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Salvation All of Grace

by

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“By grace are ye saved.”—Ephesians 2:8.

Other Divine attributes are manifest in salvation. The wisdom of God devised the plan; the power of God executes in us the work of salvation; the immutability of God preserves and carries it on—in fact, all the attributes of God are magnified in the salvation of a sinner: but at the same time the text is most accurate, since grace is the fountain-head of salvation, and is most conspicuous throughout. Grace is to be seen in our election; for “there is a remnant according to the election of grace, and if by grace then it is no more of works.” Grace is manifestly revealed in our redemption, for ye know therein the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is utterly inconceivable that any soul could have deserved to be redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. The mere thought is abhorrent to every holy mind. Our calling is also of grace, too, for “He hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” By grace also we are justified; for over and over again the apostle insists upon this grand and fundamental truth. We are not justified before God by works in any measure or in any degree, but by faith alone; and the apostle tells us “it is of faith, that it might be by grace.” We see a golden thread of grace running through the whole of the Christian’s history, from his election before all worlds, even to his admission to the heaven of rest. Grace, all along, “reigns through righteousness unto eternal life,” and “where sin aboundeth, grace doth much more abound.” There is no point in the history of a saved soul which you can put your finger and say, “In this instance he is saved by his own deservings.” Every single blessing which we receive from God, comes to us by the channel of free favour, revealed to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. Boasting is excluded, because deservings are excluded. Merit is an unknown word in the

Christian church; it is banished once for all; and our only shoutings over foundation or top-stone are, “Grace, grace unto it!”

Perhaps the apostle is the more earnest in insisting upon this truth here, and in many other places, because this is a point against which the human heart raises the greatest objection. Every man by nature fights against salvation by grace. Though we have nothing good in ourselves, we all think we have, though we have all broken the law, and have lost all claim upon divine regard, yet we are all proud enough to fancy that we are not quite so bad as others; that there are some mitigating circumstances in our offences, and that we can, in some measure, appeal to the justice as well as to the compassion of God. Hence the apostle puts it so strongly, “By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.”

The statement of the text means just this, that we all need saving from our sins, and saving from the consequences of them; and that if we are saved it is not because of any works which we have already performed. Who among us, upon looking back at his past life, would dare to say that he deserves salvation? Neither are we saved on account of any works foreseen which are yet to be performed by us. We have made no bargain with God that we will give him so much service for so much mercy; neither has he made any covenant with us of this character; he has freely saved us, and if we serve him in the future, as we trust we shall, with all our heart and soul and strength, even then we shall have no room for glorying, because our works are wrought in us of the Lord. What have we even then which we have not received? We are saved, not because of any mitigating circumstances with regard to our transgressions, nor because we were excusable on account of our youth, or of our ignorance, or any other cause; we are not saved because there were some good points in our character, which ought not to be overlooked, or some hopeful indications of better things in the future. Ah, no; “By grace are ye saved.” That clear and unqualified statement sweeps away all supposition of any deserving on our part, or any thought of deserving. It is not a case of a prisoner at the bar who pleads “not guilty,” and who escapes because he is innocent; far from it, for we are guilty beyond all question. It is not even a case of a prisoner who pleads “guilty,” but at the same time mentions certain circumstances which render his offence less heinous; far from it, for our offence is heinous to the last degree, and our sin deserves the utmost wrath of God. But ours is the case of a criminal confessing his guilt and owning that he deserves the punishment, offering no extenuation and making no apology, but casting himself upon the absolute mercy of the judge, desiring him for pity’s sake to look upon his misery and spare him in compassion. As condemned criminals we stand before God when we come to him

for mercy. We are not in a state of probation, as some say; our probation is over: we are already lost, “condemned already,” and our only course is to cast ourselves upon the sovereign mercy of God in Christ Jesus; not uttering a syllable of claim, but simply saying, “Mercy, Lord, I crave, undeserved, mercy according to thy lovingkindness, and thy grace in Christ Jesus.” “By grace are ye saved.” This is true of every saint on earth and every saint in heaven, altogether true without a single sentence of qualification. No man is saved except as the result of the free favour and unbought mercy of God, not of deserving, not of debt, but entirely and altogether because the Lord “will have mercy on whom he will have mercy,” and he wills to bestow his favour on the unworthy sons of men.

