

YOUR PERSONAL SALVATION

NO. 1524

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls. Of this salvation the Prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the Grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did indicating, when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To whom it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to us they did minister the things which are now reported to you by them that have preached the Gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven—which things angels desire to look into.”
1 Peter 1:9-12.

“Let Your mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even Your salvation, according to Your Word.”
Psalms 119:41.

THESE two texts will be, to me, as a bow and a sword—the first for shooting the arrows of the Truth of God and the second for close quarters in dealing with individual consciences. You will see the reason for the pair of texts as we proceed. May the Holy Spirit make use of both according to His own mind. Last Sabbath I preached upon the God of salvation [#1523—*The Royal Prerogative*]*—*this morning our principal objective is to speak of that salvation, itself. I then tried to show that God is always the same and that the God of the Old Testament, unto whom belongs the issues, or escapes from death, is *still* the God of our salvation.

My first text runs upon the same line, for it teaches us that the Prophets of old, who spoke by the power of the Holy Spirit, testified concerning the same salvation which has been reported to us by the Apostles as actually accomplished. There has been no new salvation! There has been a change in the *messengers*, but they have all spoken of one thing and, though their tidings have been more clearly understood in these latter days, the substance of the good news is still the same. The Old Testament and the New are one, inspired by the same Spirit and filled with the same Subject, namely, the one promised Messiah.

The Prophets foretold what the Apostles reported. The Seers looked forward and the Evangelists look backward—but their eyes meet at one place—they see eye to eye and both behold the Cross. I shall aim, this morning, at commending the salvation of God to those of you who possess it, that you may be the more grateful for your choice inheritance. But I will still more labor to commend it to those who possess it not, that having some idea of the greatness of its value, they may be stirred up to seek it for themselves. Ah, my unsaved Hearers, how great is your loss in missing the salvation of God!

“How shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation?” O that you might be rescued from such folly! Perhaps God the Holy Spirit will show you the preciousness of this salvation and then you will no longer neglect, despise, or refuse it, but will offer the prayer which I have selected as a sort of second text and entreat the Lord to let His mercies come to you, even His salvation. The prayer may be helpful in enabling you to take with you words and turn to the Lord. God grant it may be so!

I. First, I shall in much simplicity, with a vehement desire for the immediate conviction and salvation of my hearers, try to COMMEND THE SALVATION OF GOD by opening up what Peter has said in the verses before us. Let me urge you to give earnest heed to the salvation of God, because it is a salvation of Grace. The 10th verse says, “Of this salvation the Prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the Grace that would come to you.” Salvation is altogether of Grace—Grace which comes from God in His mercy to man in his helplessness! The Gospel does not come to

you asking something of you, but its hands are laden with gifts more precious than gold which it freely bestows upon guilty men. It comes to us, not as a reward for the obedient and deserving, but as a merciful gift for the disobedient and undeserving.

It deals with us, not upon the ground of justice, but upon terms of pure mercy. It asks no price and exacts no purchase. It comes as a benefactor, not as a judge. In the Gospel, God gives liberally and upbraids not. We are accustomed not only to say, "Grace," but, "Free Grace." It has been remarked that this is a tautology. So it is, but it is a blessed one, for it makes the meaning doubly clear and leaves no room for mistakes! Since it is evidently objectionable to those who dislike the doctrine intended, it is manifestly forcible and, therefore, we will keep to it. We feel no compunction in ringing such a silver bell twice over—Grace, Free Grace! Lest any should imagine that Grace can be otherwise than free, we shall continue to say, not only Grace, but Free Grace, so long as we preach!

You are lost, my dear Hearer, and God proposes your salvation, but not on any ground of your deserving to be saved, else the proposal would most assuredly fall to the ground in the case of many of you—I might have said in the cases of us *all*, though some of you think not. The Lord proposes to save you because you are miserable and He is merciful! Because you are needy and He is bountiful. Why, I think every man who hears this good news should open both his ears and lean forward, that he may not lose a word! Yes, and he should open his heart, too, for salvation by Grace is most suitable to all men and they need it greatly.

