

STRUGGLES OF CONSCIENCE

NO. 336

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 AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

*“How many are my iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin.”
 Job 13:23.*

THERE are many persons who long to have a deeper sense of their sinfulness, and then with a certain show of conscientious scruple, they make an excuse for the exercise of simple faith. That spiritual disease, which keeps sinners from Christ, assumes a different shape at different times. In Luther’s day the precise evil under which men labored was this—they believed in being self-righteous—and so they supposed that they must have good works before they might trust in Christ. In our day the evil has taken another, and that a most extraordinary shape. Men have aimed at being self-righteous after quite an amazing fashion; they think they must feel worse, and have a deeper conviction of sin before they may trust in Christ. Many hundreds do I meet with who say they dare not come to Christ, and trust Him with their souls, because they do not *feel* their need of Him enough; they have not sufficient contrition for their sins; they have not repented as fully as they have rebelled! Brothers and Sisters, it is the same evil, from the same old germ of self-righteousness, but it has taken another and I think a more crafty shape. Satan has wormed himself into many hearts under the garb of an angel of light, and he has whispered to the sinner, “Repentance is a necessary virtue. Stop until you have repented, and when you have sufficiently mortified yourself on account of sin, then you will be fit to come to Christ, and qualified to trust and rely on Him.”

It is with that deadly evil I want to grapple this morning. I am persuaded it is far more common than some would think. And I think I know the reason of its great commonness. In the Puritan age, which was noted certainly for its purity of Doctrine, there was also a great deal of experimental preaching, and much of it was sound and healthy. But some of it was unscriptural, because it took for its standard what the Christian *felt*, and not what the *Savior said*—the inference from a Believer’s *experience*, rather than the message which goes before any belief. Those excellent men, Mr. Rogers, of Dedham, who has written some useful works, and Mr. Sheppard, who wrote *The Sound Believer*, and Mr. Flavel and many others give descriptions of what a sinner must *be* before he may come to Christ, which actually represent what a saint is, *after* he has come to Christ! These good Brothers have taken their own experience—what they felt before they came into the Light of God—as the standard of what every other person ought to feel before he may put his trust in Christ and hope for mercy. There were some in Puritan times who protested against that theology, and insisted that sinners were to be bid to come to Christ just as they were—with no preparation either of feeling or of doing. At the present time there are large numbers of Calvinistic ministers who are afraid to give a free invitation to sinners. They always garble Christ’s invitation thus—“If you are a *sensible sinner* you may come.” Just as if *stupid sinners* might not come! They say, “If you feel your need of Christ, you may come.” And then they describe what that feeling or need is, and give such a high description of it that their hearers say, “Well, I never felt like *that*,” and they are afraid to venture for lack of the qualification. Mark you, the Brothers speak truly in some respect; they describe what a sinner *does* feel before he comes, but they make a mistake in putting what a sinner feels, as if that were what a sinner *ought* to feel! What the sinner feels, and what the sinner does, until he is renewed by Grace, are just the very opposite of what he ought to feel or do! We are always wrong when we say one Christian’s experience is to be estimated by what another Christian has felt. No, Sir, my experience is to be measured by the Word of God! And what the sinner should feel is to be measured by what Christ commands him to feel, and not by what another sinner has felt!

Comparing ourselves among ourselves is not wise. I believe there are hundreds and thousands who remain in doubt and darkness, and go down to despair because there is a description given, and a preparation for Christ demanded to which they cannot attain—a *description indeed which is not true*—because it is a description of what they feel *after* they have found Christ, and not what they must feel *before* they may come to Him. Now, then, with all my might I come this

morning to break down every barrier that keeps a soul from Christ; and, as God the Holy Spirit shall help me, to dash the battering ram of the Truth of God against every wall that has been built up, whether by doctrinal truth or experimental truth, that keeps the sinner from Christ, who desires to come and to be saved by Him! I shall attempt to address you in the following order this morning. First, a little by way of *consolation*; then, a little by way of *instruction*; then a little more upon *discrimination* or caution; and in the last place, a few sentences by way of *exhortation*.