I. This simple truth we do not mean to work out this morning, doctrinally or controversially, out to use it for practical purposes, and the first is this—THIS GREAT DOCTRINE SHOULD INSPIRE EVERY SINNER WITH HOPE. If salvation be altogether of the free favour and grace of God, then—who among us dare despair? Who in this place shall be so wicked as to sit down in sullenness and say, “It is impossible for me to be saved”?

For first, my brethren, if salvation be of mercy only, it is clear that our *sin is by no means an impediment to our salvation*. If it were of justice our transgression of the law would render our salvation utterly impossible; but if the Lord deals with us upon quite another footing, and says, “I will forgive them freely,” that very promise presupposes sin. If the Lord speaks of mercy, that very word takes it for granted that we are guilty, or else there would be no room for mercy at all. The very statement that we are saved by grace implies that we are fit objects for grace; and who are fit objects for grace but the guilty, the wretched, the condemned. O sons of men, the law stops your mouths, and makes you silently own that you are guilty before God, but the gospel opens the mouth of the dumb by declaring that “Christ died for the ungodly,” and that “he came into the world to save sinners.” If mercy come into the field, sin is swallowed up in forgiveness, and unworthiness ceases to be a barrier for love. Is not this both clear and comforting?

Now, observe, that *this prevents the despair which might arise in any heart on account of some one especial sin*. I meet with many whose terror of conscience arises from one particular crime. Had they not committed that crimson sin, they consider that they might have been pardoned, but now they are in an evil case. “Surely,” say they, “that sin, like an iron bolt, has fast closed the gates of heaven against me.” And yet it cannot be so if salvation be of grace. Whatever the sin may be, its greatness will only serve to illustrate the great grace of God. Undeserved mercy can pardon one sin as well as another, if the soul confess it. If

God acted on the rule of merit with us, then no sin would be pardonable under any circumstances; but when he deals with us in a way of grace he can pass by any offence for which we seek forgiveness. The great sinner is so much the fitter object for great mercy. He who hath but little sin, can, as it were, but draw forth little mercy from God to blot it out; but he who is guilty of some great, crowning, damning sin, he it is to whom the heights and depths of divine mercy may be displayed; and if I speak to such an one this morning I would look upon him with joyful eyes. Sorrowful as he is, I am thankful to have found out such an one. Thou art a rare platform on which my Lord's love may display itself, because thou knowest thyself to be so utterly lost a sinner. Thou art but a black foil to set forth the brilliant diamond of my Master's grace. Thy foulness shall but illustrate the virtue of his precious blood, and thy crimson sin, by yielding in a moment to the precious blood, shall only show how great is his power to save.