Only give intimation that goods are to be had free and your shop will be besieged with customers! Those who want us to notice their wares are often crafty enough to put at the head of their advertisement what is not true, "To be given away." But salvation's grand advertisement *is* true—salvation is everything for nothing—pardon free, Christ free, Heaven free! "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Our good Physician has none but gratis patients. Since the gifts which the God of All Grace grants to sinful men are beyond all price, He does not barter and dicker with them, but makes His blessings free as air! I am sure that if you feel yourselves to be guilty, the very idea of being saved by Grace will have a charm for you. To a thirsty man, the sound of a rippling stream is music and to a convicted conscience, free pardon is as rivers of water in the wilderness! Oh, that all the world would listen when we have such a message to tell!

Again, your closest attention may well be asked to the salvation of God when you are told in the text that it is by faith. "Receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls." Salvation is not obtained by painful and humiliating penances. Nor by despondency and despair. Nor by any effort, mental or spiritual, involving a purchase by labor and pain. It is entirely and *only* by faith, or trust, in the Lord Jesus! Do you ask—"Is it really so, that salvation is by believing, simply *believing*?" Such is the statement of the Word of God! We proclaim it upon the guarantee of Infallible Scripture! "All that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the Law of Moses." "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." "He that believes in Him is not condemned." "He that believes on Him has everlasting life."

These are a mere handful of proof texts gleaned from wide fields of the same kind. "Repent and believe the Gospel," is our one plain and simple message. We cry again and again, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." "Believe only," and, "Jesus only," are our two watchwords! Now, it is singularly foolish that men should quibble at this which ought to please them! What? Shall it be that the Gospel shall be regarded as too easy a thing? Will men quarrel with Mercy for being too generous? If there is a condition, is it wisdom on our part to contend with God because that condition seems to be too slight? What would *you* have for a condition? Would you have it proclaimed that men must be saved by works?

Which among you would, then, be saved? Your works are imperfect and full of evil! The Law cannot justify you, it condemns you! As long as you are under the Law, has not the Holy Spirit declared that you are under the curse? Ought you not, you sons of men, bless God that salvation is of faith that it might be by Grace and that it might be possible to you and sure to all the seed? The sinner cannot keep the Law of God—he has already broken it most terribly and he is, himself, enfeebled and depraved by the Fall. Adam did not stand when he was in his perfection—what shall we do who are ruined by his fall and full of evil?

By the Grace of God the sinner can believe in Jesus! This is ceasing from his own power and merit and leaving himself in his Savior's hands. Salvation by faith thus sets an open door before those whom the Law shuts out! It is in every way

adapted to the case of the guilty and fallen—and such characters should hasten to accept salvation thus presented to them! O my God, how is it that this message does not, at once, awaken all who hear it to an eager acceptance of Your salvation? O that the Spirit of God would make these appeals powerful with you! The Gospel of salvation ought to be regarded by you, for it has engrossed the thoughts of Prophets! The text says, “Of this salvation the Prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the Grace that would come to you.”

Those great men, the choice spirits of the ages which they adorned, were delighted to preach of this salvation as a blessing to be hereafter revealed! They did not, themselves, altogether understand what they were called to reveal, for the Holy Spirit often carried them beyond themselves and made them utter more than they understood. The Inspiration of the Bible is *verbal* Inspiration. In some cases it must have been *only* verbal—in *every* case it must have been mainly so! The human mind is not able to understand and to express all the thoughts of God, they are too sublime and, therefore, God dictated to the Prophets the very language which they should deliver—language of which they, themselves, could not see the far-reaching meaning.

They rejoiced in the testimony of the Spirit within them, but they were not free from the necessity to search and to search diligently, if they would, for themselves to derive benefit from the Divine Revelation. I know not how this is, but the fact is clearly stated in the text and must be true. Oh, my Hearers, how diligently you ought to search the Scriptures and listen to the saving Word of God! If men that had the Holy Spirit and were called, “Seers,” nevertheless searched into the meaning of the Word of God which they, themselves, spoke, what ought such poor things as *we* are to do in order to understand the Gospel?

It should be our delight to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the Doctrines of Grace. Surely it must be a crime of crimes to be living in utter neglect of a salvation which gained the attentive mind of Daniel and Isaiah and Ezekiel! O that the long list of great and holy men would have some weight with thoughtless ones! I would cause a noble line of Prophets to pass before you this morning that you may see how many of them spoke of Christ and His salvation. From Abel, whose blood cried from the ground, down to him who spoke of the Sun of Righteousness and His Resurrection—they all spoke in Jehovah’s name for your sakes! From Moses down to Malachi, all of these lived and many of them died that they might bear witness to “the Grace that would come to you.”

