Struggles of Conscience



Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

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"How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin." —*Job 13:23*

Introduction

A. An Evil Assumption

There are many persons who long to have a deeper sense of their sinfulness. With a certain show of conscientious scruple,[1] they make an excuse for the exercise of simple faith. That spiritual disease which keeps sinners from Christ assumes a different shape at different times.

In Luther's[2] day the precise evil under which men labored was this: they believed in being self-righteous. They supposed that they must have good works before they might trust in Christ.

In our day the evil has taken another most extraordinary shape. Men have aimed at being self-righteous after quite a singular fashion.[3] They think they must feel worse and have a deeper conviction of sin before they may trust in Christ.

I meet many hundreds who say they dare not come to Christ and trust Him with their souls because they do not feel their need of Him enough. They do not have sufficient contrition[4] for their sins. They have not repented as fully as they have rebelled.

Brethren, it is the same evil from the same old germ of self-righteousness, but it has taken another and more crafty shape! Satan has wormed himself into many hearts under the garb of an angel of light and he has whispered to the sinner, "Repentance is a necessary virtue. Stop until you have repented, and when you have sufficiently mortified[5] yourself on account of sin, then you will be fit to come to Christ and qualified to trust and rely on Him."

It is with that deadly evil I want to grapple this morning. I am persuaded it is far more common than some would think and I think I know the reason of its great commonness.

B. Believers' Experiences Mistaken

In the Puritanic age, which was noted for its purity of doctrine, there was also a great deal of experimental preaching.[6] Much of it was sound and healthy, but some of it was unscriptural. It took for its standard what the Christian *felt* and not what the Savior *said*, inferring from a believer's experience rather than the message which goes before any belief.[7]

That excellent man, Mr. Rogers[8] of Deadham, who has written some useful works, Mr. Shepard[9] who wrote *The Sound Believer*, Mr. Flavel,[10] and many others give descriptions of what a sinner *must be before* he may come to Christ. These descriptions actually represent what a saint is *after* he has come to Christ.

These good brethren have taken their own experiences of what they felt before they came into Light[11] as the standard of what every other man ought to feel before he may put his trust in Christ and hope for mercy.

There were some in the Puritanic times who protested against that theology and insisted that sinners were to be bidden to come to Christ just as they were and not with any preparation either of feeling or of doing.

At the present time there are large numbers of Calvinistic ministers who are afraid to give a free invitation to sinners. They always garble Christ's invitation thus: "If you are a *sensible* sinner you may come." (As if ignorant sinners might not come!) Then they describe what that feeling of need is and give such a high description of it that their hearers say, "Well, I never felt like that." They are afraid to venture for lack of the qualification.[12]

The brethren speak truly in some respect. They describe what a sinner feels before he comes, but they make a mistake in putting what a sinner feels as if that were what a sinner *ought* to feel. What the sinner feels and what the sinner does until he is renewed by grace are just the very opposite of what he ought to feel and do.

We are always wrong when we say one Christian's experience is to be estimated by what another Christian has felt. No sir! My experience is to be measured by the Word of God! What the sinner should feel is to be measured by what Christ commands him to feel and not by what another sinner has felt. Comparing ourselves among ourselves, we are not wise.

I do believe there are hundreds and thousands who remain in doubt and darkness. They go down to despair because there is a description given and a demanded preparation for Christ to which they cannot attain. The description is not true because it is a description of what they feel *after* they have found Christ and not what they must feel *before* they may come to Him.

I come this morning with all my might to break down every barrier that

keeps a soul from Christ! God the Holy Spirit shall help me to dash the battering ram of truth against every wall that has been built up, whether doctrinal or experimental, that keeps the sinner from Christ, who desires to come and be saved by Him.

I shall attempt to address you in the following order this morning. First, a little by way of *consolation*; then, a little by way of *instruction*; a little more upon *discrimination* or caution; and in the last place, a few sentences by way of *exhortation*.

Consolation

A. Comfort for Those Who Pray to Know Their Sins

First, beloved, let me speak to you who desire to feel more and more your sins and pray the prayer of the text, “Lord, how many are mine iniquities and my sins, make me to know my transgression and my sin” (Job 13:23). Let me try to comfort you.

It ought to give you much solace[13] when you recollect that the best of men have prayed this prayer before you. The better a man is, the more anxious he is to know the worst of his case. The more a man gets rid of sin and lives above his daily faults and errors, the more he cries, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psa 139:23-24).

Bad men do not want to know their badness. Only the good man who has been renewed by grace is anxious to discover his disease that he may have it healed. It ought to be some ground of comfort to you that your prayer is not a prayer which could come from the lips of the wicked but a prayer which has constantly been offered by the most advanced of saints and by those who have most grown in grace.