It is clear, too, that if *the sinner's despair should arise from the long continuance, multitude, and great aggravation of his sins, there is no ground for it*. For if salvation be of pure mercy only, why should not God forgive ten thousand sins as well as one? "Oh," sayest thou, "I see why he should not." Then thou seest more than is true; for once come to grace, you have done with bounds and limits. Know, moreover, that "his thoughts are not your thoughts. And as the heavens are higher than the earth so are his thoughts higher than your thoughts and his ways than your ways." To blot out ten thousand sins is with him no effort of grace, for "he is plenteous in mercy." He has been forgiving the sons of men ever since the first sinner crossed the threshold of Paradise, and he delights to do it; so that, guilty ones, I see in the multitude of your sins only so much the more room for the Lord to exercise his own delightful attribute of mercy. If he delights to blot out one sin, then he delights ten thousand times more to blot out ten thousand sins. If thou wilt look at it in that light, though thy transgressions may be as many as the hairs on thy head or as the sands on the sea shore, innumerable, thou needest not for a moment think thou art cast away from hope. The Lord's mercy is a sea which cannot be filled, though mountains of sin be cast into its midst; it is like Noah's flood, which covers all and drowns even the mountain-tops of heaven-defying sins. I wish to speak right home to the hearts of those who are in trouble and seeking mercy, and to them I say,—do you not see that if salvation be of grace alone, then *the depravity of thy nature does not shut thee up in despair?* What though thy nature be inclined to sin, and especially inclined to some sins; what if thou be naturally angry and passionate, or if thou be proud and covetous; what if thou be in thy natural disposition sceptical or lustful, yet from the grace of God hope flows even for thee. If the Lord were to deal with thee according to thy constitution and nature, then, indeed, it were a hopeless case with

thee: but if he blesses thee, not because thou art good, but because thou needest to be blest; if he looks upon thee in mercy, not because thou art beautiful, but because thou art sick unto death, and defiled, and needest to be healed and cleansed; if it be thy misery and not thy merit which he considers, then thou art yet in the land of hope. However fallen thou mayest be, thou mayest yet be raised up. Why should not the Lord take the most depraved, and abandoned, and obstinate among us, and renew his nature and make of him a miracle of grace? Would it not magnify his mercy if he should make of such an one the opposite of what he now is, tender in heart, holy in spirit, devout in character, ardent in love, and fervent in prayer? He can do it. Glory be to his name, he can do it; and now that he deals with us in grace let us hope he will do it in the case of many.

Remember, too, that *any spiritual unfitness which may exist in a man should not shut him out from a hope, since God deals with us in mercy.* I hear you say, "I believe God can save me, but I am so impenitent." Yes, and I say it again, if thou wert to stand on terms of debt with God, thy hard heart would shut thee out of hope. How could he bless such a wretch as thou art, whose heart is a heart of stone? But if he deal with thee entirely upon another ground, namely, his mercy, why I think I bear him say, "Poor hard-hearted sinner, I will pity thee, and take away thy heart of stone, and give thee a heart of flesh." Dost thou say, "I cannot repent?" I know the criminality of that sad fact. It is a great sin not to be able to repent; but then the Lord will not look upon thee from the point of what thou oughtest to be, but he will consider what he can make thee, and he will give thee repentance. Has not his Son gone up to heaven, "exalted on high, to give repentance and remission of sins"? Do I hear thee confess that thou canst not believe? Now, the absence of faith from thee is a great evil, yea a horrible evil; but then the Lord is dealing with thee on terms of grace, and does not say, "I will not smite thee because thou dost not believe," but he saith, "I will give thee faith," for faith is "not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." He works our faith in us, and has pity upon us, and takes away the unbelieving heart, and gives the tender heart, the believing heart, in the presence of the cross of Christ. Oh, though I were black as the devil with past sin, and vile as the devil with innate depravity, yet, if the Lord's mercy looked upon me could he not forgive the past and change my nature, and make me, as bright a seraph as Gabriel before his throne? "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" O sinner, what a door of hope there ought to be open to thee in this truth, that salvation is altogether of grace.

For now, to sum up all, in a word, there is no supposable circumstance or incident, or anything connected with any man, that can shut him out of hope if he seek forgiveness through the Saviour's blood. Whoever thou mayest be, and

whatever thou mayest have done, grace can come and save thee. I say again, if thy character be the question at issue, thou art a lost man; if thy power to amend thy character be the hinge of the business, thou art a lost man; but if the grace that pardons and the power that amends both come from God, why shouldst thou be a lost man? Why should the harlot perish? Why should the thief perish? Why should the adulterer perish? Why should the murderer perish? "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon." Ye have heaped up your sins, but God will heap up his mercies; ye have highly aggravated your transgressions; ye have sinned against light and knowledge; ye have done evil with both hands greedily; but; thus saith the Lord, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Thus much upon the first statement, that this doctrine ought to give hove to the sinner.

