

# An Address to a Soul So Overwhelmed With a Sense of the Greatness of Its Sins

by Philip Doddridge

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*Philip Doddridge's sermon offers comfort and hope to those overwhelmed by their sins, emphasizing the power of Christ's grace and the importance of humble repentance.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 130:1

**Topics:** "Sin And Guilt", "Gods Mercy"

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## Description

Philip Doddridge preaches about the compassionate care and hope offered by Christ to those burdened by their sins and overwhelmed with guilt, emphasizing that no one is beyond the reach of God's mercy. He addresses the common feelings of unworthiness and despair, encouraging the reader to humbly approach Christ for forgiveness and salvation, highlighting the abundant grace and promises found in the Gospel. Doddridge urges the distressed soul to reject self-condemnation and embrace the love and compassion of the Redeemer, reminding them that Christ is willing and able to save even the greatest of sinners.

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## Transcript

1--4. The case described at large.--5. As it frequently occurs.--6. Granting all that the dejected soul charges on itself.--7. The invitations and promises of Christ give hope.--8 The reader urged, under all his burdens and fears, to an humble application to him. Which is accordingly exemplified in the concluding Reflection and Prayer.

1. I have now done with those unhappy creatures who despise the Gospel, and with those who neglect it. With pleasure do I now turn myself to those who will hear me with more regard. Among the various cases which now present themselves to my thoughts, and demand my tender, affectionate, respectful care, there is none more worthy of compassion than that which I have mentioned in the title of this chapter, none which requires a more immediate attempt of relief. 2. It is very possible some afflicted creature may be ready to cry out, "It is enough: aggravate my grief and my distress no more.

The sentence you have been so awfully describing, as what shall he passed and executed on the impenitent and unbelieving, is my sentence; and the terrors of it are my terrors. 'For mine iniquities have gone up into the heavens,' and my transgressions have reached unto the clouds. (Rev. 18:5) My case is quite singular. Surely there never was so great a sinner as I. I have received so many mercies, have enjoyed so many advantages, I have heard so many invitations or Gospel grace; and yet my heart has

been so hard, and my nature is so exceeding sinful, and the number and aggravating circumstances of my provocations have been such, that I dare not hope.

It is enough that God hath supported me thus long; it is enough, that, after so many years of wickedness, I am yet out of hell. Every day's reprieve is a mercy at which I am astonished. I lie down, and wonder that death and damnation have not seized me in my walks the day past. I arise, and wonder that my bed has not been my grave; wonder that my soul is not separated from my flesh, and surrounded with devils and damned spirits." 3. "I have indeed heard the message of salvation; but, alas! it seems no message of salvation to me.

There are happy souls that have hope; and their hope is indeed in Christ and the grace of God manifest in him. But they feel in their hearts an encouragement to apply to him, whereas I dare not do it. Christ and grace are things in which I fear I have no part, and must expect none. There are exceeding rich and precious promises in the word of God; but they are to me as a sealed book, and are hid from me as to any personal use. I know Christ is able to save: I know he is willing to save some.

But that he should be willing to save me--such a polluted, such a provoking creature, as God knows, and as conscience knows, I have been, and to this day am--this I know not how to believe; and the utmost that I can do towards believing it, is to acknowledge that it is not absolutely impossible, and that I do not lie down in complete despair; though, alas! I seem upon the borders of it, and expect every day and hour to call into it." 4. I should not, perhaps, have entered so fully into this case, if I had not seen many in it; and I will add, reader, for your encouragement, if it be your case, several, who now are in the number of the most established, cheerful, and useful Christians.

And I hope divine grace will add you to the rest, if "out of these depths you he enabled to cry unto God;" (Psa. 130:1) and though, like Jonah, you may seem to be cast out from his presence, yet still, with Jonah, you "look towards his holy temple." (Jonah 2:4) 5. Let it not be imagined, that it is in any neglect of that blessed Spirit, whose office it is to be the great Comforter, that I now attempt to reason you out of this disconsolate frame; for it is as the great source or reason, that he deals with rational creatures; and it is in the use of rational means and considerations that he may most justly be expected to operate.

