

A NEW YEAR'S BENEDICTION

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 AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

*“But the God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus,
 after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.”*
1 Peter 5:10.

THE Apostle Peter turns from exhortation to prayer. He knew that if praying is the end of preaching in the hearer, preaching should always be accompanied by prayer in the minister. Having exhorted Believers to walk steadfastly, he bends his knee and commends them to the guardian care of Heaven, imploring upon them one of the largest blessings for which the most affectionate heart ever made supplication. The minister of Christ is intended to execute two offices for the people of his charge. He is to speak for God to them and for them to God. The pastor has not fulfilled the whole of his sacred commission when he has declared the whole counsel of God. He has then done but half.

The other part is that which is to be performed in secret, when he carries upon his breast, like the priest of old, the wants, the sins, the trials of his people and pleads with God for them. The daily duty of the Christian pastor is as much to pray for his people, as to exhort, instruct and console. There are, however, special seasons when the minister of Christ finds himself constrained to pronounce an unusual benediction over his people. When one year of trial has gone and another year of mercy has commenced, we may be allowed to express our sincere congratulations that God has spared us and our earnest invocations of a thousand blessings upon the heads of those whom God has committed to our pastoral charge.

I have this morning taken this text as a new year's blessing. You are aware that a minister of the Church of England always supplies me with the motto for the new year. He prays much before he selects the text and I know that it is his prayer for you all today. He constantly favors me with this motto and I always think it my duty to preach from it and then desire my people to remember it through the year as a staff of support in their time of trouble, as some sweet morsel, a wafer made with honey, a portion of angel's food, which they may roll under their tongue and carry in their memory till the year ends and then begin with another sweet text. What larger benediction could my aged friend have chosen, standing as he is today in his pulpit and lifting up holy hands to preach to the people in a quiet village Church—what larger blessing could he implore for the thousands of Israel than that which in His name I pronounce upon you this day—“But the God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.”

In discoursing upon this text, I shall have to remark—first, what the Apostle asks of Heaven. And then, secondly, why he expects to receive it. The reason of his expecting to be answered is contained in the title by which he addresses the Lord his God—“The GOD OF ALL GRACE who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus.”

I. First, then, WHAT THE APOSTLE ASKS FOR ALL TO WHOM THIS EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN.

He asks for them four sparkling jewels set in a black foil. The four jewels are these—Perfection, Establishment, Strengthening, Settling. The jet-black setting is this—“After you have suffered awhile.” Worldly compliments are of little worth. For as Chesterfield observes, “They cost nothing but ink and paper.” I must confess, I think even that little expense is often thrown away. Worldly compliments generally omit all idea of sorrow. “A merry Christmas! A happy new year!” There is no supposition of anything like suffering. But Christian benedictions look at the truth of matters.

We know that men must suffer, we believe that men are born to sorrow as the spark flies upwards. And therefore in our benediction we include the sorrow. No, more than that, we believe that the sorrow shall assist in working out the blessing which we invoke upon your heads. We, in the language of Peter, say, “After you have suffered a while, may the God of all grace make you perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.” Understand, then, as I take each of these four jewels, that you are to look upon them and consider that they are only desired for you “After you have suffered awhile.”

We must not discard the sufferings. We must take them from the same hand from which we receive the mercy. And the blessing bears date, "After you have suffered a while."

1. Now the first sparkling jewel in this ring is perfection. The Apostle prays that God would make us perfect. Indeed, though this is a large prayer and the jewel is a diamond of the first water and of the finest size, yet is it absolutely necessary to a Christian that he should ultimately arrive at perfection. Have you ever on your bed dreamed a dream, when your thoughts roamed at large and the bit was taken from the lip of your imagination, when stretching all your wings, your soul floated through the infinite, grouping strange and marvelous things together, so that the dream rolled on in something like supernatural splendor? But on a sudden you were awakened and you have regretted hours afterwards that the dream was never concluded.