II. Secondly, THIS DOCTRINE AFFORDS DIRECTION TO THE SINNER, as to how to act before his God in seeking mercy. Clearly, O soul, if salvation be of grace alone, it would be a very wrong course of action to plead that thou art not guilty, or to extenuate thy faults before God: that were to go upon the wrong tack altogether. If salvation be by thy merit, or by an absence of demerit, then thou wouldst be right enough to set up a good character as a plea, though, I believe that in the trial thou wouldst mightily break down, for thou art as full of sin as an egg is of meat, and thy sin is as damnable as hell itself, and therefore it were vain for thee to plead innocence; but if thou couldest plead it, it is the wrong plea. If salvation be of grace, then go to the Lord and confess thy sin and transgression, and ask for grace. Do not for a moment attempt to show that thou hast no need of grace, for that were folly indeed. What more foolish than for a beggar to plead that he is not in want? Do not shut the door of grace in thine own face. To say, "I am not guilty," is to say "I do not need mercy;" to say "I have not transgressed," is to say, "I do not need to be forgiven," and how better couldest thou commit spiritual suicide than by such pleading?

Neither, O sinner, hope to propitiate the Lord with gifts and sacrifices. If salvation be of grace, how durst thou think to buy it? If he saith he gives it freely, bring not with thee any bribe in thy hand; for in so doing thou wilt insult and anger him. Indeed, what couldest thou bring to him when Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof for a burnt sacrifice? If thou couldest give

him rivers of oil that should deluge a continent, or seas of sacrificial blood broad as the Pacific, yet couldst thou not for a moment render thyself acceptable with him. Try it not therefore. Venture on no ceremonies. Rest not in rituals. If salvation be of grace, accept it as a free gift, and bless the giver. Do not think to dress thyself in garments of outward religiousness, or to borrow virtue from a fellow-man who claims to be a priest; but since salvation is of free mercy, go and cast thyself on that free mercy. That is to act according to the dictates of prudence. Thy true course is this. Since God is willing to show his mercy, go and confess that thou needest that mercy. Aggravate thy sin in the confession, if thou canst. Instead of trying to make it appear white, try to see its unutterable blackness. Say that thou art without excuse, justly condemned, for thy transgressions. I warrant thee thou shalt never go beyond the truth in stating thy sin, for that were quite impossible. A man lying on the field of battle wounded, when the surgeon comes round, or the soldiers with the ambulance, does not say, "Oh, mine is a little wound," for he knows that then they would let him lie; but he cries out, "I have been bleeding here for hours, and am nearly dead with a terrible wound," for he thinks that then he will gain speedier relief; and when he gets into the hospital he does not say to the nurse, "Mine is a small affair; I shall soon get over it"; but he tells the truth to the surgeon in the hope that he may set the bone at once, and that double care may be taken. Ah, sinner, do thou so with God. The right way to plead is to plead thy misery, thine impotence, thy danger, thy sin. Lay bare thy wounds before the Lord, and as Hezekiah spread Sennacherib's letter before the Lord, spread thy sins before him with many a tear and many a cry, and say, "Lord, save me from all these; save me from these black and foul things, for thy infinite mercy's sake." Confess thy sin; wisdom dictates that thou shouldst do so, since salvation is of grace. And then yield thyself up to God; capitulate at discretion; make no terms with him, but say, "Here I stand before thee, O my Maker; I have offended thee; I yield to thee, because thou hast said thou wilt deal with me on terms of grace; behold I cast myself at thy feet; the weapons of my rebellion I cast from my hand; for ever; I desire that thou wouldest take me and make me what thou wouldest have me to be; and seeing thou art a God of grace, I beseech thee to have pity upon me. Thou hast appointed a way of salvation by Jesus Christ, Oh, save me in that way, I entreat thee."

