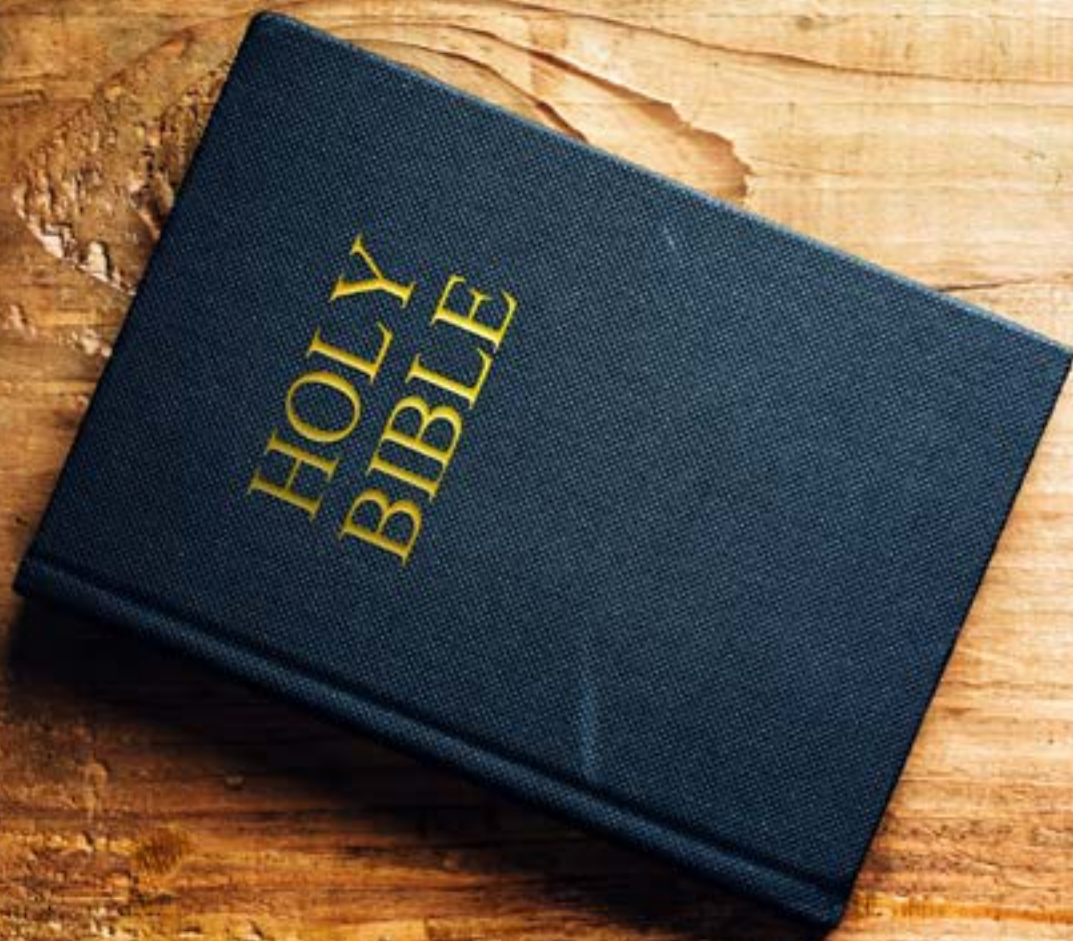


**THE GOSPEL
IN A
SINGLE
VERSE**



CHARLES H. SPURGEON (1834-1892)

THE GOSPEL IN A SINGLE VERSE

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From *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Sermon 2300.

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THE GOSPEL IN A SINGLE VERSE

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

—1 Timothy 1:15

ISPOKE yesterday with a brother minister who had been a pastor in America, and I asked him why he was so anxious to go back again where the climate had so greatly tried him. He answered, “I love the people to whom I preach.” “What sort of people are they?” I enquired. “Well,” he replied, “they are a people who come together anxious to get good. They do not try to find fault with me; but they seek to get all the good they can out of the gospel I preach.” “Well,” I said, “it is worthwhile crossing the ocean to go to a congregation of that sort of people.”

You know, dear friends, how it is with some people, as it was with one friend to whom I spoke last Tuesday. God had blessed the Word to his soul and he was converted. But he had been hearing me some time before, and I said to him, “How was it, do you think, that during those other years that you came here, you did not find the Savior?” “Oh, sir!” he answered, “I am afraid it was because I came to hear you, and when I had been here, and heard you, I was quite satisfied. But when God taught me to come here to look for Christ, and to seek eternal life, then I obtained the blessing.”

