

JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE

NO. 126

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 5, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“Being justified freely by His Grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”
Romans 3:24.*

THE hill of comfort is the hill of Calvary. The house of consolation is built with the wood of the Cross. The temple of Heavenly cordials is founded upon the split Rock, split by the spear which pierced its side. No scene in sacred history ever gladdens the soul like the scene on Calvary—

*“Is it not strange, the dark hour
That ever dawned on sinful earth
Should touch the heart with softer power
For comfort, than an angel’s mirth?
That to the Cross the mourner’s eyes should turn
Sooner than where the stars of Bethlehem burn?”*

Nowhere does the soul ever find such consolation as on that very spot where misery reigned, where woe triumphed, where agony reached its climax. There Grace has dug a fountain which always gushes with waters pure as crystal, each drop capable of alleviating the woes and the agonies of mankind! You have had your seasons of woe, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus. And you will confess it was not at Olivet that you found comfort, not on the hill of Sinai, nor on Tabor. But Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha have been a means of comfort to you. The bitter herbs of Gethsemane have often taken away the bitters of our life. The scourge of Gabbatha has often scourged away our cares and the groans of Calvary have put all other groans to flight.

We have, this morning, then, a subject which I trust may be the means of comforting God’s saints, seeing it takes its rise at the Cross and from there runs on in a rich stream of perennial blessing to all Believers. You note, *we have in our text*, first of all, the Redemption of Christ Jesus. Secondly, *the justification of sinners flowing from it*. And then thirdly, *the manner of the giving of this justification*, “freely by His Grace.”

I. First, then, we have THE REDEMPTION THAT IS IN OR BY CHRIST JESUS. The figure of redemption is very simple and has been very frequently used in Scripture. When a prisoner has been taken captive and has been made a slave by some barbarous power, it has been usual, before he could be set free, that a ransom price should be paid. Now we, being, by the Fall of Adam, prone to guiltiness and, indeed, virtually guilty, were by the irreproachable judgment of God given up to the vengeance of the Law. We were given into the hands of Justice—Justice claimed us to be his bond slaves forever, unless we could pay a ransom, whereby our souls could be redeemed. We were, indeed, poor as owlets, we had nothing wherewith to bless ourselves. We were, as our hymn has worded it, “bankrupt debtors.” All we had was sold. We were left naked and poor and miserable and we could by no means find a ransom. It was just then that Christ stepped in, stood Sponsor for us and, in the place of all Believers, paid the ransom price, that we might in that hour be delivered from the curse of the Law and the vengeance of God! We could then go on our way, clean, free and justified by His blood!

Let me just endeavor to show you some qualities of the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus. You will remember *the multitude* He has redeemed. Not I, alone, nor you, alone, but “a multitude that no man can number.” A number which shall as far exceed the stars of Heaven, as they exceed all mortal reckoning! Christ has bought for Himself some out of every kingdom and nation and tongue under Heaven! He has redeemed from among men some of every rank, from the highest to the lowest, some of every color—

black and white—some of every standing in society, the best and the worst, for some of all sorts has Jesus Christ given Himself a Ransom that they might be redeemed unto Himself!