They, themselves, were, no doubt saved. But still, the full understanding and enjoyment of the Truth was reserved for us! Unto them it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to *us*, they ministered the things of God! They lighted lamps to shine for future ages! They told of a Christ who was actually to come in later days to work out His Redemption after they had all died in faith without a sight of His actual coming! You and I live in the light of a finished salvation! God has appeared in human flesh! Christ has borne the guilt of man! His Atonement is complete! Jesus has risen from the dead and gone into Glory pleading for Believers!

Surely that which Prophets thought worth their while to study night and day, though they knew that they would never see it, ought to be thought worthy of the devout attention of those immediately concerned in it! If Daniel set his face, by prayer and study—in fasting and in loneliness—to search out the salvation of the *future*, we ought at once to seek for the salvation which is now present among us! If Isaiah spoke with a golden tongue as the very Chrysostom of the old dispensation; if Jeremiah wept, like a Niobe, rivers of tears; if Ezekiel, despite the splendor of his princely intellect, was almost blinded by the splendor of his visions—if the whole goodly fellowship of the Prophets lived and died to study and to foretell the great salvation—we ought to give most earnest heed to it! If they pointed us to the Lamb of God and, according to the best of their light, foretold the coming of the Redeemer, then woe unto us if we trifle with Heaven’s message and cast its blessings behind our backs! By all the Prophets whom the Lord has sent, I beseech you, give His salvation a hearty welcome and rejoice that you have lived to see it!

Furthermore, when prophecy had ceased, the Holy Spirit came upon another set of men of whom our text speaks. Peter says of these things, that they “are now reported to you by them that have preached the Gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven.” The Apostles followed the Prophets in testifying to this salvation and with the Apostles there was an honorable fellowship of earnest Evangelists and preachers. I will not stay to point out to you the admirable character of these men, but I would beg you to observe that, having personally seen Christ Jesus for themselves, they were not deceived. Many of them had eaten and drank with Him—all the Apostles had done so—they had been with Him in familiar conversation and they were resolute in bearing witness that they had seen Him after He had risen from the dead.

These men spoke with the accent of conviction! If they were duped, there certainly never was another instance of such persons and so many of them being so utterly deluded. They continued throughout all their lives to bear hardships and to endure reproaches for the sake of bearing witness to what they had seen and heard—and all the Apostles but one died a martyr's death rather than allow the slightest suspicion to be cast upon the truth of their report! The text says that they reported these things when they preached the Gospel by the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven. I see them going everywhere preaching the Word of God!

They were dressed in no robes but those of poverty. They had no distinctions but those of shame and suffering. They had no power but that of the Holy Spirit. I hear them fearlessly lifting up their voices among a warrior population, or gently testifying in peaceful homes. They evangelized the open country and they instructed the capital itself—Caesar's household hears of them! I see them far away among the Parthians and Scythians telling the barbarians that there is salvation and that Jesus has accomplished it! With equal joy I see them telling cultured Greeks that God was in Christ a Man among men and that the Incarnate God died in man's place that believing men might be delivered from the wrath of God and from the plague of sin.

These noble bearers of glad tidings continued to report this salvation till they had finished their missions and their lives and, therefore, I feel that for us, in these times, to trifle with God's Word and give a deaf ear to the invitations of the Gospel is an insult to their honored memories! You martyr them a second time by contemptuously neglecting what they died to hand to you! From the dead they bear witness against you and when they rise again they will sit with their Lord to judge you! Nor have we merely Prophets and Apostles looking on with wonder, but our text says, "Which things angels desire to look into."

We know very little of these heavenly beings. We do know, however, that they are pure spirits and that the elect angels have not fallen into sin. These beings are not concerned in the Atonement of Christ so far as it is a ransom for *sin*, seeing as they have never sinned—they may, however, derive some advantage from His death, but of that we cannot now speak particularly. They take such an interest in us, their fellow creatures, that they have an intense wish to know all the mysteries of our salvation. They were pictured, you know, upon the Ark of the Covenant as standing upon the Mercy Seat and looking down upon it with steady gaze. Perhaps Peter was thinking of this holy imagery. They stand intently gazing into the marvel of Propitiation by blood!

