

FOR WHOM DID CHRIST DIE? NO. 1191

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 6, 1874,
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*“Christ died for the ungodly.”
Romans 5:6.*

IN this verse the human race is described as a sick man whose disease is so far advanced that he is altogether without strength—no power remains in his system to throw off his mortal malady, nor does he desire to do so—he could not save himself from his disease if he would, and would not if he could. I have no doubt that the Apostle had in his eyes the description of the helpless infant given by the Prophet Ezekiel. It was an infant—an infant newly born—an infant deserted by its mother before the necessary offices of tenderness had been performed. It was left unwashed, unclothed, unfed. It was a prey to certain death under the most painful circumstances—forlorn, abandoned, hopeless.

Our race is like the nation of Israel. Its whole head is sick and its whole heart faint. Such unconverted men are you! Only there, in this darker shade in your picture, we see that your condition is not only your calamity, but your *fault*. In other diseases men are grieved at their sickness—but this is the worst feature in your case—you love the evil which is destroying you! In addition to the pity which your case demands, no little blame must be measured out to you—you are without will for that which is good. Your “cannot,” means “*will not*.” Your inability is not physical but moral—not that of the blind who cannot see for want of eyes—but of the willingly ignorant who refuse to look!

While man is in this condition, Jesus interposes for his salvation. “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,” according to “His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins.” The pith of my sermon will be an endeavor to declare that the reason of Christ’s dying for us did not lie in our *excellence*—but where sin abounded Divine Grace did much more abound. The persons for whom Jesus died were viewed by Him as the opposite of good. He came into the world to save those who are guilty before God, or, in the words of our text, “Christ died for the ungodly.”

Now to our business. We shall dwell first upon *the fact*—“Christ died for the ungodly.” Then we shall consider the *plain inferences* from that fact. And, thirdly, proceed to think and speak of *the proclamation* of this simple but wondrous Truth of God.

I. First, here is THE FACT—“*Christ died for the ungodly.*” Never did the human ear listen to a more astounding and yet cheering Truth! Angels desire to look into it. And if men were wise, they would ponder it day and night. Jesus, the Son of God! Himself God over all! The infinitely glorious One! Creator of Heaven and earth—out of love to men stooped to become a Man and die! Christ, the thrice holy God, the pure-hearted Man in whom there was no sin and could be none, espoused the cause of the wicked! Jesus, whose doctrine makes deadly war on sin, whose Spirit is the destroyer of evil, whose whole Self abhors iniquity, whose Second Advent will prove His indignation against transgression—yet undertook the cause of the impious—and even unto death pursued their salvation!

The Christ of God, though He had no part or lot in the Fall and the sin which has arisen out of it, has died to redeem us from its penalty and, like the Psalmist, He can cry, “Then I restored that which I took not away.” Let all holy beings judge whether this is not the miracle of miracles! *Christ*, the name given to our Lord, is an expressive word. It means “Anointed One,” and indicates that He was sent upon a Divine errand, commissioned by supreme Authority. The Lord Jehovah said of old, “*I have laid help upon One that is mighty. I have exalted One chosen out of the people.*” And again, “*I have given Him as a Covenant to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people.*” Jesus was both set apart to this work and qualified for it by the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He is no unauthorized Savior, no amateur Deliverer, but an Ambassador clothed with unbounded power from the great King!

He is a Redeemer with full credentials from the Father! It is this ordained and appointed Savior who has “died for the ungodly.” Remember this, you ungodly! Consider well who it was that came to lay down His life for such as you are!

The text says Christ *died*. He did a great deal besides dying, but the crowning act of His career of love for the ungodly, and that which rendered all the rest available to them, was His *death* for them. He actually gave up the ghost, not in fiction, but in fact. He laid down His life for us, breathing out His soul, even as other men do when they expire. That it might be indisputably clear that He was really dead, His heart was pierced with the soldier's spear and out of it came blood and water. The Roman governor would not have allowed the body to be removed from the Cross had he not been duly convinced that Jesus was, indeed, dead.

