

The Mysteries of the Brazen Serpent

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon explains how faith in Christ lifted up on the cross is the sole remedy for sin and eternal death, using the metaphor of the brazen serpent lifted by Moses.

Scripture: John 3:14, Numbers 21:6-9, Isaiah 53:3, 1 Corinthians 1:18

Topics: "Salvation", "Faith", "Christ Crucified"

Description

In this powerful sermon, C.H. Spurgeon expounds on the biblical metaphor of the brazen serpent lifted by Moses as a type of Christ crucified. He vividly describes the perilous condition of sinners and the only remedy found in faith in Jesus lifted up on the cross. Spurgeon challenges ministers to boldly proclaim this gospel and calls sinners to look in faith for salvation. This sermon blends vivid imagery with deep theological insight to awaken hearts to the necessity of Christ's atoning work.

Transcript

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”—John 3:14.

WE are told by wise men that all languages are based upon figures, that the speech of men who are uncivilized is mainly composed of figures; and that indeed the language of the most civilized, when cleaved so as to bring it to its natural foundation, is based upon a set of metaphors perceived by the mind, and then used in language. This much I know, that when we would teach children to speak, we are accustomed to call things, not exactly by the names by which they are known to us, but by some name which represents, for instance, the kind of noise which is uttered by some animal; but which in some way or other, by a species of figure, is easily understood by the child to represent the things. But certain it is that among savage nations, the speech is almost entirely composed of metaphors. Hear an Indian warrior addressing the chiefs, and inflaming them for war; he gathers together all the metaphors of heaven and earth to make his speech. And you will note the same thing is true even in the names which the Indian warriors bear. Those of you who are acquainted with their nomenclature will remember, that the strangest names are given to their great men, by way of figure and metaphor to set forth the qualities of their mind.

Now, beloved, it is the same in spiritual language as it is in natural speech Nicodemus was but a child in grace: when Jesus Christ would teach him to speak concerning things of the kingdom, he did not talk to him in abstract words, but he gave him metaphorical words whereby he might understand the essence of the thing better than by giving him a mere abstract term. When he talked to Nicodemus, he did not say

anything about sanctification; but he said, "Except a man be born of water." He did not talk anything to him about the great change of the heart; but he said, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." He would not tell him much about the Spirit when he began, but he said "The wind bloweth where it listeth." And when he wanted to teach him faith he did not begin by saying, "By faith we are allied to Christ, and derive salvation from our living head;" but he said—"Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness." And so the first religious talk of converted men must always be in figures. Not the epistles of Paul, which are pure didactic teaching, but the words of Jesus, must first be applied to the sinner, before he is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and understands the mysteries of the kingdom. And I believe I have hit upon the reason why our Master used this figure, and talked to Nicodemus with metaphor after metaphor, and figure after figure, because the root of all language must be in figures.

And now, to-day, I am about to address the mass of my congregation concerning that simple subject of faith in the Lord Jesus, whereby men are saved. And instead of addressing them in a didactic and doctrinal manner, I shall adopt the parable of my text, and endeavour to imitate the example of my Lord, in trying to make faith plain to those who are but children in grace.

Allow me, then, dear friends, to describe first, the people in the wilderness—the representatives of men who are sinners. Let me describe next, the brazen serpent—the type of Jesus Christ crucified. Let me then note what was to be done with the brazen serpent—it was to be lifted up; and so was Christ to be lifted up. And then let us notice what was to be done by the people who were bitten—they were to look at the serpent; and so sinners must believe in Christ.

I. Our first figure represents MEN IN THE ESTATE OF SIN; and the figure is borrowed from the children of Israel in the wilderness, when they were invaded by the fiery serpents. Can you imagine the horror and dismay depicted upon the countenances of the Israelites, when, for the first time, they saw themselves invaded by an army of fiery flying serpents? They had stood valiantly in fight against Amalek; but these were things that trembled not at the sword. Moses had taught them the use of the bow, as it is written in the book of Jasher, but these were things, against which the arrow could not prevail. They had endured weariness, and thirst and hunger; the sun had sometimes smitten them by day, and the frost by night, and but for God's preservation, the hardships of the wilderness would have cut them off. All these they had endured and were inured to them; but these fiery serpents were novelties; and all new terrors are terrible from their very novelty. Can you imagine how they began to tell one another of the awful visitants which they had beheld! and can you. imagine how their terror spread like wildfire through the camp, and ere the rumour had spread the serpents were devouring them?

