

Perfect Restoration

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon passionately teaches that through God's mercy and Christ's sacrifice, repentant sinners and backsliders can be perfectly restored as if they had never been cast aside.

Scripture: Zechariah 10:6, Luke 15:24, John 14:21, Revelation 21:3-4, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Psalm 51:12, Romans 8:19-22, Luke 23:43

Topics: "Divine Mercy", "Restoration", "Backsliding"

Description

In this heartfelt sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the profound promise of perfect restoration found in Zechariah 10:6. He passionately urges sinners and backsliders alike to seek God's mercy through prayer and faith in Jesus Christ. Spurgeon vividly describes how God not only forgives sin but renews the believer's nature and restores them to a place of honor and fellowship with Him. This sermon offers hope and encouragement to all who feel cast aside, assuring them of God's readiness to restore completely.

Transcript

"They shall be as though I had not cast them aside." Zechariah 10:6.

You all know how God did, for a time, cast off His ancient people. Both Israel and Judah, after long provocation of Jehovah, were carried away captive into the land of their enemies. God forsook His Temple and that glorious sanctuary was laid in ruins. The whole land was given up to be the prey of the cruel foe and the inhabitants, themselves, were carried into captivity beyond the rivers of Babylon. And they were sorely afflicted. They had greatly sinned and heavy was their punishment. But now, by the mouth of the Prophet Zechariah, God talks to them of mercy and, as a choice note in the message of mercy, He says that He will restore them to their old estate—and they shall be as though He had never cast them aside. It is a wonderful promise! I pray that it may sound like heavenly music in the ear of many a backslider.

In commencing my sermon, I draw your attention to the preceding clause of the verse—"I will have mercy upon them." Learn from this that the only terms upon which God can deal with guilty men are terms of mercy—"I will have mercy upon them." Therefore, my Friend, if you would be saved, do not try to deal with God upon the footing of justice. If you do, you will first have to say that you have never sinned and that would be a lie. You will not be able to prove that assertion—your lips, your eyes, your heart, your hands, your whole conduct will all be witnesses against you! You must admit that you have sinned. It may be that you will then try to find some excuse for your sin. You say, perhaps, that you could not help it. But you might have helped it—you ought to have helped it. Or, possibly, you will try to make out that your sin is

very little. But your conscience knows that it is not little. If any one sin has been little—and I do not think that is possible—you have added so many other evils to these grains of sin that you cannot count them, and your transgressions are multiplied upon you! No, you will never make out a good case if you appeal to God's justice, for Justice will try you, condemn you, and cast you aside. God will not deal with you on those terms. Confess that you are guilty! Ask Him, for His mercy's sake, to pass over your guilt. Plead with Him, for His dear Son's sake, to blot it out and He will yield to such pleading as that—and He will deal with you in the way of mercy.

From the clause which follows my text I learn another lesson. The Lord says, "They shall be as though I had not cast them aside: for I am the Lord their God, and will hear them." From these words I gather that one of the surest tokens that mercy is about to be received is prayer—"I am the Lord their God, and will hear them." But God would not hear them if they did not pray, so, if you wish to know whether God is about to bless you, answer this question—Do you feel that you need to pray? Is your heart beginning to cry to God, even now? Then He will hear you and, hearing you, He will have mercy upon you! I care not what else there is about you that seems hopeful, if it cannot be said of you, "Behold, He prays," there is no solid ground for hope. But if, bowing your head in the pew at this moment, or even sitting still just as you are, you are saying in your heart, "Lord, have mercy upon me! Lord, save me!" this is a blessed token that the angel of mercy is close at hand! I trust, before this service is over, you will be saved, and have cause to praise and magnify the Lord for His great mercy toward you!

Now to come to the text itself, if we are dealing with God upon the footing of mercy, and if we have begun to pray, then this is what we may expect at His hands, for He has given the promise, "They shall be as though I had not cast them aside." I am going to take the text, first, in its general application to all repentant sinners. And then, secondly, in its special application to all backsliders. I have many things to say and, therefore, I must speak but briefly upon each point.