Give me leave, therefore, to address myself calmly to you, and to ask you, what reason you have for all these passionate complaints and accusations against yourself? What reason have you to suggest that your case is singular, when so many have told you they have felt the same? What reason have you to conclude so hardly against yourself, when the Gospel speaks in such favorable terms? Or, what reason to imagine, that the gracious things it says are not intended for you? You know, indeed, more of the corruption of your own heart, than you know of the hearts or others; and you make a thousand charitable excuses for their visible failings and infirmities, which you make not for your own.

And it may be, some of those whom you admire as eminent saints when compared with you, are on their part humbling themselves in the dust, as unworthy to be numbered among the least of God's people, and wishing themselves like you; in whom they think they see much more good, and much less of evil, than in themselves. 6. But to suppose the worst, what if you were really the vilest sinner that ever lived upon the face of the earth? What if "your iniquities had gone up into the heavens" every day, and "your transgressions had reached unto the clouds," (Rev. 18:5) reached thither with such horrid aggravations, that earth and heaven should have had reason to detest you as a monster of impiety?

Admitting all this, "is any thing too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. 18:14) Are any sins, of which a sinner can repent, of so deep a dye, that the blood of Christ cannot wash them away! Nay, though it would be daring wickedness and monstrous folly, for any "to sin that grace may abound," (Rom. 6:1) yet had you indeed raised your account beyond all that divine grace has ever yet pardoned, who should "limit the holy One of Israel?" (Psa. 78:41) or who shall pretend to say, that it is impossible that God may, for your very wretchedness, choose you out from others, to make you a monument of mercy, and a trophy of hitherto unparalleled grace?

The apostle Paul strongly intimates this to have been the case with regard to himself; and why might not you likewise, if indeed "the chief of sinners," obtain mercy, that in you, as the chief, "Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who shall hereafter believe?" (1 Tim. 1:15,16) 7. Gloomy as your apprehensions are, I would ask you plainly, do you in your conscience think that Christ is not able to save you? What! is he not "able to save, even to the uttermost, them that come unto God by him?" (Heb. 7:25) Yes, you will say, abundantly able to do it; but I dare not imagine that he will do it.

And how do you know that he will not? He has helped the very greatest sinners or all that have yet applied themselves to him; and he has made thee offers of grace and salvation in the most engaging and encouraging terms. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink:" (John 7:37) "let him that is a-thirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." (Rev. 22:17) "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28) And once more, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." (John, 4:37) "True," will you say, "none that are given him by the Father: could I know I were of that number, I could then apply cheerfully to him."

But, dear reader, let me entreat you to look into the text itself, and see whether that limitation he expressly added there. Do you there read, none of them whom the Father hath given me shall be cast out? The words are in a much more encouraging form; and why should you frustrate his wisdom and goodness by such an addition of your own? "Add not to his words, lest he reprove thee;" (Prov. 30:6) take them as they stand, and drink in the consolation of them. Our Lord knew into what perplexity some serious minds might possibly be thrown by what he had before been saying, "All that the Father hath given me shall come unto me;" and therefore, as it were on purpose to balance it, he adds those gracious words, "him that cometh unto me I will in no wise," by no means, on no consideration whatsoever, "cast out." 8.

If, therefore, you are already discouraged and terrified at the greatness of your sins, do not add to their weight and number that one greater, and worse than all the rest, a distrust of the faithfulness and grace of the blessed Redeemer. Do not, so far as in you lies, oppose all the purposes of his love to you. O distressed soul! whom dost thou dread? To whom dost thou tremble to approach? Is there any thing so terrible in a crucified Redeemer, in the Lamb that was slain? If thou carriest thy soul, almost sinking under the burden of its guilt, to lay it down at his feet, what dost thou offer him, but the spoil which he bled and died to recover and possess?

And did he purchase it so dearly, that he might reject it with disdain? Go to him directly, and fall down in his presence, and plead that misery of thine, which thou hast now been pleading in a contrary view, as an engagement to your own soul to make the application, and as an argument with the compassionate Savior to receive you. Go, and be assured, that "where sin hath abounded, there grace shall much more abound." (Rom. 5:20) Be assured, that, if one sinner can promise himself a more certain welcome than another, it is not he that is least guilty and miserable, but he that is most deeply humbled before God under a sense of that misery and guilt, and lies the lowest in the apprehension of it.

Reflections on these Encouragements, ending in an humble and earnest Application to Christ for Mercy.