Now, concerning this Ransom, we have to observe that it was all paid and all paid at once. When Christ redeemed His people, He did it thoroughly. He did not leave a single debt unpaid, nor yet one farthing for them to settle afterwards. God demanded of Christ the payment for the sins of all His people. Christ stood forward and to the utmost farthing paid whatever His people owed. The Sacrifice of Calvary was not a partial payment—it was not a partial exoneration—it was a complete and perfect payment and it obtained a complete and perfect remittal of all the debts of all Believers that have lived, do live, or shall live to the very end of time! On that day when Christ hung on the Cross, He did not leave a single farthing for us to pay as a satisfaction to God. He did not leave, from a thread even to a shoelace, that He had not satisfied. The whole of the demands of the Law were paid then and there by Jehovah Jesus, the great High Priest of all His people! And blessed be His name, He paid it all at once, too! So priceless was the Ransom, so princely and munificent was the price demanded for our souls, one might have thought it would have been marvelous if Christ had paid it by installments—some of it now and some of it then. Kings' ransoms have sometimes been paid part at once and part in dues afterwards to run through years. But not so our Savior—once and for all He gave Himself as a Sacrifice. At once He counted down the price and said, "It is finished," leaving nothing for Him to do, nor for us to accomplish. He did not drivel out a partial payment and then declare that He would come again to die, or that He would again suffer, or that He would again obey. But down upon the nail, to the utmost farthing, the Ransom of all His elect was paid and a full receipt given to them. Christ nailed that receipt to His Cross and said, "It is done, it is done. I have taken away the handwriting of ordinances, I have nailed it to the Cross. Who is he that shall condemn My people or lay anything to their charge? For I have blotted out like a cloud their transgressions and like a thick cloud their sins!"

And when Christ paid this Ransom, you will notice that He did it all Himself! He was very particular about that. Simon, the Pyrenean, might bear the Cross but Simon, the Pyrenean, might not be nailed to it. That sacred circle of Calvary was kept for Christ, alone. Two thieves were with Him there, not righteous men, lest any should have said that the death of those two righteous men helped the Savior. Two thieves hung there with Him, that men might see that there was majesty in His misery and that He could pardon men and show His Sovereignty even when He was dying! There were no righteous men to suffer. No disciples shared His death. Peter was not dragged there to be beheaded. John was not nailed to a cross side by side with Him. He was left there alone! He says, "I have trodden the winepress alone. And of the people there was none with Me." The whole of the tremendous debt was put upon His shoulders! The whole weight of the sins of all His people was placed upon Him! Once He seemed to stagger under it—"Father, if it is possible." But again He stood upright—"Nevertheless, not My will but Yours be done." The whole of the punishment of His people was distilled into one cup—no mortal lips might give it so much as a solitary sip! When He put it to His own lips, it was so bitter, He well near spurned it. "Let this cup pass from Me." But His love for His people was so strong that He took the cup in both His hands and—

*"At one tremendous draught of love
He drank damnation dry,"*

for all His people! He drank it all, He endured all, He suffered all—so that now and forever there are no flames of Hell for them, no racks of torment! They have no eternal woes—Christ has suffered all they ought to have suffered and they must, they shall go free! The work was completely done by Himself, without a helper!

And note, again it was *accepted*. In Truth, it was a goodly ransom. What could equal it? A soul "exceedingly sorrowful even unto death." A body torn with torture, a death of the most inhuman kind. And an agony of such a character that tongue cannot speak of it, nor can even man's mind imagine its horror! It was a goodly price. But say, was it accepted? There have been prices paid, sometimes, or rather offered, which never were accepted by the party to whom they were offered and, therefore, the slave did

not go free. But this was accepted. I will show you the evidence. When Christ declared that He would pay the debt for all His people, God sent the officer to arrest Him for it. He arrested Him in the Garden of Gethsemane and seizing upon Him, he dragged him to the bar of Pilate, to the bar of Herod and to the judgment seat of Caiaphas—the payment was all made and Christ was put into the grave! He was there locked up in vile durance until the acceptance was ratified in Heaven. He slept there a portion of three days in His tomb. It was declared that the ratification was to be this—the Surety was to go His way as soon as His suretyship engagements had been fulfilled. Now let your minds picture the buried Jesus. He is in the sepulcher. 'Tis true He has paid all the debt, but the receipt is not yet given. He slumbers in that narrow tomb. Fastened in with a seal upon a giant stone, He sleeps still in His grave. Not yet has the acceptance been given from God. The angels have not yet come from Heaven to say, “The deed is done. God has accepted Your sacrifice.” Now is the crisis of this world! It hangs trembling in the balance. Will God accept the ransom, or will He not? We shall see. An angel comes from Heaven with exceeding brightness. He rolls away the stone. And forth comes the Captive, with no manacles upon His hands, with the grave clothes left behind Him! He is free, never more to suffer, never more to die. Now—

*“If Jesus had not paid the debt,
He never had been at freedom set.”*

If God had not accepted His sacrifice, He would have been in His tomb at this moment! He never would have risen from His grave! But His Resurrection was a pledge of God’s accepting Him—He said, “I have had a claim upon You to this hour. That claim is now paid. Go Your way.” And Death gave up his royal Captive, the stone was rolled into the garden and the Conqueror came forth, leading captivity captive!

