

The Warrant of Faith

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that the sole and immutable warrant for a sinner to believe in Jesus Christ is the direct command of God to believe, apart from any personal worthiness or experience.

Scripture: 1 John 3:23, Galatians 3:10, Romans 3:28, Romans 4:5, Hebrews 7:25, John 3:16, Romans 5:1

Topics: "Faith", "Justification", "Grace"

Description

In this powerful sermon, C.H. Spurgeon expounds on the commandment to believe in Jesus Christ as the sole warrant for saving faith. He contrasts the law's condemnation with the gospel's free grace, emphasizing that faith is a trusting reliance on Christ alone, not on personal worthiness or feelings. Spurgeon challenges legalistic views that require repentance or regeneration before one can believe, affirming that the gospel is for sinners as sinners. This sermon calls listeners to embrace the simplicity and certainty of faith grounded solely in God's command.

Transcript

"And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ."—1 John 3:23.

THE old law shines in terrible glory with its ten commandments. There are some who love that law so much, that they cannot pass over a Sabbath without its being read in their hearing, accompanied by the mournful petition, "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law." Nay, some are so foolish as to enter into a covenant for their children, that "they shall keep all God's holy commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life." Thus they early wear a yoke which neither they nor their fathers can bear, and daily groaning under its awful weight, they labour after righteousness where it never can be found. Over the tables of the law in every Church, I would have conspicuously printed these gospel words, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." The true believer has learned to look away from the killing ordinances of the old law. He understands that "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written: Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." He therefore turns with loathing from all trust in his own obedience to the ten commands, and lays hold with joy upon the hope set before him in the one commandment contained in my text, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ."

We sing, and sing rightly too—

“My soul, no more attempt to draw

Thy life and comfort from the law,”

for from the law death cometh and not life, misery and not comfort. “To convince and to condemn is all the law can do.” O, when will all professors, and especially all professed ministers of Christ, learn the difference between the law and the gospel? Most of them make a mingle-mangle, and serve out deadly potions to the people, often containing but one ounce of gospel to a pound of law, whereas, but even a grain of law is enough to spoil the whole thing. It must be gospel, and gospel only. “If it be of grace, it is not of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; and if it be of works, then it is not of grace, otherwise work is no more work.”

The Christian then, turning his attention to the one command of the gospel, is very anxious to know first, what is the matter of the believing here intended; and secondly, what is the sinner’s warrant for so believing in Christ; nor will he fail to consider the mandate of the gospel.

I. First then, THE MATTER OF BELIEVING, or what is it that a man is to believe in order to eternal life. Is it the Athanasian creed? Is it true, that if a man does not hold that confession whole and entire, he shall without doubt perish everlastingly? We leave those to decide who are learned in matters of bigotry. Is it any particular form of doctrine? Is it the Calvinistic or the Arminian scheme? For our own part we are quite content with our text—believing on “his Son Jesus Christ.” That faith which saves the soul is believing on a person, depending upon Jesus for eternal life.

To speak more at large of the things which are to be believed in order to justification by faith. they all relate to the person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must believe him to be God’s Son—so the text puts it—“His Son.” We must grasp with strong confidence the great fact that he is God: for nothing short of a divine Saviour can ever deliver us from the infinite wrath of God. He who rejects the true and proper Godhead of Jesus of Nazareth, is not saved, and cannot be, for he believes not on Jesus as God’s Son. Furthermore, we must accept this Son of God as “Jesus,” the Saviour. We must believe that Jesus Christ the Son of God, became man out of infinite love to man, that he might save his people from their sins, according to that worthy saying, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” even the chief. We must look upon Jesus as “Christ,” the anointed of the Father, sent into this world on salvation’s errand, not that sinners might save themselves, but that he, being mighty to save, might bring many sons unto glory. We must believe that Jesus Christ, Coming into the world to save sinners, did really effect his mission; that the precious blood which is shed upon Calvary is almighty to atone for sin, and therefore, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, since the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin. We must heartily accept the great doctrine of the atonement—regarding Jesus as standing in the room, place, and stead of sinful men, bearing for them the terror of the law’s curse until justice was satisfied and could demand no more. Moreover, we should rejoice that as Jesus Christ, by his dying, put away for ever the sin of his people, so by his living he gave unto those who trust in him a perfect righteousness, in which, despite their own sins, they are “accepted in the beloved.” We are also taught, that if we heartily trust our soul with Christ, our sins, through his blood, are forgiven, and his righteousness is imputed to us. The mere knowledge of these facts will not, however, save us, unless we really and truly trust our souls in the Redeemer’s hands. Faith must act in this wise: “I believe that Jesus came to save sinners, and therefore, sinner though I be, I rest myself on him; I know that his righteousness justifies the ungodly; I, therefore, though ungodly, trust in him to be my righteousness; I know that his precious blood in heaven prevails with God on the behalf of them that come unto him; and since I come unto him, I know