I. First, Beloved, let me speak to you who are desiring to feel more and more your sins, and whose prayer is the prayer of the text, “Lord how many are my iniquities and my sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin.” Let me try to COMFORT YOU. It ought to give you much solace when you remember that the best of men have prayed this prayer before you. The better a man is, the more anxious is he to know the worst of his case; the more a man gets rid of sin, and the more he lives above his daily faults and errors, the more does he cry, “Search me, O God, and know my heart. O try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there are any wicked ways in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Bad men do not want to know their badness; it is the good man, the man who has been renewed by Grace, who is anxious to discover what is his disease, that he may have it healed. Ought it not, then, to be some ground of comfort to you, that your prayer is not a prayer which could come from the lips of the wicked, but a prayer which has constantly been offered by the most advanced of saints, by those who have most grown in Grace? Perhaps that is a reason why it should not be offered by you, who just now can scarcely hope to be a saint at all; yet it should be a matter of sweet rejoicing that your prayer cannot be an evil one, because the “Amens” of God’s people, even those who are the fathers in our Israel, go up to God with it. I am sure my aged Brothers and Sisters in Christ now present, can say unanimously, “That has often been my prayer, ‘Lord let me know my iniquities and my sins; teach me how vile I am and lead me daily to Christ Jesus that my sins may be put away.’”

Let this reflection also comfort you—you never prayed like this years ago when you were a careless sinner. It was the last thing you would ever think of asking! You did not want to know your guilt. No, you found pleasure in wickedness. Sin was a sweet morsel to you; you only wanted to be let alone, that you might roll it under your tongue. If any told you of your evil, you would rather they let it alone. “Ah,” you said, “what business is that of yours? No doubt I make some mistakes, and am a little amiss, but I don’t need to be told so.” Why, the last meditation you would ever have thought of entertaining would have been a meditation upon your own criminality! When conscience did speak, you said, “Lay down, Sir, be quiet!” When God’s Word came home sharp to you, you tried to blunt its edge—you did not want to feel it. Now, ought it not to be some comfort that you have had such a gracious change worked in you, that you are now longing for the very feeling which at one time you could not endure? Surely, Man, the Lord must have begun a good work in you, for you would not have such wishes and desires as these unless He had put His hands to the plow and had begun to plow the barren, dry, hard soil of your heart!

Yet further, there is another reason why you should take comfort; it is very probable you already feel your guilt, and what you are asking for, you already have in measure realized. It often happens that a man has the Grace which he seeks for, and does not know he has it, because he makes a mistake as to what he should feel when he has the blessing—he has already got the blessing which he asks God to give him. Let me put it in another shape. If you are sorry because you cannot be sorry enough on account of sin, why, you are already sorry! If you grieve because you cannot grieve enough, why, you grieve already! If it is a cause of repentance to you, that your heart is very hard, and that you cannot repent, why you do repent! My dear Hearer, let me assure you, for your comfort, that when you go down on your knees and say, “Lord, I groan before You, because I cannot groan; I cannot feel! Lord help me to feel,” why, you *do* feel, and you have the repentance that you are asking for! At least you have the first degree of it. You have got the mustard seed of repentance in a tiny grain. Let it alone, it will grow! Foster it with prayer, and it will become a tree. The very Grace which you are asking of God is speaking in your very prayer! It is repentance which asks God that I may repent more; it is a broken heart which asks God to break it. That is not a hard heart which says, “Lord I have a hard heart—soften my heart.” It is already a soft heart! That is not a dead soul which says, “Lord I am dead—quicken me.” Why, you *are* quickened! That man is not dumb who says, “Lord I am dumb—make me speak.” Why, he speaks already! And that man who says, “Lord I cannot feel,” why, he feels already! He is already a sensible sinner—so that he is just the man who Christ calls to Him. This experience of yours, which you think is just the opposite of what it ought to be, is just what it should be! Oh, be comforted in this respect. But sit not down in it; be comforted enough to make you run to Jesus *now*—

just as you are! I take you, Sinner, to be just the man the minister is always seeking after. When we say that Christ came that there might be drink given to the thirsty, you are just the man we mean—you are thirsty. “No,” you say, “I don’t feel that I am thirsty, I only wish I did.” Why, that wish to *feel* thirsty *is* your thirst! You are exactly the man. You are far nearer the character than if you said, “I do thirst; I have the qualification.” Then, I would be afraid you had not got it. But, because you think you have it not, it is all the clearer proof that you have this qualification, if indeed there is a qualification. When I say, “Come unto Christ, all you who labor and are heavy laden.” And you say, “Oh, I don’t feel heavy laden enough,” why, you are the very man the text means! And when I say, “Whoever will, let him come,” and you say, “I wish I were more willing, I will to be willing,” why, you are the man! It is only one of Satan’s quibbles—a bit of Hell’s infernal logic to drive you from Christ. Be a match for Satan, now, this once, and say, “You lying fiend; you tell me I do not feel my need of a Savior enough. I know I feel my need! And, inasmuch as I long to feel it, I do feel it. Christ bids me come to Him and I will come—now, this morning! I will trust my soul, just as it is, in the hands of Him whose body hung upon the tree. Sink or swim, here I am resting on Him and clinging to Him as the Rock of my salvation.”

