



A faithful Saying

A Sermon by George Müller of Bristol

Notes of a Sermon preached by George Müller at the Opening of Salem Chapel, North Common, near Bristol, Feb. 27, 1872.

I Timothy i. 15,16.

Well now, dear friends, you are almost all strangers to me. I do not know your state, cannot possibly know it; therefore I do not know what you need to have more especially brought before you this evening, and therefore in the consciousness of my weakness I asked the Lord again and again to direct me to a portion from which to speak to you, and after prayer I have been directed to two verses in the chapter which we have been reading. This is just the portion which suits us all; there is not one here present for whom there is not something contained in this portion, for we are all sinners, without a single exception; and that is a point which I desire particularly to impress on your hearts, as well as on my heart. By the grace of God I am convinced about it; now are all here present convinced that they are sinners? We are all sinners, and great sinners; and here it rests. Some make excuses and say they are not so bad as others: they have not murdered anybody, they have not robbed anybody; but that is not the question. We are all naturally going our own way, instead of going the way that God would have us go. And it is just this which is hateful to God, that we naturally please ourselves, go our own way, do all to our own liking, instead of caring about the way of God, and seeking to please Him. It is because we seek to gratify ourselves, and do not set God before us, on this very ground that we are sinners whose sins are most hateful to God. If we had what we all deserve, we must all go to the place of perdition. There is no help for us. But in this verse it is pointed out that although we are the chief of sinners, yet there is hope. Wicked, guilty never so much, yet there is no need of despairing if we are ready to be saved in God's own appointed way. Now these verses bring the matter before us in a very few words. The Holy Ghost by the Apostle Paul seeks to commend the way in which a sinner is to be saved. God might speak in the way of command or threatening, - If you will not believe I will send you to hell. But God is entreating, reasoning with sinners. That is according to the heart of God, so pitiful, so compassionate, in order that He might get the sinner to Himself; and therefore he says it is a "faithful saying," it is quite true, there is no flaw in it, it is all real, all good this saying that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. You stake nothing, you risk nothing; you may depend on it that it is so.

It is worthy of all acceptance. It deserves to be accepted. Now have we all accepted this statement? By the grace of God I have accepted it, and there are not a few here present who have accepted it. Now just ask yourselves this question one after the other. Let not a single heart be left out here. The aged need it as well as the young. Have I accepted it? You see I am a witness for God, and I tell you I have accepted it. And I could point to this one, and another, and another who have accepted it; but the point is have we all accepted it? The hearts of those who have accepted it long that all might accept it. Should there be any here present who might be in doubt about it, let them now accept this statement. We have especially to notice this, - "Christ Jesus *came into the world.*" What does this imply? That He was before in existence. It also teaches us the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Son of the living God, the Creator of the universe, by whom all things were made, by whom everything is kept in existence, and for whose honour and glory everything has been created, without whom none of us would have an existence, without whom none of us would be kept in existence. How did He come into the world? As a prince? Not as His Royal Highness, on whose account thanksgiving is made today, but He came as a little babe in a manger. He was a carpenter's son, working at the bench as a carpenter, and called upon this account the carpenter's son, and thus going on until He was thirty years of age. As such He came into the world, in the form of a servant, as a poor one, as a mean one, as a despised one - not as a prince, not as a nobleman's son, but as a poor one, taking upon Him the form of a servant, and for thirty-three years thus going on. And for what did He come into the world? To save sinners; for this very purpose.