Perhaps that is a reason why it would not be offered by you who just now can scarcely hope to be a saint at all; yet it should be a matter of sweet rejoicing that your prayer cannot be an evil one. The “Amens” of God’s people, even those who are the fathers in our Israel, go up to God with it. I am sure my aged brothers and sisters in Christ can say unanimously, “That has often been my prayer, ‘Lord, let me know my iniquity and my sin; teach me how vile I am, and lead me daily to Christ Jesus that my sins may be put away.’”

Let this reflection also comfort you. You never prayed like this years ago when you were a careless sinner. It was the last thing you would ever think of asking. You did not want to know your guilt. No, you found pleasure in wickedness!

Sin was a sweet morsel to you. You only wanted to be left alone that you might roll it under your tongue. If any told you of your evil, you would rather

they left it alone.

"Ah," said you, "what business is that of yours? No doubt I make some mistakes and am a little amiss, but I don't want to be told."

Why, the last meditation you would ever have thought of entertaining would have been a meditation upon your own criminality! When conscience spoke, you said, "Lay down, sir, be quiet!"

When God's Word came home sharply to you, you tried to blunt its edge—you did not want to feel it. Is it not some comfort that you have had such a gracious change wrought[14] in you that you are now longing for the very feeling which at one time you could not endure?

Surely, the Lord must have begun a good work in you; for you would not have such wishes and desires as these unless he had put his hand to the plough, and had begun to plough the barren, dry, hard soil of your heart.

B. Asking for What You Already Have

There is another reason why you should take comfort. It is probable you already feel your guilt; and what you are asking, you have already in measure realized. It often happens that a man has the grace which he seeks for and does not know he has it. He makes a mistake as to what he should feel when he has the blessing.

He has already got the boon[15] which he asks God to give him. Let me just put it in another way. If you are sorry because you cannot be sorry enough on account of sin, you are *already* sorry! If you grieve because you cannot grieve enough, you *do* grieve already! If it is a cause of repentance to you that your heart is very hard and that you cannot repent, why, you *do* repent!

My dear hearer, let me assure you for your comfort! When you go down on your knees and say, "Lord, I groan before Thee because I cannot groan; I cannot feel—Lord, help me to feel," why, you *do* feel, and you *have got* the repentance that you are asking for! You have got the mustard seed of repentance in a tiny grain.

Let it alone and it will grow. Foster it with prayer and it will become a tree. The very grace which you are asking from God is speaking in your very prayer.

It is repentance which asks God that I may repent more. It is a broken heart which asks God to break it. That is not a hard heart which says, "Lord I have a hard heart; soften my heart." It is a soft heart already. That is not a dead soul which says, "Lord, I am dead; quicken me." Why, you are quickened! That man

is not dumb who says, “Lord, I am dumb; make me speak.” Why, he speaks already! That man who says, “Lord, I cannot feel,” feels already. He is a sensible sinner already.

You are just the man that Christ calls to Him. This experience of yours which you think is just the opposite of what it *ought* to be is just what it *should* be. Oh, be comforted in this respect! But sit not down in it! Be comforted enough to run to Jesus now—just as you are. I take you, sinner, to be just the man the minister is always seeking after.

When we say that Christ came that there might be drink given to the thirsty, you are just the man we mean—you are thirsty.

“No,” you say, “I don’t feel that I am thirsty, I only wish I did.”

Why, that wish to feel thirsty is your thirst! You are exactly the man! You are far nearer the character than if you said, “I do thirst, I have the qualification.” Then I would be afraid you had not got it. It is all the clearer proof that you have this qualification, if indeed there be any qualification, because you think you do not have it.

When I say, “Come unto Christ all ye that labor and are heavy laden” (Mat 11:28), and you say, “Oh, I don’t feel heavy laden enough,” why, you are the very man the text means! And when I say, “Whosoever will, let him come,” and you say, “I wish I were more willing, I *will* to be willing,” why, you are the man!

It is only one of Satan’s quibbles[16] and a bit of hell’s infernal logic to drive you from Christ. Be a match[17] for Satan now this once and say, “You lying fiend, you tell me that I do not feel my need of a Savior enough. I know I feel my need! As I long[18] to feel it, I *do* feel it. Christ bids me come to Him, and I will come—now, this morning. I will trust my soul, just as it is, in the hands of Him Whose body hung upon the tree. Sink or swim, here I am resting on Him and clinging to Him as the Rock of my Salvation.”

Take, then, these words of comfort.

Instruction

A. God Answers by Showing Us Our Sin

You anxiously long to know all your iniquities and your sins. You pray, “Lord, make me to know my transgression and my sin.” Let me instruct you, then, as to how God will answer your prayers.