I. First, then, applying the text, IN GENERAL, TO ALL REPENTANT SINNERS, I say to every unsaved man and woman in this great assembly—If you will come to God by prayer, with faith in Jesus Christ, God will receive you and you shall be as though you had never fallen through your sin, and had never been cast aside by God! At the present moment, as an unconverted sinner, you are far off from God by wicked works—and His Word declares that you are "condemned already." But He is prepared to restore you to all the dignity which manhood had before the Fall! He is prepared to give back that which He took not away and to make you even as unfallen man was and would have been! Yes, and to give you something even more noble and glorious than Adam ever possessed.

For, first, He is prepared to make a clean sweep of all your sins. In virtue of the Sacrifice of Christ, God stands ready, right now, to take the pen and strike out the record of all your transgressions! If you believe in Jesus, you shall be as though you had never sinned! When the prodigal son came back and his father had kissed him, he was to his father as if he had never gone away, as if he had never wasted his substance in riotous living. His father had him once more at home and he loved him as much as he loved the elder brother, loved him as much as if he had never grieved him in all his life. What do you say to this? This privilege is proffered to you, also, in the Gospel of God. If you believe in Christ Jesus, your sins shall be as though they had never been committed and you shall be as dear to God as if you had always perfectly kept His Law!

That is good news for guilty sinners, but there is more to follow, for God is both able and willing to renew your nature. He will make you as though He had not cast you aside. He will come and take away that heart

of stone out of your flesh and then on that heart of flesh He will write His Law, and He will put His fear in your heart so that you shall eventually be as though He had never cast you aside. I mean that the blessed processes of regeneration and sanctification shall begin in your heart, if you believe in Christ, and the Holy Spirit shall go on working in your heart and you shall advance in the spiritual life from glory unto glory till, one of these days, you shall be as pure as an angel, as holy as God, Himself, and you shall open your eyes and see God—and in Heaven, itself, you shall understand the words of the Lord Jesus, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Sinner, you are lost and you are sinking down, down, down, through the defilement of your nature! But the Holy Spirit can come and change that nature so that you shall rise and rise, and rise, till, when Christ appears, you shall be like He, for you shall see Him as He is! Is not this a glorious Gospel that we have to preach to every soul that will repent of sin and believe in Christ? To penitent sinners, God gives the blotting out of their sin and the renewal of their nature!

This is not enough, however, if we are to regain all we have lost. When Adam sinned, he lost Paradise; but God will give a better Paradise to sinners who repent. Shall it be with you as though God had not cast you aside? Oh, yes, there is another Paradise into which Christ will introduce you in due time—and you shall have a foretaste of it, even while you are here, in the perfect peace and rest which He will give to your heart, for—

"The men of Grace have found Glory begun below; Celestial fruits on earthly ground From faith and hope may grow." But, by-and-by, you shall be taken up, as was the penitent thief to whom Christ said, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Only it shall be a better Paradise than that primitive Eden—it shall be a garden where flowers shall never wither and leaves shall never fall. There, dwelling with God in Glory, it shall be with you as though He had never cast you aside!

Nor is this all, for, before Adam fell there was no curse upon the world, and no curse upon Adam. The earth did not bring forth thorns and thistles and with no sweat of his face was man compelled to eat his hard-earned bread. And can God ever make it so with us? Yes, Brothers and Sisters, for Christ has redeemed us from the curse. If we are believers in Jesus, we may have, for a little while, to bear with this world's griefs, groaning as the whole creation does in travail for a better birth, but, as surely as we have been born again, so the day will come when there shall be new heavens and a new earth, and God will strike out thorns and thistles from among the world's products! "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." I expect to see this world, in the millennial age, restored to all the brightness with which God swathed it when first He sent it roiling from His great hands of power. It was a bright star, then, but sin has made it cloudy and imperfect. But Christ will take away all the mists and, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" shall yet ascend from this poor planet, for then shall be realized the vision that John saw in the isle called Patmos—"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Now we are getting on— are we not? —towards the complete coming back to God, so that we shall be as though He had never cast us aside!