He did not come into the world to save good people, and if there are any persons here who consider themselves good people, then they are not among the number Jesus came to save. If you continue so, you will not have the benefit of this salvation. We must be brought to see that we need the Saviour, that we are wicked persons who deserve nothing but punishment. As long as we have a good opinion about ourselves, and will do our best to please God, and make up for any little thing that might be wanting, we are altogether mistaken, we know nothing yet about the way to heaven. We must first see that we are sinners: that is, that we are wicked, although we are not drunkards; that we are wicked, although we are not murderers; that we are wicked, although we are not thieves; that we are wicked, although we may be industrious, and although we have not defrauded people, - because naturally we are going our own way, we are seeking to please ourselves, to do the things we like, instead of doing the things which God would have us do. We all fall short of the glory of God naturally; we have all gone astray from God like lost sheep. If God were to go from one to another and to chalk those who are sinners, every one would be chalked. I should be chalked, and you would be chalked, not one would be passed by, but everyone would be chalked as sinners. And if the question were, Are there any *great* sinners here? and if God were to chalk all the *great* sinners, he would chalk me and you and everyone of us. But there is hope, hope for such wicked sinners as you and I are, but hope alone in God's appointed way. Hope in Jesus, but in no other way. Hope through the shedding of the blood of Jesus, but in no other way. Hope by God not sparing His only begotten Son, wounding Him, bruising Him, laying upon Him the punishment due to us. That blessed Holy One stands, and He has transferred to and laid on Him all our sins and all our iniquities. You all remember the late war between the Germans and the French. Now in these countries people, whether they like or not, must be soldiers if their health and strength allow it. Now suppose it could have been managed in the case of anyone that a substitute could have been bought, that is, by giving another man who was not under the necessity of attending to his business, a sum of money to serve instead, then the substitute takes the place of that other one, and goes into battle and fights in his stead. So the Lord Jesus Christ became a substitute in the room of such as you and I. We ought to be punished for our iniquities, for all our wicked deeds and wicked thoughts, for our pride and high-mindedness, for our self-will, and for our temper, and for all those things; but the blessed Lord Jesus has the punishment for all our sins laid on Him, He stood instead of us, and in our stead endured the torment, anguish, and punishment we ought to have borne throughout eternity. He became a real man, and really bore the punishment. But not only was it necessary that He should be a man, He must be Divine, in order to give value to the sufferings; and all the woe, the misery, and anguish which ought to have come upon us throughout eternity was concentrated in that time when the Lord Jesus hung upon the cross. He came into the world to save sinners, to deliver them from hell, from the power of sin, to translate them into His own kingdom. And now you see what the sinner has to do - to depend upon Jesus for salvation. We have not to go to Paris, or to Bath, or to Bristol; here, in this very place, in this very hour it is to be had. No money to be paid for it, but only to accept what God in His wondrous grace and mercy has provided in His dear Son. If we do this we shall obtain forgiveness of sins, shall be accepted by God, shall be justified, shall be heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, and have heaven at the last. Now how many are ready to receive this blessing? Who will say, - These are good news; I will accept them? Or will you slight it still? The vilest, the most hardened, the most wretched, may even now obtain the full blessing through Jesus.

The apostle says "*of whome I am chief*". He does not say - came into the world to save such wretched sinners as you are; but I am a very good being, and I do not need this. He says, I am the first among them, the chief among them. He does not point out other people to be very bad, and make out himself to be very good. I do not mean to say, dear friends, that you are worse than I am. If I were to speak out my heart I should say that I am one of the vilest, most guilty sinners who sought most greedily to find satisfaction in the world, and found it not. What an encouragement is contained in this word for you and me - "*that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering!*" Now what does this mean? Just this, - though I am such a wicked, guilty sinner, though I did such abominable deeds, I, Saul, a great persecutor, who sought to torment to the uttermost those who believed in Jesus, tried to make them blaspheme Christ, who worried them to such a degree, and sought to use such means in every way to

get them away from Christ that I compelled them often to blaspheme, and went a great distance to a large city, Damascus, to bring them to Jerusalem, and torment them there, - yet I was converted just when on the point of entering Damascus. The Lord Jesus appeared to him and said, "*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?*" . This abominable wretch Saul was accepted by Jesus, and not only obtained forgiveness of sins, but became one of the chief instruments in preaching the Gospel. See what an encouragement this is. The Apostle Paul was converted in order that afterwards not a single sinner might despair, that none might say, Oh! I am too great a sinner. You should say, Oh! Paul was converted; Paul was a pattern to show that what the Lord did to him He would do to others. Saul was converted, and therefore I need not despair. Now should there be anyone here who says, I am too old for Christ; you are not too old, Paul was a pattern. If any should say, I am too hardened; you are not too hardened, look at Saul. If any should say, I have too long neglected the Lord Jesus; if you wish to obtain the blessing in the appointed way, there is hope, and you are told for an encouragement that Paul was converted. If any should say, I have sinned against light and knowledge, and I have neglected it and resisted it to this day, and never laid these things to heart; it is true it is very late, but not *too* late if, you are willing this very evening to accept Christ. Come, black as thou art, says Christ; and here I am with open arms ready to receive thee. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." *Coming* means believing Him, trusting Him.

