

SALVATION ALL OF GRACE

“By Grace are you saved.”

Ephesians 2:8

OTHER Divine attributes are manifest in salvation. The Wisdom of God devised the plan. The Omnipotence 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 fountainhead 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 you 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, for, “He has 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 are we justified, for over and over again the Apostle insists upon this grand and fundamental Truth of God. 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 abounds, Grace does much more abound.” There is no point in the history of a saved soul upon which you can put your finger and say, “In this instance he is saved by his own merit.” Every single blessing which we receive from God comes to us by the channel of free favor, revealed to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. Boasting is excluded because merits are excluded. Merit is an unknown word in the Christian Church—it is banished once and for all—and our only shouts over foundation or top stone are, “Grace, Grace unto it!”

Perhaps the Apostle is the more earnest in insisting upon this Truth of God 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 offenses 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 you 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—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 worked in us of the Lord! What have we, 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 you 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 offense less heinous. Far from it, for our offense is heinous to the last degree and our sin deserves the utmost wrath of God! 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 Your loving kindness and Your Grace in Christ Jesus." "By Grace are you 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 favor and unbought mercy of God, not of merit, 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 favor on the unworthy sons of men.

1. This simple Truth of God we do not mean to work out this morning, doctrinally or controversially, but to use it for practical purposes and the first is this—THIS GREAT DOCTRINE SHOULD INSPIRE EVERY SINNER WITH HOPE. If salvation is altogether of the free favor and Grace of God, then who among us dares to 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 Brothers and Sisters, if salvation is 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 Souls of men, the Law stops your mouths and makes you silently admit that you are guilty before God! But the Gospel opens the mouth of the dumb by declaring, "Christ died for the ungodly," and, "He came into the world to save sinners." If mercy comes 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 special 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," they say, "that sin, like an iron bolt, has fast closed the gates of Heaven against me." And yet it cannot be so if salvation is 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 confesses 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 offense for which we seek forgiveness.

The great sinner is so much the fitter object for great mercy. He who has 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. You are a rare platform on which my Lord's love may display itself because you know yourself to be so utterly a lost sinner! You are but a black foil to set forth the brilliant diamond of my Master's Grace! Your foulness shall but illustrate the virtue of His precious blood and your 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 is of pure mercy only, why should not God forgive 10,000 sins as well as one? "Oh," you say, "I see why He should not." Then you see 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 10,000 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 10,000 times more to blot out 10,000 sins! If you will look at it in that light, though your transgressions may be as many as the hairs on your head or as the sands on the sea shore, you need not for a moment think you are cast away from hope!

The Lord's mercy is a sea which cannot be filled though mountains of sin are cast into its midst! It is like Noah's flood which covers all and drowns even the mountaintops 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 is of Grace alone, then the depravity of your nature does not shut you up in despair? What? Though your Nature is inclined to sin, and especially inclined to some sins—what if you are naturally angry and passionate? What if you are proud and covetous? What if you are in your natural disposition skeptical or lustful? Yet from the Grace of God hope flows even for you!

If the Lord were to deal with you according to your constitution and Nature, then, indeed, it were a hopeless case with you. But if He blesses you, not because you are good but because you need to be blessed. If He looks upon you in mercy, not because you are beautiful but because you are sick unto death and defiled, and need to be healed and cleansed. If it is your misery and not your merit which He considers, then you are yet in the land of hope! However fallen you may be, you may 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? What if He should make him 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 here today.

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 you were to stand on terms of debt with God, your hard heart would shut you out of hope. How could He bless such a wretch as you are, whose heart is a heart of stone? But if He deals with you entirely upon another ground, namely, His mercy, why I think I hear Him say, "Poor hard-hearted Sinner, I will pity you and take away your heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh."

Do you 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 you from the point of what you ought to be, but He will consider what He can make you, and He will give you repentance! Has not His Son gone up to Heaven, "exalted on high, to give repentance and remission of sins?" Do I hear you

confess that you cannot believe? Now, the absence of faith from you is a great evil, yes, a horrible evil. But then the Lord is dealing with you on terms of Grace and does not say, "I will not strike you because you do not believe," but He says, "I will give you 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 you in this Truth of God—that salvation is altogether of Grace! And 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 seeks forgiveness through the Savior's blood! Whoever you may be and whatever you may have done, Grace can come and save you! I say again, if your character is the question at issue, you are a lost man! If your power to amend your character is the hinge of the business, you are a lost man!

But if the Grace that pardons and the power that amends both come from God, why should you 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." You have heaped up your sins but God will heap up His mercies! You have highly aggravated your transgressions—you have sinned against light and knowledge—you have done evil with both hands greedily! But, thus says the Lord, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed you." "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Thus much upon the first statement, that this doctrine ought to give hope 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 is of Grace alone, it would be a very wrong course of action to plead that you are not guilty, or to extenuate your faults before God—that were to go upon the wrong tack altogether. If salvation is by your merit, or by an absence of demerit, then you would be right enough to set up a good character as a plea, though I believe that in the trial you would break down mightily, for you are as full of sin as an egg is of meat and your sin is as damnable as Hell itself!