by faith that I have an interest in his perpetual intercession.”

Now, I have enlarged the one thought of believing on God's Son Jesus Christ. Brethren, I would not darken counsel by words without knowledge. “Believing” is most clearly explained by that simple word “trust.” Believing is partly the intellectual operation of receiving divine truths, but the essence of it lies in relying upon those truths. I believe that, although I cannot swim, yonder friendly plank will support me in the flood—I grasp it, and am saved: the grasp is faith. I am promised by a generous friend that if I draw upon his banker, he will supply all my needs—I joyously confide in him, and as often as I am in want I go to the bank, and am enriched: my going to the bank is faith. Thus faith is accepting God's great promise, contained in the person of his Son. It is taking God at his word, and trusting in Jesus Christ as being my salvation, although I am utterly unworthy of his regard. Sinner, if thou takest Christ to be thy Saviour this day, thou art justified; though thou be the biggest blasphemer and persecutor out of hell, if thou darest to trust Christ with thy salvation, that faith of thine saves thee; though thy whole life may have been as black, and foul, and devilish as thou couldst have made it, yet if thou wilt honour God by believing Christ is able to forgive such a wretch as thou art, and wilt now trust in Jesus' precious blood, thou art saved from divine wrath.

II. The WARRANT OF BELIEVING is the point upon which I shall spend my time and strength this morning. According to my text, the warrant for a man to believe is the commandment of God. This is the commandment, that ye “believe on his Son Jesus Christ.”

Self-righteousness will always find a lodging somewhere or other. Drive it, my brethren, out of the ground of our confidence; let the sinner see that he cannot rest on his good works, then, as foxes will have holes, this self-righteousness will find a refuge for itself in the warrant of our faith in Christ. It reasons thus: “You are not saved by what you do but by what Christ did; but then, you have no right to trust in Christ unless there is something good in you which shall entitle you to trust in him.” Now, this legal reasoning I oppose. I believe such teaching to contain in it the essence of Popish self-righteousness. The warrant for a sinner to believe in Christ is not in himself in any sense or in any manner, but in the fact that he is commanded there and then to believe on Jesus Christ. Some preachers in the Puritanic times, whose shoe latches I am not worthy to unloose, erred much in this matter. I refer not merely to Alleyne and Baxter, who are far better preachers of the law than of the gospel, but I include men far sounder in the faith than they, such as Rogers of Dedham, Shepherd, the author of “The Sound Believer,” and especially the American, Thomas Hooker, who has written a book upon qualifications for coming to Christ. These excellent men had a fear of preaching the gospel to any except those whom they styled “sensible sinners,” and consequently kept hundreds of their hearers sitting in darkness when they might have rejoiced in the light. They preached repentance and hatred of sin as the warrant of a sinner's trusting to Christ. According to them, a sinner might reason thus—“I possess such-and-such a degree of sensibility on account of sin, therefore I have a right to trust in Christ.” Now, I venture to affirm that such reasoning is seasoned with fatal error. Whoever preaches in this fashion may preach much of the gospel, but the whole gospel of the free grace of God in its fulness he has yet to learn. In our own day certain preachers assure us that a man must be regenerated before we may bid him believe in Jesus Christ; some degree of a work of grace in the heart being, in their judgment, the only warrant to believe. This also is false. It takes away a gospel for sinners and offers us a gospel for saints. It is anything but a ministry of free grace.