And what is a Christian, if he does not arrive at perfection, but an unfinished dream? A majestic dream it is true, full of things that earth had never known if it had not been that they were revealed to flesh and blood by the Spirit. But suppose the voice of sin should startle us before that dream is concluded and if as when one awakes, we should despise the image which began to be formed in our minds—what were we then? Everlasting regrets, a multiplication of eternal torment must be the result of our having begun to be Christians, if we do not arrive at perfection. If there could be such a thing as a man in whom sanctification began but in whom God the Spirit ceased to work—if there could be a being so unhappy as to be called by grace and to be deserted before he was perfected—there would not be among the damned in Hell a more unhappy wretch.

It were no blessing for God to *begin* to bless if He did not perfect. It were the grandest curse which Omnipotent hatred itself could pronounce, to give a man grace at all, if that grace did not carry him to the end and land him safely in Heaven. I must confess that I would rather endure the pangs of that dread archangel, Satan, throughout eternity, than have to suffer as one whom God once loved, but whom He cast away. But such a thing shall never be. Whom once He has chosen He does not reject. We know that where He has begun a good work He will carry it on and He will complete it until the day of Christ. Grand is the prayer, then, when the Apostle asks that we may be perfected. What were a Christian if he were not perfected?

Have you ever seen a canvas upon which the hand of the painter has sketched with daring pencil some marvelous scene of grandeur? You see where the living color has been laid on with an almost superhuman skill. But the artist was suddenly struck dead and the hand that worked miracles of art was palsied and the pencil dropped. Is it not a source of regret to the world that ever the painting was commenced, since it was never finished? Have you ever seen the human face Divine starting out from the chiseled marble? You have seen the exquisite skill of the sculptor and you have said within yourself, "What a marvelous thing this will be! What a matchless specimen of human skill!"

But, alas, it never was completed, but was left unfinished. And do you imagine, any of you, that God will begin to sculpture out a perfect being and not complete it? Do you think that the hand of Divine wisdom will sketch the Christian and not fill up the details? Has God taken us as unhewn stones out of the quarry and has He begun to work upon us and show His Divine art, His marvelous wisdom and grace and will He afterwards cast us away? Shall God fail? Shall He leave His works imperfect? Point, if you can, my Hearers, to a world which God has cast away unfinished. Is there one speck in His creation where God has begun to build but was not able to complete? Has He made a single angel deficient? Is there one creature over which it cannot be said, "This is very good"?

And shall it be said over the creature twice made—the chosen of God, the blood-bought—shall it be said, "The Spirit began to work in this man's heart, but the man was mightier than the Spirit and sin conquered grace. God was put to rout and Satan triumphed and the man was never perfected"? Oh, my dear Brothers and Sisters, the prayer shall be fulfilled. After you have suffered a while, God shall make you perfect, if he has begun the good work in you.

But, Beloved, it must be After you have suffered awhile. You cannot be perfected except by the fire. There is no way of ridding you of your dross and your tin but by the names of the furnace of affliction. Your folly is so bound up in your hearts, you children of God, that nothing but the rod can bring it out of you. It is through the blueness of your wounds that your heart is made better. You must pass through tribulation, that through the Spirit it may act as a refining fire to you. That pure, holy, purged and washed, you may stand before the face of your God, rid of every imperfection and delivered from every corruption within.

2. Let us now proceed to the second blessing of the benediction—establishment. It is not enough even if the Christian had received in himself a proportional perfection, if he were not established. You have seen the arch of Heaven as it spans the plain. Glorious are its colors and rare its hues. Though we have seen it many and many a time, it never ceases to be “A thing of beauty and a joy forever.” But alas for the rainbow, it is not established. It passes away and lo it is not. The fair colors give way to the fleecy clouds and the sky is no longer brilliant with the tints of Heaven. It is not established. How can it be? A thing that is made of transitory sunbeams and passing rain-drops, how can it abide? And mark, the more beautiful the vision, the more sorrowful the reflection when that vision vanishes and there is nothing left but darkness. It is, then, a very necessary wish for the Christian, that he should be established.

Of all God's known conceptions, next to His incarnate Son, I do not hesitate to pronounce a Christian man the noblest conception of God. But if this conception is to be but as the rainbow painted on the cloud and is to pass away forever—woe was the day that ever our eyes were tantalized with a sublime conception that is so soon to melt away. What is a Christian man better than the flower of the field, which is here today and which withers when the sun is risen with fervent heat, unless God establish him—what is the difference between the heir of Heaven, the blood-bought child of God and the grass of the field?