Now, will you who are here tonight, specially you who are not saved, try to hear me in that fashion: not noticing how I preach—because I do not care much about that myself, and you need to care about it far less—but only to think what good can be got out of it? Let each hearer ask himself, “Is there anything of saving benefit to my soul in what the preacher will say tonight?”

Now, this text contains the gospel in brief, and yet I may say that it contains the gospel in full. If you get condensed notes of a sermon or a speech, you often miss the very soul and marrow of it. But here you get all the condensation possible, as if the great truths of the gospel were pressed together by a hydraulic ram, and yet there is not a particle of it left out. It is one of the “little Bibles,” as Luther¹ used to call them: *the gospel in a verse*. The essence of the whole Bible is here:

¹ **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) – German monk, theologian, and university professor, whose ideas inspired the Protestant Reformation and changed the course of Western civilization.

*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all
acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the
world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*

I. Our Name: “Sinners”

I am going to be short upon each point, and therefore I shall at once speak upon this first head. Here is our name, or a broad word of description: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*.” One of the most important questions that can be asked by any man is this: For whom is salvation meant? The answer we have is given by the Holy Ghost in the inspired Word of God: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

A. Of all sorts

Jesus Christ came to save sinners of all sorts. So long as you can come under the general description “sinners,” it matters not what shape your sin has taken. All men have alike sinned, and yet all have not sinned in the same way. They have all wandered the downward road, and yet each one has gone a different way from all the rest. Christ Jesus came into the world to save respectable sinners and disreputable sinners. He came into the world to save proud sinners and despairing sinners. He came into the world to save drunkards, thieves, liars, whoremongers, adulterers, murderers, and such like. Whatever sort of sin there is, this word is wonderfully comprehensive and sweeping: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*.”

A black lot, a horrible crew, they are, and hell is their due reward; but these are the people Jesus came to save. If there be any people in the world who are not sinners, Jesus did not come to save them, because such people did not want² any Savior. If there be any of you who venture to say that you have never sinned, well then, you need not listen to me, for I have nothing to say to you, nor has this Book of God—except to tell you that you are under a grievous error and a great delusion.

There can be no mercy to a man who has committed no fault. Some time ago, there was a man transported for life for an offense he never committed. When it was found out that he was not guilty, Her Majesty insulted him, I think, by giving him “a free pardon.” Why, he had never committed the crime for which he had suffered, poor soul, and he had been a year at least in confinement as a felon, though he was innocent! I think Her Majesty should have begged his pardon and given him large compensation. Pardon and mercy are not for innocent people, they are for the guilty. The Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, came into the world, not to save the innocent, the righteous, and the good, but to save sinners!

² **want** – need.

B. Without qualification

Notice, next, that Jesus came to save sinners without any other qualification. There is a habit that some have of qualifying the word *sinner*, as we have it in the hymn, “Come, *humble* sinner, in whose breast a thousand thoughts revolve.”³

But when Jesus Christ invites sinners, He does it after this fashion, “Come, sinners.” “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” There is no adjective before the noun. There is no sort of qualification except that they are sinners. Christ Jesus came to save hardened sinners, for He softens the heart. He came to save aggravated sinners, for He breaks the iron sinew of the neck and subdues the stubborn will. He came to save sinners who have no good thing in them.

“If you have any merit,” said one to another, “if you have any good thing about you, it is like a drop of rose water in a sea of filth.” But, truly, there is not even that one drop of rose water in our nature; nor need there be in order that Christ may save us. He came to save sinners; that is all Paul says. I dare not limit what is left unlimited; I dare not qualify what is left unqualified. “Sinners”—that is all the apostle says. What? Even if they have no trace of goodness, no mark of anything excellent? Yes. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

C. In their pollution

This means, also, that Christ Jesus came to save sinners in their pollution. Remember that sin is a very offensive thing. When conscience is really awakened to discover the pollution of sin, it is seen to be exceeding sinful, a thing that is truly horrible. We are taught in the Scriptures even to hate the garments spotted by the flesh, and there is such a thing as a righteous indignation against sin. But the Lord Jesus Christ has come into the world to save the polluted, to save those against whom virtue gives her vote, to save those whom society expels.

