

The human race, far inferior in order of intelligence, sinned as atrociously; at any rate, if the sins of manhood that we have heard of be put together and rightly weighed, I can scarcely understand how even the sins of devils could be much blacker than the sin of mankind. However, the God who in his infinite justice passed over angels, and suffered them forever to expiate their offenses in the fires of hell, was pleased to look down on man. Here was election on a grand scale: the election of manhood, and the reprobation of fallen angelhood. What was the reason for it? The reason was in God's mind, an inscrutable reason which we do not know, and which if we knew probably we could not understand. God, who doeth as he wills with his own, and giveth no account of his matters, who deals with his creatures as the potter deals with the clay, took not upon him the nature of angels, but took upon him the seed of Abraham, and chose men to be the vessels of his mercy. This fact we know, but where is its reason? certainly not in man. "Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel, be ashamed and confounded for your own ways."

Here, very few men object. We notice that if we talk about the election of men and the non-election of fallen angels, there is no argument. Every man approves of the Sovereignty of God till he feels that he is the loser by it. When it begins to touch his own bone and his own flesh, then he kicks against it. But let us go further. The only reason why one man is saved, and not another, lies not, in any sense, in the man saved, but in God's bosom.

And now, let us review this doctrine at length. We are taught in Holy Scripture, long before this world was made, that God foreknew and foresaw all the creatures he intended to fashion; and there and then foreseeing that the human race would fall into sin, and deserve his anger, determined, in his own sovereign mind, that an immense portion of the human race should be his children, and should be brought to heaven. As to the rest, he left them to their own deserts: to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind, to scatter crime and inherit punishment. Now, in the great decree of

election, the only reason why God selected the vessels of mercy must have been because he would do it. There was nothing in any one of them which caused God to choose them. We all were alike, all lost, all ruined by the fall; all without the slightest claim upon his mercy; all, in fact, deserving his utmost vengeance. His choice of any one, and his choice of all his people, are causeless, so far as anything in them was concerned. It was the effect of his sovereign will, and of nothing which they did, could do, or ever would do; for thus saith the text: "Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel."

As for the fruit of our election, in due time Christ came into this world, and purchased with his blood all those whom the Father had chosen. Now come ye to the cross of Christ; bring this doctrine with you, and remember that the only reason why Christ gave up his life to be a ransom for his sheep was because he loved them. There was nothing in his people that made him die for them. I was thinking as I came here this morning, if any man should imagine that the love of God to us was caused by anything in us, it would be as if a man should look into a well to find the springs of the ocean, or dig into an anthill to find an Alp. The love of God is so immense, so boundless and so infinite, that you cannot conceive for a moment that it could have been caused by anything in us. The little good that is in us—the no good that is in us—for there is none, could not have caused the boundless, bottomless, shoreless, summitless love which God manifests to his people.

Stand at the foot of the cross, ye merit-mongers, ye that delight in your own works, and answer this question: Do you think that the Lord of life and glory could have been brought down from heaven, could have been fashioned like a man, and have been led to die through any merit of yours? Shall these sacred veins be opened with any lancet less sharp than his own infinite love? Do you conceive that your poor merits, such as they are, could be so efficacious as to nail the Redeemer to the tree, and make him bend his shoulders beneath the enormous load of the world's

guilt? You cannot imagine it. The consequence is so great, compared with what you suppose to be the case, that your logic fails in a moment. You cannot conceive that all the accumulated merits of manhood, if there were such things, could have brought the Eternal from the throne of his majesty, and bowed him to the death of the cross. That is a thing impossible to any thoughtful mind. No! from the cross comes the cry—"Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel."

After Christ's death, there comes in the next place, the work of the Holy Spirit. Those whom the Father hath chosen, and whom the Son has redeemed, in due time the Holy Spirit calls "out of darkness into marvelous light." Now, the calling of the Holy Spirit is without regard to any merit in us. By nature, men are said to be dead in sin. If the Holy Spirit quickens, it cannot be because of any power in the dead men, or any merit in them, for they are dead, corrupt and rotten in the grave of their sin. If then, the Holy Spirit says, "Come forth and live," it is not because of anything in the dry bones, it must be for some reason in his own mind. Therefore, know ye this, that we all stand upon a level. We have none of us anything that can recommend us to God; and if the Spirit shall choose to operate in our hearts unto salvation, he must be moved to do it by his own supreme love, for he cannot be moved to do it by any good will, good desire, or good deed that dwells in us by nature.

