

THE GROUND OF THE SINNER'S FAITH

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

WHAT ground does the sinner dare to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? My dear friends, it is true that no man will believe in Jesus unless he feels his need of Him. But you have often heard me say, and I repeat it again, that I do not come to Christ pleading that I feel my need of Him; my reason for believing in Christ is not that I feel my need of Him, but that I have a need of Him. The ground on which a man comes to Jesus is not as a sensible sinner, but as a sinner, and nothing but a sinner.

He will not come unless he is awakened; but when he comes, he does not say, "Lord, I come to thee because I am an awakened sinner, save me." But he says, "Lord, I am a sinner, save me." Not his awakening, but his sinnership is the method and plan upon which he dares to come. You will, perhaps, perceive what I mean, for I cannot exactly explain myself just now. If I refer to the preaching of a great many Calvinistic divines, they say to a sinner, "Now, if you feel your need of Christ, if you have repented so much, if you have been harrowed by the Law to such-and-such a degree, then you may come to Christ on the ground that you are an awakened sinner." I say that is false! No man may come to Christ on the ground of his being an awakened sinner; he must come to him as a sinner. When I come to Jesus, I know I am not come unless I am awakened, but still, I do not come as an awakened sinner. I do not stand at the foot of His cross to be washed because I have repented; I bring nothing when I come but sin. A sense of need is a good feeling, but when I stand at the foot of the cross, I do not believe in Christ because I have got good feelings, but I believe in Him whether I have good feelings or not. "Just as I am without one plea, But that Thy blood was shed for me, And that Thou bidst me come to Thee, O Lamb of God I come."

Mr. Roger, Mr. Sheppard, Mr. Flavel (1630-1691), and several excellent divines in the Puritanic age, and especially Richard Baxter (1615-1691), used to give descriptions of what a man must feel before he may dare to come to Christ. Now, I say in the language of good Mr. Fenner, another of those divines, who said he was but a babe in grace when compared with them—"I dare to say it, that all this is not scriptural. Sinners do feel these things before they come, but they do not come on the ground of having felt it; they come on the ground of being sinners, and on no other ground whatever."

The gate of Mercy is opened, and over the door it is written, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*" (1Ti 1:15). Between that word "save" and the next word "sinners," there is no adjective. It does not say "penitent sinners," "awakened sinners," "sensible sinners," "grieving sin-

ners,” or “alarmed sinners.” No, it only says, “sinners”! And I know this: that when I come, I come to Christ today, for I feel it is as much a necessity of my life to come to the cross of Christ today as it was to come ten years ago.

When I come to Him, I dare not come as a conscious sinner or an awakened sinner, but I have to come still as a sinner with nothing in my hands. I saw an aged man this week in the vestry of a chapel in Yorkshire. I had been saying something to this effect, and the old man, [who] had been a Christian for years...said, “I never saw it put exactly so, but still I know that is just the way I come; I say, ‘Lord, Nothing in my hands I bring, Simply to thy cross I cling; Naked, look to thee for dress; Helpless, come to thee for grace; Black [blackened by sin]’—Black enough,” said the old man, “ ‘I to the fountain fly, Wash me, Saviour, or I die.’ ”

Faith is getting right *out of yourself* and getting into Christ. I know that many hundreds of poor souls have been troubled because the minister has said, “if you feel your need, you may come to Christ.” “But,” say they, “I do not feel my need enough; I am sure I do not.” Many a score letters have I received from poor troubled consciences who have said, “I would venture to believe in Christ to save me if I had a tender conscience; if I had a soft heart—but oh my heart is like a rock of ice which will not melt. I cannot feel as I would like to feel, and therefore I must not believe in Jesus.” Oh! down with it, down with it! It is a wicked anti-Christ; it is flat Popery! It is not your soft heart that entitles you to believe. You are to believe in Christ to renew your hard heart, and come to Him with nothing about you but sin.

The ground on which a sinner comes to Christ is that he is black; that he is *dead*, and not that he knows he is dead; that he is *lost*, and not that he knows he is lost. I know he will not come unless he does know it, but that is not the ground on which he comes. It is the secret reason why, but it is not the public positive ground that he understands. Here was I, year after year, afraid to come to Christ because I thought I did not feel enough; and I used to read that hymn of Cowper’s (William, 1731-1800) about being insensible as steel: “If aught is felt ’tis only pain To find I cannot feel.”

When I believed in Christ, I thought I did not feel at all. Now, when I look back, I find that I had been feeling all the while most acutely and intensely, and most of all because I thought I did not feel. Generally, the people who repent the most think they are impenitent, and people feel most their need when they think they do not feel at all—for we are no judges of our feelings. And hence the gospel invitation is not put upon the ground of anything of which we can be a judge; it is put on the ground of our being sinners and nothing but sinners.

“Well,” says one, “but it says, ‘Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest’ (Mat 11:28)—then we [first] must be weary and heavy-laden.” Just so; so it is in the text, but then there is another: “Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev 22:17); and that does not say anything about “weary and heavy-laden.” Besides, while the invitation is given to the weary and heavy-laden, you will perceive that the promise is not made to them *as* weary and heavy-laden, but it is made to them *as coming* to Christ.

They did not know that they were weary and heavy-laden when they came; they thought they were not. They really were, but part of their weariness was that they could not be as weary as they would like to be, and part of their load was that they did not feel their load *enough*. They came to Christ just as they were, and He saved them, not because there was any merit in their weariness or any efficacy in their being heavy-laden, but He saved them as sinners and nothing but sinners, and so they were washed in His blood and made clean! My dear hearer, do let me put this truth home to thee. If thou wilt come to Christ this morning, as nothing but a sinner, He *will not cast thee out*!

Tobias Crisp (1600-1643) says in one of his sermons...“I dare to say it, but if thou dost come to Christ, whosoever thou mayest be, if He does not receive thee, then He is not true to His word, for He says, ‘Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.’ (Joh 6:37)” If thou comest, never mind qualification or preparation. He needeth no qualification of duties or of feelings either. Thou art to come just as thou art, and if thou art the biggest sinner out of hell, thou art as fit to come to Christ as if thou wert the most moral and most excellent of men.

There is a bath: who is fit to be washed? A man’s blackness is no reason why he should not be washed, but the clearer reason why he *should* be. When our city magistrates were giving relief to the poor, nobody said, “I am so poor, therefore I am not fit to have relief.” Your poverty is your preparation, the “black” is the “white” here—strange contradiction! The only thing you can bring to Christ is your sin and your wickedness. All He asks is that you will come *empty*. If you have anything of your own, you must leave all before you come (Luk 14:33). If there be anything good in you, you cannot trust Christ, you must come with nothing in your hand. Take Him as all in all, and that is the only ground upon which a poor soul can be saved—as a sinner, and nothing but a sinner!



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