



To Save Sinners

A sermon preached by George Müller

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.
– I Timothy i., 15,16.

The first point we have to consider in these verse is this, that the statement of God the Holy Spirit that Christ came into the world to save sinners is a faithful saying. That implies there is not a shadow of doubt regarding the fact the “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”. The matter is as certain as that the earth is in existence. The matter is as certain as that God invariably speaks the truth, and nothing but the truth. It is declared in the Word of God, given by inspiration; that is, written under the immediate power of God the Holy Spirit – therefore it is without a shadow of doubt. And we who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ should again and again, while life is continued to us here on earth, seek to sound it out far and wide, as much as we possibly can, that it is an entirely correct, perfectly true statement that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”.

The second point regarding this is, that the statement deserves to be accepted. It is “worthy of all acceptance” we read. And we have, therefore, to ask ourselves regarding the first, Do we believe the statement that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners?” Secondly, Have we in heart received this statement, which God the Holy Spirit makes by the Apostle Paul – for on receiving it, or not receiving it, depends the salvation of our souls! O let us not lightly treat it! Let us not simply read it and speak about it, and have certain notions regarding it; let us not be satisfied until in our inmost souls we have received the statement really and truly that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”.

Then the next point we have to weight regarding our text is this, it is not stated that Christ Jesus was born into the world to save sinners – though had it been thus stated it would have been perfectly true, for, in reference to His humanity, the Lord Jesus Christ was born into the world. But here His humanity merely not referred to, but more particularly by the statement that “He came into the world to save sinners,” His divinity is alluded to, His existence before He was seen on earth. Then He existed, for He is the Creator of the universe, the Upholder of the universe, and He existed from eternity, for He had no beginning of days. This is the particular point, that we have to lay to heart here – that He came into the world to save sinners.

And this brings before us a deeply important truth, regarding which all believers in the Lord Jesus should be clearly, distinctly instructed. In the Messiah, in the Saviour of sinners, in Christ, was united both the human and the divine nature. He was really and truly a man, like ourselves, sin only excepted. There was never found a single sin, as to action, nor as to word, nor as to thought, in our Lord Jesus Christ. He ate and drank, He slept, really and truly slept like ourselves, was altogether human like ourselves, sin only in every way most perfectly excepted. It was necessary that He should be really and truly human in order that in our

room and stead, by perfectly fulfilling the law, He might work out a righteousness in which we could be accepted before God, through faith in His Name. For this very reason, it was necessary that He should be human like ourselves, that He should come under the Law, that He might fulfil the Law, and thus bring in everlasting righteousness to the poor sinner who trusts in Him. So that we, on account of Christ, could be reckoned righteous on the part of God. This is most precious, and we have to ponder it again and again, and to see clearly and distinctly that we may have full comfort under the deep consciousness of our manifold failures and shortcomings.

Further, it was absolutely needful that He should be truly human like ourselves, sin only excepted, in order that, as a human being, He might feel, really and truly feel, the punishment which came on Him as our Substitute. Had the Saviour been only divine, and not truly human also, He would not have felt the pain and the suffering while passing on through this vale of tears for thirty-three years and a half, and especially when He hung on the Cross, when His precious hands and precious feet were pierced through with large nails, and when He shed His blood for the remission of our sins. O how deeply important it is to consider all this!

Then, lastly, it was needful that He should be truly human, sin only excepted, in order that, as our Great High Priest, He might feel sympathy for us, in our trials, in our sufferings, in our pain, and in our need. For these reasons, then, it was necessary that the Saviour of sinners should be truly human. But this is only one side of the truth. The other side is that He was at the same time as really and truly divine as the Father! This was perfectly needful, in order that, in the first place He might be able to endure all that which came on Him, in connection with the hour of darkness. A mere human being, though perfectly holy, perfectly sinless, could not have been able to endure all these pains, and torments, and agonies, which were brought on Him, when, as our Substitute, He bore the punishment, which we deserved, for our numberless transgressions. For this reason it was absolutely needful that the Saviour of sinners should be divine, as well as human.