Can you quite see the beauty of this spectacle? If we knew that a door was opened in Heaven, would not men be anxious to look in and see Heaven's wonders? But the case is here reversed, for we see a window opened towards this fallen world and heavenly beings looking down upon the earth, as if Heaven, itself, had no such Object of attraction as Christ and His salvation! Watts sang not amiss when he gave us the verse—

*“Archangels leave their high abode
To learn new mysteries here and toll
The love of our descending God,
The glories of Immanuel.”*

Paul tells us that to principalities and powers in the heavenly places shall be made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God. For men to be lessons to angels, books for seraphs to read, is a strange fact! Perhaps the angelic enquirers ask such questions as this—How is God just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly? At first it must have been, I think, a wonder that He who said, "In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die," could have permitted man to live on and to have a hope of eternal life.

How could He who says that He will by no means clear the guilty yet bestow His favors upon guilty men? Angels wonder as they see how, through the Substitution of Jesus Christ, God can be sternly just and yet abundantly gracious! And while they learn this, they long to discover more of the Truth of God wrapped up in the one great Sacrifice—they peer and pry and search and consider and, therefore, the doctrines of the Gospel are spoken of as "things which the angels desire to look into."

Now think—if these glorious spirits who need not to be redeemed—intently gaze upon the Redeemer, should not *we*, also, desire to look into the mysteries of His death? O men and women, is it nothing to you that the Son of God should give His life as a ransom for many? If these spotless ones marvel at that sacred bath of blood by which sin is washed away, will not *you*, who are covered with defilement, stop awhile to see the Lord whose flowing veins afford such purging? I think if I saw an angel intently gazing upon any object, if I were a passerby, I should stop and look, too. Have

you never noticed in the streets that if one person stands still and looks up, or is occupied with gazing into a shop window, others become curious and also look? I would enlist that faculty of curiosity which is within every man and prompt you to search with the angels as they pry into the underlying meaning of the fact and doctrine of Atonement!

They stand at the foot of the Cross ravished, astounded, yes, all Heaven to this day has never ceased its amazement at the dying Son of God made sin for men! And will none of you spare an hour to look this way and see your best Friend? Shall it be that time out of mind we must come into our pulpits and talk of Christ to deaf ears and speak to our fellow men about the Grace which is brought to them, only to find that they treat it as an old wives' fable or a story with which they have nothing to do? Ah, my careless Hearer, I wish you were in the same plight as I was in once when I was burdened with a sense of my transgressions. If you felt as I did, you would grab that word, "Grace," right eagerly and be delighted with the promise made to "faith."

You would make up your mind that if Prophets searched out salvation; if Apostles reported it; if angels longed to know it, you yourself would find it or perish in searching after it! Do you forget that you must have eternal life or you are undone forever? Do not trifle with your eternal interests! Do not be careless where earth and Heaven are in earnest! Prophets, Apostles, angels all beckon you to seek the Lord! Awake, you that sleep! Arise, O sluggish soul! A thousand voices call you to bestir yourself and receive the Grace which has come to you!

We have already gone a long way with this text, rising step by step. We have stood where angels gaze. Now behold another wonder—we rise *beyond* them to the angels' Master. Christ is the substance of this salvation! For what says the text? The Prophets spoke "beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow." Ah, there is the point! To save men Jesus *suffered*. The Manhood and the Godhead of Christ endured inconceivable anguish! All through His life our Lord was "a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." His was the bravest heart that ever lived and the gentlest spirit that ever breathed, but the most crushed and downtrodden! He went from one end of our heavens to the other like a cloud of sympathy, dropping showers of blessing.

All the trials of His people He carried in His heart and all their sins pressed heavily upon His soul—His daily burden of care for all His people was such as none can sympathize with to the fullest, even though like He they have kept the flock of God. I have sometimes had intense sympathy with Moses—I hope I am not egotistical in comparing small things with great—when he cried, "Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You lay the burden of all this people upon *me*? Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that You should say to me, Carry them in your bosom as a nursing father bears the sucking child, to the land which You swore unto their fathers? I am not able to bear all this people alone because it is too heavy for me."

But what was the care of the tribes in the wilderness on Moses' heart compared with the myriads upon myriads that lay upon the heart of Christ, a perpetual burden to His spirit? The sufferings of His life must never be forgotten, but they were consummated by the agonies of His death. There was never such a death! Physically it was equal in pain to the sufferings of any of the martyrs. But its peculiarity of excessive grief did not lie in His bodily sufferings—His *soul*-sufferings were the soul of His sufferings! Martyrs are sustained by the Presence of their God, but Jesus cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" That cry never came up from the stakes of Smithfield, or from the agonies of the Spanish torture chambers, for God was with His witnesses! But He was not with Christ! Here was the depth of His woe!