Now, mark, I want to dwell upon this next point,—because salvation is of grace it directs the guilty as to how to plead before God. When we are praying and pleading we sometimes feel we need a help to guide us in the pleading. Let this guide You. Take care that all your pleas with God are consistent with the fact that he saves by his grace. Never bring a legal plea, or a plea that is based upon self, for it will be an offence to God; whereas, if thine argument be based on grace, it

will have a sweet savour to him. Let me teach thee, seeking sinner, for a moment how to pray. Let it be in this way. Plead with God thy miserable and undone condition; tell him thou art utterly lost if he do not save thee. Tell him thou art already lost, so that thou canst not help thyself hand or foot in this matter, if he do not come to thy rescue with the fulness of his power and love. Tell him that thou art afraid to die and to come before his righteous bar, for unless he save thee hell will be thy portion. Plead with him and ask him whether it will delight him that thou shouldst make thy bed in hell. Say to him, "Shall the dead praise thee? Shall the condemned set forth thy praise?" Show him the imminence of thy danger. He knows it, but let him see that thou knowest it, and this will be good pleading with his mercy. "Save me, O Lord, for if ever soul needed saying, if ever soul were in the jaws of destruction, I am that soul, therefore have pity upon me." Thus pour out your heart before him. Then humbly urge the suitableness of his mercy to you. "Lord, thou art merciful, thy mercy will find ample scope in me. Does thy grace seek out sin to purge it away? It is here, Lord; I teem with it; my heart swarms with evils. If thou art pitiful, here is a heart which bleeds and is ready to perish. Oh, if thou be indeed a physician, here is a sick soul that wants thee; if thou art ready to forgive, here are sins that need forgiving. Come to me, Lord, for thy mercy will find a grievousness of misery in me. Besides, is not thy mercy free. It is true I do not deserve it, but thou dost not give it to men because of their deserving, else were it no grace and mercy at all. Let thy free mercy light on me. Why shouldst thou pass me by? If I be the vilest of the sons of men thou wilt be the more gracious if thou dost look upon me. What though I have forgotten thee these many years and have even despised thy love, will it not be the greater mercy on thy part to turn and give thy free grace to me, even to me?" Then argue with him the plenteousness of his grace. Say to him, "Lord, thy mercy is very great, I know it is. 'According to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.' If thou wert a little God and thou hadst but little mercy, I should have but little hope in thee; but oh, thou art so great and glorious, thou canst cast my transgressions behind thy back. By the greatness of thy compassion, then, look thou on me."

It is well also to return to the first plea and repeat it, saying, "Lord, because thou hast this great mercy and I need it, look on my impotence this day. I am so weak, I cannot come to thee unless thou come to me. Thou biddest me repent, but see how hard my heart is; thou commandest me to believe in Jesus, but my unbelief is very strong; thou tellest me to look to thy dear Son upon the cross, but I cannot see him for my tears, which blind these weary eyes. Master, come to the rescue, come and help thy servant, for thou art strong though I be weak. Thou canst break my heart though I cannot break it, and thou canst open my poor

bleared eyes, though I cannot as yet see as I would see the Saviour Jesus Christ. Oh by thy power and mercy save a weak, dead sinner.”

And then, if you feel as if you lack some other plea, begin to plead his promises. Say:

“Thou hast promised to forgive
All who on thy Son believe;
Lord, I know thou canst not lie;
Give me Christ or else I die.”

“Thou hast said that if the wicked forsake his way and turn unto thee he shall live. Lord, I turn to thee. Receive me. Thou hast said that all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. Thou hast declared that the blood of Jesus Christ thy Son cleanseth from all sin. Go not back from thy word, O God. Since thou art dealing with men on terms of grace, keep thy promise and let thy rich, free mercy come to me.”