His relatives and friends who wrapped Him in linen and laid Him in Joseph's tomb were sorrowfully sure that all that lay before them was a corpse. The Christ really died. And in saying that, we mean that He suffered all the pangs incident to death—only He endured much more and worse, for His was a death of peculiar pain and shame—and it was not only attended by the forsaking of *man*, but by the departure of His God! That cry, “My God, My God! Why have You forsaken Me?” was the innermost blackness of the thick darkness of death! Our Lord's death was penal—inflicted upon Him by Divine Justice—and rightly so, for on Him lay *our* iniquities—and therefore on Him must lay the suffering. “It pleased the Father to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.”

He died under circumstances which made His death most terrible. Condemned to a felon's gallows, He was crucified amid a mob of jesters, with few sympathizing eyes to gaze upon Him. He bore the gaze of malice and the glance of scorn. He was hooted and jeered by a ribald throng who were cruelly inventive in their taunts and blasphemies. There He hung, bleeding from many wounds, exposed to the sun, burning with fever and devoured with thirst. He was under every circumstance of contumely, pain and utter wretchedness. His death was, of all deaths, the most deadly death. And emphatically, “Christ died.”

But the pith of the text comes here, that, “Christ died *for the ungodly*.” He did not for the righteous, nor for the reverent and devout, but for the *ungodly*. Look at the original word and you will find that it has the meaning of “impious, irreligious, and wicked.” Our translation is by no means too strong, but scarcely expressive enough! To be ungodly, or godless, is to be in a dreadful state. But as use has softened the expression, perhaps you will see the sense more clearly if I read it, “Christ died for the *impious*”—for those who have no reverence for God. Christ died for the godless, who, having cast off God, cast off with Him all love for that which is right. I do not know a word that could more fitly describe the most irreligious of mankind than the original word in this text. And I believe it is used on purpose by the Spirit of God to convey to us the Truth, which we are always slow to receive, that Christ did not die because men were *good*, or *would be* good, but died for them as *ungodly*—or, in other words—“He came to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Observe, then, that when the Son of God determined to die for men, He viewed them as ungodly and far from God by wicked works. In casting His eyes over our race, He did not say, “Here and there I see spirits of nobler mold—pure, truthful, truth-seeking, brave, disinterested and just—therefore, because of these choice ones, I will die for this fallen race.” No, but looking on them *all*, He whose judgment is Infallible returned *this* verdict—“They are all gone out of the way. They have altogether become unprofitable. There is none that does good, no, not one.” Putting them down at *that* estimate, and nothing better, Christ died for them!

He did not please Himself with some rosy dream of a superior race yet to come, when the age of iron should give place to the age of gold—some halcyon period of human development in which civilization would banish crime—and wisdom would conduct man back to God. Full well He knew that, left to itself, the world would grow worse and worse, and that by its very wisdom it would darken its own eyes! It was not because a golden age would come by natural progress, but just because such a thing was *impossible*, unless He died to procure it, that Jesus died for a race which, apart from Him, could only develop into deeper damnation! Jesus viewed us as we really were, not as our pride fancies us to be! He saw us to be without God, enemies to our own Creator, dead in trespasses and sins, corrupt and set on mischief! And even in our occasional cry for good, searching for it with blind judgment and prejudiced heart so that we put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, He saw that in us was no good thing, but every possible evil, so that we were lost—utterly, helplessly, hopelessly lost apart from Him.