Take, then, these words of comfort.

II. I must now go on to my second point and give a few words of INSTRUCTION.

And so, my Hearer, you anxiously long to know how many are your iniquities and your sins; and your prayer is, “Lord, make me to know my transgressions and my sins.” Let me instruct you, then, as to how God will answer your prayers. God has more than one way of answering the same prayer; and though the ways are diverse, they are all equally useful and efficacious. It sometimes happens that God answers this prayer by allowing a man to fall into more and more gross sin. At our last Church Meeting, a Brother, in giving his experience of how he was brought to God, said he could not feel his guilt, his heart was very hard—till it happened one day he was tempted to the utterance of a lie, and no sooner had he uttered it, than he felt what a despicable creature he was to tell a lie to another. So that that one sin led him to see the deceitfulness and vileness of his own heart; and from that day, he never had to complain that he did not feel his guilt enough, but, on the contrary, he felt too guilty to come to Christ! I believe many a man who has been educated morally, who has been trained up in such a way that he has never fallen into gross sin, finds it very difficult to say, “Lord, I feel myself to be a sinner.” He knows he is a sinner and he knows it as a matter of fact, but he cannot altogether feel it. And I have known men who have often envied the harlot and the drunkard, because, they say, “Had I been like they, I would feel more bitterly my sin, and would feel I was one of those whom Jesus came to save.” It may be, though I could hope it may *not* be so, that God may allow you to fall into sin. God grant it may never be so, but if you ever should, you will then have cause to say, “Lord, I am vile. Now my eyes sees myself. I abhor myself in dust and ashes, because of this, my great sin.” Or possibly, you may not actually fall into sin, but be taken to the very verge of it. Did you ever know what it was on a sudden to be overtaken by some fiery temptation, to feel as if the strong hand of Satan had gripped you about the loins and was pulling you, you knew not where, nor why, nor how—but against your will, to the very verge of the precipice of some tremendous sin, and you went on and on, till, all of a sudden, just as you were about to take a dive into sin, your eyes were opened and you said, “Great God, how came I here—I, who hate this iniquity?—I, who abhor it?—And yet my feet had almost gone, my steps had well-near slipped.” Then in the recoil you say, “Great God, hold me up, for if You do not hold me up, I fall, indeed.” Then you discover that there is inbred sin in your heart, only lacking opportunity to spring out; that your soul is like a magazine of gunpowder, only needing the spark, and there shall come a terrible catastrophe! Then you realize that you are full of sin, grim with iniquity and evil devices, and that it only needs opportunity and strong temptation to destroy you, body and soul, forever! It sometimes happens that this is the way God answers this prayer.

A second method by which the Lord answers this prayer is by opening the eyes of the soul; not so much by Providence as by the mysterious agency of the Holy Spirit. Let me tell you, my Hearer, if you should ever have your eyes opened to see your guilt, you will find it to be the most awful sight you have ever beheld! I have had as much experience of this as any man among you. For five years as a child there was nothing before my eyes but my guilt; and though I do not hesitate to say that those who observed my life would not have seen any extraordinary sin, yet as I looked upon myself, there was not a day in which I did not commit such gross, such outrageous sins against God, that often and often I wished I had never been born! I know John Bunyan’s experience when he said he wished he had been a frog, or a toad, rather than a man, so guilty did he feel himself to be. You know how it is with yourselves. It is as when a housewife cleans

her chamber, she looks and there is no dust; the air is clear and all her furniture is shining brightly. But there is a chink in the window shutter—a ray of light creeps in and you see the dust dancing up and down, thousands of grains, in the sunbeam—it is the same all over the room—but she can only see it only where the sunbeam shines. It is just so with us; God sends a ray of His Light into the heart, and then we see how vile and full of iniquity it is! I trust, my Hearer, that your prayer may not be answered as it was in my case, by terrible conviction, awful dreams, nights of misery and days of pain. Take care! You are praying a tremendous prayer when you are asking God to show you your wickedness! Better for you to modify your prayer and put it thus—“Lord, let me know enough of my iniquity to bring me to Christ; not so much as to keep me from Him; not so much as to drive me to despair; but only enough to be divorced from all trust in myself, and to be led to trust in Christ alone.” Otherwise, like Moses, you may be compelled to cry out in a paroxysm of agony, “O Lord, kill me I pray You, out of hand, if I have found favor in Your sight and let me not see my wretchedness!”