And now, dear friends, if we could all of us see our position in this world, we should this day feel as Israel did when they saw the serpents coming upon them. When our children are born into this world, we believe there is sin in them; but it is a terrible thing for us to reflect that even if the serpent had not bitten them in the birth, yet they are surrounded everywhere by innumerable evils! Can a father send his son into this wicked world with a consciousness of all the evils that will surround him, without a sense of terror? And can a Christian man trust himself to walk in the midst of this ungodly and libidinous generation, without feeling that he is surrounded with temptations, which, if he were left to himself, would be a thousand times more dangerous to him than the most destroying of serpents?

But the picture blackens; we must have deeper shades to paint it. Behold the people after they were bitten! Can you picture their writhings and contortions when the poison of the serpent had infected their veins? We are told by the old writers that these serpents when they bit caused vehement heat, so that

there was a pain throughout the body, as if a hot iron had been sent along the veins. Those who had been bitten had a great thirst; they drank incessantly, and still cried for water to quench the burnings within. It was a hot fire which was lit in the fountain, and which ran through every nerve and every sinew of the man; they were racked in pain, and died in most fearful convulsions. Now my brethren, we cannot say that sin instantly produces such an effect as this upon the men who are the subjects of it; but we do affirm, that, let sin alone, and it will develop itself in miseries far more extreme than ever the bite of the serpent could have caused. It is true the young man who quaffs the poisoned cup of intoxication, wots not that there is a serpent there; for there is no serpent except in the dregs thereof. It is sure that the woman who boasts herself of her riches, and arrays herself right gaudily in her pride, wots not that a serpent binds the zone of her waist; for there is no serpent there as she knoweth, but she shall know it when the days of her frivolity are ended. It is true he that curseth God knows not that a viper hath infused the poison which he speaks out against his Maker; but he shall know it in days to come. Look ye at a bloated drunkard; see him after years of intoxication have defaced all that was manlike in him, as he totters to his grave a poor feeble creature; the pillars of his house are shaken, his strength has failed him, and that which God had meant to be his own image hath become the image of misery incarnate! See the lascivious debauchee after his brief day of pleasure has closed!—No, it is too loathsome for me to paint; my lips refuse to depict the miseries which our hospitals see every day; the awful loathsomeness, the accursed disease which eats up the very bones of those who indulge in sin. Fiery serpents, ye are nothing when compared with fiery lusts! ye may infuse poison into the blood; but lusts do that, and do something more, for they infuse damnation into the soul! When sin has had its perfect work; when its last fair conception has been brought forth, and hath developed itself in the dire crime and the loathsome iniquity—then we have a picture which serpent-bitten Israel would not set forth to us in all its horrors!

And the shades thicken yet again; the darkness lowers, and the clouds are heavier! How awful must have been the death of those who died by the serpents! There are some deaths which are sweet to think upon. The death of the late eminent preacher, Dr. Beaumont, who died in his pulpit, was a death which all of us might envy; whose released spirit, whilst the singing of God's praise was ascending up to heaven, left his body, and was forthwith raised to the throne of God. The death of him, who having served his Master, sinks like a shock of corn fully ripe, or like a sun that hath run its race, is something to be noted and remembered with delight. But the death of the sinner, who hath been bitten by his lusts, and hath not been saved by faith in Christ—oh, how terrible! It is not in the power of mortal language to depict the horrors of the death-bed of a man who has lived without God and without Christ. I challenge all the orators that have ever lived, to draw forth from their vocabulary, words full enough of horror and of terror to depict the departing scene of the man who has lived at enmity with God, and who dies with his conscience quickened then. Some men it is true live in sin, and take the last dregs of their infatuation before they die, and sink into the pit blindfolded, without the slightest pang of horror; but other men who have had their consciences awakened, die not so. Oh, the shrieks, the yells, the screams! oh, the face of anguish, the contortions, the misery. Have you never heard how men do bend their fists and swear they will not die; and how they start forth, and declare—"I cannot, and I must not die; I am unprepared!" Starting back from the fiery gulph they clutch the physician, and desire him, if possible, to lengthen out the thread of their existence! Ay, many a nurse has vowed that she would never nurse such a man again, for the horrors would be with her till she died.