Yet, viewing us as in that Graceless and Godless plight and condition, He died for us! I would have you remember that the view under which Jesus beheld us was not only the true one, but, for us, the *kindly* one. Had it been written that Christ died for the better sort, then each troubled spirit would have inferred, “He died not for *me*.” Had the merit of His

death been the perquisite of honesty, where would have been the dying thief? If of chastity, where the woman that loved much? If of courageous fidelity, how would it have fared with the Apostles, for they all forsook Him and fled? There are times when the bravest man trembles lest he should be found a coward. He has the most disinterested frets about the selfishness of his heart and fears the most pure would be staggered by his impurity! Where, then, would have been hope for one of us if the Gospel had been only another form of Law and the benefits of the Cross had been reserved as the *rewards* of virtue?

The Gospel does not come to us as a premium for virtue, but it presents us with forgiveness for sin. It is not a reward for health, but a medicine for sickness. Therefore, to meet all cases, it puts us down at our worst and, like the good Samaritan with the wounded traveler, it comes to us where we are. "Christ died for the impious" is a great net which takes in even the leviathan sinner—and of all the innumerable creeping sinners which swarm the sea of sin—there is not one kind which this great net does not encompass! Let us note well that in this condition lay the need of our race that Christ should die. I do not see how it could have been written, "Christ died for the *good*." To what end for the good? Why would He need to die for them? If men are perfect, does God need to be reconciled to them? Was He ever opposed to holy beings? Impossible!

On the other hand, were the good ever the enemies of God? If there are such, would they not of necessity be His friends? If man is by nature just with God, to what end should the Savior die? "*The Just for the unjust*," I can understand. But the "Just dying for the just" were a *double* injustice—an injustice that the just should be punished at all—and another injustice that the Just should be punished for them. Oh no! If Christ died, it must be because there was a penalty to be paid for *sin* committed. Therefore He must have died for those who had committed sin. If Christ died, it must have been because "a fountain filled with blood" was necessary for the cleansing away of heinous stains. Therefore it must have been for those who are defiled.

Suppose there should be found anywhere in this world an unfallen man—perfectly innocent of all actual sin and free from any tendency to it? Then there would be a superfluity of cruelty in the crucifixion of the innocent Christ for such an individual! What need has he that Christ should die for him, when he has in his own innocence the right to live? If there is found beneath the covering of Heaven an individual who, notwithstanding some former slips and flaws, can, by *future* diligence, completely justify himself before God, then it is clear that there is no need for Christ to die for him, either! I would not insult him by telling him that Christ died for him, for he would reply to me, "Why did He? Cannot I make myself just without Him?" In the very nature of things it must be so, that if Christ Jesus dies, He must die for the ungodly.

Such agonies as His would not have been endured had there not been a cause. And what cause could there have been but sin? Some have said that Jesus died as our *example*—but that is not altogether true. Christ's death is not *absolutely* an example for men, for it was a march into a region of which He said, "You cannot follow Me now." His *life* was our example, but not His death in *all* respects, for we are, by no means, bound to surrender ourselves voluntarily to our enemies as He did—we are told that when persecuted in one city, we are to flee to another. To be willing to *die* for the Truth of God is a most Christly thing, and in *that* Jesus is our example. But into the winepress which He trod—it is not ours to enter—the *voluntary* element which was peculiar to His death renders it inimitable.

He said, "I lay down My life of Myself; no man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." One word of His would have delivered Him from His foes. He had but to say, "Be gone!" and the Roman guards would have fled like chaff before the wind! He died because He willed to do so. Of His own accord He yielded up His spirit to the Father. It had to be as an Atonement for the guilty. It could not have been as an *example*, for no man is bound, voluntarily, to die. Both the dictates of Nature and the command of the Law require us to preserve our lives. "You shall not kill," means, "You shall not voluntarily give up your own life any more than take the life of another." Jesus stood in a special position and, therefore, He died. But His example would have been complete enough without His death, had it not been for the peculiar office which He had undertaken.