I know what all this means by experience. I have gone over all these pleas by the week together, and pleaded with God that he would have mercy upon me. “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him from all his fears.” Therefore, bear I testimony unto you, O seeking souls, that this is the way to move his heart. Go upon the plan of grace, and plead his love. Not your deservings, but your undeservings; not your profession of what you hope to do, but your acknowledgment of your misery, will have power with him.

I have found it sweet work sometimes to plead with God his mercy in the gifts of Christ. Let me help thee, sinner, to do it, and may the Spirit help thee. Say thou unto God thus, “Lord, thou hast given thine only begotten Son to die; surely he need not have died for the righteous; he died for the guilty; I am such an one; Lord, wilt thou give thy Son for sinners, and then cast sinners away? Didst thou nail him to the cross only for a mockery, that we might come to that cross, and not find pity? O thou God of mercy, in the gift of thy Son thou hast done so much that thou canst not draw back; thou must save sinners, now that thou hast given Jesus to die for them.”

Then plead with Jesus the compassion of his heart. Tell him that he said he would not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. Pluck him by the sleeve, and say, “Thou hast said ‘Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.’” Tell him that it was written of him, “This man receiveth sinners and eateth

with them.” Tell him that thou hast heard that “this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;” and say to him, “Hast thou lost thy compassion, Saviour? Wilt thou not dart a glance of love on me, even me? Thou didst heal lepers, heal my leprosy. Thou didst permit the woman, whom thou didst call a dog, to come and receive blessings at thy hands; and although I be a dog, yet give the crumbs of thy mercy to me, even me.” This is the style of plea that will win the day.

And then I would advise thee, if thou failest still in prayer, to go to God thus, and say to him, “Lord, thou hast sworn with an oath—‘As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he would turn to me and live.’ I know that thou meanest this, my God; wilt thou take pleasure then in my death, and spurn me now that I turn to thee?” Tell him that he has saved other sinners like thyself. Remind him of thy wife, or child, or friend; tell him of Saul of Tarsus; tell him of the woman that was a sinner; tell him of Rahab; and say unto him, “Lord, dost thou not delight to save great, big, black sinners? and I am just such an one. Thou hast not changed. By all that thou hast done for others, I pray thee do the like for me.” And then say to him again, “I thank thee, O God, that thou hast permitted me even to pray to thee; I bless thy grace that thou hast moved me to come to thee; and as thou hast given me grace to feel my sin in a measure, wilt thou leave me to perish after all? Oh, by the grace I have received in being spared so long, in being permitted to hear thy gospel, I beseech thee to give me more grace.” Then throw yourself down before him, and if you perish, perish there. Go to the cross with such pleas as these, and resolve that if it can be that a sinner may die at the cross’ foot, you will die there, but nowhere else. As the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, there shall never a soul perish that can cast itself upon the sovereign grace of God through Jesus Christ his Son.

III. Now, to turn away from that to a third point. A FULL CONVICTION OF THIS TRUTH WILL RECONCILE OUR HEARTS TO ALL DIVINE ORDINANCES WITH REGARD TO SALVATION. I feel in my own heart, and I think every believer here does, that if salvation be of grace, God must do as he wills with his own. None of us can say to him, “What doest thou?” If there were anything of debt, or justice, or obligation, in the matter, then we might begin to question God; but as there is none, and the thing is quite out of court as to law, and far away from rights and claims, as it is all God’s free favour, we will henceforth stop our mouths and never question him. As to the persons whom he chooses to save, let him save whom he wills. His name shall be had in honour for ever, let his choice be what it may. As to the instrument by whom he saves, let

him save by the coarsest speaker, or by the most eloquent; let him do what seemeth him good. If he will save by the Bible, without ministers, we will be glad to hold our tongues; and if he will save souls by one of our brethren, and not by us, we will grieve to think that we are so little fitted for his service; but still, if after doing all we can, he uses another more than us, we will say, "Blessed be his name." We will not envy our brethren. The Lord shall distribute his grace by what hands he pleases. Send, Lord, by whomsoever thou wilt send.