Others say that the warrant for a sinner to believe in Christ is his election. Now, as his election cannot possibly be known by any man until he has believed, this is virtually preaching that nobody has any known warrant for believing at all. If I cannot possibly know my election before I believe—and yet the minister tells

me that I may only believe upon the ground of my election—how am I ever to believe at all? Election brings me faith, and faith is the evidence of my election; but to say that my faith is to depend upon my knowledge of my election, which I cannot get without faith. is to talk egregious nonsense.

I lay down this morning with great boldness—because I know and am well persuaded that what I speak is the mind of the Spirit—this doctrine that the sole and only warrant for a sinner to believe in Jesus is found in the gospel itself and in the command which accompanies that gospel, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” I shall deal with that matter first of all, negatively, and then, positively.

1. First, **NEGATIVELY**; and here my first observation is that any other way of preaching the gospel-warrant is absurd. If I am to preach faith in Christ to a man who is regenerated, then the man, being regenerated, is saved already, and it is an unnecessary and ridiculous thing for me to preach Christ to him, and bid him to believe in order to be saved when he is saved already, being regenerate. But you will tell me that I ought to preach it only to those who repent of their sins. Very well; but since true repentance of sin is the work of the Spirit, any man who has repentance is most certainly saved, because evangelical repentance never can exist in an unrenewed soul. Where there is repentance there is faith already, for they never can be separated. So, then, I am only to preach faith to those who have it. Absurd, indeed! Is not this waiting till the man is cured and then bringing him the medicine? This is preaching Christ to the righteous and not to sinners. “Nay,” saith one, “but we mean that a man must have some good desires towards Christ before he has any warrant to believe in Jesus.” Friend, do you not know what all good desires have some degree of holiness in them? But if a sinner hath any degree of true holiness in him it must be the work of the Spirit, for true holiness never exists in the carnal mind, therefore, that man is already renewed, and therefore saved. Are we to go running up and down the world, proclaiming life to the living, casting bread to those who are fed already, and holding up Christ on the pole of the gospel to those who are already healed? My brethren, where is our inducement to labour where our efforts are so little needed? If I am to preach Christ to those who have no goodness, who have nothing in them that qualifies them for mercy, then I feel I have a gospel so divine that I would proclaim it with my last breath, crying aloud, that “Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—sinners as sinners, not as penitent sinners or as awakened sinners, but sinners as sinners, sinners “of whom I am chief.”

Secondly, to tell the sinner that he is to believe on Christ because of some warrant in himself, is legal, I dare to say it—legal. Though this method is generally adopted by the higher school of Calvinists, they are herein unsound, uncalvinistic, and legal; it is strange that they who are so bold defenders of free grace should make common cause with Baxterians and Pelagians. I lay it down to be legal for this reason: if I believe in Jesus Christ because I feel a genuine repentance of sin, and therefore have a warrant for my faith, do you not perceive that the first and true ground of my confidence is the fact that I have repented of sin? If I believe in Jesus because I have convictions and a spirit of prayer, then evidently the first and the most important fact is not Christ, but my possession of repentance, conviction, and prayer, so that really my hope hinges upon my having repented; and if this be not legal I do not know what is. Put it lower. My opponents will say, “The sinner must have an awakened conscience before he is warranted to believe on Christ.” Well, then, if I trust Christ to save me because I have an awakened conscience, I say again, the most important part of the whole transaction is the alarm of my conscience, and my real trust hangs there. If I lean on Christ because I feel this and that, then I am leaning on my feelings and not on Christ alone, and this is legal indeed. Nay, even if desires after Christ are to be my warrant for believing, if I am to believe in Jesus not because he bids me, but because I feel some desires after him, you will again with half an eye perceive that the most important source of my comfort must be my own desires. So that we

shall be always looking within. "Do I really desire? If I do, then Christ can save me; if I do not, then he cannot." And so my desire overrides Christ and his grace. Away with such' legality from the earth!