Still, however, the practical question recurs, and you ask me again, “Tell me how I can feel the need of my Savior.” The first advice I give you is this—particularize your sins. Do not say, “I am a sinner;” it means nothing—everybody says that—but say this, “Am I a liar? Am I a thief? Am I a drunk? Have I had unchaste thoughts? Have I committed unclean acts? Have I in my soul often rebelled against God? Am I often angry without a cause? Have I a bad temper? Am I covetous? Do I love this world better than the world to come? Do I neglect prayer? Do I neglect the great salvation?” Put the questions upon the separate points, and you will soon convict yourself much more readily than by taking yourself in the gross as being a sinner. I have heard of a hypocritical old monk who used to whine out, while he whipped his back as softly as he could, “Lord, I am a great sinner; as big a sinner as Judas.” And when someone said, “Yes, that you are—you are like Judas, a vile old hypocrite,” then he would say, “No, I am not!” Then he would go on again, “I am a great sinner.” Someone would say, “You *are* a great sinner, you broke the First Commandment.” And then he would say, “No, I have not!” Then, when he would go on and say, “I am a great sinner,” someone would say, “Yes, you have broken the Second Commandment,” and he would say, “No, I have not.” And the same with the Third, and the Fourth, and so on right through! So it came to pass he had kept the whole Ten according to his own account, and yet he went on crying he was a great sinner! The man was a hypocrite, for if he had *not* broken the Commandments, how could he be a sinner at all? You will find it better not to dwell on your sins in the mass, but to write them down, count them over, and look at them individually, one by one.

Then let me advise you next to hear a personal ministry. Sit not where the preacher preaches to you in the plural number, but where he deals with you as a man alone, by yourself. Seek out a preacher like Rowland Hill, of whom it is said that if you sat in the back seat in the gallery, you always had a notion that Mr. Hill meant you. Or, that if you sat in the doorway where he could not see you, yet you were quite convinced he must know you were there, and that he was preaching right at you! I wonder indeed, if men ever could feel their sins under some ministers—genteel ministers, intellectual, respectable, who never speak to their hearers as if they did anything wrong? I say of these gentlemen what Hugh Latimer said of many ministers in his day, that they are more fit to dance a Morris-dance than to deal with the souls of men! I believe there are some this day more fit to deliver smart lectures, and bring out pleasing things to soothe carnal minds, than to preach the Word of God to sinners! We need the likes of John the Baptist back again, and Boanerges; we need men like Baxter to preach—

*“As though they might not preach again,
As dying men to dying men!”*

We need men like John Berridge, who have pulled the velvet out of their mouths years ago, and cannot speak fine words—men who hit hard, who draw the bow and pull the arrow to its very head, and send it right home, taking deadly aim at the heart and the conscience of men, plowing deep, hitting at the private lusts and at the open sins—not generalizing, but particularizing; not preaching to men in the mass, but to men in the detail—not to the mob and the crowd, but to each man separately and individually! Grow not offended with the minister if he comes home too close to you—remember that is his duty! And if the whip goes right around you, and stings you, thank God for it, be glad of it! Let me, if I sit under a ministry, sit under a man who sometimes uses the knife with me; a man who will not spare me; a man who will not flatter me. If there should be flattery anywhere, let it not be at any rate, in the pulpit! He who deals

with men's souls should deal with them very plainly! The pulpit is not the place for fine words, when we have to deal with the solemnities of eternity. Take that advice, then, and listen to a personal, home-smiting ministry.

