace, your eternal life is sure, because you are one in Him, and “accepted in the Beloved.”

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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