Now, I pray you, if you will manifest some sign of thought and softness, remember that if the Son of God became a man so that He might suffer to the death for men, it is astonishing that men should turn deaf ears to the salvation which He accomplished! I hear from His Cross His sad complaint, "Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold and see if there was ever sorrow like My sorrow, which is done to Me." Oh, if you are born of woman and have a heart that has any flesh about it, think well of the salvation, "the Grace, which is brought unto you," by the sufferings of the Son of God! One other step remains. It cannot be higher—it is on the same level and I beseech you to stand upon it and think a while, you that have thought so little of yourselves and of your God.

It is this. The Holy Spirit is the witness to all this. It was the Holy Spirit that spoke in the Prophets. It was the Holy Spirit who was with those who reported the Gospel at the first. It is the same Holy Spirit who every day bears witness to Christ. Do you not know that we still have miracles in the Christian Church? Scoffers come to us and say, "Work a miracle and we will believe you." We work miracles every day! Had you been present at a meeting held here last month you would have heard something not far short of one hundred persons, one after another, assert that by the preaching of the

Gospel in this place lately, their lives have been completely changed. In the case of some of these the change is very obvious to all persons acquainted with them.

How was this great change achieved? By the Holy Spirit through the Gospel of your salvation! But I need not quote those special cases. There are many here who would tell you, if this were the time to speak, where they used to spend their Sundays and what was their delight. All things have become new with them. They now seek after holiness as earnestly as they once pursued evil! Though they are not what they want to be, they are not what they used to be. They never thought of purity or goodness, or anything of the kind, but they loved the wages of unrighteousness and now they loathe the things they once loved! I have seen moral miracles quite as marvelous in their line as the healing of a leper or the raising of the dead! This is the witness of the Holy Spirit which He continues to bear in the Church and, by that witness I entreat you to stop and think of the blessed salvation which can work the same miracle in you.

From the first day in which man fell—when the Holy Spirit, at the gates of Eden presented the Gospel in the first promise—all down the prophetic ages and then by Christ and by His Apostles and onward by all the men whom God has sent, since, to speak with power, the Holy Spirit entreats you to consider Christ and His salvation! To this end He convinces the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment to come—that men may turn unto the salvation of God and live forever! By the Spirit of the living God I entreat you, dear Hearers, to neglect no longer the great salvation which has won the admiration of all holy beings and has the seal of the Triune God upon its forefront!

II. So far I have commended my Lord's salvation and now I would desire you, with all this in your minds, to turn to the prayer in the 119th Psalm—"Let Your mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even Your salvation, according to Your Word." Use the prayer with this intent—Lord, I have been hearing what Prophets and Apostles and angels think of Your salvation. What Your Son and what Your Spirit think of it. Now let me humbly say what I think of it—Oh that it were mine! Oh that it would come to me! This, then, is my second head. I would RECOMMEND THE PRAYER OF THE PSALMIST.

I will say about it, first, that it is, in itself, a very gracious prayer, for it is offered on right grounds. "Let Your mercies come also unto me." There is no mention of merit or desert. His entreaty is only for mercy. He pleads guilty and throws himself upon the prerogative of the King who can pardon offenders. Are you willing, my dear Hearer, you who have never sought the Savior—are you willing at this moment to stand on that ground and to ask for salvation as the result of mercy? You shall have it on such terms, but you can never be saved until you will acknowledge that you are guilty and submit to Justice.

Observe the plural, "Let your *mercies* come unto me," as if David felt that he needed a double share of it, yes, a sevenfold measure of it! Elsewhere he cried, "According unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Our sense of sin leads us to use similar language. Lord, I need much mercy, manifold mercy, multiplied mercy! I need mercy upon mercy! I need forgiving mercy! I need regenerating mercy! I need mercy for the present as well as for the past and I shall need mercy to keep me in the future if I am to be saved at all! Friend, set your plea on that ground! Multiplied sins crave multiplied mercies. "Let Your mercies come also unto me, O Lord."