And here I come to the sinner again: with the two great gospel commands we will raise no dispute. Hath he said, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved"? We will never raise a question against either the believing or the baptism. If the Lord chooses to say, "I will save those who trust in Christ," it is both so natural a thing that he should claim our faith, and so gracious a thing that he should give us the faith he claims of its, that we cannot question it. And even if it were not so, he has a right to make what rules he pleases. If God permits entrance only by one door, let us enter by it and raise no contention. The Lord bids thee trust in Jesus; say not in thy heart, "I would rather do or feel some wonderful matter." If he had bidden thee do some great thing wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather now that he saith to thee, simply trust in Jesus and be saved. I know if I were authorised to preach this morning that every man who would sail round the world should be saved, you would begin saving your money to make the great excursion; but when the gospel comes to you there in those very pews and aisles, and bids you now turn your eyes to the crucified Saviour and only look to him, I know if you have not learned the truth, that salvation is of grace, you will kick at that divine command; but if you know it is of grace, and only grace, you will say, "Sweet is the command of God; Lord, enable me now to trust myself with thy dear Son."

And, then, you will not quarrel with the ordinance of baptism either. I know it is very natural that you should say, "What is there in it?" I also would say, what is there in it? What can there be in a mere washing in water? If you thought there were any salvation by it meritoriously, you would have missed the track altogether; but the Lord hath put it, that "he that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved," and therefore you obey. I do not attempt to justify my Lord for so commanding, for he needs no defence from me, but if he so chooses to put it, the true heart will yield a prompt obedience to his will. If it were of merit, I could see no merit in baptism or in the believing, for surely it cannot be meritorious to believe what is true, or to have one's body washed with pure water. But salvation is of grace; and if the Lord chooses to put it so, let him put it as he wills. I am such a sinner, I will take his mercy, let him present it in what way he pleases.

As to the manner in which the Lord may be pleased to reveal himself to any one of us, I am sure that if we know that salvation is of grace, we shall never quarrel about that any more. To some of us, the Lord revealed himself on a sudden. We know when we were converted to a day. I know the place to a yard. But many others do not. The day breaks on them gradually; first twilight, then a brighter light, and afterwards comes the noon. Do not let us quarrel about that. So long as I get a Saviour, I do not mind how I get him; so long as he blots out my sins, I will not object about the way in which he manifests his love to me. If it be of grace, that silences everything; Jew and Gentile shut their mouths without a murmuring word, and all together sit down at the foot of the cross, no more to question, but reverently to adore.

IV. I pass over this point rapidly, for time flies. I fain would clip his wings. But I must needs introduce to you the next fact,—that the doctrine that salvation is of grace furnishes to those who receive it **A MOST POWERFUL MOTIVE FOR FUTURE HOLINESS.**

A man who feels that he is saved by grace says, “Did God of his free favour blot out my sins? Then, oh, how I love him. Was it nothing but his love that saved an undeserving wretch? Then my soul is knit to him for ever.” Great sin becomes in such a case no barrier to great holiness, but rather a motive for it; for he who has had much forgiven loves much, and loving much he begins at once to be in earnest in the service of him whom he loves. I put it to thee, sinner, if the Lord this morning were to appear to thee and say, “All thy sins have been blotted out,” wouldst thou not love him? Ay, methinks a dog would love such a Master as that. Wouldst thou not love him? Ay, I know thou wouldst. I know you proud, self-righteous people, would not; but you real sinners, if pardon were to come to you, would you not love God with all your hearts? Assuredly you would, and then your soul would begin to burn with a desire to honour him. You would want to tell the next person you met—“The Lord has had mercy upon me; wonder of wonders, he has had mercy upon me.” And then you would desire to put away everything that would displease him. Away ye sins, away ye sins; how can I defile myself with you again? And then you would desire to practise all his will, and say, “For the love I bear his name no duty shall be too difficult, no command too severe.” There are none shall love God like those who are saved by grace. The man who thinks to save himself by works does not love God at all; he loves himself; he is a servant working for wages, and that is the kind of servant who would turn to another master tomorrow if he could get better paid, and if the wages do not suit him he will strike. The old-fashioned servants were the best servants in the world, for they loved their masters, and if paid no wages at all