And now, my dear hearers, you are not dying now; but you will be dying soon. None of you have taken a lease of your lives; it is impossible for you to guarantee to yourselves existence for another hour. And if you are Godless and Christless, ye have all in your veins the venom of that death unutterable which will

make your departure doleful beyond expression! I would to God I could cut the cords of my stammering tongue so as to address you with vehemence and passion upon this subject. Men are dying every day around us; at this very hour there are thousands departing into the world of spirits. In upper chambers, where mourning relatives are pouring floods of tears upon their burning brows; far away on the wild sea, where the sea-gull utters the only scream over the shipwrecked mariner; down, deep, deep, deep, in the lowest valley, and high upon the loftiest hills, men are dying now, and dying in all the agonies I have sought to describe, but have failed to do. Ah, and ye must die also! and will ye march on heedlessly; will ye go on step after step, singing merrily all the way, and dreaming not of that which is to come! Oh, will ye be like the silly bullock that goeth easily to the slaughter, or will ye be like the lamb that licks the butcher's knife! Mad, mad O man, that thou shouldst go to eternal wrath and to the chambers of fell destruction, and yet no sigh comes from thy heart; no groan is uttered by thy lips! Thou diest every day, but groanest never, till the last day of thy death, which is the beginning of thy misery. Yes, the condition of the mass of men is just like the condition of the children of Israel when they were bitten by the serpents.

II. And now comes THE REMEDY. The remedy of the bitten Israelites was a brazen serpent; and the remedy for sinners is Christ crucified. "Stuff, nonsense," said some of the children of Israel, when they heard that a brazen serpent lifted up on a pole was to be the means of their cure. Many of them laughed in the jollity of unbelief—absurd, ridiculous; who ever heard of such a thing, how can it be? A serpent of brass lifted up upon a pole, to cure us of these wounds, by being looked Upon! why all the skill of the physicians cannot do it; will a glance at a brazen Serpent do it? It is impossible!" This much I know, if they did not despise the brazen serpent, there be many that despise Christ crucified. Shall I tell you what they say of him? They say of him as they did of the brazen serpent. Some Wise one said—"Why it was a serpent that did the mischief; how can a serpent Undo it?" Yes, and men will say, "It was by man that sin and death came into the World, and can a man be the means of our salvation?" "Ah," says another, having the prejudice of a Jew about him, "and what a man he was! No king, no prince, no mighty conqueror; he was but a poor peasant, and he died upon a cross." Ah, so said some in the camp; they said it was only a brazen serpent, not a golden one, and how could a brazen serpent be of any use to them? It would not sell for much if it were broken up. What was the use of it? And so men say of Christ. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and they hide their faces from him because they cannot see how he is adapted for their cure.

But some will have it that the preaching of the cross not only cannot save, but will increase the evil. Old physicians tell us that brass was the most likely thing in the world to make people die the quicker; the sight of anything that is bright would have the effect of making the poison yet more strong in its effects, so that it would be death at once to look upon brass. And yet strange to say, to look at the brazen serpent saved them. "Now," says the infidel, "I cannot see how men are to be saved from sin by the preaching of Christ." "Truly, sir," he says, "you go and tell men that though they have sinned never so much, if they do but believe, their sins shall all be washed away! Why they will take advantage of that, and they will be more wicked than ever they were. You tell men that their good works are of no avail whatever, that they must rest on Christ alone!" "Why," says the sceptic, "my dear fellow, it will be the destruction of all morality; instead of a cure, it will be a death. Why preach it?" Ah, the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved, it is Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. I cannot, myself, but admit, that at first sight the brazen serpent seems to be the most absurd invention, in itself, for curing those who were bitten, that ever mind of man could have invented; and yet I see in the brazen serpent, when I come to study it, the highest wisdom that even God himself could develop. I grant you that the cross of Christ also does in its outward appearance seem to be the simplicity of simplicities; something

which any one might have thought of, but which would have been beneath their thought. But when you come to study and understand the marvellous scheme of God's justice vindicated, and man pardoned through the atoning blood of the cross, I say, that not even the mighty intellect of God could have conceived a wiser plan, than the wisdom of God displayed in Christ Jesus crucified.