Again, any other way of preaching than that of bidding the sinner believe because God commands him to believe, is a boasting way of faith. For if my warrant to trust in Jesus be found in my experience, my loathings of sin, or my longings after Christ, then all these good things of mine are a legitimate ground of boasting, because though Christ may save me, yet these were the wedding-dress which fitted me to come to Christ. If these be indispensable pre-requisites and conditions, then the man who has them may truly and justly say, "Christ did save me, but I had the pre-requisites and conditions first, and therefore let these share the praise." See, my brethren, those who have a faith which rests upon their own experience, what are they as a rule? Mark them, and you will perceive much censorious bitterness in them, prompting them to set up their own experience as the standard of saintship, which may assuredly make us suspicious whether they ever were humbled in a gospel manner at all, so as to see that their own best feelings, and best repentances, and best experiences in themselves are nothing more nor less than filthy rags in the sight of God. My dear brethren, when we tell a sinner that foul and filthy as he is, without any preparation or qualification, he is to take Jesus Christ to be his all in all, finding in him all that he can ever need, when we dare on the spot to bid the jailor just startled out of sleep, "Believe in Jesus," we leave no room for self-glorification, all must be of grace. When we find the lame man lying at the temple gates, we do not bid him strengthen his own legs. or feel some life in them, but we bid him in the name of Jesus rise up and walk; surely here when God the Spirit owns the Word, all boasting is excluded. Whether I rely on my experience or my good works makes little difference, for either of these reliances will lead to boasting since they are both legal. Law and boasting are twin brothers, but free grace and gratitude always go together.

Any other warrant for believing on Jesus than that which is presented in the gospel is changeable. See, brethren, if my warrant to believe in Christ lies in my meltings of heart and my experiences, then if to-day I have a melting heart and I can pour my soul out before the Lord, I have a warrant to believe in Christ. But to-morrow (who does not know this?) to-morrow my heart may be as hard as a stone, so that I can neither feel nor pray. Then, according to the qualification-theory, I have no right to trust in Christ, my warrant is clean gone from me. According to the doctrine of final perseverance, the Christian's faith is continual, if so the warrant of his faith must be always the same, or else he has sometimes an unwarranted faith which is absurd; it follows from this that the abiding warrant of faith must lie in some immutable truth. Since everything within changes more frequently than ever does an English sky, if my warrant to believe in Christ be based within, it must change every hour; consequently I am lost and saved alternately. Brethren, can these things be so? For my part I want a sure and immutable warrant for my faith; I want a warrant to believe in Jesus which will serve me when the devil's blasphemy comes pouring into my ears like a flood; I want a warrant to believe which will serve me when my lustings and corruptions appear in terrible array, and make me cry out, "O wretched man that I am;" I want a warrant to believe in Christ which will comfort me when I have no good frames and holy feelings, when I am dead as a stone and my spirit lies cleaving to the dust. Such an unfailing warrant to belief in Jesus is found in this precious truth, that his gracious commandment and not my variable experience, is my title to believe on his Son Jesus Christ.

Again, my brethren, any other warrant is utterly incomprehensible. Multitudes of my brethren preach an impossible salvation. How often do poor sinners hunger and thirst to know the way of salvation, and there is no available salvation preached to them. Personally, I do not remember to have been told from the pulpit to believe in Jesus as a sinner. I heard much of feelings which I thought I could never get, and

