

GRACE—THE ONE WAY OF SALVATION NO. 765

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*“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
we shall be saved, even as they.”
Acts 15:11.*

YOU who are conversant with Scripture will recollect that these are the words of the Apostle Peter. Paul and Barnabas had been preaching the Gospel among the Gentiles with great success, but “certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed,” could not get rid of their old Jewish bigotry, and vehemently urged that the converted Gentiles ought to be circumcised, or else they could not be saved. They made a great clamor over this, and there was no small dissension and disputation. The children of the bondwoman mustered all their forces, while the champions of glorious liberty arrayed themselves for the battle. Paul and Barnabas, those valiant soldiers of the Cross, stood out stoutly against the ritualistic Brothers, and told them that the rite of circumcision did not belong to the Gentiles at all, and ought not to be forced upon them; they would not yield their free principles at the dictation of the Judaizers, but scorned to bow their necks to the yoke of bondage. It was agreed to bring the matter up for decision at Jerusalem before the Apostles and Elders; and when all the Brothers had assembled, there seems to have been a considerable dispute, in the midst of which, Peter, speaking with his usual boldness and clearness, declared that it would be wrong to put a heavy yoke upon the necks of the Gentiles, which neither that generation of Jews nor their fathers had been able to bear, and then he concluded his address by saying, in effect, “Although these people are not circumcised, and ought not to be, yet we believe that there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile, but by the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.” Herein Peter was not to be blamed, but to be greatly commended, for he spoke under the influence of the Spirit of God.

I. We shall use the text as concisely as we can for three important purposes; and in the first place, we shall look upon it AS AN APOSTOLIC CONFESSIO OF FAITH.

You notice it begins with, “*We believe.*” We will call it, then, the “Apostle’s Creed,” and we may rest assured that it has quite as clear a right to that title as that highly esteemed composition which is commonly called the “Nicene, or Apostle’s Creed.” Peter is speaking for the rest, and he says, “We believe.” Well, Peter, what do you believe? We are all attentive. Peter’s answer is, “We believe that through the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.” There is a great deal of talk in our day—foolish, vainglorious, idiotic, senseless talk, as we think, about Apostolic succession. Some persons think they have the direct line from the Apostles running right at their feet, and others believe that those who make the greatest boast about it, have the least claim to it. There are clergymen who imagine that because they happen to be in a church which is in open alliance with the State, they must necessarily be ministers of the Church of which Christ said, “My Kingdom is not of this world.”

Now *we* think that their union with the State is in itself a conclusive reply to all such claims to Apostolic succession; and moreover, we remark many fatal points of difference between the Apostles and their professed successors. Whenever did Peter or Paul become State-paid ministers? In what State Church did they enroll themselves? What tithes did they receive? What rates did they levy? What laws did they make upon the Jews and the Gentiles? Were they rectors or vicars, prebendaries or deans, canons or curates? Did they buy their livings in the market? Did they sit in the Roman House of Lords dressed in lawn sleeves? Were they styled Right Reverend Fathers in God? Were they appointed by the Prime Minister of the day? Did they put on gowns, and read prayers out of a book? Did they christen children, and call them regenerate, and bury wicked reprobates in sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection? As opposite as light is from darkness were those Apostles from the men who pretend to be their Divinely-appointed successors! When will men cease to thrust their arrogant pretences into our faces? Only when the common sense, to say nothing of the religion of our country, shall have rebuked their presumption!