But remember, that much as those who heard of the brazen serpent might have despised it, yet there was no other means of cure. And, now hear me for one moment, while I tell the whole story of salvation. Men, brethren, and fathers, we are born of a sinful generation, and we have ourselves increased our guilt, for us there is no hope; do what we may, we cannot save ourselves.

"Could our zeal no respite know,

Could our tears for ever flow,

All for sin could not atone."

But brethren, Christ Jesus, God's eternal Son, came into this world, and was born of the virgin Mary, he lived a doleful life of misery, and at last he died a death accompanied by unutterable pangs—that was the punishment of the sins of those who, as penitents, come to Christ. If you this day so repent, and put your trust in Jesus, you have in your trust and repentance a sure proof that Christ was punished for you.

III. And now WHAT WAS TO BE DONE WITH THE BRAZEN SERPENT? The text says, "Moses lifted it up;" and we read he was to lift it up upon a pole. Ah, dear friends, and Christ Jesus must be lifted up. He has been lifted up; wicked men lifted him up, when, with nails on an accursed tree, they crucified him! God the Father hath lifted him up; for he hath highly exalted him, far above principalities and powers. But the minister's business is to lift him up. There are some ministers who forget that their errand in the world is to lift up Christ. Suppose Moses, when God told him to lift up the brazen serpent, had said in himself, "It is becoming in me, before I lift it up, that I should give some explanatory remarks. And instead of lifting it up before the vulgar crowd, I will initiate a proved few, so that they may understand about it. I will arrange around this serpent a few golden cloths, I will garnish it with silver tapestry, so that it may not be looked upon by vulgar eyes, and I will endeavour to explain it to them." Now this is what many priestly persons in this age and in ages past have tried to do. The gospel! oh, that must not be preached to the poor! "The Bible," says the Church of Rome, "must not be read by the vulgar crowd! How can they understand it? It is a thing too sacred for the common people to see! No, wrap up the brazen serpent; wrap it up in a cloth, do not let it be exhibited." "No," say our Protestant ministers, many of them, "the Bible must be given, but we must never alter the translation of it!" There are some passages in the present translation that are so dark, that no man can understand them without an explanation. "But no," say the divines of this age, "we will not have the Bible translated properly, the people must always put up with a faulty translation. The brazen serpent must be wrapped up, because it would a little unsettle matters, if we were to have a new translation!" "No," say others, "we will have a new translation, if need be; but there are some parts of the truth that ought not to be preached!" I am not now misrepresenting some of my brethren in the ministry. I know they hold that some doctrines of God's Word ought not to be preached—every day at least. They say Election is true; but they never mention it. They say Predestination is no doubt a godly doctrine, but it ought to be kept from the people. It must be in their creed, or else they would not be sound; but in the pulpit it must not be mentioned at all. "No," says the Church of Rome, "if we have a brazen serpent, we will put it in the sanctum, where it cannot be seen, and we will have the smoke of incense before it, so that it shall not be plainly discerned; the pomp, and ceremony, and trappings of formality, shall shield it from the