We may fairly conclude that Christ died for men who needed such a death and, as the *good* did not need it for an example—and in fact it is not an example to them—He must have died for the ungodly. The sum of our text is this—all the benefits resulting from the Redeemer's passion and from all the works that followed upon it, are for those who, by nature, are ungodly. His Gospel is that sinners believing in Him are saved. His sacrifice has put away sin from all who

trust Him and, therefore, it was offered for those who had sin upon them. “He rose again for our justification,” but certainly not for the justification of those who can be justified by their own works! He ascended on high and, we are told, He “received gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious, also.” He lives to intercede and Isaiah tells us that, “He made intercession for the transgressors.”

The aim of His death, Resurrection, Ascension and eternal life is for the sinful sons of men. His death has brought pardon, but it cannot be pardon for those who have no sin—pardon is only for the *guilty*. He is exalted on high “to give repentance,” but surely not to give repentance to those who have never sinned and have nothing to repent of! Repentance and remission both imply previous guilt in those who receive them. Unless, then, these gifts of the exalted Savior are mere shams and superfluities, they must be meant for the really *guilty*. From His side there flowed out water as well as blood—the water is intended to cleanse polluted Nature, then certainly not the nature of the sinless, but the nature of the impure—and so both blood and water flowed for sinners who need the double purification.

Today the Holy Spirit regenerates men as the result of the Redeemer’s death. And who can be regenerated but those who need a new heart and a right spirit? To regenerate the already pure and innocent would be ridiculous! Regeneration is a work which creates life where there was formerly death. It gives a heart of flesh to those whose hearts were originally stone and implants the love of holiness where sin once had sole dominion. Conversion is also another gift which comes through His death—but does He turn those whose faces are already in the right direction? It cannot be! He converts the sinner from the error of his ways. He turns the disobedient into the right way. He leads the stray sheep back to the fold.

Adoption is another gift which comes to us by the Cross. Does the Lord adopt those who are already His sons by nature? If children already, what room is there for adoption? No, but the grand act of Divine love is that which takes those who are “children of wrath, even as others,” and by Sovereign Grace puts them among the children and makes them “heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ.” Today I see the Good Shepherd in all the energy of His mighty love going forth into the dreadful wilderness. For whom is He gone forth? For the 99 who feed at home? No, but into the desert His love sends Him, over hill and dale, to seek the *one lost* sheep which has gone astray!

Behold, I see Him awakening His Church, like a good housewife, to cleanse her house. With the bosom of the Law she sweeps and with the candle of the Word she searches, and what for? For those bright new coined pieces fresh from the mint which glitter safely in her purse? Assuredly not! But for that lost piece which has rolled away into the dust and lies hidden in the dark corner. And lo! Grandest of all visions! I see the Eternal Father, Himself, in the infinity of His love, going forth in haste to meet a returning child! And whom does He go to meet? The elder brother returning from the field, bringing his sheaves with him? An Esau who has brought him savory meat such as his soul loves? A Joseph whose godly life has made him lord over all Egypt?

No, the Father leaves His home to meet a returning Prodigal who has companied with harlots and groveled among swine! He who comes back to Him is in disgraceful rags and disgusting filthiness! It is on a *sinner’s* neck that the Father weeps! It is on a *guilty* cheek that He sets His kisses! It is for an unworthy one that the fatted calf is killed and the best robe is worn! And the house is made merry with music and with dancing for him! Yes, tell it, and let it ring round earth and Heaven—Christ died for the ungodly! Mercy seeks the guilty! Grace has to do with the impious, the irreligious and the wicked! The Physician has not come to heal the healthy, but to heal the sick! The great Philanthropist has not come to bless the rich and the great, but the captive and the prisoner! He puts down the mighty from their seats, for He is a stern leveler! He has come to lift the beggar from the dunghill and to set him among princes, even the princes of His people!

Sing, then, with the holy Virgin, and let your song be loud and sweet—“He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He has sent away empty.” “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” “He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” O you guilty ones, believe in Him and live!