One thing is clear from this “Apostle’s Creed” which we have before us—*it is clear that the Apostles did not believe in ritualism*. Peter—why, they make him out to be the head of the Church! Do they not say that he was the first pope, and so on? I am sure if Peter were here he would grow very angry with them for slandering him so scandalously, for in his Epistle he expressly warned others against being lords over God’s heritage, and you may be sure he did not fall into that sin himself. When he is asked for his confession of faith, he stands up and declares that he believes in salvation by Divine Grace alone. “We believe.” O bold Apostle, what do you believe? Now we still hear it. Peter will say, “We believe in circumcision; we believe in regeneration by baptism; we believe in the sacramental efficacy of the Lord’s Supper; we believe in pompous ceremonies; we believe in priests, and altars, and robes, and rubrics!” No; he does not utter a syllable concerning anything of the kind. He says, “We believe that through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we who have been circumcised shall be saved, just like those who have not been circumcised; we believe that we shall be saved, even as they.” He makes very little, it seems, of ceremonies in the matter of salvation. He takes care that no idea of Sacramentarianism shall mar his explicit confession of faith; he glories in no rite, and rests in no ordinance. All his testimony is concerning the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He says nothing whatever about ordinances, ceremonies, Apostolic gifts, or prelate unction—his theme is GRACE, and GRACE alone; and those, my Brothers and Sisters, are the true successors of the Apostles who teach you that you are to be saved through the unmerited favor and free Mercy of God, agreeing with Peter in their testimony, “We believe that through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved.” These are the men who preach to you the Gospel of salvation through the blood and Righteousness of Jesus; but those pretended ministers who boast of their priesthood, preach another gospel, “which is not another; but there are some that trouble you.” Upon their heads shall be the blood of deluded souls. They profess to regenerate others, but they will perish themselves; they talk of sacramental grace, and shall receive eternal destruction. Woe unto them, for they are deceivers and liars. May the Lord deliver this land from their superstitions.

Another thing is very clear here. The Apostle *did not believe in self-righteousness*. The creed of the world is, “Do your best and it will be all right with you.” To question this is treason against the pride of human nature, which evermore clings to salvation by its own merits. Every man is born a Pharisee. Self-confidence is bred in the bones—and will come out in the flesh. “What?” says a man, “do you not believe that if a man does his best, he will fare well in the next world? Why, you know, we must all live as well as we can, every man according to his own light; and if every man follows out his own conscience, as near as may be, surely it will be well with us?” That is not what Peter said. Peter did not say, “We believe that through doing our best, we shall be saved like other people.” He did not even say, “We believe that if we act according to our light, God will accept that little light for what it was.” No, the Apostle strikes out quite another track, and solemnly affirms, “We believe that through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved,” not through our good works, not through anything that we do, not by the merit of anything which we feel or perform, or promise to perform, but by Grace, that is to say, by the free favor of God—

*“Perish each thought of human pride,
Let God alone be magnified.”*

We believe that if we are ever saved at all, we must be saved gratis—saved as the gratuitous act of a bountiful God—saved by a gift, not by wages—saved by God’s Love, not by our own doings or merits. This is the Apostle’s creed: salvation is all of Divine Grace from first to last, and the channel of that Grace is the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved, and lived, and died, and rose again for our salvation. Those who preach mere morality, or set up any way except that of trusting in the Grace of God through Christ Jesus, preach another gospel, and they shall be accursed, even though they preach it with an angel’s eloquence. In the day when the Lord shall come to discern between the righteous and the wicked, their work, as wood, hay, and stubble, shall be burnt up; but those who preach salvation by Grace through Jesus Christ, shall find that their work, like gold, and silver, and precious stones, shall survive the fire, and great shall be their reward.

I think it is very clear, again, from the text, *that the Apostles did not believe in salvation by the natural force of free will*. I fail to detect a trace of the glorification of free will here. Peter puts it, “We believe that we shall be saved;” through what? Through our own unbiased will? Through the volitions of our own well-balanced nature? Not at all, Sir; but, “we believe that through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved.” He takes the crown from off the head of man in all respects, and gives all glory to the Grace of God; he extols God, the Gracious Sovereign, who will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy, and who will have compassion upon whom He will have compassion. I wish I had

a voice of thunder to proclaim in every street of London this glorious Doctrine, “By Grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” This is the old Reformation Doctrine. This is the Doctrine which will shake the very gates of Hell, if it is but faithfully preached. O for an army of witnesses to publish abroad the Gospel of Grace in its Sovereignty, Omnipotence, and fullness. If you are ever to get comfort, believe me, dear Hearer, you must receive the Doctrine of Salvation by Free Grace into your soul as the delight and solace of your heart, for it is the living Truth of the living God. Not by ritualism, not by good works, not by our own unaided free will are we saved, but by the Grace of God alone.—