would have stuck to the family for love's sake. Such are the servants of God who are saved by his grace. "Why," say they, "he has already pardoned me and saved me, and therefore my ear is bored and fastened to the door of his house to be his servant for ever; and my glory is, 'I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid, thou hast loosed my bonds.'" Such a man feels that he must perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. He will not stop short with a measure of grace; he needs immeasurable grace. He will not say, "There are some sins in me which I cannot overcome;" but by God's grace he will seek to drive out all the Amalekites. He will not say, "Up to this point I am commanded to go, but beyond that I have a licence to say, "That is my besetting sin; I cannot get rid of it." No, but loving God with all his heart he will hate sin with all his heart, and war with sin with all his might, and will never put sword in scabbard till he is perfected in the image of Christ. The Lord fires us with such ardent love as this, and I know no way by which to get it except by coming to him on terms of grace, confessing sin, receiving mercy, feeling love kindle in the heart in consequence, and thus the whole soul becomes consecrated to the Lord.

V. Lastly, I would I could handle my text as I desire and as it handles me; but the truth of my text will be **A TEST FOR THIS CONGREGATION.**

The way you treat this text shall well reveal what you are. It will be either a stone of stumbling to you this morning, or else a foundation stone on which you build. Is it a stone of stumbling? Did I hear you murmur, "Why, the man does not hold up morality and good works; he preaches salvation for the guilty and the vile: I do not want such a religion"? Alas I thou hast stumbled at this stumbling stone, and shalt be broken upon it. Thou shalt perish, for thou dost insult thy God by thinking thyself wiser than his word, and by fancying that thy righteousness is purer than the righteousness of Christ. Thou dost imagine thou canst force thy way to heaven by a road that is most effectually blocked up; thou dost despise the path which the Lord has opened. Beware of self-righteousness. The black devil of licentiousness destroys his hundreds, but the white devil of self-righteousness destroys his thousands. But dost thou accept this text as a foundation stone? Dost thou say, "I need grace indeed for I am guilty;" then come and take all the blessings of the covenant, for they are thine. "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and he hath exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he hath sent empty away." Art thou guilty? Come and trust thy Saviour. Art thou empty? Come and be filled out of the fulness which is treasured up in Christ Jesus. Believe in Jesus now, for one act of faith sets thee free from all sin. Do not tarry for a moment, nor raise questions with thy God. Believe him capable of infinite mercy, and through Jesus Christ rest thou in him.

If thou be the worst soul in the world to thine own apprehension, and the one odd man that would be left out of every catalogue of grace, now write not such things against thyself; or even if thou do, come and cast thyself upon thy God. He cannot reject thee; or if he should, thou wouldst be the first that ever trusted in him and was confounded. Come and try. Oh! that his Spirit may bring thee to Jesus at this very moment, and that in heaven there may be joy in the presence of the angels of God because a soul has confided in the grace of God and found immediate pardon, instantaneous salvation, through the precious blood of Christ. The Lord bless every one of you.

Oh, how I would like that every soul here should be washed in the blood of Christ this morning. Would God that every one of you wert robed in the righteousness of Christ this day, and prepared to enter into his rest. Pray for it, Christian brethren and sisters. Why should we not have it? Why, this congregation, great as it may seem comparatively, is very little to God. Why should there be one left out? Let your prayers encircle the whole house and bear the entire audience up to God, and lay it before him and say, "By thy mercy and by thy lovingkindness, save all this gathered company, for Christ's sake." Amen.

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