But even this is not all that the text means. Before Adam fell, He was engaged in God's service. He was head gardener in Paradise. God put him in the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. Well, Brothers and Sisters, however sinful you may have been, if you go to the Lord Jesus Christ, He will give you employment while you are here! He will set you in His vineyard to render Him some service. Perhaps He

will choose you to look after the little children in the Sunday school. Maybe He will call you out to preach for Him, certainly He will want you to work for Him in some way or other. What a blessing it will be to be one of the servants of God! Will God ever employ us who once were so far from Him? Yes, it shall be with you as though He had never cast you aside.

But, then, God not only employed Adam to work for Him, but He walked with Adam in the garden. The Lord God was accustomed, in the cool of the day, to have fellowship with unfallen man—but will He confer such a favor as that upon us? Oh, yes! If we come to Him in Christ Jesus, God will come and speak with us and commune with us from the Mercy Seat and even in this life He will be our constant Companion and our ever-present Friend. And when we have done communing with Him here, He will take us up to that blessed place of which it is written, "His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads." Ah, Beloved, when we once get to our God in Heaven, then shall we find these words literally true, "They shall be as though I had not cast them aside."

Brothers and Sisters, if we will but believe in Jesus Christ, there awaits us an eternal destiny of unspeakable honor and delight. If we will but believe in Christ, we need hardly regret that we have fallen, for He will so effectually restore us that all trace of sin shall be forever removed! Sin has defaced the image of God, but the Grace of God will renew it. By our transgression, we have lost everything that was worth having, but if we will but believe in Him, Christ will bring back everything through His blood and righteousness. Oh, cast not away the blessed alternative that lies before you! Choose not to be ruined! Choose not to continue in spiritual death! You are immortal—make not your immortality the most tremendous of curses! Come and believe in Jesus, that your immortality may become an attribute that shall make you like God, immortal in Glory! I do think that this matter is so clear and simple, that, if men were not maddened by sin, they would not delay a minute, but they would give up everything else, and say, "The all-important thing is for me to get my eternal destiny secured. I must go and believe in Christ. I must get to my God. I must obtain forgiveness of my sins." Oh, that you might be allured to Christ by this sweet, sweet text, which is so musical to me that I wish to ring it again and again in every ear, "They shall be as though I had not cast them aside." I leave it with you—God bless it to every one of you!

II. But now I have to speak, in PARTICULAR, TO PENITENT BACKSLIDERS.

I have no doubt that there are some such persons in this congregation, and I want to say to them, "The Lord addresses you—you wanderers—you turncoats, you who have been faithless, you who have turned aside—you who have started aside like a broken arrow or a deceitful bow—and He invites you to return to Him! He says of you, "They shall be as though I had not cast them aside." I know you and I pray you, now, to listen to me very earnestly. You have fallen into a sad state of heart and life. You used to be, perhaps, a member of this Church or of some other. But you are not fit to be a member of any Church just now, you know that you are not. You are living a very evil life and conscience tells you how wrong you are, and all the while you know better. You would not like me to tell your history since last you went to the House of God, or since you were numbered with God's people, would you? No, but at this moment the Lord says to you, "Return unto Me, and it shall be with you as though I had not cast you aside."

Come to Him, for He is prepared to cast your sins behind His back, into the depths of the sea, and to make an end of your transgression forever. What do you say to this wondrous mercy on His part? Oh, Boy, if you had provoked your father and had gone away and left your dear old home, if he wrote you a loving letter, and said, "Jack, my Son, come back to me and I will freely forgive you. You have behaved very shamefully, but if you will come home, there shall be an end of it all." Oh, would you not make haste

back? So I say to you, Backsliders, will you not come home when our Father in Heaven sends you such a message as this, "They shall be as though I had not cast them aside"?