*“Not for the works which we have done,
Or shall hereafter do,
Has God decreed on sinful worms
Salvation to bestow.
The Glory, Lord, from first to last,
Is due to You alone:
Anything to ourselves we dare not take,
Or rob You of Your crown.”*

Were I now to take this Apostle’s creed to pieces, and look closely at the details of it, it would be easy to show that this creed contains within it many important Truths of God. It implies, most evidently, the Doctrine of *human ruin*. “We believe that we shall be *saved*.” That statement assuredly implies that we need to be saved. The Apostle Peter, as well as his brother Apostle, Paul, was sound in the faith concerning the total depravity of human nature, he viewed man as a lost creature, needing to be saved by Divine Grace. He believed in those three great “r’s” which Rowland Hill used to talk about—ruin, redemption, and regeneration. He saw most clearly man’s ruin, or he would not have been so explicit upon man’s salvation. If Peter were here to preach tonight, he would not tell us that man, though he is a little fallen, is still a noble creature, who needs only a little assistance, and he will be quite able to right himself. Oh, the fearful flattery which has been heard from some pulpits! Anointing corruption with the unction of hypocrisy; smearing the abomination of our depravity with sickening eulogies! Peter would give no countenance to such false prophets. No, he would faithfully testify that man is *dead* in sin, and life’s a gift; that man is lost, utterly fallen and undone. He speaks in his Epistles of the former lusts of our ignorance, of our vain conversation received by tradition of our fathers, and of the corruption which is in the world through lust. In the verse before us, he tells us that the best of men, men such as himself and the other Apostles, had need to be saved, and, consequently, they must have been originally among the lost, heirs of wrath even as others. I am sure that he was a firm Believer in what are called “*the Doctrines of Grace*,” as he was certainly in his own person an illustrious trophy and everlasting monument of Divine Grace. What a ring there is in that word GRACE! Why, it does one good to speak it and to hear it; it is, indeed, “a charming sound, harmonious to the ear.” When one feels the power of it, it is enough to make the soul leap out of the body for joy—

*“Grace! How good, how cheap, how free,
Grace, how easy to be found!
Only let your misery
In the Savior’s blood be drowned!”*

How it suits a sinner! How it cheers a poor forlorn wanderer from God! Grace! Peter was not in a fog about this; his witness is clear as crystal, decisive as the sentence of a judge. He believed that salvation was of God’s free favor, and God’s almighty power; and he speaks out like a man, “We believe that we are saved by Grace.”

Our Apostle was also most decided and explicit concerning *the Atonement*. Cannot you see the Atonement in the text, sparkling like a jewel in a well-made ring? We are saved “through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” What does the Apostle mean but the Grace which came streaming from those five wounds when the Savior hung on the Cross? What does he mean but the Grace which is revealed to us in the bleeding Sufferer who took our sins, and carried our sorrows, that we might be delivered from wrath through Him? O that everyone were as clear about the Atonement as Peter is! Peter had seen his Master; no, more, his Master had looked at him and broken his heart, and afterwards bound it up, and given him much Grace; and now Peter is not content with saying, “We believe that we shall be saved through Grace,” but he is careful to word it, “We believe that we shall be saved *through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*.” Dear Hearers, never have any questions upon the vital point of Redemption by blood. This is a fundamental Truth of God; he who

is in darkness upon this subject, has no Light of God in him. What the sun is to the heavens, the Doctrine of a Vicarious Satisfaction is to theology. Atonement is the brain and spinal cord of Christianity. Take away the cleansing blood, and what is left to the guilty? Deny the Substitutionary work of Jesus, and you have denied all that is precious in the New Testament. Never, never let us endure one wavering, doubtful thought upon this all-important Truth of God.