Next to that, if you would know your sins, study much the Law of God. Let the 20th Chapter of Exodus be often before your eyes, and take with it as a commentary, Christ's sermon and Christ's speech when he said, "He who looks on a woman to lust after her, has committed adultery already with her in his heart." Understand that God's Commandments mean not only what they say in words, but that they touch the *thought*, the *heart*, the *imagination*. Think of that sentence of David, "Your Commandments are exceedingly broad." And thus, I think, you will soon come to detect the heinousness of your sin, and the blackness of your guilt. And if you would know still more, spend a little time in contemplating the fatal end of your sin, should you die impenitent. Dare to look downward to that fire which must be your eternal doom, unless Jesus Christ saves you! Be wise, Sinner, and look at the harvest which you shall surely reap if you sow tares. Sometimes let these words ring in your ears, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Open your ears and listen to the end of this text—"Where there is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Let such a passage as this be chewed over in your soul, "The wicked shall be cast into Hell with all the nations that forget God." These solemn thoughts may help you. Such books as Allaine's *Alarm*, Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*, Doddridge's *Rise and Progress* may have a good effect on your mind, in helping you to see the greatness of your guilt—by making you meditate upon the greatness of its punishment!

But if you would have a better and more effectual way, still, I give you one other piece of advice. Spend much of your time in thinking upon the agonies of Christ. The guilt of your sin is never so clearly seen anywhere as in the fact that it slew the Savior. Think what an evil thing that must be which cost Christ His life, in order to save you. Consider, I say, poor Soul, how black must be that vileness which could only be washed out with His precious blood; how grievous those offenses which could not be expiated unless His body were nailed to the Cross, His side pierced, and unless He died in fever and in thirst, crying, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Go to the Garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives, and see the Savior in His bloody sweat! Go to Pilate's Hall and see Him in His shameful accusations! Go to the hall of Herod's praetorian guard, and see there how the mighty men set Christ at nothing! And go then, last of all, to Calvary, and see that spectacle of woe—and if these do not show you the blackness of your sin, then nothing can! If the death of Christ does not teach you your need of a Savior, then what remedy remains for a heart so hard, for a soul so blind as yours?

Thus have I given you words of instruction. Forget them not; put them into practice. Be not hearers only, but *doers* of the Word!

III. And now, very briefly indeed, a few sentences by way of DISCRIMINATION.

You are longing, my Hearer, to know your great guilt and to feel your need of Jesus. Take care that you discriminate between the work of the Spirit, and the work of the devil. It is the work of the Spirit to make you feel yourself a sinner, but it never was His work to make you feel that Christ could forget you! It is the work of the Spirit to make you repent of sin—but it is not the work of the Spirit to make you despair of pardon! That is the *devil's* work. You know Satan always works by trying to counterfeit the work of the Spirit. He did so in the land of Egypt. Moses stretched out his rod, and turned all the waters into blood; out came Jannes and Jambres, and by their cunning and sleight of hand, they have a large piece of water brought and they turn that into blood. Then Moses fills the land with frogs—the ungracious sorcerers have a space cleared, and they fill that with frogs—thus they opposed the work of God by pretending to do the same work. So will the devil do with you. "Ah," says God the Holy Spirit, "Sinner you cannot save yourself." "Ah," says Satan, "and He cannot save you, either." "Ah," says God the Holy Spirit "you have a hard heart; only Christ can soften it." "Ah," says the devil, "but He won't soften it unless you soften it first." "Ah," says God the Spirit, "you have no qualifications; you are naked and ruined, and undone." "Yes," says the devil, "it is no use your trusting Christ, because you have no good in you, and *you* cannot hope to be saved." "Ah," says God the Spirit, "you do not feel your sin; it is difficult for you to repent, because of your hardness." "Ah," says the devil, "and because you are so hard-hearted, Christ cannot save you."

Now learn to distinguish between the one and the other. When a poor penitent sometimes thinks of destroying himself, do you think *that* is the Spirit's work? "It is the devil's work; he was a murderer from the beginning." One sinner says, "I am so guilty, I am sure I can never be pardoned." Is that the Spirit's teaching—that lie? Oh, that comes

from the father of lies! Take heed, whenever you read a biography like that of John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, as you read, say, "that is the Spirit's work, Lord send me that"—"that is the devil's work, Lord keep me from that." Do not be desirous to have the devil tearing your soul to pieces; the less you have to do with him, the better, and if the Holy Spirit keeps Satan from you, bless Him for it. Do not wait to have the terrors and horrors that some have, but come to Christ just as you are! You do not need those terrors and horrors, they are of little use. Let me remind you of another thing. I ask you not to acquaint yourself with your sins so as to hope to know them all, because you cannot number them with man's poor arithmetic! Young, in his *Night Thoughts*, says, "God hides from all eyes but His own, that desperate sight—a human heart." If you were to know only the tenth part of how bad you have been, you would be driven mad! You who have been the most moral, the most excellent in character, if all the past sins of your heart could stand before you in their black colors, and you could see them in their true light, you would be in Hell, for indeed it is Hell to discover the sinfulness of sin! Do you mean to say that you would go down on your knees and ask God to send you to Hell, or drive you mad? Be not so foolish—say, "Lord, let me know my guilt enough *to drive me to Christ*; but do not gratify my curiosity by letting me know more. No, give me enough to make me feel that I must trust Christ, or else be lost, and by Your Grace, I shall be well content if You give me that, though You deny me more."