To go a little further: this truth, which holds good so far, holds good all the way. God's people, after they are called by grace, are preserved in Christ Jesus; they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation"; they are not suffered to sin away their eternal inheritance, but as temptations arise they have strength given with which to encounter them, and as sin blackens them they are washed afresh, and again cleansed. But mark, the reason why God keeps his people is the same as that which made them his people—his own free sovereign grace. If you, my brother, have been delivered in the hour of temptation, pause and remember that you were not delivered for your own sake. There was nothing in

you that deserved the deliverance. It was not because you have been a faithful servant of God, nor because you have been a prayerful Christian; it is simply and only because of God's mercy. He is not moved to anything he does for you by anything that you do for him; his motive for blessing you lies wholly and entirely in the depths of his own bosom. Blessed be God, his people shall be kept.

*"Nor death, nor hell shall e'er remove  
His favorites from his breast;  
In the dear bosom of his love  
They must forever rest."*

But why? because they are holy? because they are sanctified? because they serve God with good works? No, but because he in his sovereign grace has loved them, does love them, and will love them, even to the end.

And this truth shall hold good all the way to heaven. The day is coming when every blood-bought, blood-washed child of God shall enter glory arrayed in white, and our song there shall be, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory"; and that shall be true, it shall not be a mere exaggeration of gratitude. It shall be true; we shall be compelled to sing it, because we could not sing anything else. We shall feel that we did nothing, and that we were nothing, but that God did it all—that we had nothing in us for a motive of his doing it, but that his motive lay in himself; therefore unto him shall be every particle of the honour forever and ever.

Now this, I take to be the meaning of the text, distasteful as it is to the great majority, even of professing Christians in this age. It is a doctrine that requires a great deal of salt, or else few people will receive it. It is very unsavory to them; however, there it stands. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." His truth we must preach, and this we must proclaim. Salvation is "not of men, neither by man; not of the will of the flesh, nor of blood," nor of birth, but of the sovereign will of God, and God alone.

Now, let us **illustrate this text**. Look for a moment at man's character by this illustration, considering him as a criminal, which certainly he is in the sight of God.

Suppose that some great criminal is apprehended and shut up in prison. He has committed high treason, murder, rebellion, and every possible iniquity. The public cry is—"This man must die! He richly deserves it!" You look through his character: you cannot see one solitary redeeming trait. He is an old offender; he has so long persevered in his iniquity that you are compelled to say, "The case is hopeless for this abandoned wretch; let him die." Now, if her Majesty the Queen, having in her hands the sovereign power of life and death, chooses that this man shall not die, but that he shall be spared, do you not see as plain as daylight, that the only reason that can move her to spare this man, must be her own love, her own compassion? Whether we like it or not, this is just the truth concerning ourselves. This is our character and position before God. The only ground upon which God can save you is his own love. He cannot save you because you deserve it, for you do not. There is no excuse that might be made for your sin.

Suppose now that this criminal is visited by her Majesty in person. She goes to him, and she says to him, "Rebel, traitor, murderer, I have in my heart compassion for you; you deserve it not; but I am come this day to you, to tell you that if you repent you shall have mercy at my hands." Suppose this man, springing up, should curse her to her face and spit upon her uttering blasphemies. She retires; she is gone; but so great is her compassion, that the next day she sends a messenger, and days, and weeks, and months, and years, she continually sends messengers, and these go to him, and say, "If you will repent of your transgressions you shall have mercy." The man curses at the messengers and stops his ears against their words. He says, "I don't care whether I am hanged or not; I'll take my chances along with everybody else."

Now, if her Majesty would spare such a man as that, on what terms can she do it? You say, "She cannot, unless she does it out of love; she cannot because of any merit in him, because such a beast as that ought to die." And now, what are you and I by nature but like this? And my unconverted hearer, what is this but a picture of you?

Has not God himself visited your conscience? and has he not said to you, "Sinner! come now, let us reason together; though your sins be red like crimson, they shall be white as snow." And what have you done? Stopped your ear against the voice of conscience—cursed God, blasphemed his holy name, despised his word, and railed against his ministers. And this day, again, with tears in his eyes, a servant of God is come to you, and his message is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." And what will you do? If left to yourselves you will despise the message, and go away despising God again, as you have before.