It seems to me, too, that without straining the text, I might easily prove that Peter believed in the Doctrine of *the Final Perseverance of the Saints*. They were not, in a certain sense, it seems, perfectly saved when he spoke, but he says, “We believe we shall be saved.” Well, but Peter, may you not fall away and perish? “No,” he says, “we believe that through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *we shall be saved*.” How positively he speaks of it! I do wish you, dear Friends, to get a firm and intelligent hold of the Doctrine of the Safety of the Believer, which is as clear as noonday in the Scriptures. Upon the whole you have learned it, and can defend it well, but all of you should be able to give a reason for the hope that is in you. I have known one of our people met by those who do not believe this Doctrine, and they have said to him, “You will fall away; look at your own weakness and tendency to sin.” “No,” said the man, “I know I would if I were left to myself, but then Christ has promised that He will never leave me nor forsake me.” Then it is sometimes said, “but you may be a Believer in Christ today, and yet perish tomorrow;” but our friends generally reply, “Do not tell us that lie: God’s saints shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of Jesus’ hand; as for your doctrine of the final falling of the Lord’s blood-bought ones, if that is the gospel, go and keep it to yourselves; as for us, we would not go two inches to listen to it; there is nothing in it to lay hold of; it is a bone without marrow; there is no strength, no comfort for the soul in it.” If I know when I trust Christ that He will save me at the last, then I have something to rest upon, something worth living for, but if it is all a mere “if,” or “but,” or “maybe,” or “perhaps,” a little of myself, and a little of Christ, I am in a poor case, indeed. A gospel which proclaims an uncertain salvation is a miserable imposition. Away with such a gospel, away with such a Gospel; it is a dishonor to Christ; it is a discredit to God’s people; it neither came from the Scriptures of Truth, nor does it bring Glory to God.

Thus, have I tried to open up the Apostle’s creed, “We believe that through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”

II. And now, having used the text as the Apostle’s confession of faith, I shall take it as THE CONVERTED MORAL MAN’S STATEMENT.

Let me show you what I mean. Observe and admire the way in which Peter puts the case. A company of Jews has assembled to discuss a certain matter, and some of them look very wise, and bring up certain suggestions that are rather significant. They say, “Well, perhaps these Gentile dogs may be saved; yes, Jesus Christ told us to go and preach the Gospel to every creature; therefore, no doubt, He must have included these Gentile dogs—we do not like them, though, and must keep them as much under our rules and regulations as we can; we must compel them to be circumcised; we must have them brought under the full rigor of the Law; we cannot excuse them from wearing the yoke of bondage.” Presently, the Apostle Peter gets up to speak, and you expect to hear him say—do you not?—to these gentlemen, “Why, these ‘Gentile dogs,’ as you call them, can be saved, even as *you*.” No; he adopts quite a different tone; he turns the tables, and he says to them, “We believe that you may be saved, even as they.” It were just as if I should have a company of persons here now who had been very bad and wicked, who had plunged into the deepest sin, but God’s Grace has met with them and made them new creatures in Christ Jesus: there is a Church Meeting, and when these persons are brought before the Church, suppose there were some of the members who should say, “Yes, we believe that a drunk may be saved, and a person who has been a harlot may, *perhaps*, be saved, too.” But imagine, now, that I were to stand up and reply, “Now, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I believe that *you* may be saved even as *these*,” what a rebuke it would be! This is precisely what Peter meant. “Oh,” he said, “do not raise the question about whether *they* can be saved—the question is whether *you*, who have raised such a question, will be saved.” “We believe that, through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, even as they.” So he seems, in this dispute, to take the objectors aback, and to put the Gentile Believers first in order, to cast out the bad, proud, wicked, devilish spirit of self-righteousness.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, some of us were favored by Providence with the great privilege of having Christian parents, and consequently we never did know a great deal of the open sin into which others have fallen. Some of us never were inside a theater in our lives, never saw a play, and do not know what it is like. There are some here who, perhaps, never did frequent the tavern, do not know a lascivious song, and never uttered an oath. This is cause for great thankful-

ness, very great thankfulness indeed; but, O you excellent moralists, mind you do not say in your heart, “We are quite sure to be saved,” for, let me tell you, you have not before God any advantage over the outward transgressor, so as to entitle you to be saved in a less humbling manner. If you are ever saved, you will have to be saved in the same way as those who have been permitted to plunge into the most outrageous sin. Your being restrained from overt offenses is a favor for you to be grateful, but not a virtue for you to trust in. Ascribe it to God’s Providential goodness, but do not wrap it about you as though it were to be your wedding garment, for if you do, your self-righteousness will be more dangerous to you than some men’s open sins are to them; for do you not know how the Savior put it, “Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you.” You moral people must be saved by the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—saved *even as they*, the outcasts, the wanderers. You will not, you cannot be saved in any other way, and will not be saved at all if you do not submit to this way. You will not be permitted to enter Heaven, good as you think yourselves to be, unless you come down to the terms and conditions which Sovereign Grace has laid down, namely, that you should trust Christ, and be saved by Divine Grace, “even as they.”

