

YOUR PERSONAL SALVATION.

NO. 1524

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.”-

1 Peter 1:9-12.

“Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation, according to thy word.”-Psalm 119:41.

THESE two texts will be to me as a bow and a sword: the first for shooting the arrows of truth, 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-day I discoursed upon the God of salvation: this morning our principal object 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 belongeth the issues from death, is the God of our salvation still. 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: 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; and still more shall I 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 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 unto the Lord. God grant it may be so!

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 tenth verse says, “Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto 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 boon for the disobedient and undeserving. It treats 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 giveth liberally and upbraideth 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 mistake. 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 would the proposal 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 so. The Lord proposes to save you because you are miserable and he is merciful; because you are necessitous and he is bountiful. Why, methinks 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 gratis, 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 boons which the God of all grace grants to sinful men are beyond all price, he does not barter and chaffer 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 convinced 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, even the salvation of your souls.” Salvation is not obtained by penances, painful and humiliating: nor by despondency and despair; nor by any effort, mental or spiritual, involving a purchase by labor and pain; but entirely and alone by faith, or trust, in the Lord Jesus. Do you ask—is it so, that salvation is by believing, simply believing? Such is the statement of the

word of God. We proclaim it upon the warrant of infallible Scripture. “All that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.” “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” “He that believeth in him is not condemned.” “He that believeth on him hath everlasting life.” These are a mere handful of proof texts gleaned from wide fields of the like kind. “Repent ye and believe the gospel,” is our one plain and simple message. We cry again and again, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” “Believe only,” and “Jesus only,” are our two watchwords. Now, it is singularly foolish that men should cavil at this which ought to please them. The very simplicity of faith they cavil at. What, shall it be so, that the gospel shall be regarded as too easy a thing? Will men quarrel with mercy for being too generous to them? If there be 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 hath not the Holy Spirit declared that you are under the curse? Ought ye not, ye sons of men, to 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 arouse all who hear it to an eager acceptance of thy 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 which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto 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 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! If men that had the Holy Ghost, and were called "seers," nevertheless searched into the meaning of the word 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 spake of Christ and his salvation. From Abel, whose blood cried from the ground, down to him who spake of the Sun of righteousness as near his rising, 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 which is come unto 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 unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things of God. They lighted lamps which shine for future ages; they told of a Christ who was actually to come in the latter 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 completed. Jesus has risen from the dead and gone into the glory, pleading for believers. Surely that which prophets thought it worth their while to study by night and by day, though they knew that they should 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 spake with 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 unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost 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 seen Christ Jesus for themselves personally, 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 intercourse, and they were resolute in bearing witness that they had seen him after he had risen from the dead. These men spake 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 with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. I see them going everywhere preaching the word, dressed in no robes but those of poverty, having no distinctions but those of shame and suffering, 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 evangelize the open country, they instruct 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 stead 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 the angels desire to look into." We know very little of these heavenly beings: we 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 they have never transgressed: 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 thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," could have permitted man to live on and to have a hope of eternal life. How could he who saith 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; but while they learn this they long to discover more of the truth wrapped up in the one great sacrifice: they peer and pry, and search and consider, and hence the doctrines of the gospel are spoken of as "things which the angels desire to look into." Now, think you if these glorious spirits who needed not to be redeemed, yet 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 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 a while to see the Lord whose flowing veins afford such purging? Methinks, if I saw an angel intently gazing upon any object, if I were a passer by, 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 look also? 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 cross-foot ravished, astounded: yea, 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 unto them, 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 catch at 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 for ever? 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, thou that sleepest. Arise, O sluggish soul! A

thousand voices call thee to bestir thyself, and receive the grace which has come unto thee.