vulgar gaze of the people; we will have it girt all round with a thousand ceremonies, which will abstract the gospel, and leave the people to be content with the ceremonies!" Now in these days there are great tendencies to that. The Puseyites are trying, instead of preaching the simplicity of the gospel, to give us figures. "Oh," they say, "what an elevating thing is a Gothic church; how it lifts the soul to heaven to sit in a place where there is a forest of Gothic pillars! oh, what a sweet influence a well played organ has on the mind!" They tell us there is a kind of heavenly influence poured forth from vestments when well worn; and that to see the priest discharge his functions in a holy and reverent manner, is a most excellent way of impressing souls. They will have us believe that holly at Christmas time is a most heavenly and spiritual thing. They teach us that our passions will be carried to heaven by these little sprigs of green; that putting flowers now and then where the gas lamps should be, has a most extraordinary influence in carrying away our souls to paradise; that burning candles in the daylight is just the most splendid way in all the world of showing forth the sun of righteousness! Now, we do not exactly fall in with their views. We believe that these places are good for children; they are not so liable to cry there, for there are more things to amuse them. But we never could see how a man—who was a man—could ever sit down to a thing so infamously namby-pamby as the religion of a Puseyite. There is nothing in it but pure nonsense, and all that the gospel may not be seen. It is as if Aaron had filled his censer full of incense and waved it before the brazen serpent, and made a great smoke, so that the people could not see; and then poor Moses tarried behind and tried to look, but none of the poor souls could see because there was the smoke before them. No, the only thing we have to do with Christ Jesus crucified is, just to lift him up and preach him. There is many a man who could only speak in a ploughman's dialect, who will wear a bright and starry crown in heaven, because he lifted Christ up, and sinners saw and lived. And there is many a learned doctor, who spoke with the brogue of the Egyptian, and, with dark and mysterious language, he talked he knew not what, 'who, after having ended his course, shall enter heaven without a solitary star in his crown, never having lifted up Christ, nor won crowns for his Master. Let each of us who are called to the solemn work of the ministry remember, that we are not called to lift up doctrine, or church governments, or particular denominations; our business is to lift up Christ Jesus and to preach him fully. There may be times when church government is to be discussed, and peculiar doctrines are to be vindicated. God forbid that we should silence any part of truth: but the main work of the ministry—its every day work—is just exhibiting Christ. and crying out to sinners, "Believe, believe, believe on him who is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world."

And let it be remembered, that if the minister doth but preach Christ plainly, that is all he has to do; if with affection and prayer he preaches Christ fully, if there were never a soul saved—which I believe would be impossible—he would have done his work, and his Master would say, "Well done." I have gone away from this hall, after preaching upon divers doctrines, and though many have complimented me, foolishly, I have said to myself, "I can but groan that I had such a subject at all." And at another time, when I have been faltering in my delivery, and committed a thousand blunders in my speech, I have gone away as happy as a prince, because I have said, "I did preach Christ." There was enough for sinners to be saved by; and if all the papers in the world should abuse me, and all the men in the world should say 'cry him down;' he will still live and still breathe as long as he feels in himself, "I have preached to sinners, and Christ has been preached to them, so as they could understand and lay hold on him and be saved."

IV. And now, dear friends, I have almost concluded; but I have come to that part of the discourse which needs most of power. WHAT WERE ISRAEL TO DO? What are convinced sinners to do? The Israelites were to look; the convinced sinner must believe. Do you picture Moses with his reverend head standing erect, and boldly crying out with all his might—"Look, look, look!" Do you see him, as with his right hand

he grasps the pole, and lifts it up, and marches with it through the camp like a great standard-bearer, pointing with his finger, and speaking with hand, and eye, and lip, and foot, and every part of the body, as he passionately bids poor bitten Israel to look? You can, perhaps, conceive the scene as men roll over one another, and the dying and almost dead behold the brazen serpent. and begin to live. Now note, there may be some in the camp who would not look; they obstinately shut their eyes, and when the pole was brought near them they would not look. Perhaps it was through unbelief; they said, "What was the use of it? it could do them no good!" There is the wretch, the pole is before him, and yet he will not look. Well what will become of him? Oh, the death-pangs are upon him; see how death is twitching him! How his flesh seems to writhe in agony! He has shut his eyes with all the force and passion he can command, lest they should be opened on that brazen serpent, and he should live! Ah! my hearer, and I have such an one here to-day. I have many here who will not come to Christ that they may be saved—men, who when the gospel is preached to them resist it, despise it, and reject it. Though the reception of the gospel be all of grace, yet the rejection of it is all of man. And I have some here who have often been touched in their conscience; they have often been moved to believe, but they have been desperately set on mischief, and they would not come to Christ. Ah, sinner, thou little knowest how direful thy doom shall be. Thou mayest this day tell me thou dost not believe on the Saviour; thou mayest turn away thine ear from the warning, and say, "What need to make so great a noise about it? I would rather die than believe; for I do not think that Christ can save! What good is there in it?" Ah, sir, you may reject me; but remember there is a greater preacher than I am coming to you soon. He with a skeleton arm, and bony finger, and cold speech, he will freeze, and yet convince! It is one called Death! Look me in the face to-day; and tell me I preach you a lie—you can do that easily! Look death in the face to-morrow, and tell him that, and you will find it harder work. Ay, and if you have the fool-hardiness to do that, you will not look at the face of the Great Judge, when he shall sit upon the throne, and tell him that his gospel was not true; for affrighted and alarmed, you shall rush hither and thither to hide yourselves from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne. Perhaps there were some in the camp who said they would look by-and-by. "Oh," said they, "there is no need to look now; the venom has not yet worked its effects: we are not yet dead; a little longer!" And ere they uttered the last word they were stiff and clay-cold! How many do the same? They will not be religious yet; another day, another hour. They believe they can be pious when they like, which is a fallacy; and therefore they will postpone the matter as long as they may. How many have postponed the day of salvation, until the day of damnation has come, before they had repented! Oh, how many have said, "A little sleep, a little folding of the hands!" and they have been like men on shipboard, when the ship was foundering, who would not escape while they might, but still tarried on deck; at last a sea swallowed them, and they went down alive into the depths. Take heed of procrastination; delays are dangerous, and some delays are damnable! Look hither, look hither to Christ bleeding on cross. Look now, for the Spirit saith, "to-day: if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts as in the day of provocation."