II. Let us now consider THE PLAIN INFERENCES FROM THE FACT. Let me have your hearts as well as your ears, especially those of you who are not yet saved, for I desire you to be blessed by the Truths uttered. And oh, may the Spirit of God cause it to be so! It is clear that those of you who are ungodly—and if you are unconverted you are that—are *in great danger*. Jesus would not interpose His life and bear the bloody sweat and crown of thorns, the nails, the spear, the unmitigated scorn and death, itself, if there were not solemn need and imminent peril! There is danger, solemn

danger, for you! You are already under the wrath of God. You will soon die and then, as surely as you live, you will be lost, and lost forever! As certain as the righteous will enter into everlasting life, you will be driven into everlasting punishment. The Cross is the danger signal to you. It warns you that if God spared not His only Son, He will not spare you! It is the lighthouse set on the rocks of sin to warn you that swift and sure destruction awaits you if you continue to rebel against the Lord. Hell is an awful place or Jesus had not needed to suffer such infinite agonies to save us from it.

It is also fairly to be inferred that *out of this danger only Christ can deliver the ungodly—and He only through His death*. If a less price than that of the life of the Son of God could have redeemed men, we would have been spared. When a country is at war and you see a mother give up her only boy to fight her country's battles—her only well-beloved, blameless son—you know that the battle must be raging very fiercely and that the country is in stern danger. For, if she could find a substitute for him, though she gave all her wealth, she would lavish it freely to spare her darling. If she were certain that in his heart a bullet would find its target, she must have strong love for her country—and her country must be in dire straits before she would bid him go.

If, then, “God spared not His Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all,” there must have been a dread necessity for it. It must have stood thus—either *He* die, or the *sinner* must, or Justice must—and since Justice could not, and the Father desired that the sinner should not, then Christ *must*. And so He did. Oh, miracle of love! I tell you, Sinners, you cannot help yourselves, nor can all the priests of Rome or Oxford help you! Let them perform their antics as they may, Jesus, alone, can save! And that only by His death! There on the bloody tree hangs all man's hope. If you enter Heaven it must be by force of the Incarnate God's bleeding out his life for you! You are in such peril that only the pierced hands can lift you out of it. Look to Him, at once, I pray, before the proud waters go over your soul!

Then let it be noticed—and this is the point I want constantly to keep before your view—that *Jesus died out of pure pity*. He must have died out of the most gratuitous benevolence to the undeserving, because the character of those for whom He died could not have attracted Him, but must have been repulsive to His holy Soul. The impious, the godless—can Christ love these for their *character*? No, He loved them notwithstanding their offenses, loved them as creatures fallen and miserable, loved them according to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses and tender mercies—from pity—and not from admiration. Viewing them as ungodly, yet He loved them! This is extraordinary love! I do not wonder that some persons are loved by others, for they wear a potent charm in their countenances, their ways are winsome and their characters charm you into affection—“but God commends His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

He looked at us and there was not a solitary beauty spot upon us. We were covered with “wounds, bruises and putrefying sores,” distortions, defilements, pollutions and yet, for all that, Jesus loved us! He loved us because He would love us, because His heart was full of pity and He could not let us perish. Pity moved Him to seek the most needy objects so that His love might display its utmost ability in lifting men from the lowest degradation and putting them in the highest position of holiness and honor. Observe another inference. If Christ died for the ungodly, *this fact leaves the ungodly no excuse if they do not come to Him* and believe in Him unto salvation. Had it been otherwise they might have pleaded, “We are not fit to come.” But you are ungodly and Christ died for the ungodly—why not for *you*?

I hear the reply, “But I have been so very vile.” Yes, you have been impious, but your sin is not worse than this word, ungodly, will compass. Christ died for those who were wicked, thoroughly wicked. The Greek word is so expressive that it *must* take in your case, however wrongly you have acted. “But I cannot believe that Christ died for such as I am,” says one. Then, Sir, mark! I hold you to your words and charge you with contradicting the Eternal God to His teeth and making Him a liar! Your statement gives God the lie! The Lord declares that, “Christ died for the ungodly,” and you say He did not! What is that but to make God a liar? How can you expect mercy if you persist in such proud unbelief? Believe the Divine Revelation! Close in at once with the Gospel. Forsake your sins and believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall surely live.