Oh, may God fulfill to you this rich benediction, that you may not be as the smoke out of a chimney, which is blown away by the wind—that your goodness may not be as the morning cloud and as the early dew which passes away. But may you be established, may every good thing that you have be an abiding thing. May your character be not a writing upon the sand, but an inscription upon the rock. May your faith be no “baseless fabric of a vision,” but may it be built of stone that shall endure that awful fire which shall consume the wood, hay and stubble of the hypocrite. May you be rooted and grounded in love. May your conviction be deep. May your love be real. May your desires be earnest. May your whole life be so settled, fixed and established, that all the blasts of Hell and all the storms of earth shall never be able to remove you.

You know we talk about some Christian men as being old established Christians. I do fear there are a great many that are old, who are not established. It is one thing to have the hair whitened with years, but I fear it is another thing for us to obtain wisdom. There are some who grow no wiser by all their experience. Though their fingers are well rapped by experience, yet have they not learned in that school. I know there are many aged Christians who can say of themselves and say it sorrowfully too, they wish they had their opportunities over again, that they might learn more and might be more established. We have heard them sing—

*“I find myself a learner yet,
Unskillful, weak and apt to slide.”*

The benediction however of the Apostle is one which I pray may be fulfilled in us whether we are young or old—but especially in those of you who have long known your Lord and Savior. You ought not now to be the subject of those doubts which vex the babe in grace. Those first principles should not always be laid again by you—but you should be going forward to something higher. You are getting near to Heaven. Oh, how is it that you have not got to the land Beulah yet? To that land which flows with milk and honey? Though they have been whitened with the sunlight of Heaven, how is it that some of the sunlight does not gleam from your eyes?

We who are young look up to you old established Christians. And if we see you doubting and hear you speaking with a trembling lip then we are exceedingly cast down. We pray for our sakes as well as for yours, that this blessing may be fulfilled in you, that you may be established. That you may no longer be exercised with doubt. That you may know your interest in Christ. That you may feel you are secure in Him. That resting upon the Rock of Ages you may know that you cannot perish while your feet are fixed there. We do pray, in fact, for all, of whatever age, that our hope may be fixed upon nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness and that it may be so firmly fixed that it may never shake. That we may be as Mount Zion, which can never be removed and which abides forever.

Thus have I remarked upon the second blessing of this benediction. But mark, we cannot have it until after we have suffered a while. We cannot be established except by suffering. It is of no use our hoping that we shall be well-rooted if no March winds have passed over us. The young oak cannot be expected to strike its roots so deep as the old one. Those old gnarlings on the roots and those strange twisting of the branches, all tell of many storms that have swept over the aged tree. But they are also indicators of the depths into which the roots have dived. And they tell the woodman that he might

as soon expect to rend up a mountain as to tear up that oak by the roots. We must suffer a while, then shall we be established.

3. Now for the third blessing, which is strengthening. Ah, Brethren, this is a very necessary blessing, too, for all Christians. There are some whose characters seem to be fixed and established. But still they lack force and vigor. Shall I give you a picture of a Christian without strength? There he is. He has espoused the cause of King Jesus. He has put on his armor. He has enlisted in the heavenly host. Do you observe him? He is perfectly covered from head to foot and he carries with him the shield of faith. Do you notice, too, how firmly he is established? He keeps his ground and he will not be removed.

But notice him. When he uses his sword it falls with feeble force. His shield, though he grasps it as firmly as his weakness will allow him, trembles in his grasp. There he stands, he will not move, but still how tottering is his position. His knees knock together with fright when he hears the sound and the noise of war and tumult. What does this man need? His will is right, his intention is right and his heart is fully set upon good things. What does he need? Why he needs strength! The poor man is weak and childlike. Either because he has been fed on unsavory and unsubstantial meat—or because of some sin which has straitened him—he has not that force and strength which ought to dwell in the Christian man.