Perhaps you say, "Well, but, if I should ever become a Christian, again, as I hope I once was, yet I should never get my joy back. God might forgive me, but I never could forgive myself. Sir, you do not know to whom you are talking! You cannot imagine how far I have gone into sin. I was a woman who came to the Communion Table among the pure and godly, but, oh, now I am one of the cast-offs." Yes, I know. I know. But God says even to you, "Come back, come back, though you have unchastely left the Husband of your soul, yet is He prepared to receive you, again, and it shall be unto you as though He had not cast you aside." Yes, Brothers and Sisters, you may pray that prayer of penitent David, "Restore unto me the joy of your salvation. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which You have broken may rejoice." You professors know that you cannot go into sin without getting your bones broken if you are truly God's people! If you are not His chosen ones, you may go and live in sin, and riot in it—and He will leave you alone till the Great Judgment Day! But if you are His people, He will beat you till your very bones cry out. Yet, if you are prepared to come back to Him, just as you came at first, crying—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,

Simply to Your Cross I cling," He is ready to end it all and give you back your joy! Did not the father give joy to the returned prodigal? There was music and dancing and, "they began to be merry." And God will rejoice over a poor soul that has wandered far from Him, but at last returns—and the poor soul shall be happy, too. Yes, my dear Sister, my dear Brother, you can have back your early joy! You may yet sing with gladness of heart—

"I will praise You every day!

Now Your anger's turned away,

Comfortable thoughts arise

From the bleeding Sacrifice." "Ah," I hear one say, "I might have my sin pardoned and I might get back my joy, but can I ever have my purity restored? I have defiled myself—my very thoughts are impure. I have mixed with company that has depraved me. I feel that my garments may be washed, but they will always smell of the loathsome places where I have been. I am afraid that if the wounds that sin has made are all healed, the scars will always show. I have blackened myself so that I fear I can never be white again." Well, yours is an evil case, indeed. It is a hard task to get the stench of sin out of a garment spotted with the flesh. The Lord will have to pull you out of the fire, but yet, when He undertakes that task, He can strip you of that filthy garment and He can cause you to hate the sin that you have loved! He can make it so loathsome to you that the very thought of it shall make you sick. I have known the drunkard hate the very house where he used to get his drink and go to the other side of the street. I have known a swearer cured of his blasphemy in a minute. I have known the backslider who has indulged some lust of the flesh, chasten his soul after it, so that the very mention of it has brought the tears into his eyes. He could not bear, even, to think of it! Yes, the Holy Spirit can give you back more than your former purity! He can create in you a clean heart and renew a right spirit within you. Truly, I have to preach a blessed Gospel to you, poor Backslider! Are you behind the pillar there? If so, may the arrow glance right round it and find you out, and reach your soul!

"Oh," says one, "but if I get back my purity, do you think that God will ever love me again, and dwell with me, and guide and bless me?" Well, He taught backsliding and repenting David to pray, "Take not your Holy Spirit from me," and when God put that prayer into David's mouth, it was because He meant to answer it! Yes, and He can come to you, even to you, and though it is now months since you had the light of God's Countenance and felt happy and restful in Christ, you shall have it all back again! Oh, have we not had joyous Sabbaths here, sometimes, when the Word of the Lord seems to ravish our very hearts with delight? And when we have gone downstairs to the Communion Table, I know that some of you have felt as though Heaven itself had come into your spirit! Well, you shall have those old Sabbaths over again, or rather, you shall have new communion with your Lord which shall be even more blessed! I know your private prayers used to be very precious—they shall be so again. You used to walk down a quiet street that you might talk with God, alone—you shall do it again. Poor Soul, you who have gone so far away from God, come back to Him! "Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married to you." Therefore, return to Him and you shall behold His face again and, in His Presence you shall, once more, bathe your soul with exceeding joy!

"Ah," says one, "but I should like to get back again among God's people. "Yes, that restored communion is a secondary matter in comparison with returning to the Lord, yet it is, in itself, a very valuable thing which ought to be highly prized. I am sure I can speak for all God's servants here—if this is the Church that you have dishonored, if this is the Church that you have grieved—none could be more willing to receive you back again than we are! I have felt a joy akin to that of Heaven, sometimes, when I have once more received into Church fellowship some who have sinned very grossly. I know that when they come back, they will love Christ better than ever, for they have had much forgiven! These are they who break the alabaster boxes and pour the precious ointment on their Savior's head. I know that Peters—who have denied their Lord—when they come back and weep bitterly over their sin, are the very men who will feed Christ's lambs and be shepherds to His sheep! I have sometimes heard of a bone, that has been broken, and has become stronger after the fracture than it was before. Indeed, I once saw such a bone that was taken out of a grave—it belonged to a leg that had been broken. How did we know that? Why, because it was thicker in that part than anywhere else! And, sometimes, it happens that Grace overrules the fall so that a man becomes stronger at that point where he fell and he is more watchful than he ever was before. Is not that a wonderful thing?