"O my soul! what sayest thou to these things? Is there not at least a possibility of help from Christ? And is there a possibility of help any other way? Is any other name given under heaven, whereby we can be saved? I know there is none. (Acts 4:12) I must then say, like the lepers of Israel, (2 Kings 7:4) 'If I sit here, I perish; and if I make my application in vain, I can but die.' But peradventure he may save my soul alive. I will therefore arise, and go 'into him; or rather, believing him here, by his spiritual presence, sinful and miserable as I am, I will this moment fall down on my face before him, and pour out my soul unto him.

"Blessed Jesus, I present myself unto thee, as a wretched creature, driven indeed by necessity to do it. For surely, were not that necessity urgent and absolute, I should not dare, for very shame, to appear in thine holy and majestic presence. I am fully convinced that my sins and my follies have been inexcusably great, more than I can express, more than I can conceive. I feel a source of sin in my corrupt and degenerate nature, which pours out iniquity as a fountain sends out its water, and makes me a burden and a terror to myself.

Such aggravations have attended my transgressions, that it looks like presumption so much as to ask pardon for them. And yet, would it not be greater presumption to say, that they exceed thy mercy, and the efficacy of thy blood; to say, that thou hast power and grace enough to pardon and save only sinners of a lower order, while such as I lie out of thy reach? Preserve me from that blasphemous imagination! Preserve me from that unreasonable suspicion! Lord, thou canst do all things, neither is there any thought of mine heart withholden from thee. (Job 42:2) Thou art indeed, as thy word declares able to save unto the uttermost. (Heb. 7:25) And therefore, breaking through all the oppositions of shame and fear that would keep me from thee, I come and lie down as in the dust before thee.

Thou knowest, O Lord! all my sins, and all my follies. (Psa. 69:5) I cannot, and I hope! may say, I would not disguise them before thee, or set myself to find out plausible excuses. Accuse me, Lord, as thou pleasest; and I will ingenuously plead guilty to all thine accusations. I will own myself as great a sinner as thou callest me; but I am still a sinner that comes unto thee for pardon. If I must die, it shall be submitting, and owning the justice of the fatal stroke. If I perish, it shall be laying hold, as it were, on the horns of the altar: laying myself down at thy foot-stool, though I have been such a rebel against thy throne.

Many have received a full pardon there; have met with favor even beyond their hopes. And are all thy compassions, O blessed Jesus! exhausted? And wilt thou now begin to reject an humble creature who flies to thee for life, and pleads nothing but mercy and free grace? Have mercy upon me, O most gracious Redeemer! have mercy upon me, and let my life be precious in thy sight! (2 Kings 1:14) O do not resolve to send me down to that state of final misery and despair from which it was thy gracious purpose to deliver and save so many!

"Spurn me not away, O Lord! from thy presence, nor be offended when I presume to lay hold on thy royal robe, and say that I cannot and will not let thee go till my suit is granted! (Gen. 32:26) Oh! remember that my eternity is at stake! Remember, O Lord, that all my hopes of obtaining eternal happiness, and avoiding everlasting, helpless, hopeless destruction, are anchored upon thee; they hang upon thy smiles, or drop at thy frown,. O have mercy upon me, for the sake of this immortal soul of mine!

Or if not for the sake of mine alone, for the sake of many others, who may, on the one hand, be encouraged by thy mercy to we, or, on the other, may be greatly wounded and discouraged by my helpless despair! I beseech thee, O Lord, for thine own sake, and for the display of thy Father's rich and

sovereign grace! I beseech thee by the blood thou didst shed on the cross! I beseech thee by the covenant of grace and peace, into which the Father did enter with thee for the salvation of believing and repenting sinners! save me, save me, O Lord, who earnestly desire to repent and believe!

I am indeed a sinner, in whose final and everlasting destruction thy justice might be greatly glorified; but oh! if thou wilt pardon me, it will be a monument raised to the honor of thy grace and the efficacy of thy blood, in proportion to the degree in which the wretch, to whom thy mercy is extended, was mean and miserable without it. Speak, Lord, by thy blessed Spirit, and banish my fears! Look unto me with love and grace in thy countenance, and say to me, as in the days of thy flesh thou didst to many an humble suppliant, `Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace.'"

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