frames after which I longed; but I found no peace until a true, free grace message came to me, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." See, my brethren, if convictions of soul are necessary qualifications for Christ, we ought to know to an ounce how much of these qualifications are needed. If you tell a poor sinner that there is a certain amount of humblings, and tremblings, and convictions, and heart-searchings to be felt, in order that he may be warranted to come to Christ, I demand of all legal-gospellers distinct information as to the manner and exact degree of preparation required. Brethren, you will find when these gentlemen are pushed into a corner, they will not agree, but will every one give a different standard, according to his own judgment. One will say the sinner must have months of law work; another, that he only needs good desires; and some will demand that he possess the graces of the Spirit—such as humility, godly sorrow, and love to holiness. You will get no clear answer from them. If the sinner's warrant to come is found in the gospel itself, the matter is clear and plain; but what a roundabout plan is that compound of law and gospel against which I Contend! And let me ask you, my brethren, whether such an incomprehensible gospel would do for a dying man? There he lies in the agonies of death. He tells me that he has no good thought or feeling, and asks what he must do to be saved. There is but a step between him and death—another five minutes and that man's soul may be in hell. What am I to tell him? Am I to be an hour explaining to him the preparation required before he may come to Christ? Brethren, I dare not. But I tell him, "Believe, brother, even though it be the eleventh hour; trust thy soul with Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." There is the same gospel for a living man as for a dying man. The thief on the Cross may have had some experience, but I do not find him pleading it; he turns his eye to Jesus, saying, "Lord, remember me !" How prompt is the reply, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." He may have had ongoing desires, he may have had deep convictions, but I am quite sure he did not say, "Lord, I dare not ask thee to remember me, because I do not feel I have repented enough. I dare not trust thee, because I have not been shaken over hell's mouth." No, no, no; he looked to Jesus as he was, and Jesus responded to his believing prayer. It must be so with you, my brethren, for any other plan but that of a sinner's coming to Christ as a sinner, and resting on Jesus just as he is, is utterly incomprehensible, or, if it is to be explained at all, will require a day or two to explain it ill; and that cannot be the gospel which the apostles preached to dying men.

Yet again, I believe that the preaching of alarms of conscience and repentance as qualifications for Christ, is unacceptable to the awakened sinner. I will introduce one, as Saltmarsh does in his "Flowings of Christ's Blood Freely to the Chief of Sinners." Here is a poor brother who dares not believe in Jesus. I will suppose him to have attended a ministry where the preaching is "If you have felt this, if you have felt that, then you may believe." When you went to your minister in trouble, what did he say to you? "He asked me whether I felt my need of Christ, I told him I did not think I did, at least I did not feel my need enough. He told me that I ought to meditate upon the guilt of sin, and consider the dreadful character of the wrath to come, and I might in this way feel my need more." Did you do so? "I did; but it seemed to me as if while I meditated upon the terrors of judgment, my heart grew harder instead of softer, and I seemed to be desperately set, and resolved in a kind of despair to go on in my ways; yet, some-times I did have some humblings and some meltings of heart." What did your minister tell you to do to get comfort then? "He said I ought to pray much." Did you pray? "I told him I could not pray; that I was such a sinner that it was of no use for me to hope for an answer if I could." What did he say then? "He told me I ought to lay hold upon the promises." Yes, did you do so? "No; I told him I could not lay hold upon the promises; that I could not see they were meant for me, for I was not the character intended; and that I could only find threatenings in the Word of God for such as I was." What did he say then? "He told me to be diligent in the use of the means, and to attend his ministry." What did you say to that? "I told him I was diligent, but that what I wanted was not means, I wanted to get my sins pardoned and forgiven." What did he say then? "Why, he

said that I had better persevere and wait patiently for the Lord; I told him that I was in such a horror of great darkness, that my soul chose strangling rather than life. Well then, he said, he thought I must already be truly penitent, and was therefore safe, and that sooner or later I should have hope. But I told him, a mere hope was not enough for me, I could not be safe while sin lay so heavy upon me. He asked me whether I had not desires after Christ. I said I had, but they were merely selfish, Carnal desires; that I sometimes thought I had desires, but they were only legal. He said if I had a desire to have a desire, it was God's work, and I was saved. That did prop me up for a time, sir, but I went down again, for that did not do for me, I wanted something solid to rest on." And sinner, how is it now with you? where are you now? "Well, sir, I scarce know where I am, but I pray you, tell me what I must do?" Brethren, my reply is prompt and plain; hear it. Poor soul, I have no questions to ask you; I have no advice to give you, except this, God's command to you is, whatever you may be, trust to the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. Will you do it or no? If he rejects that, I must leave him; I have no more to say to him; I am clear of his blood, and on him the sentence comes, "He that believeth not shall be damned." But you will find in ninety-nine Cases out of one hundred, that when you begin to talk to the sinner, not about his repentings and his desirings, but about Christ, and tell him that he need not fear the law, for Christ has satisfied it; that he need not fear an angry God, for God is not angry with believers; tell him that all manner of iniquity was Cast into the Red Sea of Jesus' blood, and, like the Egyptians, drowned there for ever; tell him that no matter however vile and wicked he may have been, "Christ is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him;" and tell him that he has a right to come, be he who he may, or what he may, because God bids him come; and you will find that the suitability of such a gospel to the sinner's case, will prove a sweet inducement in the hand of the Holy Spirit, to lead that sinner to lay hold on Jesus Christ. O my brethren, I am ashamed of myself when I think of the way in which I have sometimes talked to awakened sinners. I am persuaded that the only true remedy for a broken heart is Jesus Christ's most precious blood. Some surgeons keep a wound open too long; they keep cutting, and cutting, and cutting, till they cut away as much sound flesh as proud flesh. Better by half heal it, heal it at once, for Jesus Christ was not sent to keep open the wounds, but to bind up the broken in heart. To you, then, sinners of every sort and hue, black, hard-hearted, insensible, impenitent, even to you is the gospel sent, for "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," even the chief.