It is a gracious prayer, because it asks for the right thing—"Your salvation"—not a salvation of my own invention, but, "Your salvation." God's salvation is one in which His Divine Sovereignty is revealed and that Sovereignty must be accepted and adored. Do not dispute against God's salvation, but accept it in its entirety, just as it is revealed. Receive the salvation which the Lord planned in eternity—which He worked out on Calvary and which He applies to the heart by the Holy Spirit. You need salvation from sinning as well as salvation from Hell and the Lord will give you that. You need salvation from self to God and that, too, He will bestow. Ask for all that the Lord intends by His salvation and includes in it. "Let Your mercies come also unto me, even Your salvation."

You see, dear Brothers and Sisters, that the prayer is put in the right form, for it is added, "Even Your salvation according to Your Word." He wishes to be saved in the manner which the Lord has appointed. Dear Hearer, where are you? Are you hidden away in the foggy corners? I wish I could get a hold of your hand and speak as a Brother to you. You do not want God to go out of the way of His Word to save you, do you? You are willing to be saved in the Scriptural way, the Biblical way! People nowadays will do anything but keep to the Word of God! They will follow any book but the Bible! Now, pray the Lord to give you the salvation of the Bible in the Bible's own way.

Lord, if Your Word says I must repent, give me Your salvation and cause me to repent! If Your Word says that I must confess my sin, give me Your salvation in the confession of sin! If You say I must trust Christ, Lord, help me, now, to trust Him—only grant me Your salvation according to Your Word. Observe that the whole prayer is conceived and uttered in a humble spirit. It is, “Let Your salvation come also unto me.” He admits his helplessness. He cannot get at the mercy! He needs it to come to him. He is so wounded and so sick that he cannot put on the plaster nor reach the medicine and, therefore, he seeks the Lord to bring it to him.

He is like the man half dead on the road to Jericho and needs that someone should pour on the oil and wine, for he cannot help himself by reason of his spiritual lethargy and death. “Let Your mercies come to me, O Lord.” This implies that there is a barrier between him and the mercy. The road appears to be blocked up. The devil intervenes and his fears hedge up the way and he cries to God to clear the road. “Lord, let Your mercies come! Did you not say, Let there be light and there was light? So let Your mercy come to me, a poor dying sinner and I shall have it, Lord! But it must come to me by Your power. Lo, here I lie at Hell’s dark door and feel within my spirit as if the sentence of condemnation were registered in Heaven against me! But let Your mercies come also unto *me*, O God, even Your salvation, according to Your Word.” That is a very gracious prayer.

In the second place this prayer may be supported by gracious arguments. May the Spirit of God help you to plead them. I will suppose some poor heart painfully longing to use this prayer. Here are arguments for you. Pray like this. Say, “Lord, let Your mercy come to me, for I need mercy.” Do not go on the tack of trying to show that you are good, because mercy will then pass you by. To argue merit is to plead against yourself! Whenever you say, “Lord, I am as good as other people. I try to do my best,” and so on, you act as foolishly as if a beggar at your door should plead that he was not very badly off, not half so needy as others and neither scantily fed nor badly clothed. This would be a new method of begging and a very bad one!

No, no! State your case in all its terrible truthfulness. Say, “O Lord, I feel that nobody in all this world needs Your mercy more than I do! Let my need plead with You! Give me Your salvation. I am no impostor, I am a sinner—let Your mercy and Your Truth visit me in very deed.” Your soul’s wounds are not such as sham beggars make with chemicals—they are real sores—plead them with the God of all Grace! Your poverty is not that which wears rags abroad and fine linen at home—you are utterly bankrupt and this you may urge before the Lord as a reason for His mercy.

Next plead this—“Lord, You know and You have made me to know somewhat of what will become of me if Your mercy does not come to me—I must perish, I must perish miserably! I have heard the Gospel and have neglected it. I have been a Sabbath-breaker, even when I thought I was a Sabbath-keeper. I have been a despiser of Christ, even when I stood up and sang His praises, for I sang them with a hypocrite’s lips. The hottest place in Hell will surely be mine unless Your mercy comes to me. Oh, send that mercy, now.” This is good and prevalent pleading—hold on to it.

Then plead, “If Your mercy shall come to me, it will be a great wonder, Lord. I have not the confidence to do more than faintly hope it may come, but, oh, if You ever do blot out my sins I will tell the world of it! I will tell the angels of it! Through eternity I will sing Your praises and claim to be, of all the saved ones, the most remarkable instance of what Your Sovereign Grace can do! Do you feel like that, dear Hearer? I used to think if the Lord saved me He would have begun on a new line altogether—that His mercy would have sent up her song an octave higher than before! In every man’s case there will be a conviction that there is a something so special about his guilt that there will be something very special about the mercy which can put that guilt away.