The fact that Christ died for the ungodly renders self-righteousness a folly. Why need a man pretend that he is good if “Christ died for the ungodly”? We have an orphanage and the qualification for our orphanage is that the child for whom admission is sought shall be utterly destitute. I will suppose a widow trying to show me and my fellow trustees that her boy is a fitting object for the charity. Will she tell us that her child has a rich uncle? Will she enlarge upon her own capacities for earning a living? Why, this would be to argue *against* herself, and she is much too wise for that, I

guarantee you, for she knows that any such statements would damage, rather than serve, her cause. So, Sinner, do not pretend to be righteous! Do not dream that you are better than others, for that is to argue against yourself! Prove that you are not, by nature, ungodly, and you prove yourself to be one for whom Jesus did *not* die!

Jesus comes to make the ungodly godly and the sinful holy—but the raw material upon which He works is described in the text, not by its goodness, but by its badness—it is for the *ungodly* that Jesus died! “Oh, but if I felt!” Felt what? Felt something which would make you better? Then you would not so clearly come under the description here given. If you are destitute of good feelings, thoughts, hopes and emotions, you are ungodly, and, “Christ died for the ungodly.” Believe in Him and you shall be saved from that ungodliness. “Well,” cries out some Pharisaic moralist, “this is dangerous doctrine.” How so? Would it be dangerous doctrine to say that physicians exercise their skill to cure sick people and not healthy ones? Would that encourage sickness? Would that discourage health? You know better!

You know that to inform the sick of a physician who can heal them is one of the best means for promoting their cure. If ungodly and impious men would take heart and run to the Savior, and by Him become cured of impiety and ungodliness, would not that be a good thing? Jesus has come to make the ungodly godly, the impious pious, the wicked obedient and the dishonest upright! He has not come to save them *in* their sins, but *from* their sins—and this is the best of news for those who are diseased with sin. Self-righteousness is a folly and despair is a crime since Christ died for the ungodly! None are excluded but those who exclude themselves! This great gate is set so wide open that the very worst of men may enter, and you, dear Hearer, may enter now!

I think it is also very evident from our text that when they are saved, *the converted find no ground of boasting*, for when their hearts are renewed and made to love God, they cannot say, “See how good I am,” because they were not so by nature—they were ungodly and, as such, Christ died for them. Whatever goodness there may be in them *after* conversion they ascribe it to the Grace of God, since by nature they were alienated from God and far removed from righteousness. If the truth of natural depravity is but known and felt, Free Grace must be believed in—and then all glorying is at an end! *This will also keep the saved ones from thinking lightly of sin.* If God had forgiven sinners without an Atonement, they might have thought little of transgression. But now that pardon comes to them through the bitter griefs of their Redeemer, they cannot but see it to be an exceedingly great evil.

When we look to Jesus dying on the Cross we end our dalliance with sin and utterly abhor the cause of so great suffering to so dear a Savior. Every wound of Jesus is an argument against sin. We never know the full evil of our iniquities till we see what it cost the Redeemer to put them away! Salvation by the death of Christ is the strongest conceivable promoter of all the things which are pure, honest, lovely and of good report. It makes sin so loathsome that the saved one cannot take up even its *name* without dread. “I will take away the name of Baal out of your mouth.” He looks upon it as we should regard a knife rusted with gore with which some villain had killed our mother, our wife or child! Could we play with it? Could we bear it about our persons or endure it in our sight? No, accursed thing! Stained with the heart’s blood of my Beloved, I would gladly fling you into the bottomless abyss! Sin is that dagger which stabbed the Savior’s heart and therefore must be the abomination of every man who has been redeemed by the atoning Sacrifice.