God has more than one way of answering the same prayer. Though His ways are diverse, they are all equally useful and efficacious.[19]

It sometimes happens that God answers this prayer by allowing a man to fall into more and more gross sin. At our last church meeting a brother, in giving his experience of how he was brought to God, said he could not feel his guilt and that his heart was very hard until one day he was tempted to the utterance of an untruth. No sooner had he uttered it than he felt what a despicable creature he was to tell a lie to another. So that one sin led him to see the deceitfulness and vileness of his own heart. From that day he never had to complain that he did not feel his guilt enough. On the contrary, he felt too guilty to come to Christ.

I believe many a man who has been educated morally and trained up in such a way that he has never fallen into gross sin finds it very difficult to say, “Lord, I feel myself to be sinner.” He knows he is a sinner, but he cannot altogether feel it.

I have known men who have often envied the harlot and the drunkard because they say, “Had I been like them, I should feel more bitterly my sin and should feel that I was one of those whom Jesus came to save.”

It may be—though I could hope it may not be so—that God may suffer you to fall into sin. God grant it may never be so; but, if you ever should, you will then have cause to say, “Lord, I am vile—now my eyes see myself. I abhor myself in dust and ashes because of this my great sin” (*see* Job 40:4; 42:6).

You may not actually fall into sin but be taken to the very verge of it. Did you ever know what it was all of a sudden to be overtaken by some fiery temptation? Did you ever feel as if the strong hand of Satan had gripped you about the loins and was pulling on you, not knowing where or why or how, but against your will to the very verge of the precipice of some tremendous sin? You went on and on until, suddenly, just as you were about to take a dive into sin, your eyes were opened and you said, “Great God, how came I here—I, who hate

this iniquity?—I, who abhor it?—and yet ‘my feet were almost gone. My steps had well-nigh slipped’” (*see* Psa 73:2).

Then, in recoil you say, “Great God, hold Thou me up, for if You do not hold me up, I fall indeed” (*see* Psa 119:117). You discover that there is inbred sin in your heart only lacking opportunity to spring out. Your soul is like a magazine of gunpowder, only needing the spark and there shall come a terrible catastrophe. You discover that you are full of sin, grim with iniquity and evil devices; you only want[20] opportunity and strong temptation to destroy your body and soul forever. It happens sometimes that this is the way God answers this prayer.

B. God Answers by Opening the Eyes of the Soul

A second method by which the Lord answers this prayer is by opening the eyes of the soul, not so much by providence,[21] as by the mysterious agency of the Holy Spirit. Let me tell you, my hearer, that if you have your eyes opened to see your guilt, you will find it to be the most awful sight that you have ever beheld.

I have had as much experience of this as any man among you. For five years as a child there was nothing before my eyes but my guilt. Those who observed my life would not have seen any extraordinary sin. But there was not a day, as I looked upon myself, in which I did not commit such gross, outrageous sins against God that often I have wished I had never been born. I know John Bunyan’s experience when he said he wished he had been a frog or a toad rather than a man, so guilty did he feel himself to be.

You know how it is with yourselves. It is as when a housewife cleans her chamber: she looks, and there is no dust. The air is clear and all her furniture is shining brightly. But there is a chink[22] in the window shutter, a ray of light creeps in, and you see the dust dancing up and down, thousands of grains in the sunbeam. It is all over the room the same but she can see it only where the sunbeam comes. It is just so with us.

God sends a ray of divine light into the heart, and then we see how vile and full of iniquity it is. I trust, my hearer, that your prayer may not be answered as it was in my case, by terrible conviction, awful dreams, nights of misery, and days of pain. Take care! *You are praying a tremendous prayer when you are asking God to show you your wickedness.*

It would be better for you to modify your prayer and put it thus: “Lord, let me know enough of my iniquity to bring me to Christ and not so much as to keep me from Him, or to drive me to despair, but only enough to be divorced from all trust in myself and to be led to trust in Christ alone.” Otherwise, like Moses, you may be constrained to cry out in a paroxysm[23] of agony, “O Lord, ‘kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness’” (Num 11:15).

C. Practical Advice to See Our Sin

The practical question recurs and you ask me again, “Tell me how I can feel the need of my Savior.” The first advice I give you is this: *particularize your sins*. Do not say, “I am a sinner,” because it means nothing. Everybody says that. But say this, “Am I a liar? Am I a thief? Am I a drunkard? Have I had unchaste thoughts? Have I committed unclean acts? Have I in my soul often rebelled against God? Am I often angry without a cause? Have I a bad temper? Am I covetous? Do I love this world better than the world to come? Do I neglect prayer? Do I neglect the great salvation?”

Put the questions upon the separate points and you will soon convict yourself much more readily than by taking yourself in the gross as being a sinner.