And, moreover, God gave a second proof of acceptance *for He took His only-begotten Son to Heaven* and set Him at His right hand, far above all principalities and powers! And therein He meant to say to Him, “Sit upon the Throne, for You have done the mighty deed. All Your works and all Your miseries are accepted as the ransom of men.” O my Beloved, think what a grand sight it must have been when Christ ascended into Glory! What a noble certificate it must have been of His Father’s acceptance of Him! Do you not think you see the scene on earth? It is very simple. A few disciples are standing upon a hill and Christ mounts into the air in slow and solemn movement, as if an angel sped His way by gentle degrees, like mist or exhalation from the lake into the skies. Can you imagine what is going on up yonder? Can you for a moment conceive how, when the mighty Conqueror entered the gates of Heaven, the angels met Him—

*“They brought His chariot from on high,
To bear Him to His Throne,
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
‘The glorious work is done!’”*

Can you think how loud were the plaudits when He entered the gates of Heaven? Can you conceive how they pressed on one another to behold how He came conquering from the flight? Do you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the redeemed saints come to behold the Savior and the Lord? They had desired to see Him and now their eyes behold Him in flesh and blood, the conqueror over death and Hell! Do you think you see Him, with Hell at His chariot wheels, with Death dragged as a captive through the royal streets of Heaven? Oh, what a spectacle was there that day! No Roman warrior ever had such a triumph. None ever saw such a majestic sight! The pomp of a whole universe, the royalty of entire Creation—cherubim and seraphim and all powers created—did swell the show! And God Himself, the Everlasting One, crowned all, when He pressed His Son to His bosom and said, “Well done, well done! You have finished the work which I gave You to do. Rest here forever, My accepted One.” Ah, but He never would have had that triumph if He had not paid all the debt. Unless His Father had accepted the Ransom, He had never been so honored! But because it was accepted, therefore did He so triumph. So far, then, concerning the Ransom.

II. And now, by the help of God’s Spirit, let me address myself TO THE EFFECT OF THE RANSOM. Being justified—“justified freely by His Grace through the redemption.”

Now, *what is the meaning of justification?* Divines will puzzle you, if you ask them. I must try the best I can to make justification plain and simple—even to the comprehension of a child. There is not such a thing as justification to be had on earth for mortal men except in one way. Justification, you know, is a forensic term—it is employed always in a legal sense. A prisoner is brought to the bar of justice to be tried. There is only one way whereby that prisoner can be justified—he must be found not guilty and if he is found not guilty, then he is justified—that is, he is proved to be a just man. If you find that man guilty, you cannot justify him. The Queen may pardon him but she cannot justify him. The deed is not a justifiable one—if he is guilty concerning it—he cannot be justified on account of it. He may be *pardoned*. But no royalty, itself, can ever wash that man's character. He is as much a real criminal when he is pardoned as before. There is no means among men of justifying a man of an accusation which is laid against him except by his being proved not guilty. Now, the wonder of wonders is that we are proved guilty and yet we are justified—the guilty verdict has been brought in against us—and yet, notwithstanding, we are justified! Can any earthly tribunal do that? No. It remained for the Ransom of Christ to effect that which is an impossibility to any tribunal upon earth! We are all guilty. Read the 23rd verse, immediately preceding the text—“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” There the verdict of guilty is brought in and yet we are immediately afterwards said to be justified freely by His Grace!