And therefore it were vain for you to plead innocence—but if you could plead it, it is the wrong plea. If salvation is of Grace, then go to the Lord and confess your sin and transgression, and ask for Grace. Do not, for a moment, attempt to show that you have no need of Grace, for that were folly, indeed! What more foolish than for a beggar to plead that he is not in need? Do not shut the door of Grace in your 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 could you commit spiritual suicide than by such pleading?

Neither, O Sinner, hope to propitiate the Lord with gifts and sacrifices. If salvation is of Grace, how dare you think to buy it? If He says He gives it freely, bring not with you any bribe, for in so doing you will insult and anger Him. Indeed, what could you bring to Him when Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof for a burnt sacrifice? If you could give Him rivers of oil that should deluge a continent, or seas of sacrificial blood broad as the Pacific, yet could you not for a moment render yourself acceptable with Him! Therefore do not try it! Venture on no ceremonies. Rest not in rituals. If salvation is of Grace, accept it as a free gift and bless the Giver. Do not think to dress yourself 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 yourself on that free mercy!

That is to act according to the dictates of prudence. Your true course is this—since God is willing to show His mercy—go and confess that you need that mercy. Aggravate your sin in the confession if you can. Instead of trying to make it appear white, try to see its unutterable blackness. Say that you are without excuse, justly condemned for your transgressions. I assure you you shall never go beyond the truth in stating your sin, for that were quite impossible. A man lying wounded on the field of battle—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, you must do the same with God! The right way to plead is to plead your misery, your impotence, your danger, your sin. Lay bare your wounds before the Lord and as Hezekiah spread Sennacherib’s letter before the Lord, spread your 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 Your infinite mercy’s sake.” Confess your sin! Wisdom dictates that you should do so, since salvation is of Grace.

And then yield yourself up to God. Capitulate at discretion. Make no terms with Him, but say, “Here I stand before You, O my Maker. I have offended You. I yield to You because You have said You will deal with me on terms of Grace. Behold, I cast myself at Your feet. The weapons of my rebellion I cast from my hands forever. I desire that You would take me and make me what You would have me to be. And seeing You are a God of Grace, I beseech You to have pity upon me. You have appointed a way of salvation by Jesus Christ. Oh, save me in that way, I entreat You.”

Now, mark, I need 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 offense to God. Whereas, if your argument is based on Grace, it will have a sweet savor to Him.

Let me teach you, seeking Sinner, for a moment how to pray. Let it be in this way. Plead with God your miserable and undone condition. Tell Him you are utterly lost if He does not save you. Tell Him you are already lost, so that you can not help yourself hand or foot in this matter if He does not come to your rescue with the fullness of His power and love. Tell him that you are afraid to die and to come before His righteous bar, for unless He saves you Hell will be your portion. Plead with Him and ask Him whether it will delight Him that you should make your bed in Hell. Say to Him, “Shall the dead praise You? Shall the condemned set forth the praise?” Show Him the imminence of your danger. He knows it, but let Him see that you know it, and this will be good pleading with His mercy. “Save me, O Lord, for if ever a soul needed saving, if ever a 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, You are merciful. Your mercy will find ample scope in me. Does your Grace seek out sin to purge it away? It is here, Lord—I teem with it—my heart swarms with evils! If You are pitiful, here is a heart which bleeds and is ready to perish. Oh, if You are, indeed, a physician, here is a sick soul that needs you! If You are ready to forgive, here are sins that need forgiving. Come to me, Lord, for Your mercy will find a grievousness of misery in me! Besides, is not Your mercy free? It is true I do not deserve it, but You do not give it to men because of their merit, else were it not Grace and mercy at all. Let Your free mercy light on me! Why should You pass me by? If I am the vilest of the sons of men You will be the more gracious if You look upon me. What? Though I have forgotten You these many years and have even despised Your love, will it not be the greater mercy on Your part to turn and give Your free Grace to me, even to me?”

Then argue with Him the plenteousness of His Grace. Say to Him, “Lord, Your mercy is very great, I know it is. ‘According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.’ If You were a little God and You had but little mercy, I should have but little hope in You, but oh, You are so great and glorious! You can cast my transgressions behind Your back! By the greatness of Your compassion, then, look on me.” It is well, also, to return to the first plea and repeat it, saying, “Lord, because You have this great mercy and I need it, look on my impotence this day. I am so weak I cannot come to You unless You come to me. You bid me repent, but see how hard my heart is! You command me to believe in Jesus, but my unbelief is very strong! You tell me to look to Your 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 Your servant for You are strong, though I am weak. You can break my heart though I cannot break it and You can open my poor bleared eyes, though I cannot as yet see as I would see the Savior Jesus Christ. Oh, by Your power and mercy save a weak, dead sinner.” And then, if you feel as if you wanted some other plea, begin to plead His promises. Say—

*“You have promised to forgive
All who on Your Son believe.
Lord, I know You cannot lie!
Give me Christ or else I die.*