I might here pause, surely, but I must add yet one other point upon this negative mode of reasoning. Any other warrant for the sinner's faith than the gospel itself, is false and dangerous.

It is false, my brethren, it is as false as God is true, that anything in a sinner can be his warrant for believing in Jesus. The whole tenour and run of the gospel is clean contrary to it. It must be false, because there is nothing in a sinner until he believes which can be a warrant for his believing. If you tell me that a sinner has any good thing in him before he believes, I reply, impossible—"Without faith it is impossible to please God." All the repentings, and humblings, and convictions that a sinner has before faith, must be, according to Scripture, displeasing to God. Do not tell me that his heart is broken; if it is only broken by carnal means, and trusts in its brokenness, it needs to be broken over again. Do not tell me he has been led to hate his sin; I tell you he does not hate his sin, he only hates hell. There cannot be a true and real hatred of sin where there is not faith in Jesus. All the sinner knows and feels before faith is only an addition to his other sins, and how can sin which deserves wrath be a warrant for an act which is the work of the Holy Spirit?

How dangerous is the sentiment I am opposing. My hearers, it may be so mischievous as to have misled some of you. I solemnly warn you, though you have been professors of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for

twenty years, if your reason for believing in Christ lies in this, that you have felt the terrors of the law; that you have been alarmed, and have been convinced; if your own experience be your warrant for believing in Christ, it is a false reason, and you are really relying upon your experience and not upon Christ: and mark you, if you rely upon your frames and feelings, nay, if you rely upon your communion with Christ, in any degree whatever, you are as certainly a lost sinner as though you relied upon oaths and blasphemies; you shall no more be able to enter heaven, even by the works of the Spirit—and this is using strong language—than by your own works; for Christ, and Christ alone, is the foundation, and “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Take care of resting in your own experience. All that is of nature’s spinning must be unravelled, and everything that getteth into Christ’s place, however dear to thee, and however precious in itself, must be broken in pieces, and like the dust of the golden calf, must be strawed upon the water, and thou wilt be made sorrowfully to drink of it, because thou madest it thy trust. I believe that the tendency of that preaching which puts the warrant for faith anywhere but in the gospel command, is to vex the true penitent, and to console the hypocrite; the tendency of it is to make the poor soul which really repents, feel that he must not believe in Christ, because he sees so much of his own hardness of heart. The more spiritual a man is, the more unspiritual he sees himself to be; and the more penitent a man is, the more impenitent he discovers himself to be. Often the most penitent men are those who think themselves the most impenitent; and if I am to preach the gospel to the penitent and not to every sinner, as a sinner, then those penitent persons, who, according to my opponents, have the most right to believe, are the very persons who will never dare to touch it, because they are conscious of their own impenitence and want of all qualification for Christ. Sinners, let me address you with words of life: Jesus wants nothing of you, nothing whatsoever, nothing done, nothing felt; he gives both work and feeling. Ragged, penniless, just as ye are, lost, forsaken, desolate, with no good feelings, and no good hopes, still Jesus comes to you, and in these words of pity he addresses you, “Him that cometh to me I will in no Wise cast out.” If thou believest in him thou shalt never be confounded.