To close this point. Christ’s death for the ungodly is *the grandest argument to make the ungodly love Him when they are saved.* To love Christ is the mainspring of obedience in men—how shall men be led to love Him? If you would grow love, you must *sow* love. Go, then, and let men know the love of Christ to sinners, and they will, by Divine Grace, be moved to love Him in return. No doubt all of us require to know the threats of the wrath of God—but that which sooner touches my heart is Christ’s free love to an unworthy one like myself. When my sins seem blackest to me, and yet I know that through Christ’s death I am forgiven, this blest assurance melts me down—

*“If You had bid Your thunders roll,
And lightning flash, to blast my soul,
I still had stubborn been.
But mercy has my heart subdued,
A bleeding Savior I have view’d,
And now I hate my sin.”*

I have heard of a soldier who had been put in prison for drunkenness and insubordination several times and he had been also flogged, but nothing improved him. At last he was taken in the commission of another offense and brought

before the commanding officer, who said to him, “My Man, I have tried everything in the martial code with you except shooting you. You have been imprisoned and whipped, but nothing has changed you. I am determined to try something else with you. You have caused us a great deal of trouble and anxiety, and you seem resolved to do so still. I shall, therefore, change my plans with you—I shall neither fine you, flog you, nor imprison you—I will see what *kindness* will do, and therefore I fully and freely forgive you.” The man burst into tears, for he reckoned on a round number of lashes and had steeled himself to bear them. But when he found he was to be forgiven and set free, he said, “Sir, you shall not have to find fault with me again.”

Mercy won his heart. Now, Sinner, in that fashion God is dealing with you! Great sinners! Ungodly sinners! God says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are My ways your ways. I have threatened you and you hardened your hearts against Me. Therefore, 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.” “Well,” says one, “I am afraid if you talk to sinners like *that*, they will go and sin more and more.” Yes, there are brutes everywhere who can be so unnatural as to sin because Grace abounds, but I bless God there is such a thing as the *influence* of love! And I am rejoiced that many feel the force of it and yield to the conquering arms of amazing Grace. The Spirit of God wins the day by such arguments as these! Love is the great battering ram which opens gates of brass!

When the Lord says, “I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities,” then the man is moved to repentance. I can tell you hundreds and thousands of cases in which this infinite love has done all the good that morality, itself, could ask to have done. It has changed the heart and turned the entire current of the man’s nature from sin to righteousness. The sinner has believed, repented, turned from his evil ways, and become zealous for holiness! Looking to Jesus he has felt his sin forgiven and he has become a new man, to lead a new life! God grant it may be so, this morning, and He shall have all the glory of it.

III. So now we must close—and this is the last point—THE PROCLAMATION OF THIS FACT that “Christ died for the ungodly.” I would not mind if I were condemned to live 50 years more and never to be allowed to speak but these five words, if I might be allowed to utter them in the ear of every man, woman and child who lives—“CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY!” It is the best message that even angels could bring to men! In the proclamation of this, the whole Church ought to take its share. Those of us who can address thousands should be diligent to cry aloud—“Christ died for the ungodly.” But those of you who can only speak to one, or write a letter to one, must keep on at this—“Christ died for the ungodly.” Shout it out, or whisper it out! Print it in capital letters, or write it in a lady’s hand—“Christ died for the ungodly.”

Speak it solemnly! It is not a thing for jest. Speak it joyfully! It is not a theme for sorrow, but for joy! Speak it firmly. It is an indisputable fact. Facts of science, as they call them, are always questioned—this is unquestionable! Speak it earnestly, for if there is any Truth of God which ought to arouse a man’s soul, it is this—“Christ died for the ungodly.” Speak it where the ungodly live—and that is at your own house. Speak it, also, down in the dark corners of the city, in the haunts of debauchery, in the home of the thief, in the den of the depraved. Tell it in the jail and sit down at the dying bed and read in a tender whisper—“Christ died for the ungodly.” When you pass the harlot in the street, do not give a toss with that proud head of yours, but remember that “Christ died for the ungodly.” And when you remember those that injured you, say no bitter word, but hold your tongue and remember, “Christ died for the ungodly.”