To prove to you, dear Friends, that this must be the case, I will suppose that you have picked out 20 people who have been good, in a moral sense, from their youth up. Now, these people must be saved just the same as those other 20 over yonder, who have been as bad as bad can be from their earliest childhood, and I will tell you why—because these amiable persons fell in Adam just as surely as the outcasts did; they are as fully partakers of the curse of the Fall as the profane and drunken; and they were born in sin and shaped in iniquity just as the dissolute and the dishonest were. There is no difference in the blood of humanity, it flows from one polluted source, and is tainted in all its channels. The depravity of human nature does not belong merely to those who are born in dirty back courts and alleys, but it is as certainly manifest in those of you who were born in the best parts of the city. You dwellers in Belgravia are as altogether born in sin as the denizens of Bethnal Green. The West End is as sensual as the East. Hyde Park has no natural superiority of nature over Seven Dials. The corruption of those born in the castle at Windsor is as deep as the depravity of workhouse children. You, Ladies and Gentlemen, are born with hearts as bad and as black as the poorest of the poor. You sons of Christian parents, do not imagine, because you spring of a godly ancestry, that therefore your nature is not polluted like the nature of others. In this respect, we are all alike; we are born in sin, and alike are we dead by nature in trespasses and sins, heirs of wrath, even as others.

Remember, too, that although you may not have sinned openly, as others have done, yet in your hearts you have, and it is by your hearts that you will be judged; for how often a man may commit adultery in his heart, and incur the guilt of theft, while his hands lay idly by his side! Do you not know that a look may have in it the essence of an unclean act, and that a thought may commit murder as well as a hand? God takes note of heart sin as well as hand sin. If you have been outwardly moral, I am thankful for it, and I ask *you* to be thankful for it too; but do not trust in it for Justification, seeing that you must be saved, even as the worst of criminals are saved, because in heart, if not in life, you have been as bad as they.

Moreover the method of pardon is the same in all cases. If you moralists are to be washed, where must you find the purifying bath? I never heard of but one Fountain, that—

*“Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins.”*

That Fountain is for the dying thief as much as for you, and for you as much as for him. There is a Robe of Righteousness that is to cover the best living among professors—that same Robe of Righteousness covered Saul of Tarsus, the bloody persecutor. If you, of unspotted outward character, are ever to have a Robe of Righteousness, you must wear the same one as he wore; there cannot be another nor a better. O you who are conscious of outward innocence, do, *do*, humble yourselves at the foot of the Cross, and come to Jesus just as empty-handed, just as broken-hearted as if you had been outwardly among the vilest of the vile, and through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, you shall be saved, even as they. O may the Holy Spirit bring you to this. I do not know whether anybody here has ever fallen into such an unwise thought as I have known some entertain. I met with a case of this sort only the other day. A very excellent and amiable young woman, when converted to God, said to me, “You know, Sir, I used to almost wish that I was one of those very bad sinners whom you so often speak to, and invited to come to Jesus, because I thought then I should feel my need more: that was my difficulty, I could not feel my need.” But see, dear Friends, we believe that through the Grace of our Lord Jesus

Christ, we who have not plunged into black sin, shall be saved even as they who have done so. Do not make a difficulty about this. Others make a difficulty on the opposite side; they say, "Oh, I could trust Christ if I had been kept from sin!" The fact is, that you unbelieving souls will not trust Christ whichever way you have lived, for from some quarter or other, you will find cause for your doubts; but when the Lord the Spirit gives you faith, you big sinners will trust Christ quite as readily as those who have not been openly great offenders; and you who have been preserved from open sin will trust Him as joyfully as the great transgressors. O come, come, come, you sick souls; come to my Master! Do not say, "We would come if we were worse." Do not say, "We would come if we were better." But come as you are; come just as you are. Oh, if you are a sinner, Christ invites you! If you are but lost, remember Christ came to save the lost! Do not be picking out your case, and making it to be different from others, but come, and welcome! Weary and heavy laden Sinner, come, and welcome! Come, even now!—