But once let the prayer of Peter be fulfilled to him and how strong the Christian becomes! There is not in all the world a creature so strong as a Christian when God is with him. Talk of Behemoth! He is but as a little thing. His might is weakness when matched with the Believer. Talk of Leviathan that makes the deep to be hoary! He is not the chief of the ways of God. The true Believer is mightier far than even he. Have you ever seen the Christian when God is with him? He smells the battle afar off and he cries in the midst of the tumult, “Aha! Aha! Aha!” He laughs at all the hosts of his enemies. Or if you compare him to the Leviathan—if he is cast into a sea of trouble, he lashes about him and makes the deep hoary with benedictions. He is not overwhelmed by the depths, nor is he afraid of the rocks.

He has the protection of God about him and the floods cannot drown him. No, they become an element of delight to him, while by the grace of God he rejoices in the midst of the billows. If you want a proof of the strength of a Christian you have only to turn to history. There you can see there how Believers have quenched the violence of fire, have shut the mouths of lions, have shaken their fists in the face of grim death, have laughed tyrants to scorn and have put to flight the armies of aliens, by the all-mastering power of faith in God. I pray God, my Brethren, that He may strengthen you this year.

The Christians of this age are very feeble things. It is a remarkable thing that the great mass of children nowadays are born feeble. You ask me for the evidence of it. I can supply it very readily. You are aware that in the Church of England Liturgy it is ordered and ordained that all children should be immersed in Baptism except those that are certified to be of a weakly state. Now, it were uncharitable to imagine that persons would be guilty of falsehood when they come up to what they think to be a sacred ordinance. And, therefore, as nearly all children are now sprinkled and not immersed, I suppose they are born feeble. Whether that accounts for the fact that all Christians are so feeble I will not undertake to say, but certain it is that we have not many gigantic Christians nowadays.

Here and there we hear of one who seems to work all but miracles in these modern times and we are astonished. Oh that you had faith like these men! I do not think there is much more piety in England now than there used to be in the days of the Puritans. I believe there are far more pious men. But while the quantity has been multiplied, I fear the quality has been depreciated. In those days the stream of grace ran very deep indeed. Some of those old Puritans, when we read of their devotion and of the hours they spent in prayer, seem to have as much grace as any hundred of us. The stream ran deep.

But nowadays the banks are broken down and great meadows have been flooded therewith. So far so good. But while the surface has been enlarged I fear the depth has been frightfully diminished. And this may account for it, that while our piety has become shallow our strength has become weak. Oh, may God strengthen you this year! But remember, if He does do so, you will then have to suffer. “After you have suffered a while,” may He strengthen you. There is sometimes an operation performed upon horses which one must consider to be cruel—the firing of them to make their tendons strong. Now, every Christian man before he can be strengthened must be fired. He must have his nerves and

tendons braced up with the hot iron of affliction. He will never become strong in grace, unless it is after he has suffered a while.

4. And now I come to the last blessing of the four—"Settling." I will not say that this last blessing is greater than the other three, but it is a stepping-stone to each. And strange to say, it is often the result of a gradual attainment of the three preceding ones. "Settle you!" Oh, how many there are that are never settled. The tree which should be transplanted every week would soon die. No, if it were moved, no matter how skillfully, once every year, no gardener would expect fruit from it. How many Christians there be that are transplanting themselves constantly, even as to their doctrinal sentiments. There be some who generally believe according to the last speaker. And there are others who do not know what they believe, but they believe almost anything that is told them.

The spirit of Christian charity, so much cultivated in these days and which we all love so much, has, I fear, assisted in bringing into the world a species of latitudinarianism. In other words, men have come to believe that it does not matter what they believe. Although one minister says it is so and the other says it is not so—we are both right. Though we contradict each other flatly, yet we are both correct. I know not where men have had their judgments manufactured, but to my mind it always seems impossible to believe a contradiction. I can never understand how contrary sentiments can both of them be in accordance with the Word of God, which is the standard of truth.

But yet there are some who are like the weathercock upon the Church steeple, they will turn just as the wind blows. As good Mr. Whitfield said, "You might as well measure the moon for a suit of clothes as tell their doctrinal sentiments," for they are always shifting and ever changing. Now I pray that this may be taken away from any of you, if this is your weakness and that you may be settled. Far from us be bigotry removed. Yet would I have the Christian know what he believes to be true and then stand to it. Take your time in weighing the controversy, but when you have once decided, be not easily moved. Let God be true though every man be a liar and stand to it—that what is according to God's Word one day cannot be contrary to it another day. That what was true in Luther's day and Calvin's day must be true now.