It was further necessary that He should be divine in order to give value to His precious blood, for by it not merely one sinner was to be saved, not merely a thousand sinners, not merely a million sinners, but an innumerable company. Therefore this must be the blood of the God Man, Christ Jesus, not merely the blood of the man, Christ Jesus, not merely the blood of the One, Who had been born at Bethlehem by the Virgin Mary, and brought up at Nazareth as an ordinary man, but the God-Man, the Creator of the universe, the Upholder of the universe. And thus, because of His being really and truly God, power was given to that blood shed for the remission of our sins, to save an innumerable multitude! O how precious the consideration of this, that we may have full consolation in the fact that He Who died on the cross shed the blood of the God-Man, “the blood of God”, as it is stated in the 28th verse of the 20th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

Lastly, it was necessary that He should be truly divine, in order that the powers of darkness might not have the ability of overthrowing the atoning work which our precious Lord Jesus began on earth, and is carrying on now in glory. Had He, our Substitute, been merely human, though the most holy and spotless of human beings, the devils would have sought opportunity, without hesitating one moment, to overturn this atoning work of His; but because the atoning work was commenced and is carried on by One Who is really God, Satan, who is a mere creature, cannot overturn the work. Therefore, the salvation of our souls is certain. Now, may the beloved young disciples particularly seek to clearly understand the necessity of the true humanity of our Lord, and the true divinity, as being absolutely needful regarding the salvation of our souls.

The next point we have to ponder is that, “He came into the world to save sinners.” This word is full of comfort in particular. O what would have become of all who are believers in Christ were there not this statement. Had it been stated, “He came into the world to save good people, who needed something of His help; excellent people, who were not completely perfect, and needed a little of His help!” o, then, what would have become of great sinners like myself? We should have no comfort. But it is simply stated, “He came into the world to save sinners.” Therefore none are excluded, whether they are young sinners, or old sinners, whether they have been guilty of many sins or few sins! No exception made here! “He came into the world to save sinners.” That implies even the oldest sinners, the most notorious sinners, the most hardened sinners; those who have been guilty times without number, those whose sins are more in number than the hairs of their head. Even such can be saved by Him. O how precious! O how precious! No poor sinner is excluded, provided he seeks salvation in God’s appointed way, through the Lord Jesus Christ. O unspeakably blessed this!

Now what have we to do on our part, in order to partake of the benefit of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done, as our Substitute, is first to see the need of a Saviour. There are many people who think themselves very good, very excellent people, who look on the drunkard, the thief, and the robber with utter contempt, because they regard themselves as such very good and excellent people. They trust that by their good life and excellent deportment they will get to heaven, not knowing that, by our own strength, we can only fit ourselves for hell. But of the thousands upon thousands, the tens of thousands upon tens of thousands that have been on earth since the creation, there has not been one single individual ever found who by his own goodness and merit and worthiness, brought himself to heaven. On the other hand, numberless individuals, by their own goodness and merit, have brought themselves to hell, to perdition, because they trusted in their own goodness, instead of trusting in Christ.

Therefore the first thing, in order to partake of this salvation prepared by the Lord Jesus Christ for poor sinners is that we see, clearly and distinctly see, we need a Saviour, that we cannot save ourselves by our own goodness, merit, and worthiness. In the Word of God, our own righteousness is compared to filthy rags, and God will have no filthy rags in heaven. Clean, fine, white linen, spotlessness, He requires for His own presence. I repeat, therefore, the first thing, is we desire to be saved through Jesus Christ, is that we see we are sinners, that we see we need a Saviour, and that we put our trust in Him alone for salvation. If we cannot see this, we should ask God to show it to us, and should read His Word, in which it is plainly stated – for instance, in the first three chapters of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, and in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, besides a number of other portions – that all human beings, without exception, are sinners. Then when we see it, we have to confess before God that we are sinners, deserving punishment; and have to ask Him that He would be pleased, by the power of His Holy Spirit, to help us to put our trust alone in Jesus for the salvation of our souls. Thus is brought to us peace and joy in God; and the more we enter into it, the more clearly we see it and apprehend it, the greater will be the peace and joy in our souls.

After the Apostle Paul had made the statement, that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” he adds, “of whom I am chief.” This is not merely carelessly or in a flippant way uttered. Nothing of the kind! This is his sure and hearty conviction, that he was the greatest sinner, that he was the chief of sinners, for he could never forget that he had been so great a persecutor of the Church of God, that he had again and again and again beaten the believers in Christ, that he had cast them into prison, that he had worried them until at last they blasphemed the Name of Jesus – at least he had aimed at it, and would not let them go till he had done his utmost to make them do so – and then, lastly, whenever he possibly could,

he had sought to see that they were put to death. Now, on account of all this, which he never could forget and which he refers to again and again in his epistles, and in the Acts of the Apostles, he calls himself “the chief of sinners.” We, in a thoughtless and flippant way, may use the same expression; but we should lay it to heart that thus it was not with the Apostle Paul. He meant what he said in calling himself, “the chief of sinners”.