Now, allow me to explain *the way whereby God justifies a sinner*. I am about to suppose an impossible case. A prisoner has been tried and condemned to death. He is a guilty man. He cannot be justified because he is guilty. But now, suppose for a moment that such a thing as this could happen—that some second party could be introduced who could take all that man's guilt upon himself! Who could, in effect, change places with that man and by some mysterious process, which of course is impossible with men, *become that man*. Or take that man's character upon himself. He, the righteous man, putting the rebel in his place and making the rebel a righteous man—we cannot do that in our courts. If I were to go before a judge and he should agree that I should be committed for a year's imprisonment instead of some wretch who was condemned yesterday to a year's imprisonment, I could not take his *guilt*! I might take his *punishment*, but not his guilt. Now, what flesh and blood cannot do, Jesus Christ, by His redemption, did. Here I stand, the sinner. I mention myself as the representative of you all. I am condemned to die. God says, “I will condemn that man, I must, I will—I will punish him.” Christ comes in, puts me aside and stands Himself in my place. When the plea is demanded, Christ says, “Guilty.” He takes my guilt to be His own guilt! When the punishment is to be executed, Christ comes forth. “Punish Me,” He says—“I have put My righteousness on that man and I have taken that man's sins on Me. Father, punish Me and consider that man to have been Me. Let him reign in Heaven. Let Me suffer misery. Let Me endure his curse and let him receive My blessing.” This marvelous Doctrine of the changing of places of Christ with poor sinners is a Doctrine of Revelation! It never could have been conceived by Nature! Let me, lest I should have made a mistake, explain myself again. The way whereby God saves a sinner is not, as some say, by passing over the penalty. No! The penalty has been paid. It is the putting of another person in the rebel's place. The rebel must die. God says he must. Christ says, “I will be the Substitute for the rebel. The rebel shall take My place. I will take his.” God consents to it. No earthly monarch could have power to consent to such a change, but the God of Heaven has a right to do as He pleases! In His infinite mercy He consented to the arrangement. “Son of My love,” He said, “You must stand in the sinner's place. You must suffer what he ought to have suffered. You must be accounted guilty just as he was accounted guilty. Only then will I look upon the sinner in another light. I will look at him as if he were You. I will accept him as if he were My only-begotten Son, full of Grace and Truth. I will give him a crown in Heaven and I will take him to My heart forever and ever.” This is the way we are saved. “Being justified freely by His Grace, through the Redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”

And now, let me further go on to *explain some of the characteristics* of this justification. As soon as a repenting sinner is justified, remember, he is justified for *all* his sins. Here stands a guilty man. The moment he believes in Christ, he receives his pardon at once and his sins are no longer his. They are cast

into the depths of the sea. They are laid upon the shoulders of Christ and they are gone. The man stands a guiltless man in the sight of God, accepted in the Beloved. “What?” you say. “Do you mean that literally?” Yes I do. That is the Doctrine of Justification by Faith. Man ceases to be regarded by Divine Justice as a guilty being. The moment he believes on Christ, his guilt is all taken away. But I will go a step further. The moment the man believes in Christ, he ceases to be guilty in God’s esteem! And what is more, he becomes righteous, he becomes meritorious—the moment when Christ takes his sins *he* takes Christ’s righteousness, so that when God looks upon the sinner who but an hour ago was dead in sins, He looks upon him with as much love and affection as He ever looked upon His Son! Christ Himself has said it—“As the Father loved Me, so have I loved you.” He loves us as much as His Father loved Him! Can you believe such a Doctrine as that? Does it not pass all thought? Well, it is a Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the Doctrine whereby we must hope to be saved. Can I to any unenlightened person illustrate this thought better? I will give him the parable we have given to us in the Prophets—the parable of Joshua the High Priest. Joshua comes in, clothed in filthy garments—those filthy garments represent his sins. Take away the filthy garments. That is pardon. Put a miter on his head. Clothe him in royal raiment—make him rich and fair—that is justification. But where do these garments come from? And where do those rags go? Why the rags that Joshua had on go to Christ and the garments put on Joshua are the garments that Christ wore! The sinner and Christ do just what Jonathan and David did. Jonathan put his robes on David. David gave Jonathan his garments—so Christ takes our sins—we take Christ’s righteousness and it is by a glorious substitution and interchange of places, that sinners go free and are justified by His Grace!