“You have said that if the wicked forsake his way and turn unto You he shall live. Lord, I turn to You. Receive me. You have said that all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. You have declared that the blood of Jesus Christ Your Son cleanses from all sin. Go not back from Your word, O God! Since You are dealing with men on terms of Grace, keep Your promise and let Your 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, I bear testimony unto you, O seeking Souls, that this is the way to move His heart. Go upon the plan of 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 you, Sinner, to do it and may the Spirit help you. Say you unto God thus, “Lord, You have given Your 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, will You give Your Son for sinners and then cast sinners away? Did You nail Him to the Cross only for a mockery, that we might come to that Cross and not find pity? O God of Mercy, in the gift of Your Son You have done so much that You cannot draw back! You must save sinners now that You have 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, “You have said, ‘Him that comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.’” Tell Him that it was written of Him, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.” Tell Him that you have heard, “this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” and say to Him, “Have You lost your compassion, Savior? Will You not dart a glance of love on me, even me? You did heal lepers—heal my leprosy! You did permit the woman, whom You did call a dog, to come and receive blessings at Your hands, and although I AM a dog, yet give the crumbs of Your mercy to me, even me.”

This is the style of plea that will win the day. And then I would advise you, if you still fail in prayer, to go to God and say to Him, “Lord, You have sworn with an oath—‘As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he would turn to Me and live.’ I know that you mean this, my God. Will You take pleasure, then, in my death and spurn me now

that I turn to You?" Tell Him that He has saved other sinners like yourself. Remind Him of your 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, do You not delight to save great, big, evil sinners? I am just such an one! You have not changed. By all that You have done for others, I pray You do the same for me."

And then say to Him again, "I thank You, O God, that You have permitted even me to pray to You. I bless Your Grace that You have moved me to come to You. And as You have given me Grace to feel my sin in a measure, will You leave me to perish after all? Oh, by the Grace I have received in being spared so long in being permitted to hear Your Gospel, I beseech You 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 foot of the Cross, you will die there, but nowhere else. As the Lord my God lives, 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 is of Grace, God must do as He wills with His own. None of us can say to Him, "What are You doing?" 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 favor, we will, therefore, 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 honor forever, 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 seems good to Him. 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 Brothers 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 Brothers. The Lord shall distribute His Grace by what hands He pleases. Send, Lord, by whomever You will send.

And here I come to the sinner again—with the two great Gospel commands we will raise no dispute. Has He said, "He that believes and is baptized 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 us 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 you trust in Jesus—say not in your heart, "I would rather do or feel some wonderful matter."

If He had bid you do some great thing would you not have done it? How much rather, now, that He says to you, simply trust in Jesus and be saved? I know if I were authorized 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 Savior and only look to Him, I know if you have not learned the Truth of God, 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 Your 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 has put it, that "he that believes and is baptized, shall be saved," and therefore you must obey! I do not attempt to justify my Lord for so commanding, for He needs no defense 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 the 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 Savior, I do not mind how I get Him! So long as He blots out my sins I will not quibble about the way in which He manifests His love to me. If it is 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 gladly would clip his wings. But I must 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 favor 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 forever.”

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 you, Sinner, if the Lord this morning were to appear to you and say, “All your sins have been blotted out,” would you not love Him? Yes, I think a dog would love such a Master as that! Would you not love Him? Yes, I know you would! 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 honor Him!

You would need 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, you Sins! Away, you Sins—how can I defile myself with you again? And then you would desire to practice 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 that 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,” they say, “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 forever. And my glory is, ‘I am Your servant, I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid, You have 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 wants 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 license 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 kindled in the heart in consequence, and thus the whole soul becomes consecrated to the Lord.

1. Lastly, I wish 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 need such a religion"?

Alas, you have stumbled at this stumbling stone and shall be broken upon it. You shall perish, for you do insult your God by thinking yourself wiser than His Word and by fancying that your righteousness is purer than the righteousness of Christ! You do imagine you can force your way to Heaven by a road that is most effectually blocked up! You 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 do you accept this text as a foundation stone? Do you say, "I need Grace, indeed, for I am guilty"? Then come and take all the blessings of the Covenant, for they are yours! "He has put down the mighty from their seat and He has exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He has sent away empty." Are you guilty? Come and trust your Savior! Are you empty? Come and be filled out of the fullness which is treasured up in Christ Jesus! Believe in Jesus now, for one act of faith sets you free from all sin! Do not tarry for a moment, nor raise questions with your God. Believe Him capable of infinite mercy and through Jesus Christ rest in Him.

If you are the worst soul in the world in your own apprehension, and the one odd man that would be left out of every catalogue of Grace, now write not such things against yourself—or even if you do, come and cast yourself upon your God! He cannot reject you or if He should, you would be the first that ever trusted in Him and was refused! Come and try! Oh, that His Spirit may bring you 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 and 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 were robed in the righteousness of Christ this day and prepared to enter into His rest! Pray for it, Christian Brothers 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! Lay it before Him and say, "By Your mercy and by Your loving kindness save all this gathered company, for Christ's sake." Amen.