What a wonderful thing “society” is, itself rotten to the core very often. Yet, if there happens to be a poor woman who has gone astray, “society” cries, “Put her out! Drive the wretched creature away from us.” I have known one such turned out of hotel after hotel. They could not bear their righteous selves to come anywhere near to one who had in the least degree broken the laws of society. Yet it was not so with Christ. Notwithstanding all His sense of the horror of sin—and it is much greater than our sense of it, for His mind is sensitive because of its supreme purity—yet, notwithstanding that, He came into the world to save sinners.

And with sinners He mixed, even with publicans⁴ and harlots. With sinners He sat at meat; with sinners He lived; with sinners He died. He made His grave with the wicked;

³ “The Successful Resolve” by Edmund Jones (1722-1765), English hymn writer and minister of the Baptist congregation at Exeter.

⁴ **publicans** – Jews in Israel who served as tax collectors for the Roman authorities at the time of Jesus, and thus were hated by other Jews.

He entered paradise with a thief; and today those who sing the new song in heaven confess that they were sinners, for they say, “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev 5:9). Yes, notwithstanding the pollution of sin, Christ came to save sinners.

D. Under the curse

He came also to save sinners under the curse. Sin is a cursed thing. God has never blessed sin, and He never will do so. Though sin may seem to flourish for a time, the blight of the Almighty is upon it. The breath of the great Judge of all will wither up everything that grows of evil. He cannot bear it; His fire shall burn, even to the lowest hell, against all iniquity. And yet, though you are under the curse, Jesus Christ came into the world to save the accursed sinner by taking the curse upon Himself, and by Himself hanging on the tree of the curse, and bearing the curse for us, that we might be saved.

Do you feel the curse of God in your spirit tonight? Does it seem to dry up all the springs of your life? Then remember, notwithstanding that, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

E. Without strength

Once more, Christ came to save sinners without strength. Sin brings death. Wherever sin reigns, the power to do good dies out. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil” (Jer 13:23). But when you are without strength—ah, even without strength to believe on Him, without strength to feel your sin, without strength to feel even a desire to be better—even then it is true that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

I know He did [so], for the first good desires are His gift, the first prayers are His own breath, the first sigh under the burden of sin is His own work. Jesus does it all. He came into the world to save us. “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom 5:6), those in whom there could not be any trace of goodness—“the ungodly,” those who were without God and without hope in the world (Eph 2:12). It is for such that Jesus Christ came into the world.

I do not know how to set this gate open wider. I will take it right off its hinges; and I will pull up post and bar and all, and defy the very devils of hell to come and shut this city of refuge against any soul here that is a sinner. If you have sinned, behold, the voice of everlasting love speaks aloud to you tonight with these words: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

II. Our Need: Salvation

I must not dwell long on any one word in our text, so I pass to another. In the second place, here is our need, or a wide word of salvation. We poor sinners need saving, and “Christ Jesus came into the world *to save* sinners.”

A. What His salvation is not

1. *To save, not to condemn*

Jesus came to save. He did not come to condemn us. When God came down upon earth, it might have been thought that He must have come to condemn; for when He came down to look at the tower of Babel, and saw the sin of the world, He scattered the sinners upon the face of all the earth. Now, it might be thought that, if He came on earth, He would be shocked and horrified by a personal investigation of sin, and then would say, “I will destroy the world.” But Jesus said, “The Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them” (Luk 9:56).

“God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (Joh 3:17). If you got condemnation out of the gospel, you put the condemnation into it yourselves. It is not the gospel, but your rejection of it, that will condemn you.

Therefore, I pray God that you may never put from you the Word of God and “judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life,” as they did to whom Paul and Barnabas preached at Antioch (Act 13:46).

2. *His work, not ours*

But, next, Christ did not come into the world to help us to save ourselves. He came to save us; not to set us on our legs and say, “Now, you do so much, and I will do the rest.” No, He came to save us. From top to bottom salvation is all of grace,⁵ and all the gift of God by Jesus Christ (Rom 6:23). He did not come into the world, I say, to make us salvable, but to save us. Nor did He come to put us in the way of somehow or other meriting salvation; but He came Himself to be the Savior and to save sinners.

Cannot you see that you, who have been trying to spin a robe of righteousness, have gotten all that you do in the day unraveled before night? You who have been knitting part of a garment to cover your nakedness, put your knitting-pins down, and take what Christ has finished. Come, you who have been working hard, like prisoners on a treadmill, trying to get to heaven that way—you never will do it. See another ladder, like that which Jacob saw of old (Gen 28:12), that reaches from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven; and may God enable you to climb to Him that way, but not by a way of your own! Jesus did not come to help us to save ourselves.