“But,” says one, “no one is justified like that, till he dies.” Believe me, he is—

*“The moment a sinner believes
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives—
Salvation in full, through His blood.”*

If that young man over there has really believed in Christ this morning, realizing by a spiritual experience what I have attempted to describe, he is as much justified in God’s sight right now as he will be when he stands before the Throne of God! Not even the glorified spirits above are more acceptable to God than the poor man below who is once justified by Divine Grace! It is a perfect washing, it is perfect pardon, perfect imputation—we are fully, freely and wholly accepted through Christ our Lord! Just one more word, here, and then I will leave this matter of justification. Those who are once justified are justified irreversibly. As soon as a sinner takes Christ’s place and Christ takes the sinner’s place, there is no fear of a second change! If Christ has once paid the debt, the debt is paid and it will never be asked for again! If you are pardoned, you are pardoned once and forever! God does not give man a free pardon under His own promise and then afterwards retract it and punish the man—far from God to do such a thing! He says, “I have punished Christ. You may go free.” And after that, we may “rejoice in hope of the glory of God,” that, “being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” And now I hear one cry, “That is an extraordinary Doctrine!” Well, so some may think, but let me say to you, it is a Doctrine professed by all Protestant Churches though they may not preach it! It is the Doctrine of the Church of England, it is the Doctrine of Luther, it is the Doctrine of the Presbyterian Church—it is professedly the Doctrine of all Christian Churches—and if it seems strange in your ears, it is because your ears are estranged and not because the Doctrine is a strange one! It is the Doctrine of Holy Writ, that none can condemn whom God justifies and that none can accuse those for whom Christ has died, for they are totally free from sin! So that, as one of the Prophets has it, God sees no sin in Jacob nor iniquity in Israel. In the moment they believe, their sins being imputed to Christ, the sins cease to be theirs and Christ’s righteousness is imputed to them and accounted theirs, so that, by God’s Grace, they are accepted!

III. And now I close up with the third point, upon which I shall be brief and I hope very earnest—**THE MANNER OF GIVING THIS JUSTIFICATION.** John Bunyan would have it that there are some

whose mouths are set a watering for this great gift of Justification! Are there not some here who are saying, “Oh, if I could be justified! But, Sir, can I be justified? I have been a drunkard, I have been a swearer. I have been everything that is vile. Can I be justified? Will Christ take my black sins and am I to take His white robes?” Yes, poor Soul, if you desire it. If God has made you willing, if you confess your sins, Christ is willing to take your rags and give you His righteousness, to be yours forever. “Well, but how is it to be obtained?” one asks. “Must I be a holy man for many years and then get it?” Listen! “Freely by His Grace.” “*Freely*,” because there is no price to be paid for it! “*By His Grace*,” because we do not deserve it! “But, O Sir, I have been praying and I do not think God will forgive me unless I do something to deserve it.” I tell you, Sir, if you bring in any of your deservings, you shall never have it! God gives away His Justification *freely*. If you bring anything to pay for it, He will throw it in your face and will not give His Justification to you. He gives it away *freely*. Old Rowland Hill once went preaching at a fair. He noticed the chapmen selling their wares by auction. So Rowland said, “I am going to hold an auction, too, to sell wine and milk, without money and without price. My friends over there,” he said, “find a great difficulty to get you up to their price—my difficulty is to bring you down to mine!” So it is with men. If I could preach Justification to be bought by you at a sovereign a piece, who would go out of the place without being justified? If I could preach Justification to you by walking a hundred miles, would we not be pilgrims tomorrow morning, everyone of us? If I were to preach Justification which would consist in whippings and torture, there are very few here who would not whip themselves and that severely, too! But when it is *freely, freely, freely*, men turn away! “What? Am I to have it for nothing at all, without doing anything?” Yes, Sir, you are to have it for *nothing*, or else not at all. It is “*freely*.” “But may I not go to Christ, lay some claim to His mercy and say, Lord, justify me because I am not as bad as others?” It will not do, Sir, because it is “by His Grace.” “But may I not indulge a hope, because I go to Church twice a day?” No, Sir. It is “by His Grace.” “But may I not offer this plea that I mean to be better?” No, Sir. It is “by His Grace.” You insult God by bringing your counterfeit coin to pay for His treasures!