Now comes in conclusion a precious word, particularly for you and me who are believers in Jesus. We believe, *for what*, and *to what?* and what is the end of our belief? "*To life everlasting;*" that is, through this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we are united to the Lord Jesus Christ. Through this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we become one with the risen Lord Jesus, who liveth for ever; and if we believe in Him, the life of the Lord Jesus will be ours for ever. How blessed, how unspeakably blessed, that the moment the sinner rests in Jesus he obtains life everlasting! The body may die, in millions and millions of instances it has died; but as surely as the soul trusts in Jesus Christ for salvation, so surely from that moment we obtain life everlasting, because it is a heavenly life, Divine life, the life of the risen Lord Jesus, as certain as that blessed One is at the right hand of God. We throughout eternity shall be a happy people; we throughout eternity shall, live spiritually; we throughout eternity shall partake of the rivers of pleasure at the right hand of God, shall enjoy the presence of God and of His dear Son. Oh, how blessed and precious, that when this little span of life shall come to an end, there will be the development of that eternal life which is in us now, as surely as we have put our trust in Jesus! Oh, the unspeakable blessedness of being in heaven! - as ages shall roll on, our happiness becoming greater and greater.

Now, beloved fellow-disciples, let us see to it that during the little span of time we are here on earth we are fruit-bearers. We are called to show forth the praises of Him who bought us; we are no longer our own, we are His who has given Himself for us, and our business is to give ourselves to Him, - with our substance, with our all, to give ourselves to Him, and to seek for the little time that we live here to bear fruit to the honour and praise of His name. In order that it may be so, let us come to this precious book to obtain nourishment and strength for our souls.

Now, are you readers of the Bible? There are so many religious publications now, that they furnish a great temptation to neglect this blessed book, and to read all sorts of books, periodicals, and newspapers. Now, if you want real happiness, real spiritual strength, seek day by day to get to this blessed book. Are you in the habit of reading regularly through the Bible? Some just open the Bible, and where it falls open there they read; but after a little while it will always open in the same place. How do we read other books? We begin at the beginning and turn over page after page. So should we read God's blessed book. I recommend to you something I have known the blessedness of for forty years. After my conversion, I did not read the Bible much, but I read missionary papers and other books. But since July 1829 (now nearly 43 years ago) I have been reading God's blessed book: I read sometimes in the Old Testament, and sometimes in the New Testament. I put a mark where I left off, and read on from there when I come to it again, reading thus regularly on. During these 43 years I have read about one hundred times through the Bible. And I am not tired of it yet. It is just as fresh and as new and as pleasant, and

I am just as delighted with it as if I had never read it before. One speaks to you who has known the blessedness of it for forty-three years and a half; and to it I owe all I have, and I am just as happy in reading this portion as another portion. We have not to pick and choose; it is the *whole* that constitutes the word of God. Is it not a shame that we should have God's blessed book, and not have once read it through?

Suppose a rich uncle of yours were to die, and leave a will, and your name were in the will, - "To my nephew I give three of the cottages in such and such a place; and every year ten pounds is to be paid to my niece Sarah, and to my niece Jane, and to my niece Ann." Now if you knew that your name was in the will, you would want to see that it was all correct, you would want to read the whole will, saying, "Perhaps there is something more that my uncle may have said about me." Now these things are written for your blessing and mine, and they are better than these three cottages, and better than a thousand pounds. Oh, how deeply important to read what God says about us! If you cannot read, ask God to help you to read; if you say, I have not a Bible; then I pledge myself to supply you with a Bible. Only be in earnest about your soul, be not trifling with the things of eternity. It is high time that we should be in earnest about our souls. And we must see that God teach us by His blessed Spirit. We must not suppose that we are clever enough to understand it all ourselves. If in humility of soul we wait on Him, He will teach us. If He has taught us, then we must seek to carry out the light, for one of the especial means to obtain light is to practise what God has given us. If otherwise, God might say to us - "I have taught you so and so, and you have not done it." We must be faithful to the light we have. If we thus go on, our peace and joy will increase more and more. From strength to strength we shall go on, and our path will shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.



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