I doubt not, there were some there who tried physicians: "Look at the brazen serpent?" said they, "not we. Doctor, come hither, bring your balsam; can you not take the caustic and burn out this poison from my arm, and then pour in some cordial that will save me? Physician, have you no antidote that might cool my blood? Ah. I laugh at that brazen serpent; I will not look at it; I trust to your skill. O learned physician!" And how many now do the same? They say, "I will not believe in Christ; I will try and do better; I will reform myself, I will attend to all the ceremonies of the church. Can I not help myself, and so improve myself that I shall have no need of Jesus?" Ah, ye may try; ye may lay that flattering unction to your souls, and film the ulcerous wound, but all the while dark corruption shall sleep within, and shall at last break out in sore flames upon thee; when thou shalt have no time to attempt a cure, but shalt be swept away—not to the hospital of mercy, but like the leper, without the city, thou shalt be cast away from hope of blessedness.

It may be there were some who were so busy looking at their sores, that they did not think of looking at the serpent. Poor creatures, they lay in their misery, and kept looking first at that wound on the foot, and then at that one on the hand; and crying over their sores, and never looked at the serpent. Scores and hundreds perish in that way. ' Oh," says the sinner, "I have been so sinful!" Man, what has that to do with it? Christ is all meritorious, look at him. "No, no," says another, "I cannot look at Christ. Oh, sir, you do not know what crimes I have committed; I have been a drunkard, I have been a swearer, I have been a whore-monger, or what not; how can I be saved!" My dear man, your wounds have nothing to do with it: it is just Christ on the cross. If any poor creature, bitten by the serpent, had said to me—" Now it is no good my looking there; see how often I have been bitten; there is a huge serpent twisting round my loins, there is another devouring my hand, how can I live?" I should say to him, "My dear fellow, do not take any notice whether you have got one serpent or fifty serpents, one bite or fifty bites; all you have to do is to look. You have nothing to do with these bites, except that you have to feel them, and perish by them unless you look. But just look straight to Christ." And now thou chief of sinners, believe in the Lord Jesus; and be thy sins never so many, he is able to save unto the uttermost, them that come unto God by him. And yet how many perish through those divers delusions, with the gospel before their very eyes, lifted up on the pole so plainly that we wonder they do not see it.