2. But now, POSITIVELY, and as the negative part has been positive enough, we will be brief here. The gospel Command is a sufficient warrant for a sinner to believe in Jesus Christ. The words of our text imply this—” This is the commandment.” My brethren, do you want any warrant for doing a thing better than God’s command to do it? The children of Israel borrowed jewels of silver and jewels of gold from the Egyptians. Many, as they read the Bible, find fault with this transaction; but, to my mind, if God bade them do it, that was enough of justification for them. Very well; if God bid thee believe—if this be his commandment that thou believe—canst thou want a better warrant? I say, is there any necessity for any other. Surely the Lord’s Word is enough.

Brethren, the command to believe in Christ must be the sinner’s warrant, if you consider the nature of our commission. How runs it? “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” It ought to run, according to the other plan, “preach the gospel to every regenerate person, to every convinced sinner, to every sensible soul.” But it is not so; it is to “every creature.” But unless the warrant be a something in which every creature can take a share, there is no such thing as consistently preaching it to every creature. Then how is it put?—“He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.” Where is there a word about the pre-requisites for believing. Surely the man could not be damned for not doing what he would not have been warranted in doing. Our reaching, on the theory of qualifications, should not be,” Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;” but “Qualify yourselves for faith, be sensible of your sin, be regenerated, get marks and evidences, and then believe.” Why, surely, if I am not to sow the good seed on the stony places and among the thorns, I had better give up being a sower, and take to ploughing, or some other work. When the apostles went to Macedonia or

Achaia, they ought not to have commenced with preaching Christ; they should have preached up qualifications, emotions, and sensations, if these are the preparations for Jesus; but I find that Paul, whenever he stands up, has nothing to preach but “Christ, and him crucified.” Repentance is preached as a gift from the exalted Saviour, but it is never as the cause or preparation for believing on Jesus. These two graces are born together, and live with a common life—beware of making one a foundation for the other. I would like to carry one of those who only preach to sensible sinners, and set him down in the capital of the kingdom of Dahomey. There are no sensible sinners there! Look at them, with their mouths stained with human blood, with their bodies smeared all over with the gore of their immolated victims—how will the preacher find any qualification there? I know not what he could say, but I know what my message would be. My word would run thus—“Men and brethren, God, who made the heavens and the earth; hath sent his Son Jesus Christ into the world to suffer for our sins, and whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” If Christ crucified did not shake the kingdom of Dahomey, it would be its first failure. When the Moravian missionaries first went to Greenland, you remember that they were months and months teaching the poor Greenlander about the Godhead, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the doctrine of sin and the law, and no converts were forthcoming. But one day, by accident, one of the Greenlanders happening to read that passage, “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God,” asked the meaning, and’ the missionary, hardly thinking him advanced enough to understand the gospel, nevertheless ventured to explain it to him, and the man became converted, and hundreds of his countrymen received the Word. Naturally enough, they said to the missionaries, “Why did not you tell us this before? We knew all about there being a God, and that did us no good; why did not you come and tell us to believe in Jesus Christ before?” O my brethren, this is God’s weapon, God’s method; this is the great battering-ram which will shake the gates of hell; and we must see to it, that it be brought into daily use.

I have tried, on the positive side, to show that a free-grace warrant is consistent with the text—that it accords with apostolic custom, and is, indeed, absolutely necessary, seeing the condition in which sinners are placed. But, my brethren, to preach Christ to sinners, as sinners, must be right; for all the former acts of God are to sinners, as sinners. Whom did God elect? Sinners. He loved us with a great love, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins. How did he redeem them? Did he redeem them as saints? No; for while we were yet enemies, he reconciled us unto God by the death of his Son. Christ never shed his blood for the good that is in us, but for the sin that is in us. “He laid down his life for our sins,” says the apostle. If, then, in election and redemption, we find God dealing with sinners, as sinners, it is a marring and nullifying of the whole plan if the gospel is to be preached to men as anything else but sinners.