I have heard of a hypocritical old monk who used to whine out while he whipped his back as softly as he could, “Lord, I am a great sinner, as big a sinner as Judas!” When someone said, “Yes, that you are—you are like Judas, a vile old hypocrite!” Then he would say, “No, I am not.”

He would go on again, “I am a great sinner.” Someone would say, “You are a great sinner, you broke the first commandment,” and he would say, “No, I have not.”

Then when he would go on and say, “I am a great sinner,” someone would say, “Yes, you have broken the second commandment,” and he would say, “No, I have not,” and the same with the third and the fourth, and so on right through.

It came to pass he had kept the whole ten according to his own account and yet he went on crying he was a great sinner. The man was a hypocrite; for if he had not broken the commandments, how could he be a sinner at all?

You will find it better not to dwell on your sins in the mass but to pen them, count them over, and look at them individually, one by one.

Let me advise you next to hear a personal ministry. Do not sit where the preacher preaches to you in the plural number, but where he deals with you as a

man alone. Seek out a preacher like Rowland Hill,[24] of whom it is said that if you sat in the back seat in the gallery, you always had a notion that Mr. Hill meant you. If you sat in the doorway where he could not see you, yet you were quite convinced he must know you were there and that he was preaching right at you.

I wonder if men ever could feel their sins under some ministers—genteel ministers, intellectual, respectable—*who never speak to their hearers as if they did anything wrong*. I say of these gentlemen what Hugh Latimer[25] said of many ministers in his day, that they are fitter to dance a morris-dance[26] than to deal with the souls of men. I believe there are some this day more fit to deliver smart lectures and bring out pleasing things to soothe carnal minds than to preach the Word of God to sinners. We want the like of John the Baptist back again, and Boanerges; we want men like Baxter[27] to preach,

> *As though they might not preach again,*
> *As dying men to dying men.*

We want men like John Berridge,[28] who have pulled the velvet out of their mouths years ago and cannot speak fine words—men that hit hard, that draw the bow and pull the arrow to its very head and send it right home, taking deadly aim at the heart and the conscience of men. We need men that will plough deeply, hitting at the private lusts and at the open sins, not generalizing but particularizing. We need men who do not preach to men in the mass but to men in the detail, not to the mob and the crowd, but to each man separately and individually. Do not grow offended with the minister if he comes home too close to you. Remember that is his duty.

If the whip goes right around you and stings you, *thank God for it, be glad of it!* Let me sit under the ministry of a man who uses the knife on me sometimes, who will not spare me nor flatter me. If there should be flattery anywhere, let it not be in the pulpit! He who deals with men's souls should deal with them *very* plainly. The pulpit is not the place for fine words when we have to deal with the solemnities of eternity. Take that advice, then, and listen to a personal, home-smiting ministry.

Next to that, if you would know your sins, study much the Law of God. Let the twentieth chapter of Exodus be often before your eyes. Take with it, as a commentary, Christ's sermon and Christ's speech when He said, "He that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already with her in his heart" (Mat 5:28).

Understand that God's commandments mean not only what they say in

words but that they touch the thought, the heart, and the imagination. Think of that sentence of David, “Thy commandments are exceeding broad” (Psa 119:96). So, I think, you will soon come to detect the heinousness of your sin and the blackness of your guilt.

If you would know still more, spend a little time in contemplating the fatal end of your sin should you die impenitent.[29] Dare to look downward to that fire which must be your eternal doom unless Jesus Christ saves you.

Be wise, sinner, and look at the harvest which you shall surely reap if you sow tares.[30] Let these words ring in your ears, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment” (Mat 25:46).

Open your ears and listen to the end of this text: “Where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth” (Mat 13:42, 50). Let a passage such as this be chewed over in your soul: “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God” (Psa 9:17).

These solemn thoughts may help you. Such books as Allaine’s *Alarm*, Baxter’s *Call to the Unconverted*, Doddridge’s *Rise and Progress*, may have a good effect on your mind in helping you to see the greatness of your guilt and by making you meditate upon the greatness of its punishment.

If you would have a still better and more effectual way, I give you one other piece of advice. Spend much of your time in thinking upon the agonies of Christ for the guilt of your sin. Your sin is never so clearly seen anywhere as in the fact that it killed the Savior.

Think what an evil thing that must be which cost Christ His life in order to save you! Consider, poor soul, how black is that vileness which could only be washed out with His precious blood! How grievous are those offences which could not be expiated[31] unless His body was nailed to the tree, His side pierced, and unless He died in fever and in thirst, crying, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Psa 22:1; Mat 27:46).

Go to the garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives and see the Savior in His bloody sweat! Go to Pilate’s hall and see Him in His shameful accusations! Go to the hall of Herod’s Praetorian Guard and see there how the mighty men set Christ at naught! Last of all, go to Calvary and see that spectacle of woe. If these do not show you the blackness of your sin, then nothing can.