Falsehoods may shift, for they have a Protean shape. But the Truth of God is one and indivisible and evermore the same. Let others think as they please. Allow the greatest latitude to others, but to yourself allow none. Stand firm and steadfast by that which you have been taught and ever seek the spirit of the Apostle Paul, "If any man preach any other Gospel than that which we have received, let him be accursed." If, however, I wished you to be firm in your doctrines, my prayer would be that you may be especially settled in your faith. You believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God and you rest in Him. But sometimes your faith wavers, then you lose your joy and comfort. I pray that your faith may become so settled that it may never be a matter of question with you, whether Christ is yours or not—that you may say confidently, "I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him."

Then I pray that you may be settled in your aims and designs. There are many Christian people who get a good idea into their heads, but they never carry it out, because they ask some friend what he thinks of it. "Not much," says he. Of course he does not. Whoever did think much of anybody else's idea? And at once the person who conceived it gives it up and the work is never accomplished. How many a man in his ministry has begun to preach the Gospel and he has allowed some member of the Church, some deacon possibly, to pull him by one ear and he has gone a little that way. By-and-by, some other Brother has thought fit to pull him in the other direction. The man has lost his manliness. He has never been settled as to what he ought to do. And now he becomes a mere lackey, waiting upon everybody's opinion, willing to adopt whatever anybody else conceives to be right.

Now I pray you be settled in your aims. See what niche it is that God would have you occupy. Stand in it and don't leave it regardless of all the laughter that comes upon you. If you believe God has called you to a work, do it. If men will help you, thank them. If they will not, tell them to stand out of your road or be run over. Let nothing daunt you. He who will serve his God must expect sometimes to serve him alone. Not always shall we fight in the ranks. There are times when the Lord's David must fight Goliath singly and must take with him three stones out of the brook amid the laughter of his Brethren. But still in his weapons is he confident of victory through faith in God. Be not moved from the work to which God has put you. Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season you shall reap if you faint not. Be you settled. Oh, may God fulfill this rich blessing to you.

But you will not be settled unless you suffer. You will become settled in your faith and settled in your aims by suffering. Men are soft molluscous animals in these days. We have not the tough men that know they are right and stand to it. Even when a man is wrong, one admires his conscientiousness when he stands up believing that he is right and dares to face the frowns of the world. But when a man is right, the worst thing he can have is inconstancy, vacillation, the fear of men. Hurl it from you, O knight of the holy Cross, and be firm if you would be victorious. Faint-Heart never stormed a city yet and you will never win nor be crowned with honor if your heart is not steeled against every assault and if you are not settled in your intention to honor your Master and to win the crown. Thus have I run through the benediction.

II. I come now, asking your attention for a few minutes more, to observe THE REASONS WHY THE APOSTLE PETER EXPECTED THAT HIS PRAYER WOULD BE HEARD.

He asked that they might be made perfect, established, strengthened, settled. Did not Unbelief whisper in Peter's ear, "Peter, you ask too much. You were always headstrong. You did say 'Bid me come upon the water.' Surely, this is another instance of your presumption. If you had said, 'Lord, make them holy,' had it not been a sufficient prayer? Have you not asked too much?" "No," says Peter. And he replies to Unbelief, "I am sure I shall receive what I have asked for. For I am in the first place asking it of the God of all grace—the God of all grace."

Not the God of the little graces we have received already, but the God of the great boundless grace which is stored up for us in the promise—which as yet we have not received in our experience. "The God of all grace." Of quickening grace, of convincing grace, of pardoning grace, of believing grace—the God of comforting, supporting, sustaining grace. Surely, when we come to Him we cannot come for too much. If He is the God, not of *one* grace, or of *two* graces, but of *ALL* graces—if in Him there is stored up an infinite, boundless, limitless supply, how can we ask too much, even though we ask that we may be perfect? Believer, when you are on your knees, remember you are going to a king. Let your petitions be large. Imitate the example of Alexander's courtier, who when he was told he might have whatever he chose to ask as a reward for his valor, asked a sum of money so large that Alexander's treasurer refused to pay it until he had first seen the monarch.