Do you not see, then, that if God ever shall save you, it cannot be for your sake; but must be from his own infinite love; it cannot be from any other reason, since you have rejected Christ, despised his gospel, trodden under foot the blood of Jesus, and refused to be saved. If he saves you, it must be free grace, and free grace alone. The fact is indisputable—"Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel!" God sees us, abandoned, evil, wicked, and deserving his wrath; if he saves us, it is his boundless, fathomless love that leads him to do it—nothing whatever in us.

Such a truth should humble every Christian, and bring forth the greatest gratitude. If you are saved, you had nothing to do with it; God has done it all. Mercy undeserved has found you out. And not only was it mercy undeserved, but unasked. It is true you prayed, but not till free grace brought you to pray.

And O sinner! you say you dare not come to Christ because you have nothing that would recommend you. Well, the good news is: He asks for nothing, for he says, "Not for your sake do I this." Go to Christ and say, "Lord Jesus, there is no reason in the world why I should be saved. I cannot urge any plea, I deserve to be lost, I have no excuse for all my sins. I have nothing to bring, and nothing to say for myself, but I do say this: I have heard that thou hast come into the world to save sinners—O

Lord, save me! I claim thy gracious promise. "Be merciful to me, a sinner."

*"Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that thy blood was shed for me,  
And that thou bidst me come to thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."*

Sinner, come now, I beseech thee; I entreat thee, come now. O Spirit of the living God, draw them now! Let these feeble weak words be the means of drawing souls to Christ. Will you reject my Master again? Will you go out of this house hardened once more? You may never again have such feelings as those which are aroused in your soul. Come now, receive his mercy; now bend your willing necks to his yoke, that you may taste of his faithful love, and at last sing in heaven the song of the redeemed—"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, unto him be glory forever. Amen." □

### **TOMORROW**

*"Boast not thyself of TOMORROW; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth"*  
—Proverbs 27:1

*He was going to be all that a mortal should be*  
**TOMORROW.**

*No one should be kinder or braver than he*  
**TOMORROW.**

*A friend who was troubled and weary he knew,  
Who'd be glad of a lift and who needed it too;  
On him he would call and see what he could do*  
**TOMORROW.**

*Each morning he stacked up the letters he'd write*  
**TOMORROW.**

*And thought of the folks he would fill with delight*  
**TOMORROW.**

*It was too bad, indeed, he was busy today,  
And hadn't a minute to stop on his way;  
More time he'd have to give others, he'd say,*  
**TOMORROW.**

*The greatest of workers this man would have been*  
**TOMORROW.**  
*The world would have known him, had he ever seen*  
**TOMORROW.**

*But the fact is he died and faded from view,  
And all that he left here when living was through  
Was a mountain of things he intended to do*  
**TOMORROW.**

**FREE GRACE**  
C. H. Spurgeon

**"Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!"—Ezekiel 36:32**

**D**over and over again, Holy Scripture has to remind us of that which we never ought to forget, that salvation is God's work from first to last, and is not of man, neither by man. It is distinctly stated in our text that salvation is of God. "Not for your sakes do I this." He says nothing about what we have done or can do. All the preceding and all the succeeding verses speak of what God does. "I will take you from among the heathen." "I will sprinkle clean water upon you." "I will give you a new heart." "I will put my Spirit within you." Salvation is of God, and all of God.

Against all human effort and human merit will I speak this morning. I feel that I shall offend a great many people here. I am about to preach a doctrine that is gall and vinegar to flesh and blood, one that will make righteous moralists gnash their teeth, and make others go away and declare that I am an antinomian, and perhaps scarcely fit to live. Nevertheless, truth we will preach.

First, I shall endeavour to **expound this text.** "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God." The motive for the salvation of the human race is to be found in the breast of God, and not in the character or condition of man. Two races have revolted against God—the one angelic, the other human. When a part of this angelic race revolted against the Most High, justice speedily overtook them; they were swept from their starry seats in heaven, and henceforth they have been reserved in darkness unto the great day of the wrath of God. No mercy was ever presented to them, no sacrifice ever offered for them; but they were without hope and mercy, forever consigned to the pit of eternal torment.