Make this forever the message of your life—“Christ died for the ungodly.” And, oh, dear Friends, you that are not saved, take care that you receive this message. Believe it! Go to God with this on your tongue—“Lord save me, for Christ died for the ungodly and I am one of them.” Fling yourself right on to this as a man commits himself to his lifebelt amid the surging billows. “But I do not feel,” says one. Trust not your *feelings* if you do, but with no feelings and no hopes of your own, cling desperately to this, “Christ died for the ungodly.” The transforming, elevating, spiritualizing, moralizing, sanctifying power of this great fact you shall soon know and be no more ungodly! But first, as ungodly, rest on this, “Christ died for the ungodly.”

Accept this Truth, my dear Hearer, and you are saved! I do not mean, merely, that you will be pardoned. I do not mean that you will enter Heaven. I mean much more! I mean that you will have a new heart! You will be saved from the love of sin, saved from drunkenness, saved from uncleanness, saved from blasphemy, saved from dishonesty. “Christ died

for the ungodly”—if that is really known and trusted in, it will open in your soul new springs of living water which will cleanse the Augean stable of your nature and make a temple of God of that which was before a den of thieves! The mercy of God through the death of Jesus Christ—and a new era in your life’s history—will at once commence! Having put this as plainly as I know how, and having guarded my speech to prevent there being anything like a flowery sentence in it. Having tried to put this as clearly as daylight, itself—that “Christ died for the ungodly”—if your ears refuse the precious blessings that come through the dying Christ, your blood is on your own heads, for there is no other way of salvation for anyone among you!

Whether you reject or accept this, I am clear. But oh, do not reject it, for it is your life! If the Son of God dies for sinners and sinners reject His blood, they have committed the most heinous offense possible! I will not venture to affirm, but I do suggest that the devils in Hell are not capable of so great a stretch of criminality as is involved in the rejection of the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Here lies the highest love—the Incarnate God bleeds to death to save men—but men hate God so much that they will not even have Him as He dies to save them! They will not be reconciled to their Creator though He stoops from His loftiness to the depth of woe in the Person of His Son on their behalf! This is depravity, indeed, and desperateness of rebellion! God grant that you may not be guilty of it! There can be no fiercer flame of wrath than that which will break forth from love that has been trampled upon—when men have put from them eternal life—and done despite to the Lamb of God!

“Oh,” says one, “would God I could believe!” “Sir, what difficulty is there in it? Is it hard to believe the Truth? Dare you belie your God? Are you stealing your heart to such desperateness that you will call your God a liar?” “No, I believe Christ died for the ungodly,” says one, “but I want to know how to get the merit of that death applied to my own soul.” You may, then, for here it is—“He that *believes* in Him”—that is, he that trusts in Him, “is not condemned.” Here is the Gospel and the whole of it—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.” I am but a poor weak man like yourselves, but my Gospel is not weak! And it would be no stronger if one of “the mailed cherubim, or accorded seraphim” could take the platform and stand here instead of me! He could tell you no better news!

God, in condescension to your weakness, has chosen one of your fellow mortals to bear to you this message of infinite affection. Do not reject it! By your souls’ value, by their immortality, by the hope of Heaven and by the dread of Hell, lay hold upon eternal life! And by the fear that this may be your last day on earth, yes, and this evening your last hour, I do beseech you, now, “steal away to Jesus.” There is life in a look at the Crucified One! There is life at this moment for you. Look to Him now and live! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ezekiel 16:1-14; Romans 5:1-11.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—174, 502 (vs. 4, 5, 6), 553.

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