Plead, then, the peril of your soul and the Glory which Grace will gain by your rescue. Plead the greatness of the Grace needed, for Christ delights to do great marvels and His name is Wonderful. “Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great. Lord, save me, for I am a nobody and it will be a wonder, indeed, if Your Grace shall visit me.” Then you can put this to the good Savior. Tell Him if He will give you His salvation, He will not be impoverished by the gift. “Lord, I am a thirsty soul, but You are such a River that if I drink from You there will be no fear of my exhausting Your boundless supply.” They put up over certain little nasty, dirty ponds by the roadside, “No dogs may be washed here.” Pity the dogs if they were!

But no one puts up such a notice on the banks of great, glorious Old Father Thames! You may wash your dogs if you like and his flood will flow on! There is too much of it to be so readily polluted. So is it with the boundless mercy of God! God permits many a poor dog of a sinner to be washed in it and yet it is just as full and efficacious as ever! You need not

be afraid of enjoying too much sunlight, for the sun loses nothing by your basking in his beams. So is it with Divine Mercy—it can visit you and bless you and remain as great and glorious as ever! Out of the fullness of Christ millions may still receive salvation and He will remain the same overflowing Fountain of Grace! Plead, then, “Lord, if such a poor soul as I shall be saved, I shall be made supremely happy, but none of Your attributes or glories shall be one jot the less illustrious! You will be as great and blessed a God as ever.”

You may even say, “Lord, now that Your Son Jesus has died, it will not dishonor You to save me. Before the atoning Sacrifice it might have stained Your Justice to pass by sin, but now that the Sacrifice is offered, You can be just and yet the Justifier. Lord, none shall say You are unjust if You save even *me* now that Jesus Christ has bled. Since You have made my salvation possible without infringement of Your Law, I beseech You fulfill the design of the great Sacrifice and save even me!” There is another plea implied in the prayer and a very sweet argument it is—“Let Your mercies come also unto me, O Lord.” It means—“It has come to so many before, therefore let it also come unto me. Lord, if I were the only one and You had never saved a sinner before, yet would I venture upon Your Word and promise! Especially would I come and trust the blood of Jesus! But, Lord, I am not the first by many millions. I beseech You, then, of Your great love, let Your salvation come unto me.”

You notice in the parable of the prodigal that the forlorn feeder of swine was the only son that had gone astray and consequently the first that ever tried whether his father would receive him. The elder brother had not gone astray and was there at home to grumble at his younger brother. But the poor prodigal son, though he had no instance before him of his father’s willingness to forgive, was bold to try, by faith, his father’s heart! None had trod that way before, yet he made bold to explore it! He felt that he should not be cast out. But when we hear any of you say, “I will arise and go to my Father,” scores of us are ready to leap out of our seats and cry, “Come along, Brother, for we have come and the gracious Father has received us!”

I do not know whether the elder brother is here to murmur at a penitent sinner. I am happy to say I have none of his spirit. It will make my heart happy! The bells of my whole nature will ring for joy if I may only bring one of my poor, prodigal brothers back to my great Father’s house! Oh, come along with you and let this be the plea—“You have received so many, O receive me!” Cry, “Bless me, even me, also, O my Father!” The Lord has not come to the end of His mercy. Jesus has not come to the end of His saving work. There is room for you and there will be room for thousands upon thousands until the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door. He has not risen up, nor closed the door as yet and still His mercy cries, “Come to Me! Come to Me! Come to Me and he that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

I will close by assuring you that this blessedly gracious prayer which I have helped to back up with arguments will be answered by our gracious God. Oh, be sure of this! He never sent His Prophets to preach to us a salvation which cannot be ours! He never sent His Apostles to report to us concerning a mere dream! He never set the angels wondering at an empty speculation! He never gave His Son to be a Ransom which will not redeem and He never committed His Spirit to witness to that which will, after all, mock the sinner’s need! No, He is able to save—there is salvation—there is salvation to be had, to be had now, even now!

We are sitting in the light in this house while a dense fog causes darkness all around, even darkness which may be felt. This is an emblem of the state of those who are in Christ—they have light in their hearts, light in their habitations, light in Jesus Christ! O come to Him and find salvation now! May God bring any that have been in darkness into His marvelous light and bring them *now* and unto His name shall be praise forever and ever! Amen and amen.

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