Once again, my dear Hearers, listen to this next oration, for it is very important. Take care you do not try to make a righteousness out of your *feelings*. If you say, "I may not go to Christ till I *feel* my need of Him"—that is clear legality! You are on the wrong tack altogether, because Christ does not want you to *feel* your need in order to prepare for Him. He wants no preparation, and anything which you think to be a preparation is a mistake! You are to come just as you are—today, as you are, *now*—not as you will be, but just now, as you now are! I do not say to you, "Go home and seek God in prayer." I say, "Come to Christ, *now*, at this very hour." You will never be in a better state than you are now, for you were never in a worse state, and that is the fittest state in which to come to Christ! He who is very sick is just in the right state to have a doctor; he who is filthy and begrimed is just in the right state to be washed; he who is naked is just in the right state to be clothed—that is your case! But you say, "I do not feel my need." Just so—your not feeling it, proves you to have the greater need! You cannot trust your feelings, you say, because you haven't any. Why, if God were to hear your prayers, and make you feel your need, you would begin to trust in your feelings and would be led to say, "I trust Christ because I feel my need." That would be saying, "I trust *myself*." All these things are but Popery in disguise! All this preaching to sinners, that they must *feel* this, and *feel* that before they trust in Jesus, is just self-righteousness in another shape!

I know our Calvinistic Brothers and Sisters will not like this sermon—I cannot help that—for I do not hesitate to say that Phariseism is mixed with Hyper-Calvinism more than with any other sect in the world! And I do solemnly declare that this preaching to the prejudice and feelings of what they call, sensible sinners, is nothing more than self-righteousness taking a most cunning and crafty shape, for it is telling the sinner that he *must be something* before he comes to Christ; whereas the Gospel is preached not to sensible sinners, or sinners with any other qualifying adjective, but to SINNERS as sinners, to sinners just as they are! It is not to sinners as *repentant* sinners, but to sinners as *sinner*s, be their state what it may, and their feelings whatever they may be! Oh, Sinners, Mercy's door is flung wide open to you this morning! Let not Satan push you back by saying, "You are not fit." You *are* fit! That is to say, you have all the fitness Christ wants, and that is *none at all*! Come to Him just as you are. "Oh," says one, "but you know that hymn of Hart's?—

*'All the fitness He requires
Is to feel your need of Him,'*

I cannot get that." Let me counsel you, then, to never quote *part* of a hymn, or part of a text—quote it all!—

*"All the fitness He requires
Is to feel your need of him—
This He GIVES YOU,
It is His Spirit's rising beam!"*

Come and ask Him to give it to you, and believe He will give it you! Do believe my Master is longing to save you—trust Him, act on that belief, Sinner, and you shall be saved, or else I will be lost with you! Do but believe that my Master has got a loving heart, and that He is able to forgive, and that He has a mighty arm and is able to deliver you; do Him the honor right now of not measuring His corn with your bushel; "for His ways are not your ways, neither are His thoughts

your thoughts.” “As high as the Heaven is above the earth, so high are His ways above your ways. and His thoughts above your thoughts.” Today He says to you, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” Sinner, if you believe and are not saved, why God’s Word is a lie, and God is not true! And will you ever dream that to be the case? No, Sinner—close in now with the proclamation of this Gospel, and say—

*“I’ll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter mercy gives;
Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives!
Perhaps He will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But if I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there.”*

You cannot perish trusting in Christ! Though you have no good works, and no good feelings, yet if yours arms are around the Cross, and if the blood is sprinkled on your brow, when the destroying Angel shall pass through the world, He shall pass over you! Thus is it written—“When I see the blood, I will pass over you”—not, “when I see your *feelings* about the blood”—not even, “when I see your *faith* in the blood,” but, “*when I see the blood*, I will pass over you.” Learn to discriminate between a sense of sin which would humble you, and a sense of sin which would only make you proud. When you have come to say, “I have felt my sin enough and, therefore, I am fit to come to Christ,” it is nothing but *pride* dressed in the garb of humility!