If the death of Christ does not teach you your need of a Savior, then what remedy remains for a heart so hard and for a soul as blind as yours?

I have given you words of instruction. Do not forget them. Put them into practice! “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own

selves” (Jam 1:22).

Discrimination

A. Work of the Spirit and Work of the Devil

You are longing, my hearer, to know your great guilt and to feel your need of Jesus. Take care that you *discriminate* between the work of the Spirit and the work of the devil.

It is the work of the Spirit to make you feel that you are a sinner but it never was His work to make you feel that Christ could forget you. It is the work of the Spirit to make you repent of sin, but it is not the work of the Spirit to make you despair of pardon; that is the devil's work. You know Satan always works by trying to counterfeit the work of the Spirit as he did in the land of Egypt.

Out came Jannes and Jambres, and, by their cunning and sleight of hand, they have a large piece of water brought, and they turn that into blood. Then Moses fills the land with frogs. The ungracious sorcerers have a space cleared and they fill that with frogs. Thus the magicians opposed God's work by pretending to do the same work (Exo 7:10-8:15). The devil will also do that with you.

"Ah!" says God the Holy Spirit, "Sinner, you cannot save yourself."

"Ah!" says the devil, "and He cannot save you either."

"Ah!" says God the Holy Spirit, "you have a hard heart and only Christ can soften it."

"Ah!" says the devil, "but He won't soften it unless you soften it first."

"Ah!" says God the Spirit, "you have no qualification; you are naked, and ruined, and undone."

"Yes," says the devil, "it is no use trusting Christ because you have no good in you and you cannot hope to be saved."

"Ah!" says God the Spirit, "you do not feel your sin; you are hard to repent because of your hardness."

"Ah!" says the devil, "and because you are so hard-hearted, Christ cannot save you."

Learn to distinguish between the one and the other. When a poor penitent sometimes thinks of destroying himself, do you think that is the Spirit's work? It is the devil's work; "he was a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44).

One sinner says, "I am so guilty that I am sure I can never be pardoned." Is

that the Spirit's teaching—that lie? Oh, that comes from the father of lies!

Take heed that whenever you read a biography like that of John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, as you read, say, "That is the Spirit's work: Lord, send me that," or, "That is the devil's work: Lord, keep me from that."

Do not desire to have the devil tearing your soul to pieces; the less you have to do with him the better. If the Holy Ghost keeps Satan from you, bless Him for it! Do not wait to have the terrors and horrors that some have, but come to Christ just as you are. You do not want those terrors and horrors because they are of little use.

Let me remind you of another thing: I ask you not to acquaint yourself with your sins so as to hope to know them all because you cannot number them with man's poor arithmetic. Mr. Young,[32] in his *Night Thoughts*, says, "God hides from all eyes but His own that desperate sight—a human heart."

If you were to know only the tenth part of how bad you have been, you would be driven mad. You who have been the most moral, the most excellent in character, if all the past sins of your heart could stand before you in their black colors, and you could see them in their true light, you would be in hell. It is hell to discover the sinfulness of sin.

Do you mean to say that you would go down on your knees and ask God to send you to hell or to drive you mad? Do not be so foolish! Instead say, "Lord, let me know my guilt enough to drive me to Christ, *but do not gratify my curiosity by letting me know more*. Give me enough to make me feel that I must trust Christ or else be lost. I shall be content if You give me that, though You deny me more."

B. Feelings

Listen to this next caution for it is very important. Take care that you do not try to make a "righteousness" out of your feelings. If you say, "I may not go to Christ till I feel my need of Him," that is clear legality.[33] You are on the wrong track altogether because Christ does not want you to feel your need in order to prepare for Him. He wants no preparation.

Anything which you think to be a preparation is a mistake. You are to come just as you are today, as you are NOW—not as you will be, but just NOW as you NOW are!

I do not say to you, "Go home and seek God in prayer." I say, "Come to Christ now at this very hour," for you will never be in a better state than you are

now. You were never in a worse state, and that is the fittest state in which to come to Christ.

He that is very sick is just in the right state to have a doctor. He that is filthy and begrimed is just in the right state to be washed, and he that is naked is just in the right state to be clothed. That is your case.

You say, "But I do not feel my need." Just so: your "not feeling it" proves that you have the greater need. You cannot trust your feelings because you say that you do not have any.

If God were to hear your prayers and make you feel your need, you might begin to trust in your feelings and be led to say, "I trust Christ because I feel my need." That would be just like saying, "I trust myself."