But this is only one side of it! Here comes the other side. He obtained forgiveness, pardon. “Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.” The first thing we have to observe regarding this second verse of our text is, that the Apostle Paul knew he was a forgiven sinner, a pardoned sinner. Now, how is it with ourselves regarding this point? I am now particularly referring to believers. If we are believers in the Lord Jesus, do we know that we are forgiven ones? Do we know that every one of our sins is forgiven? That not a single sin shall be brought against us hereafter, if we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ? That, therefore, the one only hateful thing which stands between the sinner and his God, that is sin itself, is put aside? That in the sight of God, we are clean ones, spotless ones, holy ones, because we are forgiven ones. O how precious!

I walk up and down in my room in prayer and in meditation about the things of God; I come out before God with this sin and with another sin, with very many sins of which I have been guilty, and which God the Holy Spirit brings to my remembrance! But it is always wound up with “These, my numberless transgressions, are forgiven!” Every one of my sins forgiven! Not a single sin remains unforgiven! Therefore I am completely reconciled to God, and God reconciled to me! O how precious! And the result of it all is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost! Not decreased by the remembrance of all our numberless transgressions, but increased more and more, because we see more clearly God’s wondrous love to us in Christ Jesus.

Should there be a single believer present who does not yet know that his sins are all forgiven, completely forgiven, that he has obtained mercy from God, though a sinner, a great sinner, let such a one not give himself rest till he knows it for himself, for there is no lasting peace till we come to know that all our numberless transgressions are forgiven. Let us not say we cannot know this on earth; we must wait till we get to heaven. Nay, the very opposite. It is the will of God that we should know it while we are yet in the body, for He has clearly and distinctly revealed to us that our sins are all forgiven if we are believers in Christ, as it is written in the 43rd verse of the 10th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles regarding the Lord Jesus, “To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.” That is, forgiveness of sins.

By the grace of God, I have known for seventy-one years and five months that all my numberless transgressions are forgiven. I have never had five minutes’ doubt about it. And the result has been peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. So it is whenever we are really able to the full to enter into it that all our transgressions are forgiven. We have on no account to say, “o here is an apostle, who writes this; but it is not for us common ordinary believers to know.” Every one of the children of God may know it! Every one of the children of God ought to know it! Ought to know it, and not give rest to themselves till they know it to the full.

“For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first.” This “first” has a double meaning. Primarily, that a beginning might be laid in his case to be a pattern of the long-suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ; in the next place that in him, the chief of sinners, might be shown what God is willing to do for any and every sinner! Now let us seek to lay hold on this! The Apostle Paul, the

great persecutor as he was when he was called Saul, obtained full, complete forgiveness of all the numberless transgressions of which he had been guilty, that a specimen might be given of what the Lord Jesus Christ is willing to do for the oldest, the greatest of all sinners, affording especially a sample in forgiving this vile persecutor of the saints, Saul, in order that no one after him need to despair whether it be possible that he or she could obtain forgiveness of sins. Of the hundreds of millions of human beings now under heaven, it is impossible that there can be one single individual who is too great a sinner to be forgiven; for he (Paul) was forgiven to be a sample that hereafter no one need despair. O this text! How precious! If this building were gold, or were filled with gold, it would be as nothing in comparison with the preciousness of this verse! “Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first” – that in me first – “Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering.” That is long-suffering to the utmost, a sample of what He is willing to do for any and everyone! “For a pattern” – that is, for an example, for a proof – “to them which should hereafter believe on Him.” O, precious! That there might not be, of all the numberless millions of human beings, a single individual who should have Scriptural ground to say, “I am too great a sinner to be pardoned.” Then, lastly, this one word more, “Believe on Him to life everlasting.” That means to eternal joy and happiness; as “an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ” to share with Him the glory, and to be unspeakably happy throughout Eternity, by partaking of the rivers of pleasure at the right hand of God. O, ponder, ponder, ponder, again, again, and again, and pray over it yet further and further, what is contained in this word, “Believe on Him to life everlasting.” The pleasures of this life, of this world, and the possessions of this world are exposed to change, and all is vanity. It is simply of the world. But what we receive in Christ brings eternal joy, eternal happiness; joy and happiness that will never, never, never be taken from us!

O, pray for this yet more and more! Seek to apprehend it more and more, and to lay hold on it further and further, more clearly and distinctly than as yet you have done, my beloved younger brethren and sisters in Christ. God grant it, for His Name’s sake.



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Registered Office: Müller House, 7 Cotham Park, Bristol BS6 6DA
Tel: 0117 924 5001 Email: admin@mullers.org