Again, it is inconsistent with the character of God to suppose that he comes forth and proclaims, “If, O my fallen creatures, if you qualify yourselves for my mercy, I will save you; if you will feel holy emotions—if you will be conscious of sacred desires after me, then the blood of Jesus Christ shall cleanse you.” There would be little which is godlike in that. But when he comes out with pardons full and free, and saith, “Yea, when ye lay in your blood, I said unto you Live”—when he comes to you, his enemy and rebellious subject, and yet cries, “I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thine iniquities.” Why, this is divine. You know what David said, “I have sinned.” What did Nathan say? “The Lord has put away thy sin, thou shalt not die,” and that is the message of the gospel to a sinner as a sinner. “The Lord has put away thy sin; Christ has suffered; he has brought in perfect righteousness; take him, trust him, and ye shall live.” May that message come home to you this morning, my beloved.

I have read with some degree of attention a book to which I owe much for this present discourse—a book, by Abraham Booth, called “Glad Tidings to Perishing Sinners.” I have never heard any one cast a suspicion upon Abraham Booth’s soundness; on the contrary, he has been generally considered as one of the most orthodox of the divines of the last generation. If you want my views in full, read his book. If you need something more, let me say, among all the bad things which his revilers have laid to his door, I have never heard any one blame William Huntingdon for not being high enough in doctrine. Now, William Huntingdon prefaced in his lifetime a book by Saltmarsh, with which he was greatly pleased; and the marrow of its teaching is just this, in his own words, “The only ground for any to believe is, he is faithful that hath promised, not anything in themselves, for this is the commandment, That ye believe on his Son Jesus Christ.” Now, if William Huntingdon himself printed such a book as that, I marvel how the followers of either William Huntingdon or Abraham Booth, how men calling themselves Calvinistic divines and high Calvinists, can advocate what is not free grace, but a legal, graceless system of qualifications and preparations. I might here quote Crisp, who is pat to the point and a high doctrine man too. I mention neither Booth nor Huntingdon as authorities upon the subject, to the law and to the testimony we must go; but I do mention them to show that men holding strong views on election and predestination yet did see it to be consistent to preach the gospel to sinners as sinners—nay, felt that it was inconsistent to preach the gospel in any other way.

I shall only add, that the blessings which flow from preaching Christ to sinners as sinners, are of such a character as prove it to be right. Do on not see that this levels us all? We have the same warrant for believing, and no one can exalt himself above his fellow.

Then, my brethren, how it inspires men with hope and confidence; it forbids despair. No man can despair if this be true; or if he do, it is a wicked, unreasonable despair, because if he has been never so bad, yet God commands him to believe. What room can there be for despondency? Surely if anything Could cut off Giant Despair’s head, Christ preached to sinners is the sharp two-edged sword to do it.

Again, how it makes a man live close to Christ! If I am to come to Christ as a sinner every day, and I must do so, for the Word saith, “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him;” if every day I am to come to Christ as a sinner, why then, how paltry all my doings look! what utter contempt it casts upon all my fine virtues, m preachings, my prayings, and all that comes of my flesh! and though it leads me to seek after purity and holiness, yet it teaches me to live on Christ and not on them, and so it keeps me at the fountain head.

My time flies, and I must leave the last head, just to add, sinner, whoever thou mayst be, God now commands thee to believe in Jesus Christ. This is his commandment: he does not command thee to feel anything, or be anything, to prepare thyself for this. Now, art thou willing to incur the great guilt of making God a liar? Surely thou wilt shrink from that: then dare to believe. Thou canst not say, “I have no right:” you have a perfect right to do what God tells you to do. You cannot tell me you are not fit; there is no fitness wanted, the Command is given and it is yours to obey, not to dispute. You cannot say it does not come to you—it is preached to every Creature under heaven; and now soul, it is so pleasant a thing to trust the Lord Jesus Christ that I would fain persuade myself thou needest no persuading. It is so delightful a thing to accept a perfect salvation, to be saved by precious blood. and to be married to so bright a Saviour, that I would fain hope the Holy Spirit has led thee to cry, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”

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