⁵ See *All of Grace* by Spurgeon, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

3. *Not in part*

And, Christ did not come to save us in part, that we might do the rest. It takes a long time to make some men know this. I know numbers of Christian people who still have one foot on the rock and the other foot on the sand (Mat 7:24-27). There is a certain, or rather, uncertain doctrine that always makes people feel unsafe. It is that you must not say that you are saved, but that, if you hold on your way and keep on the right road, then, perhaps, when you come to die, you may begin to hope that you are saved. I would not give two pence⁶ for such a gospel as that. We want salvation given to us outright, and given to us forever. And this is what Christ does give us when we come and trust in Him. “He that believeth on him is not condemned” (Joh 3:18). He is saved, there and then, by the act of God. “He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phi 1:6). He did not come to save us in part.

4. *Not content unsaved*

And the Lord Jesus Christ has not come to make us content to be unsaved. I have sometimes heard people talk to the unconverted like this, “Now you must wait. You must wait. You cannot do anything. Therefore, sit still and wait until something happens to you.” That is not the gospel. The gospel is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Act 16:31). Read the Bible through and learn what God has there revealed. Lay aside your own system and notion.

You will not find that the Lord Jesus Christ said to the man at Bethesda, “Now, lie at the pool till the angel comes and stirs it.” That is old Judaism that does that. But Jesus said, “Rise, take up thy bed, and walk” (Joh 5:8). When Jesus speaks to sinners like that, they do rise and take up their beds and walk. Somebody says, “But you, poor minister that you are, cannot tell men to take up their beds and walk, and make them do it.” Yes, we can—when our Master speaks through us and when we deliver the Lord’s message in faith, resting on the power of the Holy Ghost. We still can be used by the Lord to work miracles. The dry bones are made to hear the voice of the Lord’s servant when the Holy Ghost goes with the voice (Eze 37), and they are quickened by divine power.

*The gospel bids the dead revive,
Sinners obey the voice and live;
Dry bones are raised, and clothed afresh,
And hearts of stone are turned to flesh.⁷*

Again, I say, Jesus did not come to make sinners contented to be lost, or to sit down and wait as if salvation did not concern them. Nay, but He came to save sinners.

⁶ **pence** – hundredth of a pound, the British monetary unit; thus, a very small amount.

⁷ “The Gospel Bids the Dead Revive” by Isaac Watts (1674-1748), English hymn writer and theologian; recognized as the “Father of English Hymnody.”

B. What His salvation means

Well, what does it mean that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners? It means that He came to save them from the *punishment* of their sin. Their sin shall not be laid to their charge so that they shall be condemned for it. That is one thing.

He came, also, to save them from the *pollution* of their sin, so that, though their mind has been debased, and their taste degraded, and their conscience deadened by sin, He came to take that evil away—[and] give them a tender heart, a hatred of sin, a love for holiness, and a desire for purity.

But Jesus came to do more than that. He came to take away our *tendencies* to sin, tendencies that are born in us and grow with us. He came by His Spirit to eradicate them, to pluck them up by the roots, to put within us another principle that shall fight with the old principle of sin and overcome it—till Christ alone shall reign and every thought shall be brought into captivity to Him (2Co 10:5). He came to save His people from apostasy. He came into the world to save sinners by keeping them faithful to the end, so that they shall not go back unto perdition.

*Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven.*⁸

A very important part of the work of grace is this. To start a man right is but little; but to keep that man holding on even to the end, this is a triumph of almighty grace. And this is what Christ has come to do. Jesus came into the world, not to half save you, not to save you in this direction or that, and in this light or that, but to save you from your sin—to save you from an angry temper, to save you from pride, to save you from strong drink, to save you from covetousness, to save you from every evil thing, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

This is a grand word: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Oh, that you might believe it! I pray God that out of this congregation there may be very many who will say, “Yes, I believe that Jesus came to save sinners, and I trust Him to save me.” You will be saved the moment that you do that, for faith is the mark of His salvation, the proof that He has saved you.⁹

⁸ “A Debtor to Mercy Alone” by Augustus Montague Toplady (1740-1778), Calvinist Anglican minister and hymn writer. He is best remembered as the author of the hymn “Rock of Ages.” Born in Farnham, Surrey, England.