I hardly like to say it, for fear that some hypocrite may go and turn it into mischief, for there is always some child of the devil who will be ready to say, "Let us sin that Grace may abound." If you do say so, your damnation will be just, and it will be most terrible! But, to the child of God, we say, in a whisper, that it has sometimes happened that the very falling into sin of the backslider has been blessed of God to make him more careful in the future, and he has been a better man afterwards. Come along, you who have turned aside, but are now truly penitent, the Church will gladly take you back! Why should we not, remembering how liable we, ourselves, are to be tempted as you were? I give a hearty and loving invitation to you, Backsliders—it comes out of my very heart. If Christ, who is perfect, will receive you, much more will we, who are ourselves so imperfect, receive you!

"Oh, but," I hear one say, "that would not make me quite as I used to be. The text says, 'They shall be as though I had not cast them aside,' but I used to have a class in the Sunday school, I sometimes used to go out and preach." Brother, why should you not go out to preach again? Sister, why should you not again take a class in the Sunday school? Our dear Lord, when He pardons you, will give you something to do just as He did with Peter. I am sure that He will not say to you, "There, I have forgiven you, but you are of

no further use to Me—go and sit in the back seat—for I shall never need your services again." Perhaps you may never be quite fit for what you were, before, and the Lord will not put you where you are not fit to be, but yet there will be some place where you will be more qualified to serve Him than you were before! For instance, in looking after backsliders. If a backslider says to you, "I cannot come back," you will be able to say to him, "Why not? I did, and so can you." Did not the Master say to Peter, "When you are converted, strengthen your brethren"? You will be able to do that kind of work even better than others could and whenever anybody is inclined to be hard and harsh upon the wanderers, you will say, "Oh, do not speak so! I know the heart of a wanderer, for I was one, myself. I know how, when they repent, they are very tender and sensitive and, often, a little touch may open their wounds and make them bleed again."

You will speak so softly, and with the tears in your eyes, that the penitent souls will look to you as a kind of father—and you will be a helper to many. I do hope it is so with you who have returned to the Lord. I am so sorry, Brother. I am so sorry, Sister, that you have so spoiled and marred your life, for it would have been an infinitely better thing to have held on your way and gone from strength to strength, glorifying God by a consistent life. But, as you have made this great and grievous error, I pray you, do not despair! Believe in the mercy of God! He has forgiven the sin of His backsliding people and He can forgive yours. There is not only a bath in which to wash the sinner, but there is a fountain opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem—that is, for God's own people—that they may wash and be clean!

The other Thursday night, when some of you were not here, I preached about the bronze serpent. [See Sermon #1722, Volume 29—The First Setting Up of the Bronze Serpent] You know how there came to be a bronze serpent—was it set up for outsiders? No, it was in consequence of the sin of God's own people, for they were "much discouraged because of the way," and they, "spoke against God, and against Moses." "Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among them, so that they were bitten, and many died." And when they repented, the bronze serpent was lifted up, that those who were bitten might look and live! They were not far from Canaan, yet they needed the bronze serpent. And you old Christians, you aged Believers, if you have been doing wrong, what a mercy it is for you that there is something better than a bronze serpent in the last day's march to Heaven and that, as you look to Him, you shall live! So, if you have been numbered among the people of God and yet have transgressed against Him, and have lost the joy of salvation—come back to Him, for the Savior's Sacrifice is available for you and God says concerning you, "They shall be as though I had not cast them aside."