When he saw the monarch, he smiled and said, "It is true, it is much for him to ask, but it is not much for Alexander to give. I admire him for his faith in me. Let him have all he asks for." And dare I ask that I may be perfect, that my angry temper may be taken away, my stubbornness removed, my imperfections covered? May I ask that I may be like Adam in the garden—no, more—as pure and perfect as God Himself? May I ask that one day I may tread the golden streets and, "With my Savior's garments on, holy as the Holy One," stand in the mid-blaze of God's glory and cry, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Yes, I may ask it. And I shall have it, for He is the God of all grace.

Look again at the text and you see another reason why Peter expected that his prayer would be heard—"The God of all grace who has called us." Unbelief might have said to Peter, "Ah, Peter, it is true that God is the God of all grace, but He is as a fountain shut up, as waters sealed." "Ah," says Peter, "get you hence Satan, you savor not the things that be of God. It is not a sealed fountain of all grace, for it has begun to flow. The God of all grace has called us." Calling is the first drop of mercy that trickles into the thirsty lip of the dying man. Calling is the first golden link of the endless chain of eternal mercies. Not the first in order of time with God, but the first in order of time with us. The first thing we know of Christ in His mercy, is that he cries, "Come unto Me all you that are weary and heavy laden." And that by His sweet Spirit He addresses us, so that we obey the call and come to Him.

Now, mark, if God has called me, I may ask Him to establish and keep me. I may ask that as year rolls after year my piety may not die out. I may pray that the bush may burn, but not be consumed—that the barrel of meal may not waste and the cruse of oil may not fail. Dare I ask that to life's latest hour I may be faithful to God, because God is faithful to me? Yes, I may ask it and I shall have it, too—because the God that calls, will give the rest. "For whom He did foreknow, them He did predestinate. And whom He did predestinate, them He also called. And whom He called He also justified. And whom He justified, them He also glorified." Think of your calling, Christian, and take courage, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." If He has called you He will never repent of what He has done, nor cease to bless or cease to save.

But I think there is yet a stronger reason—"The God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory." Has God called you, my Hearer? Do you know to what He has called you? He called you first into the house of conviction, where He made you feel your sin. Again, He called you to Calvary's summit, where you did see your sin atoned for and

your pardon sealed with precious blood. And now He calls you. And to where? I hear a voice today—Unbelief tells me that there is a voice calling me to Jordan's waves. Oh, Unbelief! It is true that through the stormy billows of that sea my soul must wade. But the voice comes not from the depths of the grave, it comes from the eternal glory. There where Jehovah sits resplendent on His Throne, surrounded by cherubim and seraphim, from that brightness into which angels dare not gaze, I hear a voice—"Come unto Me, you blood-washed sinner, come unto My eternal glory."

O Heavens! Is not this a wondrous call?—To be called to Glory? Called to the shining streets and pearly gates? Called to the harps and to the songs of eternal happiness? And better still, called to Jesus' bosom—called to His Father's face—called, not to eternal glory, but to HIS eternal glory—called to that very glory and honor with which God invests Himself forever? And now, Beloved, is any prayer too great after this? Has God called me to Heaven and is there anything on earth He will deny me? If He has called me to dwell in Heaven—is not perfection necessary for me? May I not therefore ask for it? If He has called me to Glory, is it not necessary that I should be strengthened to fight my way there? May I not ask for strengthening? If there is a mercy upon earth too great for me to think of, too large for me to conceive, too heavy for my language to carry it before the Throne in prayer—He will do for me exceeding abundantly above what I can ask, or even I can think. I know He will, because He has called me to His eternal glory.

The last reason why the Apostle expected that his benediction would be fulfilled was this—"Who has called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus." It is a singular fact that no promise is ever so sweet to the Believer as those in which the name of Christ is mentioned. If I have to preach a comforting sermon to desponding Christians, I would never select a text which did not enable me to lead the desponding one to the Cross. Does it not seem too much to you, Brothers and Sisters, this morning, that the God of all grace should be your God? Does it not surpass your faith that He should actually have called you? Do you not sometimes doubt as to whether you were called at all? And when you think of eternal glory, does not the question arise, "Shall I ever enjoy it? Shall I ever see the face of God with acceptance?"