*"Just as you are, without one trace
Of love, or joy, or inward Grace,
Or meetness for the heavenly place,
O guilty Sinner, come!
Come, here bring your boding fears,
Your aching heart, your bursting tears;
'Tis Mercy's voice salutes your ears,
O trembling sinner, come!
The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come;'
Rejoicing saints re-echo, 'Come;'
Who faints, who thirsts, who will, may come—
Your Savior bids you come!"*

III. The text would not be fairly treated if I did not use it as THE CONFESSION OF THE GREAT OUTWARD SINNER WHEN CONVERTED.

I will now speak to those here present who, before conversion, indulged in gross sins. Such are here. Glory be to God, such are here! They have been washed; they have been cleansed. My dear Brothers and Sisters, I can rejoice over you; more precious are you by far in my eyes than all the precious gems which kings delight to wear, for you are my eternal joy and crown of rejoicing. You have experienced a Divine change; you are not what you once were; you are new creatures in Christ Jesus. Now, I will speak for you. "We believe that through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." What do we mean? Why, we believe that we shall be saved even as the best are saved. I will split that thought up, as it were, into individual instances. Yonder sits a very poor Believer. We are very glad to see him at the Tabernacle. I know he had a thought that his clothes were hardly good enough to come in, but I hope none of you will ever stay away because of your clothes. Come, come anyhow; we are always glad to see you, at least, I am, if others are not. But my poor Friend is very badly off indeed; he would not like anybody perhaps to see the room where he lives. Yes, but my dear Brother, do you expect to have a poor man's salvation? Do you expect that when you get to Heaven, you will be placed in a corner as a pauper pensioner? Do you think that Jesus Christ will only give you the crumbs which fall from off His table? "Oh, no!" I think I hear you say, "Oh, no! We shall leave our poverty when we get to Glory."

Some of our friends are rich. They have an abundance of this world's goods, and we rejoice to think they have, and hope that they will have Grace to make a proper use of this mercy; but we poor people believe that we shall be saved, even as they. We do not believe that our poverty will make any difference to our share in Divine Grace, but that we shall be as much loved of God as they are, as much blessed in our poverty as they are in their riches, and as much enabled by Divine Grace to glorify God in our sphere as they are in theirs. We do not envy them, but on the contrary, ask Grace from God that we may feel that if we are poor in pocket, yet we are rich in faith, and shall be saved, even as they.

Others of you are not so much poor in money as you are poor in useful talent. You come up to Chapel, and fill your seat, and that is about all you can do. You drop your weekly offering into the box, and when that is done, you have done all, or nearly all in your power. You cannot preach; you could not conduct a Prayer Meeting; you have hardly courage enough to give away a tract. Well, my dear Friend, you are one of the timid ones, one of the little Benjamins of whom there are many. Now, do you expect that the Lord Jesus Christ will give you a second-hand robe to wear at His wedding feast? And when you sit at the banquet, do you think He will serve you from cold and inferior dishes? "Oh, no!" you say;

“Oh, no! Some of our Brothers and Sisters have great talents, and we are glad that they have; we rejoice in their talents, but we believe that we shall be saved, even as they: we do not think that there will be any difference made in the Divine distribution of loving kindness because of our degree of ability.” There are very proper distinctions here on earth between rich and poor, and between those who are learned and those who are unlearned; but we believe that there is no distinction in the matter of salvation—we shall be saved, even as they. Many of you would preach 10 times better than I do if you could only get your tongues unloosed to say what you feel. Oh, what red-hot sermons you would preach, and how earnest you would be in their delivery! Now, that sermon which you did not preach, and could not preach, shall not be set down to your account, while perhaps that discourse of mine will be a failure because I may not have preached it as I should have done, with pure motives and zealous spirit. God knows what you would do if you could, and He judges not so much according to what you do, as according to your will to do it. He takes in this case, the will for the deed, and you shall be saved, even as they who with the tongue of fire proclaim the Truths of God.