When I get home at night, I never feel satisfied with any sermon that I have preached—in fact I have long ago given up all idea of preaching according to my own ideal of how it ought to be done—and when I get home, I say to myself, "You did not speak lovingly enough, you were not tender enough, you were not earnest enough." And when I get to bed, I lie and toss about and wish that I could get up and preach again! I daresay I would do it worse the second time, but, oh, I do wish I knew how to get at backsliders, or, indeed, at the heart of anyman who has not yet come to the Savior. What better promise do you ever expect to have than this of my text? "They shall be as though I had not cast them aside." Could God say anything more gracious than that to you? If you do not accept His mercy, it will look as if you were desperately set on being God's enemy! Let him do what he likes, I, for my part, cannot see what more God can say!

Now, supposing you refuse Him, then it shall be harder with you as you go on in sin. You are not very comfortable in your mind, even now. When you are obliged to be alone, you feel very miserable. When that dear child of yours was lately carried to the grave, you began to think—and you cannot bear to see

yourself as you really are. You know that you have to hurry from one amusement to another and get into company so as to try to silence the voice of conscience. Now that you are not living near God and are not seeking Christ, you are unhappy. But you will be more unhappy, later, than you are at present! If you reject such terms as these, the guilt of your refusal will lie on your conscience and it will worry you more and more—and it ought to do so.

And then, what is worse, it may happen to you that some future day, when you come to die, this service, and even my poor feeble attempt to bring my Master's message to you, will come up before your mind's eye and you will say, "I was fairly bid to come and grand stipulations were made that it should be unto me as though God had never cast me aside, yet I would not come." Oh, such a reflection as that will make your death-pillow very hard!

And when you lift up your eyes, in the day of judgment, and find yourself about to be condemned by Christ, it will put a terrible sting into that just sentence as you think, "There was a time when mercy was within my reach. There was an hour when I stood on praying ground and pleading terms with God, and when the preacher, as best he could, pleaded with me, in God's name, and said that if I would repent, and return unto the Lord, it would be as though I had never been cast off because of my sin. Yet I would not have the mercy of God and I have perished by my own hands." Let it not be so, I implore you! There are those here whom I have looked for with eager heart. I have pleaded with them and I know that they are within an inch of decision—but that last inch is damning them! If they do not soon yield to Christ, they will perish. May God awaken them from their fatal slumber, even now, and unto His name shall be praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 51

A Psalm of David, after Nathan had rebuked him and he had been convinced of his great guilt in having sinned with Bathsheba. The music to which this Psalm can be sung must be composed of sighs, groans, sobs and cries. I believe that many of us here present have prayed this prayer of David many times—and he who has never prayed it has need to begin to do so at once! That is an old proverb, but a true one—"There is no road to Heaven except by Weeping Cross." He that has never repented will have to repent if he is ever to enter into life eternal. Hear, then, the prayer of David.

Verse 1. Have mercy upon me, O God. 'Nothing but mercy will meet my case. Your justice frowns upon me. Your anger frightens me. 'Have mercy upon me'—great mercy, unmeasured mercy, undeserved mercy—'Have mercy upon me, O God.'

1. According to Your loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions. David cannot stand himself while he reads the black record, so he prays, "Lord, blot it out! Blot it out from the sight of my eyes; but, chiefly, blot it out from Your eyes. Let not the record stand against me in Your Book of Remembrance. I cannot blot it out—not even with my blood, much less with my tears—but You can blot it out with a Savior's blood. Lord, blot it out, according to the multitude of Your tender mercies."

2. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. You see, the Psalmist multiplies the expressions he uses because he sees the indelible character of sin apart from a miracle of mercy. "Wash me, O Lord! Water must be used, but if that will not cleanse me, then use fire! Use anything, only cleanse me. First, blot my sin out of Your book, and then blot it out of my nature. Take my sin away, O God! What can I do unless You wash me and cleanse me?"

3. For I acknowledge my transgressions. That is the great point! There can be no cleansing, no washing, no blotting out of our guilt till there is a fair and square acknowledgment of it. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

3. And my sin is always before me. ' 'Wherever I go, I see it, as though it were painted on my very eyeballs! I cannot see anything without seeing my sin! It stares me in the face—it is always before me."

4. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight Oh, what an awful thing, to commit adultery in the sight of God! It is horrible, but what must it be to commit any sin in the sight of God? Will a rebel talk treason in the presence of his king? Most men court the darkness that they may not be seen to do evil, but it is the venom of our sin that we commit it when God is present and looking on. Ah, me!

4. That You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge. Another judge has to decide by the evidence that is brought before him, but this Judge has seen the evil for Himself. It was done before His very eyes and, therefore, He is clear when He judges.

5. Behold, I was shaped in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me. "If I had not been bad, I would not have acted so badly. The streams betray the fountain. If I had not been wicked at the core, I would not have acted so wickedly, but the evil tree has brought forth evil fruit." It is well when actual sin leads us to feel the depth of our original and natural sin.

6. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. The outward part is very important, but the inward part is much more so because the outward springs from the inward, and a man would not be outwardly guilty if he were not first inwardly evil. Hence, David cries for cleansing and truth and wisdom in the inward parts.

7. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. "Take the bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood of the lamb, and then purge me with it, and I shall be clean." What a wonderful faith this is! "I who am so black, I who am black as Hell, yet, if You but purge me with the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ, I shall be clean."

7. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Again, I say, what grand faith this is! The faith which believes that another can be cleansed, is very easy. The faith which, in times of joy, believes that the soul can be cleansed, is very simple. But when guilt lies heavy on you and the hand of God seems to break you into pieces in His wrath, it is grand faith to be able to then say, "Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." May God give every sinner here that blessed faith!

8, 9. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. "Do not look at my sins, Lord. Forget them! Turn Your back upon them and blot out all my iniquities." David comes back to his first prayer. "End my sins, Lord; blot them out, as when an account stands against a debtor, and the creditor erases it from the book. Do so with my sin."

10. Create in me a clean, heart, O God. Yes, we need our Creator to come and deal with us again. None but God can save us. The Omnipotence that made the heavens and the earth must be put forth to make us anew.

10. And renew a right spirit within me. Are you praying this prayer, dear Friend? Is your heart praying it while we read it?

11. Cast me not away from Your Presence. "Dismiss me not Your service, Lord." "Chase me not out of doors! Banish me not from where Your face may be seen—'Cast me not away from Your Presence."

11. And take not Your Holy spirit from me. "For, if You do, I am utterly undone. I shall go from bad to worse. I shall never repent. I shall never believe. I am as good as damned already if You take Your Holy Spirit from me! Therefore, O Lord, take not Your Spirit away from me."

12. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation. "I had it once, Lord—restore it to me—bring it back."

12. And uphold me with Your free Spirit "That I shall not turn aside again. O lift me up, and keep me up, and help me to rise higher and higher!"

13. Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You. Pardoned sinners make fine preachers. The man who has never felt the burden of sin is not fit to preach to burdened souls. Oh, but when that burden is taken off our backs and our hearts, we are ready to leap for joy! Then we cry—

"Now will I tell to sinners round What a dear Savior I have found! I'll point to Your redeeming blood, And say, 'Behold the way to God.

14. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God. I t took David a long time to come to that point and to call his sin by its right name. He had really been the murderer of Uriah, but he tried to cover his guilt by saying, "The sword devours one as well as another." But now he tells the whole truth—"Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God."

14, You are the God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. "Once let me get rid of my great sin and I will give You great praise. Wash my blood-guiltiness away with the blood of Jesus, and then I will never leave off proclaiming the glory of Your Grace."

15, 16. O Lord, open my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it "Bullocks, rams, lambs—You care not for these."

16, 17. You delight not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Come, poor souls, you that are heavy with guilt! You that lie at death's dark door, condemned by reason of a whole life of sin, offer to God this Sacrifice that He will not despise! The Jews brought their bullocks—you come and bring your broken hearts and contrite spirits! They presented to God the fat of fed beasts—you come and bring your broken-hearted groans, for God will not despise them!

18, 19. Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem. Then shall You bepleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering, and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar. If sin is pardoned, we may offer to God anything that we can, and He will accept it. But first of all we must get pardon—pardon through Jesus Christ—or else our offerings are a vain oblation. God bless the reading of this Psalm to everyone beneath this dome, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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