Let me tell you one more thing before I have done with you on this point. Anything which keeps you from Christ is sin—whatever thought you have which keeps you from trusting Christ today is a sinful thought—and every hour you continue as you are, an *unbeliever in Christ*, the wrath of God abides on you! Now, why should you be asking for a thing which may help to keep you from Christ all the longer? You know now, that you have nothing good in you; why not trust in Christ for all? But you say, “I must first of all feel more.” Poor Soul, if you were to feel more acutely, you would find it all the harder to trust Christ! I prayed to God that He would show me my guilt—I little thought how He would answer me! Why I was such a fool that I would not come to Christ unless the devil dragged me there. I said, “Christ cannot have died for me, because I have not felt miserable enough.” God heard me and, believe me, I will never pray that prayer again; for when I began to feel my guilt, then I said, “I am too wicked to be saved,” and I found the very thing I had been asking for was a curse upon me and not a blessing! So, if you should feel what you ask to feel, it might be the cause of your condemnation!

Be wise, therefore, and listen to my Master’s voice; stay not to gather together the fuller’s soap, and the refiners fire, but come, and wash now in the Jordan, and be clean. Come and stop not till your heart is turned up with the plow, and your soul hewn down with the axe! Come as you are to Him now! What? Will you not come to Christ, when He has said, “Whomever will, let him come”? Will you not trust Him when He looks down and smiles on you and says, “Trust Me, I will never deceive you”? What? Can you not say to Him, “Master, I am very guilty, but You have said, ‘Come now and let us reason together, though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool’”? Lord, this mercy is too great, but I believe it! I take You at Your Word. You have said, “Return, you backsliding children, and I will forgive your iniquities.” Lord, I come to You; I know not how it is that You can forgive such an one as I am, but I believe You cannot lie, and on that promise do I rest my soul! I know You have said, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” Lord, I cannot understand how there can be power in the blood to wash away all manner of blasphemy, but You have said it, and I believe it. It is Your business to make Your own word true, not mine, and You have said, “Whoever will, let him come.” Lord, I am not worthy, but I do will to come, or if I do not will, yet I will to will, therefore will I come, just as I am; I know I have no good feeling to recommend myself to You, but then You do not want good feelings in me; You will give me all I need.

Oh my dear Hearers, I feel so glad I have such a Gospel as this to preach to you! If you have not received it, I pray God the Holy Spirit to send it home to you. It is so simple that men cannot believe it is true! If I were to bid you take off your shoes, and run from here to York, and you would be saved, why you would do it at once and the road to York would be thronged! But when it is nothing but the soul-quickening words, “Believe and live,” it is too easy for your proud hearts to do! If I told you to go and earn a thousand pounds, and endow a church with it, and you would be saved,

you would think the price very cheap! But when I say, “Trust Christ and be saved,” you cannot do that—it is too simple! Ah, madness of the human heart! Strange, strange, besotted sin—when God makes the path plain, men will not run in it for that very reason; and when he sets the door wide open, that is the very reason they will not come in! They say if the door were half-open, and they had to push it open, they would come in. God has made the Gospel too plain and too simple to suit proud hearts—may God soften proud hearts, and make you receive the Savior!

IV. Now I come to my last point, which I have already touched upon and that is by way of EXHORTATION.

Poor Sinner, seven years ago you were saying just what you are saying now, and when seven more years shall have come, you will be saying just the same! Seven years ago you said, “I would trust Christ, but I do not feel as I ought.” Do you feel any better now? And when another seven years have come, you will feel just as you do now. You will say, “I would come, but I do not feel fit—I do not feel my need enough.” Yes, and it will keep going on forever, till you go down to the pit of Hell, saying as you go down, “I do not feel my need enough,” and then the lie will be detected, and you will say, “It never said in the Word of God, ‘I might come to Christ when I felt my need enough;’ but it said ‘Whoever will, let him come.’ I would not come as I was, therefore I am justly cast away.” Hear me, Sinner, when I bid you come to Jesus as you are, and give you these reasons for it!