Oh, what poor ideas men have of the value of Christ’s Gospel if they think they can buy it! God will not have your rusty farthings to buy Heaven with! A rich man once, when he was dying, had a notion that he could buy a place in Heaven by building a row of almshouses. A good man stood by his bedside and said, “How much more are you going to leave?” “Twenty thousand pounds.” he said “That would not buy enough for your foot to stand on in Heaven, for the streets are made of gold there and, therefore, of what value can your gold be? It would be accounted nothing when the very streets are paved with it.” No, Friends, we cannot buy Heaven with gold nor good works, nor prayers, nor anything in the world! So how can we get it? Why we ask for it! As many of us as know ourselves to be sinners may have Christ for asking for Him! Do you know that you need Christ? You may have Christ! “Whoever will, let him come and take of the Water of Life freely.” But if you cleave to your own notions and say, “No, Sir, I mean to do a great many good things and *then* I will believe in Christ.”—Sir, you will be damned if you hold onto such delusions! I earnestly warn you, you cannot be saved so. “Well, but are we not to do good works?” Certainly you are—but you are not to trust in them! You must trust in Christ wholly and *then* do good works afterwards. “But,” says one, “I think if I were to do a few good works, it would be a little recommendation when I came.” It would not, Sir. They would be no recommendation at all. Let a beggar come to your house in white kid gloves and say he is very badly off and needs some charity—would the white kid gloves recommend him to your charity? Would a good new hat that he has been buying this morning recommend him to your charity? “No,” you would say, “you are a miserable imposter. You do not need anything and you shall not have anything either! Out with you!”

The best livery for a beggar is rags and the best livery for a sinner to go to Christ in is for him to go just as he is—with nothing but sin about him! “But no,” you say, “I must be a little better and then I think Christ will save me!” You cannot get any better, try as long as you please. And besides—to use a paradox—if you were to get better, you would be all the worse, for the worse you are, the better to come to Christ! If you are all unholy—come to Christ! If you feel your sin and renounce it, come to Christ!

Though you have been the most debased and abandoned soul, come to Christ! If you feel yourself to have nothing about you that can recommend you, come to Christ—

*“Venture on Him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude.”*

I do not say this to urge any man to continue in sin. God forbid! If you continue in sin, you must not come to Christ. You cannot. Your sins will hamper you. You cannot be chained to your galley oar—the oar of your sins—yet come to Christ and be a free man. No, Sir, it is *repentance*. It is the immediate *leaving off the sin*. But mark you, neither by repentance nor by the leaving of your sins, can you be saved. It is Christ, Christ, Christ—Christ only!