⁹ See *Faith* and “The Ground of the Sinner’s Faith” by Spurgeon, “How Faith Prepares the Soul for Christ” by Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680), and “The Eye of Faith” by A. W. Pink (1886-1952); all available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

III. His Name: “Christ Jesus”

But now, thirdly, there is a name here. We have had our own name, sinners; now here is His name, or a glorious word of honor: “*Christ Jesus* came into the world to save sinners,” Christ Jesus—not an angel, not the best of men, but Christ Jesus.

A. “Christ”

“Christ” means, as you know, anointed; that is, God sent Him, anointed by His own Spirit—prepared, fitted, qualified, and endowed for the work of saving. Jesus comes not without an anointing from God. He is not an amateur savior, come on his own account, without any commission or authority; but God has anointed Him in order that He may save sinners.

When He went into the synagogue at Nazareth on the Sabbath day, He applied to Himself the words of the prophet Esaias: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luk 4:18-19; *see* Isa 6:1-2).

B. “Jesus”

The other part of His name is “Jesus,” that is, Savior. He has come, therefore, to be the anointed Savior, commissioned to be a Savior. And if He is not a Savior (I say it with all reverence), He is nothing! He came into the world to save; and if He does not save, He has missed His mark. He laid His heavenly glories down to take this still higher glory: that He might be the Savior of sinners.

The angels sang concerning Him, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luk 2:14). And the angel of the Lord said to Joseph, “Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Mat 1:21). Beloved, do notice this: the Savior of sinners is not the Virgin Mary—saints and saintesses are not saviors—but “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Joh 3:16). Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, “very God of very God,”¹⁰ the Creator of all things, sustaining all things by the word of His power (Heb 1:2-3). He came into the world, to Bethlehem’s manger and afterwards to Calvary’s cross, with this as His one business: that He might save sinners.

¹⁰ **very God of very God** – statement from the Nicene Creed (AD 325), early creed or profession of faith of the Christian church. It is called “Nicene” because it was adopted in the city of Nicaea.

Is He not able to save? Is He not just the Savior that we need? God and yet man in one Person,¹¹ He is able to sympathize because He is man, and He is able to save because He is God! Blessed God-man, Jesus Christ, Thou art able to save me!

I cannot dwell longer on that part of my theme. But I wish that you who are seeking salvation would let your thoughts dwell upon it until you truly trusted Him as your Savior.

IV. His Deed: “Came into the world”

The fourth thing in the text is His deed, or a sure word of fact. “Christ Jesus came into the world.” We have not to look to what He *will do* to save sinners, for He has done it.

A. How He came

He *came* into the world. He existed long before He came out of heaven into this world. He was in the beginning with God, and He came here (Joh 1:1-4). You and I began our existence here; but He existed from the beginning. In the glory of the Father, and in the fullness of time, He came into the world.¹²

He came *willingly*. It is put so in our text: “Christ Jesus came into the world.” There is a kind of voluntariness evident in the words. He was sent, for He is the Christ, the Messiah; but He came of His own free will.

*Down from the shining seats above,
With joyful haste he fled.*¹³

He “*came* into the world.” I say again, the salvation of sinners is not a thing to be accomplished in the future. If God had promised it, we might trust as Abraham did when he saw Christ’s day afar off and was glad (Joh 8:56). But Jesus has come; He has been here. God Almighty has been here in human form, dwelling among men. He came into the world to save sinners.

He came into the world *so far* that He knew the world’s griefs and bore them, the world’s penalty, the world’s shame and reproach, the world’s sickness, and the world’s death. He came into the world, into the very center and heart of this ungodly world, and there He dwelt, “holy, harmless, undefiled” (Heb 7:26).

“Christ Jesus came *into the world*.” When He came here, it was such a wonderful coming that He stayed here. Some three and thirty years He was here; and all that while He was still seeking to save sinners. During the last three years, He went about doing good, always hunting up sinners. And at the end of His service for sinners, He stretched out His hands and feet, and yielded up Himself to die for sinners. He breathed

¹¹ See Free Grace Broadcaster 219, *The Person of Christ*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹² See FGB 234, *Incarnation*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹³ “Plunged in a Gulf of Dark Despair” by Isaac Watts.

out His very soul for sinners. “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1Pe 2:24).