Most likely there is some doubting Brother here. Whenever he opens “Our Own Hymn Book,” he very seldom looks to “The Golden Book of Communion,” but he generally turns to hymn No. 590, or thereabouts, and begins to sing “Contrite Cries.” Well, my dear Friend, you are a weakling; you are Mr. Much-Afraid, or Mr. Little-Faith; but, how is your heart? What are your prospects? Do you believe that you will be put off with a second-rate salvation, that you will be admitted by the back door into Heaven instead of through the gate of pearl? “Oh no!” you say; “I am the weakest lamb in Jesus’ fold, but I believe that I shall be saved, even as they; that is, even as they who are the strongest in Grace, most useful in labor, and most mighty in faith.” In a few hours, dear Friends, I shall be crossing the sea, and I will suppose that there shall be a good stiff wind, and that the vessel may be driven out of her course, and be in danger. As I walk the deck, I see a poor girl on board; she is very weak and ill, quite a contrast to that fine strong, burly passenger who is standing beside her, apparently enjoying the salt spray and the rough wind. Now, suppose a storm should come on—which of these two is the more safe? Well, I cannot see any difference, because if the ship goes to the bottom, they will both go, and if the ship gets to the other side of the channel, they will both land in security. The safety is equal when the thing upon which it depends is the same. So, if the weakest Christian is in the boat of salvation—that is, if he trusts Christ—he is as safe as the strongest Christian; because, if Christ failed the weak one, He would fail the strong one, too. Why, if the least Christian who believes in Jesus does not get to Heaven, then Peter himself will not get to Heaven! I am sure of it, that if the smallest star which Christ ever kindled does not blaze in eternity, neither will the brightest star. If you who have given yourselves to Jesus should any of you be cast away, this would prove that Jesus is not able to save, and then all of us must be cast away too. Oh, yes! “We believe that we shall be saved, even as they.”

I am nearly done, but I will suppose for a moment that there has been a work of Grace in a prison—Cold Bath Fields, if you like. There are half-a-dozen villains there, thorough villains; but the Grace of God has made new men of them. I think I see them; and, if they understood the text, as they looked across the room, and saw half a dozen Apostles—Peter, James, John, Matthew, Paul, Bartholomew, and so on—they might say, “We believe that through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they, even as those Apostles are.” Can you catch the idea, and make it your own? When artists have drawn pictures of the Apostles, they have often put a halo round their heads, very much like a brass pan, or something of that kind, as if to signify that they were some particular and special saints; but there was no such halo there—the painter is far from the fact; we say it, and say it seriously and thoughtfully, that 12 souls picked from the scum of Creation who look to Christ, shall be saved, even as the 12 Apostles are saved; halo or no halo, they shall join in the same hallelujah to God and the Lamb!

I will select three holy women: they shall be the three Marys that we read about in the Evangelists, the three Marys whom Jesus loved, and who loved Jesus. These holy women, we believe, will be saved. But I will suppose that I go to one of our Refuges, and there are three girls there who were once of evil fame: the Grace of God has met with them, and they are now three weeping Magdalenes, penitent for sin. These three might say, humbly, but positively, “We believe that through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we three reclaimed harlots shall be saved, even as they—the three holy matrons who lived near Christ and were His delight.” “Ah, well,” says one, “this is Divine Grace, indeed! This is plain speech and wonderful Doctrine, that God should make no distinction between one sinner and another when we come to Him through Christ.”

Dear Hearer, if you have understood this very simple statement, go to Jesus at once with your soul, and may God enable you to obtain complete salvation at this hour. I pray you to come in faith to the Cross—I pray my Master’s Grace to compel you to enter into a state of full dependence upon Jesus, and so into a state of salvation. If you are now led to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter how black the past may have been, “the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleanses us from all sin.”—

*“Here’s pardon for transgressions past, it matters not how black their cast;
And oh, my Soul, with wonder view, for sins to come, here’s pardon, too.”*

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ACTS 8:23-38 AND 16,

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