All these things are only Popery in disguise. All this preaching to sinners that they must feel this and feel that *before* they trust in Jesus is just self-righteousness in another shape. I know our Calvinistic brethren will not like this sermon—I cannot help that—for I do not hesitate to say, that Phariseeism is mixed with Hyper-Calvinism more than with any other sect in the world.

I do solemnly declare that this preaching to the prejudice and feelings of what they call "sensible sinners" is nothing more than self-righteousness taking a most cunning and crafty shape. It is telling the sinner that he must be something before he comes to Christ.

The gospel is preached not to sensible sinners or sinners with any other qualifying adjective but to sinners *as sinners,* to sinners *just as they are.* It is not to sinners as repentant sinners but to sinners *as sinners,* whatever their state may be, and with whatever their feelings may be.

Oh, sinners, mercy's door is flung wide open to you this morning! Do not let Satan push you back saying, "You are not fit." *You are not fit* and you have all the fitness Christ wants and that is none at all. Come to Him just as you are. "Oh," says one, "but you know that hymn of Hart's?

> *"All the fitness He requireth*
> *Is to feel your need of Him."*

"I cannot get that."

Let me counsel you never to quote part of a hymn or part of a text: quote it all—

> *"All the fitness He requireth*
> *Is to feel your need of Him;*
> *This He gives you,*
> *'Tis His Spirit's rising beam."*

Come and ask Him to give it to you, and believe He will give it to you. Believe my Master is longing to save you. Trust Him, act on that belief, sinner, and you shall be saved, or else I will be lost with you. Do but believe that my Master has got a loving heart and that He is able to forgive and that He has a mighty arm. He is able to deliver you.

Do Him the honor now of not measuring His corn with your bushel. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa 55:8-9).

Today He says to you, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). Sinner, if you believe and are not saved, God’s Word is a lie and God is not true! Will you ever dream that to be the case? No, sinner! Come now with the proclamation of this gospel and say —

“I’ll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter mercy gives;
Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives.

Perhaps He will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But if I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there.”

You cannot perish trusting in Christ. The destroying angel shall pass over you if your arms are around the cross and His blood is sprinkled on your brow, though you have no good works or feelings.

It is written: “When I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Exo 12:13). It is not, “When I see your feelings about the blood,” and not, “When I see your faith in the blood,” but, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.”

Learn to discriminate between a sense of sin which would humble you and a sense of sin which would only make you proud. When you have come to say, “I have felt my sin enough and therefore I am fit to come to Christ,” it is nothing but pride dressed in the garb of humility.

C. Things that Keep You from Christ

Let me say one more thing before I am done with you on this point. Anything which keeps you from Christ is sin. Whatever you have which keeps you from trusting Christ today is a sinful thought. The wrath of God abides on you every hour you continue as you are, as an unbeliever in Christ.

Why should you be asking for a thing which may help to keep you from Christ any longer? You now know that you have nothing good in you. Why not trust in Christ for all?

You say, “But I must first of all feel more.” Poor soul, if you were to feel more acutely, you would find it all the harder to trust Christ. I prayed to God that He would show me my guilt and I little thought how He would answer me. Why, I was such a fool that I would not come to Christ unless the devil dragged me there!

I said, “Christ cannot have died for me because I have not felt miserable enough.”

God heard me. Believe me; I will never pray that prayer again! When I began to feel my guilt, I said, “I am too wicked to be saved.” I found the very thing that I had been asking for was a curse upon me and not a blessing. If you should feel what you ask to feel, it might be the cause of your condemnation.

Be wise, therefore, and listen to my Master’s voice. Do not stay to gather together the fuller’s soap,[34] and the refiner’s fire, but come and wash now in Jordan and be clean. Come and do not stop until your heart is turned up with the plough and your soul hewn down with the axe.

Come as you are to Him now. Will you not come to Christ when He has said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Mat 11:28, 29)? Will you not trust Him?

Say to Him, “Master, I am very guilty but You have said, ‘Come now, and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool’” (Isa 1:18).

“Lord, this mercy is too great, but I believe it! I take You at Your word. You have said, ‘Return, ye backsliding children, and I will forgive your iniquities’ (Jer 3:22). Lord, I come to You. I do not know how You can forgive me, but I believe You cannot lie, and on that promise I rest my soul” (Num 23:19; Ti 1:2).

“I know You have said, ‘All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men’ (Mat 12:31). Lord, I cannot understand how there can be power in the blood to wash away all kinds of blasphemy, but You have said it and I believe it (Heb 9:14).

“It is Your business to make Your own word true, not mine, and You have said, ‘Whosoever will, let him come’ (*see* Rev 22:17). Lord, I am not worthy, but I do will to come, or, if I do not will, yet I will to will, therefore will I come, just as I am. I know I have no good feeling to recommend myself to You, but

then You do not want good feeling in me, but You will give me all that I lack."