In the first place, it is a very great sin not to feel your guilt and not to mourn over it, but then it is one of the sins that Jesus Christ atoned for on the Cross! When His heart was pierced, He paid the ransom price for your hard heart! Oh, Sinner, if Christ had only died that we might be forgiven of other sins except our hard hearts, we would never go to Heaven, for we have, all of us, even we who have believed, committed that great sin of being impenitent before Him! If He had not died to wash *that* sin away, as well as every other sin, where should we be? The fact that you cannot weep, nor sorrow as you would, is an addition to your guilt! But did not Christ wash you from that sin, black though it is? Come to Him—He is able to save you, even from this!

Again, come to Jesus because it is only He who can give you that heart for which you seek. If men were not to come to Christ till they feel as they should feel, they would never come at all! I will freely confess that if I had never trusted Christ until I felt I might have trusted Him, I never could have trusted Him. and could not trust Him now; for there are times with me when after I have preached the Gospel as plainly as I could, I have returned to my own chamber, and my heart has been dead, lumpish, lying like a log within my spirit. and I have thought then, if I could not come to Christ as a sinner, I could not come anyway else! If I found in the text one word before that word, “sinners”—“Jesus Christ came into the world to save”—and then an adjective and *then*, “sinners,” I would be lost! It is just because the text says, “sinners,” just as they are, that, “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,” that I can hope He came to save me! If it had said Jesus Christ came into the world to save soft-hearted sinners, I would have said, “Lord, my heart is like stone.” If it had said Jesus came into the world to save *weeping* sinners, I would have said, “Lord though I press my eyelids, I could not force a tear.” If it had said Jesus came into the world to save sinners who *felt their need* of Him, I would say, “I do not feel the need of it; I know I do need You, but I do not feel it.” But, Lord, You came to save sinners and I am saved! I trust You came to save me, and here I am, sink or swim, I rest on You! If I perish, I will perish trusting You; and if I must am lost, in Your hands it shall be, for in my own hands I will not be in any respect, or in any degree, saved. I come to that Cross and under that Cross I stand—“Your perfect righteousness is my beauty—my glorious dress.”

Come, Sinner, to Christ, because He can soften yours heart, and you can never soften it yourself. He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins; not merely the remission, but the repentance, too! He gives His Grace not merely to those who seek it, but even to those who seek it not; He gives repentance not to those who repent, themselves, but to those who cannot repent, and to those who are saying, “Lord I would, but cannot feel”—“I would, but cannot weep”—I say Christ is just the Savior for you—a Christ who begins at the beginning, and does not need you to begin—a Christ who shall go to the end, and won’t need you to finish—a Christ who does not ask you to say Alpha and *then* He will be the Omega—but He will be both Alpha and Omega! Christ who is the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. The plain Gospel is just this, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” “But, Lord, I cannot see anything.” “Look unto Me.” “But, Lord, I do not feel.” “Look unto Me.” “But, Lord, I cannot say I feel my need.” “Look unto Me, not unto yourself—all this is looking to yourself.” “But, Lord, I feel sometimes that I could do anything, but a week passes and then I am hard of heart.” “Look unto Me.” “But Lord, I have often tried.” “Try no

more, look unto Me.” “Oh, but Lord, You know.” “Yes, I know all things, I know everything—all your iniquity and your sins, just look unto Me.” “Oh, but often, Lord, when I have heard a sermon, I feel impressed, yet it is like the morning cloud and the early dew; it passes away.” “Look unto Me, not to your feelings or your impressions; look unto Me.” “Well,” say some, “but will that really save me, just looking to Christ?” My dear Soul, if that does not save you, I am not saved! The only way in which I have been saved, and the only Gospel I can find in the Bible, is looking to Christ! “But if I go on in sin,” says one. But you cannot go on in sin; your looking to Christ will cure you of that habit of sin. “But what if my heart remains hard?” It cannot remain hard; you will find that looking to Christ will keep you from having a hard heart. It is just as we sing in the penitential hymn of gratitude—

*“Dissolved by Your mercy, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found.”*

You will never feel as you ought until you do not feel what you ought! You will never come to Christ until you do not feel that you can come! Come as you are; come in all your poverty, and stubbornness, and hardness, just as you are now. Take Christ to be your All-in-All.

Sound your songs you angels! Stroke your golden harps you redeemed ones! There are sinners snatched from Hell today! There are men and women and children who have trusted Christ this morning! Though they scarcely know it, their sins are all forgiven! Their feet are on the Rock! The new song shall soon be in their mouths, and their goings shall be established! Farewell, my Brothers and Sisters; turn to God this morning; God shall keep you, and you shall see His face in Glory everlasting! Amen.

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