B. Why He came

I do not feel that I have any need to find any words of mine to try to garnish¹⁴ this gospel of the glory of the blessed God. It is the greatest theme on which a man ever spoke; it wants¹⁵ no oratory¹⁶ to set it forth. The story itself is marvelous: “the old, old story, of Jesus and His love.”¹⁷ God could not in justice pass over human sin without an atonement;¹⁸ but He made the atonement Himself. Jesus, Who is one with the Father, came here, and offered Himself as a sacrifice that He might save sinners.

Now, if He does not save sinners, His coming here is a failure. Do you believe—can you imagine—that Christ’s coming into the world could be a failure? In my very soul I believe that all He meant to accomplish by His coming here He will accomplish, [so] that no man shall ever be able to point to any failure in this grandest of divine enterprises. There is no failure in Creation; there will be no failure in Providence.¹⁹ And when the whole story is ended, there will be no failure in this great work of Redemption.

“Christ Jesus came into the world *to save sinners*,” and sinners shall be saved. Will you be among them, my dear hearer? Why should you not be among them?

V. Our Acceptance: “I am chief”

Once more, in the fifth place, we have here our acceptance, or a word of personality. The apostle says, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, *of whom I am chief*.” I am not going to dispute with the apostle; and yet if he were here, I should be a little dubious as to his right to the title of “chief of sinners,” and I would ask him whether, if he were chief, I was not the next. I suppose that there are many here who would say that Paul sinned no more grievously than we did before our conversions.

A. Chiefest?

I remember in preaching once, I said that, if I ever got to heaven, those lines would be true of me,

¹⁴ **garnish** – adorn; decorate.

¹⁵ **wants** – needs.

¹⁶ **oratory** – eloquent speaking.

¹⁷ This lyric appears in two hymns: “Tell me the Old, Old Story” and “I Love to Tell the Story,” both taken from a poem by A. Katherine Hankey (1834-1911), “The Old, Old Story” (1866).

¹⁸ **atonement** – the act of bringing reconciliation by paying a debt owed. See Free Grace Broadcaster 227, *The Atonement*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹⁹ See *Evolution or Creation?*, and *God’s Providence* by Spurgeon; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

*Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,
While heaven's resounding mansions ring,
With shouts of sovereign grace.*²⁰

When I had done preaching, a lady met me in the aisle, and she said, "You made one mistake in your sermon."

"Oh, dear heart!" I replied, "I daresay I made twenty."

She said, "But the one you made was this. You said that you would sing the loudest when you got to heaven; but you will not. When I get there, I shall owe more to the grace of God than you will; you have not been such a sinner as I have been."

Well, I found all the other saints around us were of a mind to contest about which should praise God most because of the great things He had done for them in saving their souls. Ralph Erskine²¹ wrote a hymn about the contention amongst the birds of paradise as to which should praise God best, and he describes the different kinds of people in heaven all vying with each other in magnifying the name of the Lord Who had redeemed them. But that is not my theme just now.

B. Complete confession

When we come and appropriate this sinner's Savior, we do it, first, by a confession. "Lord, I am a sinner. I know it. I mourn over it. I confess to Thee that I have broken Thy righteous law." Then there follows, on that confession, a sense of humiliation. Did Jesus come into the world to save me? Then I am a greater sinner than I thought I was; first, that I should need the Son of God to save me; and, next, that I should sin against love so amazing, so surprising, as to rebel against One Who would come into the world to save me. The more we appreciate Christ's saving sinners, the more we depreciate ourselves. He who has a great Savior will feel himself to be a great sinner; and he who has the best and clearest view of Christ is the man who will say, "Of whom"—namely, of the saved sinners—"I am chief."

Now, this appropriation of Christ, which began with confession and went on to deep self-humiliation, flowers into faith, because, notice, the apostle says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to *save sinners*, of whom I am chief." Though he says that he is chief of them, yet he means also, "I am one of those He came to save: '*of whom* I am chief.' Oh, yes, I am one of those He came to save!" Faith enables the soul to say that.

My dear friends, I do trust that, by the grace of God, many of you will say that tonight. "Lord Jesus, I trust in Thee. Of the multitude that Thou didst come to save, who are described as sinners, I am one."

²⁰ "When Thou My Righteous Judge Shall Come," attributed to the Countess of Huntington (1707-1791), Nottinghamshire, England. She befriended George Whitefield during the Great Awakening.

²¹ **Ralph Erskine** (1685-1752) – one of the most popular preachers in the Church of Scotland in his day. Born in Monilaws, Scotland.