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 saith the text? The prophets spake "beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." Ah, there is the point. To save men Jesus suffered. The manhood and the Godhead of Christ endured anguish inconceivable. 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 down-trodden. 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 full, even though like him 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, "Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favor in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? have I begot ten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest 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 hast thou forsaken me?" That cry never came up from the stakes of Smithfield, or from the agonies of the Spanish auto-da-fe, 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 that he might suffer to the death for men, it is hard 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 ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto 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 Ghost is the witness to all this. It was the Holy Ghost that spake in the prophets; it was the Holy Ghost 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 have miracles in the Christian church still? Scoffers come to us and say, "Work a miracle, and we will believe you." We do work these 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 Sabbaths, 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 marvellous in their line as the healing of a leper or the raising of the dead. This is the witness of the Holy Ghost 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 Ghost 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 then to speak with power, the Holy Ghost 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 for ever. By the Spirit of the living God I entreat you, dear hearers, no longer to neglect 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 have I commended my Lord's salvation, and now I would desire you, with all this in your own minds, to turn to the prayer in the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm: "Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation according to thy word." Use the prayer with this intent:-Lord, I have been hearing what prophets and apostles and angels think of thy salvation, what thy Son and what thy 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 thy mercies come also unto me." There is no mention of merit or desert. His entreaty is for mercy only. 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 own that you are guilty and submit to justice. Observe the plural, "Let thy mercies come to me," as if David felt that he needed a double share of it, ay, a sevenfold measure of it. Elsewhere he cried, "According unto the multitude of thy 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 want mercy upon mercy; I want forgiving mercy, I want regenerating mercy, I want mercy for the present as well as for the past, and I shall want 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 thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord."

It is a gracious prayer, because it asks for the right thing: "even thy salvation," not a salvation of my own invention, but "thy 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 wrought 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 that the Lord will give you. You want 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 thy mercies come also unto me, even thy salvation."

You see, dear brethren, that the prayer is put in the right form, for it is added, "Even thy salvation according to thy 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 Bible way. People nowadays will do anything but keep to the word of God, they will follow any book but the Bible. Now, do pray the Lord to give you the salvation of the Bible in the Bible's own way. Lord, if thy word says I must repent, give me thy salvation, and cause me to repent; if thy word says that I must confess my sin, give me thy salvation in the confession of sin; if thou sayest I must trust to Christ, Lord, help me now to trust him; only grant me thy salvation according to thy word.

Observe that the whole prayer is conceived and uttered in a humble spirit. It is "Let thy salvation come also unto me." He owns his helplessness. He cannot get at the mercy, he wants 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 one should pour in the oil and wine, for he cannot help himself by reason of his spiritual lethargy and death.

"Let thy 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 thy mercies come, Didst thou not say, Let there be light, and there was light? So let thy mercy come to me, a poor dying sinner, and I shall have it, Lord; but it must come to me by thy 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 thy mercies come also unto me, O God, even thy salvation according to thy 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 thy 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; tell out your case in all its terrible truthfulness. Say, “O Lord, I feel that nobody in all this world needs thy mercy more than I do: let my need plead with thee; give me thy salvation. I am no impostor, I am a sinner: let thy mercy and thy 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, thou knowest, and thou hast made me to know somewhat of what will become of me if thy 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 thy mercy come to me. Oh, send that mercy, now.” This is good and prevalent pleading: hold on to it.

Then plead, “If thy 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 thou dost ever blot out my sin I will tell the world of it; I will tell the angels of it: through eternity I will sing thy praises, and claim to be of all the saved ones the most remarkable instance of what thy 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 mine iniquity, for it is great. Lord, save me, for I am a nobody, and it will be a wonder indeed if thy 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 thou art such a river that if I drink from thee there will be no fear of my exhausting thy 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 thine attributes or glories shall be one jot the less illustrious; thou wilt be as great and blessed a God as ever.” You may even say, “Lord, now that thy Son Jesus has died, it will not dishonor thee to save me. Before the atoning sacrifice it might have stained thy justice to pass by sin; but now the sacrifice is offered thou canst be just and yet the justifier. Lord, none shall say thou art unjust if thou savest even me, now that Jesus Christ has bled. Since thou thyself hast made my salvation possible without infringement of thy law, I beseech thee 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 thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord.” It means: “It has come to so many before, therefore let it come also unto me. Lord, if I were the only one, and thou hadst never saved a sinner before, yet would I venture upon thy word and promise. Especially I would come and trust the blood of Jesus: but, Lord, I am not the first by many millions. I beseech thee, then, of thy great love, let thy 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 trodden 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: "Thou hast 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 yet. Jesus has not come to the end of his saving work yet. There is room for you, and there will be room for thousands upon thousands yet, until the Master of the house hath risen up and shut to 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 him that cometh 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 after all will 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 marvellous light, and bring them now, and unto his name shall be praise for ever and ever. Amen and amen.