Oh, my dear hearers, I feel so glad that I have such a gospel as this to preach to you! If you have not received it, I pray God the Holy Ghost to send it home to you. It is so simple that men cannot believe it is true.

If I were to bid you to take off your shoes and run from here to York and you would be saved, why you would do it at once! And the road to York would be thronged! When it is nothing but the soul-quickening words, "Believe and live," it is too easy for your proud hearts to do.

If I told you to go and earn a thousand pounds and endow a church with it and you would be saved, you would think the price very cheap. When I say, "Trust Christ and be saved," you cannot do that—it is too simple. Ah, madness of the human heart (Ecc 9:3)!

Strange, strange, besotted sin, when God makes the path plain and men will not run in it for that very reason! When He opens wide the door, that is the very reason they will not come in! They say if the door was half a-jar and they had to push it open, they would come in. God has made the gospel too plain and too simple to suit proud hearts.

May God soften proud hearts and make you receive the Savior.

Exhortation

Poor sinner, seven years ago you were saying just what you are saying now, and in seven more years you will be saying just the same. Seven years ago you said, “I would trust Christ but I do not feel as I ought.” *Do you feel any better now?*

When another seven years are come, you will feel just as you do now. You will say, “I would come but I do not feel fit. I do not feel my need enough.”

Ay! And it will keep going on forever until you go down to the pit of hell, saying as you go down, “I do not feel my need enough.” Then the lie will be detected and you will say, “It did not say in the Word of God that I might come to Christ when I felt my need enough, but it said, ‘Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely’ (Rev 22:17). I would not come as I was; therefore, I am justly cast away.”

Hear me, sinner, when I ask you to come to Jesus as you are and give you these reasons for it:

1) It is a very great sin not to feel your guilt and not to mourn over it, but it is one of the sins that Jesus Christ atoned for on the tree. When His heart was pierced, He paid the ransomed price for your hard heart.

Oh, sinner, if Christ had only died that we might be forgiven of other sins except our hard hearts, we should never go to heaven! We have, all of us, even we who have believed, committed that great sin of being impenitent before Him.

If He had not died to wash that sin away as well as every other sin, where should we be? The fact that you cannot weep or sorrow as you want is an addition to your guilt; but did not Christ wash you from that sin, black though it is? Come to Him. He is able to save you even from this.

2) Again, come to Jesus because it is He *only* who can give you that heart for which you seek (Acts 4:12). If men were not to come to Christ until they feel as they should feel, they would never come at all.

I will freely confess that if I had never trusted Christ until I felt I might have trusted Him, I never could have trusted Him and could not trust Him now. There are times when after I have preached the gospel as plainly as I could, I have returned to my own chamber and my heart has been dead and lumpish, lying like a log within my spirit. I have thought then if I could not come to Christ as a sinner, I could not come any other way.

It is just because the text says “sinners” with no descriptive word qualifying the “sinner” but only that “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,” and sinners alone, that I can hope He came to save me (1Ti 1:15).

If it had said that Jesus Christ came into the world to save soft-hearted sinners, I should have said, “Lord, my heart is like adamant.” If it had said Jesus came into the world to save weeping sinners, I should have said, “Lord, though I press my eyelids I could not force a tear.” If it had said Jesus came into the world to save sinners that felt their need of Him, I should say, “I do not feel the need of it. I know I do need You but I do not feel it.”

But, Lord, You came to save sinners, and I am saved. I trust You came to save me and here I am, sink or swim. I rest on You. If I perish, I will perish trusting You, and, if I must be lost, I shall be lost in Your hands; for in my own hands I will not be in any respect, or in any degree whatever. I come to that cross and under that cross I stand.

“Thy perfect righteousness my beauty is,
My glorious dress.”

Come, sinner, to Christ because He can soften your heart, and you can never soften it yourself. He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins: not merely the remission, but the repentance too (Act 5:31). He gives His grace not merely to those who seek it, but even to those that seek it not. He gives repentance not to those who repent themselves, but to those who cannot repent.

To those who are saying, “Lord, I would but cannot feel; I would, but cannot weep,” I say Christ is just the Savior for you. He is a Christ that begins at the beginning and does not want *you* to begin. He is a Christ that shall go to the end and won’t want *you* to finish. He is a Christ that does not ask *you* to say Alpha, and then He will be the Omega: but He will be both Alpha and Omega. Christ is the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

The plain gospel is just this, “Look unto *me*, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth” (Isa 45:22).

“But, Lord, I cannot see anything.”

“Look unto *Me*.”

“But, Lord, I do not feel.”

“Look unto *Me*.”

“But, Lord, I cannot say I feel my need.”

“Look unto *Me*, not unto yourself; all this is looking to yourself.”