And now I must tell you one or two sweet things for the encouragement of the poor sinner. Oh, you that are guilty this morning, and know that you are so, let me say to you, "Look to Christ." For remember the brazen serpent was lifted up, that every one in the camp who was bitten might live; and now Christ is lifted up to you, that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Sinner, the devil says you are shut out; tell him that "whosoever" shuts out none. Oh that precious word, "whosoever." Poor soul, I see thee clutch at it and say, "Then, Sir, if I believe, he will not cast me away." I see the harlot in all her guilt bemoaning her iniquity; she says it is impossible that Christ should save. But she hears it said, "Whosoever," and she looks and lives! Remember, it mattered not how old they were, nor how much bitten they were, nor whereabouts in the camp they lived; they did but look and live. And now ye that have grown grey in iniquity, whose hairs might rather be black than white, if they showed forth your character, for it has been blackened by years of vice. Remember there is the same Christ for big sinners as for little sinners; the same Christ for grey heads as for babes; the same Christ for poor as for rich; the same Christ for chimney sweeps as for monarchs; the same Christ for prostitutes as for saints: "Whosoever." I use broad words that I may take a broad range, and sweep the whole universe of sinners through—whosoever looketh to Christ shall live. And remember it does not say that if they looked but little they should not live. Perhaps there was some of them so bitten that their eyelids were swollen and they could scarcely see. Old Christopher Ness says, "There may have been some of them that had so little sight that they could but squint from one eye." Says he, in his strange language, "If they did but dart a little glance at the brazen serpent, they lived." And you who say you cannot believe; if God gives you only half a grain of faith, that will carry you to heaven. If you can only say, "O Lord, I would believe, help thou mine unbelief;" if you can but put out your hand with Simon Peter, and say, "Lord save, or I perish," it is enough. If you can only pray that poor publican's prayer—" God be merciful to me a sinner," that will do. And if you cannot sing with some of the old experienced saints—

"My name from the palms of his hands,

Eternity cannot erase;

remember it is quite enough, if you can only sing—

"I can but perish if I go,

I am resolved to try;

For if I stay away, I know

I must for ever die."

And now poor soul I have almost done. But I cannot let thee go. I see thee with the tear in thine eye; I hear thee confessing thy guilt, and bemoaning thy sin; I bid thee look to my Master and live. Be not afraid to try my Lord and Master. I know what thy bashfulness is; I have felt the same, and thought he never would save me. Come soul, thou art in secret now with thyself; for though there be thou sands around thee, thou thinkest I am speaking alone to thee. And so I am. My brother, my sister, you are weeping to-day on account of sin—look to Jesus. And for your encouragement note these three things. Note first that Jesus Christ was put on the cross on purpose for you to look at. The only reason why he died, was that poor sinners might look at him and be saved. Now, my dear brethren, if that was Christ's purpose in being hung on the tree, you need not think you may not do it. If God sends a river, and sends it for us to drink of, will you disappoint him in not drinking? No, rather you will say. "Did he design me to drink it? Then will I drink it." Now, Jesus hung on the cross on purpose to be looked at. Look at him, look at him, and live. Remember again for your encouragement, he asks you to look; he invites you to believe; he has sent his minister this day, even to command you to do it; he has said to me, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." Now I need not simply say that my Master's door is wide open for you; I will say something more: he has told me to ask you to come in. Wisdom crieth aloud, she uttereth her voice in the streets, she inviteth you; she saith, "My oxen and my fatlings are killed, all things are ready, come ye to the supper." Yea, my Master has given instructions to his Holy Spirit that if men will not come of themselves, he should compel them to come in that his house may be filled. Then, poor sinner, you must be welcome, he will have enough sinners to fill his table; and if he has made you feel your sinnership—come and welcome, sinner, come. And my last encouragement is this: Come to my Master and try him, because he promises to save you. The promises of Jesus Christ are all of them as good as oaths; they never fail. He says—"Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Now, if I had here a man who declared himself to be the vilest wretch on earth, I would say to him—Young man, I am very fond of proving the truthfulness of God's promises; now God says, if you believe you shall not perish. My dear friend, when a common sinner tries, and it does not fail, it is some proof of its truthfulness: but you are an extraordinary sinner. Now, thou extraordinary sinner, venture thyself on this promise; he says thou shalt not perish; come and try him. And remember, God must undeify himself, and cease to be true, before he can ever damn a sinner who has believed in Christ. Come risk it, thou who art so laden with sin that thou staggerest under thy burden; fall down on the simple promise, "He is able to save to the uttermost." Just cast thyself wholly on Christ, and if thou art not saved, God's book is a lie, and God himself has broken his truth. But that cannot be. Come thou and try it. "Whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

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