But I know you will go away, many of you, and try to build up your own Babel Tower to get to Heaven. Some of you will go one way to work and some another. You will go the ceremony way—you will lay the foundation of the structure with infant Baptism, build Confirmation on it and the Lord’s Supper. “I shall go to Heaven,” you say. “Do not I keep Good Friday and Christmas? I am a better man than those Dissenters! I am a most extraordinary man. Do I not say more prayers than anyone?” You will be a long while going up that treadmill before you get an inch higher—that is not the way to get to the stars! One says, “I will go and study the Bible and believe right Doctrine and I have no doubt that by believing right Doctrine I shall be saved.” Indeed you will not! You can be no more saved by believing right Doctrine than you can by doing right actions! “There,” says another, “I like that, I shall go and believe in Christ and live as I like.” Indeed you will not! For if you believe in Christ, He will not let you live as your flesh likes. By His Spirit He will constrain you to mortify its affections and lusts. If He gives you the Grace to make you believe, He will give you the Grace to live a holy life afterwards—if He gives you faith, He gives you good works afterwards! You cannot believe in Christ unless you renounce every fault and resolve to serve Him with full purpose of heart. I think at last I hear a sinner say, “Is that the only door? And may I venture through it? Then I will! But I do not quite understand you. I am something like poor Tiff, in that remarkable book, ‘*Dred*.’ They talk a great deal about a door, but I cannot see the door. They talk a great deal about the way, but I cannot see the way, for if poor Tiff could see the way, he would take these children away by it. They talk about fighting but I do not see anyone to fight, or else I would fight.”

Let me explain it then. I find in the Bible, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” What have you to do, but to believe this and trust in Him? You will never be disappointed with such a faith as that! Let me give you another illustration I have given hundreds of times but I cannot find another as good, so I must give it again—Faith is something like this. There is a story told of a captain of a man-of-war, whose son—a young lad—was very fond of running up the rigging of the ship. And one time, running after a monkey, he ran up the mast till at last he got on to the main truck. Now, the main truck, you are aware, is like a large round table put onto the mast so that when the boy was on the maintop. There was plenty of room for him, but the difficulty was—to use the best explanation I can—that he could not reach the mast that was under the table, he was not tall enough to get down from this maintop, reach the mast and so descend. There he was on the maintop—he managed to get up there, somehow or other—but down he never could. His father saw that and he looked up in horror. What was he to do? In a few moments his son would fall down and be dashed to pieces! He was clinging to the maintop with all his might, but in a little time he would fall down on the deck and there he would be—a mangled corpse. The captain called for a speaking trumpet. He put it to his mouth and shouted, “Boy, the next time the ship lurches, throw yourself into the sea.” It was, in truth, his only way of escape. He might be picked up out of the sea, but he could not be rescued if he fell on the deck! The poor boy looked down on the sea. It was a long way. He could not bear the idea of throwing himself into the roaring current beneath him. He thought it looked angry and dangerous. How could he cast himself down into it? So he clung to the maintop with all his might, though there was no doubt that he must soon let go and perish. The father called for a gun and pointing it up at him, said, “Boy, the next time the ship lurches, throw yourself into the sea, or I’ll shoot you!” He knew his

father would keep his word. The ship lurched on one side, over went the boy into the sea and out went brawny arms after him! The sailors rescued him and brought him on deck.

Now, we, like the boy, are in a position of extraordinary danger, by nature, which neither you nor I can possibly escape by ourselves. Unfortunately, we have got some good works of our own, like that maintop, and we cling to them so fondly that we will never give them up. Christ knows that unless we give them up, we shall be dashed to pieces, at the last, for that rotten trust must ruin us. He, therefore, says, "Sinner, let go of your own trust and drop into the sea of My love." We look down and say, "Can I be saved by trusting in God? He looks as if He were angry with me and I could not trust Him." Ah, will not Mercy's tender cry persuade you?—"He that believes shall be saved." Must the weapon of destruction be pointed directly at you? Must you hear the dreadful threat—"He that believes not shall be damned?" It is with you now as with that boy—your position is one of imminent peril in itself and your slighting the Father's counsel is a matter of more terrible alarm—it makes peril more perilous! You must do it, or else you perish! Let go of your hold! That is faith when the poor sinner lets go of his hold, drops down and so is saved! And the very thing which looks as if it would destroy him, is the means of his being saved!

Oh, believe on Christ, poor Sinners! Believe on Christ! You who know your guilt and misery, come! Cast yourselves upon Him! Come and trust my Master and as He lives, before whom I stand, you shall never trust Him in vain! No, but you shall find yourselves forgiven and go your way, by His Grace, rejoicing in Christ Jesus!

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

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