Oh, Beloved, when you hear of Christ, when you know that this grace comes through Christ and the calling through Christ and the glory through Christ, then you say, "Lord, I can believe it now, if it is through Christ." It is not a hard thing to believe that Christ's blood was sufficient to purchase every blessing for me. If I go to God's treasury without Christ, I am afraid to ask for anything, but when Christ is with me I can then ask for everything. For surely I think He deserves it though I do not. If I can claim His merits then I am not afraid to plead. Is perfection too great a blessing for God to give to Christ? Oh, no. Is the keeping, the stability, the preservation of the blood-bought ones too great a reward for the terrible agonies and sufferings of the Savior? I think not. Then we may with confidence plead, because everything comes through Christ.

I would in concluding make this remark. I wish, my Brothers and Sisters, that during this year you may live nearer to Christ than you have ever done before. Depend upon it, it is when we think much of Christ that we think little of ourselves, little of our troubles and little of the doubts and fears that surround us. Begin from this day and may God help you. Never let a single day pass over your head without a visit to the garden of Gethsemane and the Cross on Calvary. And as for some of you who are not saved and know not the Redeemer, I would to God that this very day you would come to Christ. I dare say you think coming to Christ is some terrible thing—that you need to be prepared before you come. That He is hard and harsh with you. When men have to go to a lawyer they need to tremble. When they have to go to the doctor they may fear—though both those persons, however unwelcome—may be often necessary.

But when you come to Christ, you may come boldly. There is no fee required. There is no preparation necessary. You may come just as you are. It was a brave saying of Martin Luther's, when he said, "I would run into Christ's arms even if He had a drawn sword in His hand." Now, He has not a drawn sword, but He has His wounds in His hands. Run into His arms, poor Sinner. "Oh," you say, "May I come?" How can you ask the question? You are *commanded* to come! The great command of the Gospel is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus." Those who disobey this command disobey God. It is as much a command of God that man should believe on Christ, as that we should love our neighbor.

Now, what is a command I have certainly a right to obey. There can be no question, you see. A sinner has liberty to believe in Christ because he is told to do so. God would not have told him to do a thing which he must not do. You are allowed to believe. "Oh," says one, "that is all I want to know. I do believe that Christ is able to save to the uttermost. May I rest my soul on Him and say, 'sink or swim, most blessed Jesus, you are my Lord' "? *May* do it, Man? Why you are

commanded to do it. Oh that you may be enabled to do it. Remember, this is not a thing which you will do at a risk. The risk is in *not* doing it. Cast yourself on Christ, Sinner. Throw away every other dependence and rest alone on him.

“No,” says one, “I am not prepared.” Prepared! Sir? Then you do not understand me. There is no preparation needed. It is, just as you are. “Oh, I do not feel my need enough.” I know you do not. What has that to do with it? You are commanded to cast yourself on Christ. Be you ever so black, or ever so bad, trust to Him. He that believes on Christ shall be saved, be his sins ever so many. He that believes not must be damned be his sins ever so few. The great command of the Gospel is, “Believe.” “Oh,” says one, “am I to say I know that Christ died for me?” Ah, I did not say that, you shall learn that by-and-by. You have nothing to do with that question now, your business is to believe on Christ and trust Him. To cast yourself into His hands. And may God the Spirit now sweetly compel you to do it.

Now, Sinner, hands off your own righteousness. Drop all idea of becoming better through your own strength. Cast yourself flat on the promise. Say—

*“Just as I am without one plea,
But that Your blood was shed for me,
And that You bid me come to You.
Oh, Lamb of God! I come, I come.”*

You cannot trust in Christ and find Him to deceive you. Now, have I made myself plain? If there were a number of persons here in debt and if I were to say, “If you will simply trust to me your debts, they shall be paid and no creditor shall ever molest you,” you would understand me directly. How is it you cannot comprehend that trusting in Christ will remove all your debts, take away all your sins and you shall be saved eternally?

Oh, Spirit of the living God, open the understanding to receive and the heart to obey and may many a soul here present cast itself on Christ. On all such, as on all Believers, do I again pronounce the benediction, with which I shall dismiss you. “May the God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, After you have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you”!

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