“But, Lord, I feel sometimes that I could do anything, but a week passes, and then I am hard of heart.”

“Look unto *Me*.”

“But, Lord, I have often tried.”

“Try no more. Look unto *Me*.”

“Oh, but Lord, Thou knowest.”

“Yes, I know all things. I know everything, all your iniquity and your sins, but look unto *Me*.”

“Oh, but often, Lord, when I have heard a sermon I feel impressed; yet it is like the morning cloud and the early dew, and it passes away.”

“Look unto *Me*, not to your feelings or your impressions. Look unto *Me*!”

“Well,” says one, “but will that really save me, just looking to Christ?”

My dear soul, if that does not save you, then I am not saved. The only way in which I have been saved, and the only gospel I can find in the Bible, is looking to Christ.

“But if I go on in sin,” says one; but you cannot go on in sin. Your looking to Christ will cure you of that habit of sin.

“But if my heart remains hard?” It cannot remain hard. You will find that looking to Christ will keep you from having a hard heart. It is just as we sing in the penitential hymn of gratitude—

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

You will never feel as you ought until you do not feel what you ought; you will never come to Christ until you do not feel that you can come.

Come as you are! Come in all your poverty and stubbornness and hardness, and just as you are. Take Christ to be your all in all now.

Sound your songs, ye angels, smite your golden harps, ye redeemed ones; there are sinners snatched from hell today! There are men who have trusted Christ this morning. Though they scarcely know it, their sins are all forgiven. Their feet are on the Rock and the new song shall soon be in their mouth. Their goings shall be stablished (Rom 16:25).

Farewell, brethren, and turn to God this morning. God shall keep you, and you shall see His face in glory everlasting. Amen.

Short Biography of Charles H. Spurgeon

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) was born in Kelvedon, Essex, England, June 19, 1834. Because his father and grandfather were pastors, Spurgeon was reared with the knowledge of the Gospel. Yet, he was not converted until a snowy January morning in 1850. In August of the same year, Spurgeon preached his first sermon to a small gathering of farmers.

A year later, a village church called him as its pastor. In 1854, when he was nineteen, he was installed as shepherd over the flock of the New Park Street Chapel, Southwark, London, which later became the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Beginning in January 1855, Spurgeon's sermons were published weekly, a practice which did not cease until 1916, twenty-four years after his death. During his pastorate in London, Spurgeon ministered to a congregation of nearly 6,000 people each Sunday, published his sermons weekly, and wrote a monthly magazine. He also founded a college for pastors, two orphanages, a home for the elderly, a colportage society, and several mission stations.

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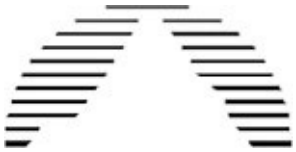

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[1] **conscientious scruple** – conscience inhibiting reasonable action.
[2] **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) – German monk who was instrumental in the first Protestant reformation.
[3] **singular fashion** – an unusual way.
[4] **contrition** – humbling sorrow.
[5] **mortified** – subdued or deadened bodily appetites.
[6] **experimental preaching** – preaching from personal experience.
[7] **any belief** – faith in Christ.
[8] **John Rogers of Deadham** (d. 1636) – Puritan nonconformist preacher.
[9] **Thomas Shepard** (1605-1679) – English preacher silenced for Puritanism.
[10] **John Flavel** (1627-1691) – Presbyterian clergyman, Puritan, and author.
[11] **Light** – saving grace from God that gives faith in Christ Jesus.
[12] **qualification** – a standard that must be met to attain a privilege.
[13] **solace** – relief of anxiety or grief.
[14] **wrought** – worked.
[15] **boon** – benefit; favor
[16] **quibbles** – evasive small arguments.
[17] **match** – rival.
[18] **long** – earnestly desire.
[19] **efficacious** – effective.
[20] **want** – lack.
[21] **providence** – God's most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures and all their actions.
[22] **chink** – crack; a narrow opening.
[23] **paroxysm** – sudden violent motion or action.
[24] **Rowland Hill** (1795-1879) – popular English preacher.
[25] **Hugh Latimer** (c.1485-1555) – Anglican reformer and martyr.
[26] **morris-dance** – a traditional English dance performed by men wearing costumes and bells.
[27] **Richard Baxter** (1615-1691) – English Puritan minister.
[28] **John Berridge** (1716-1793) – English vicar of Everton.
[29] **impenitent** – without sorrow for sins.
[30] **tares** – weeds in grain fields.
[31] e**xpiated** – atoned for.
[32] **Edward Young** (1681-1765) – English poet and chaplain to King George II.
[33] **legality** – attempting to earn your way into heaven by being good.
[34] **fullers soap** – a soap for whitening garments.