This appropriation of Christ by faith will go on to open confession of Him. The apostle does confess that, while he was the chief of sinners, yet Christ died for him; and you will be led to make that confession. I hope that you will do it as our friends are going to do it to-night, by obedience to Christ's law in baptism, as He bids you. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mar 16:16).²²

C. Present state

One thing I notice about my text which greatly delights me. Paul says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom *I am chief*."

"No, no, Paul; that expression will not do. Why, my dear man, you are a scholar; and yet you have made a mistake in the tense of the verb! It is not *sum*, 'I am,' but *sui*, 'I was.'"

"No, no," says Paul; "never bring your Latin in here. My Greek expression is, '*I am chief*.'"

"What? After being saved, after being forgiven, still are you chief of sinners?"

"Yes," he says, "it is so."

And it is possible for a man to be not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles, and yet to feel that, in putting his whole life together, he has to take his place among the sinners, ay, at the head of them, as the chief of sinners.

I think I told you that I once tried the plan, which some of our brethren try, of praying to God as a saint. Why, I have seen some of our brethren when they have had a Sunday out with their best go-to-meeting clothes on, talk about their being perfect—and they looked exactly like the peacock I saw with his tail spread out, strutting along so grandly! Well, I rather liked the look of that fine show; there was something very beautiful in it, so I tried it myself once. I went to God in prayer boasting about my virtues, my attainments, my growth in grace, and my service for Him. I trust that I have as good a right to do that as anybody else has. I have served God with all my might, and I have laid everything at His feet.

But when I tried to pray that way, I knocked at the gate and nobody came. I knocked again, but nobody came. There is a little wicket, you know, that they open, just to look out to see who is there. So they asked, "Who is that knocking?" I answered, "Oh, it is a saint! It is one who has grown in grace until he is perfectly sanctified, one who has preached the gospel for many years." They just shut the gate at once; they did not know anything about me in that capacity; so I stood there, and got nothing.

²² **is baptized...shall be saved** – This is not to imply that baptism is required as a prior condition before salvation. The historic evangelical interpretation of this verse is its emphasis on the importance of believers' baptism: those who *have been* saved will follow the Lord in obedience to His command to be baptized (Mat 28:19; compare Mar 16:15-16). See *Baptism: A Burial and Baptismal Regeneration* by Spurgeon, both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

At last, broken-hearted and full of grief, I knocked again with all my might, and when they asked, “Who is there?” I said, “Here is a poor sinner, who has often come to Christ in that capacity, and has taken Him to be his whole righteousness and salvation, and he has come again just as he used to come.” “Ah!” they said, “it is you, is it? We have known you for many years; you are always welcome.” I found that I had access to my God when I said, “I am the chief of sinners. I am a sinner still.”

Well, now, putting myself in that position, where I always must be, and always hope to be, I would say to any sinner here, whoever you may be: “Come, friend, come along with me to the cross.” One says, “But I cannot go with you; you have been a minister of the gospel these thirty years and more.” My dear friend, I am a poor sinner still; and I have to look to Christ every day as I did at the very first. Come along with me. Come along with me. It is many, many years since, on a snowy morning, I looked to Him and was lightened. I wish that this snowy night some soul here would look to Him and live.

Conclusion

I had much more to say, but the time has gone, so I just leave with you my text, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” It is a blessed proverb, an apostolic proverbial saying; but it is a true saying. “It is a faithful saying” (2Ti 2:11). Everybody who has tried it has found it true. It is worthy of the acceptance of you all, and it is worthy of all the acceptance that any one of you can give to it. You may come and trust your soul on it, for time and for eternity. You may come with all your burden of sin upon your shoulders. You may come with all your want²³ of feeling, with all your hardness of heart, and just take as your Savior this Jesus Christ, Who came into the world to save sinners. Only trust Him.

And when you have trusted Him, you have done much more than you dream. Some people think that there is nothing in faith. But God is pleased with it, and “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb 11:6). If God is pleased with it, there is a great deal more in it than some imagine. That faith contains within itself a future life of holiness. It is the one acorn out of which countless forests will yet grow. Believe! May the Lord help you to believe in Jesus immediately! Before you leave this place, trust Him! Trust Him wholly. He came to save sinners; [ask] Him to save you. It is His business; it is not yours. Leave yourself in His hands, and He will save you, “to the praise of the glory of His grace” (Eph 1:6).



²³ **want** – lack.