

A Christmas Question

by C.H. Spurgeon

The sermon explores the question of whether Jesus Christ is born to us and given to us, and how we can know if we are truly born again.

Duration: 48:37

Scripture: Psalm 36:1, Isaiah 9:6, Matthew 6:33, John 1:12, Romans 8:14, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 2:17

Topics: "Atonement For Sin", "Christmas Salvation"

Description

The sermon transcript describes the pitiable condition of those who died from hunger and cold in the streets. It then transitions to a depiction of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, emphasizing his suffering and the completion of the atonement for sin. The sermon urges sinners to believe in Christ and find salvation. It concludes with a call to rejoice and celebrate the birth of Jesus, comparing it to the joyous celebration of a prince being born.

Transcript

The Prince of Preachers Charles Haddon Spurgeon has been called England's greatest contribution to the spread of the gospel in the 19th century. One of his contemporaries said that the chief secret of Spurgeon's attractiveness was the fact that in every sermon, no matter what the text or the occasion, he explained the way of salvation in simple terms. Spurgeon's messages remain one of the great treasure houses of Christian literature, still bringing the light of the gospel and the comfort of the scriptures to hungry souls long after the preacher has passed into glory.

This is Charles Kelsch inviting you to listen to a message from the Prince of Preachers. Ch. Spurgeon preached this message on December 25, 1859, at the Exeter Hall.

It is entitled, A Christmas Question. The text is found in Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6. For unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given.

Upon other occasions I have explained the main part of this verse. The government shall be upon his shoulders. His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God.

If God shall spare me, on some future occasion I hope to take the other titles, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. But now this morning, the portion which shall engage our attention is this. Unto us a child is born.

Unto us a son is given. The sentence is a double one, but it has in it no tautology. A careful reader will soon discover a distinction.

And it is not a distinction without a difference. Unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given.

As Jesus Christ is a child in His human nature, He is born, begotten of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary. He is as truly born, as certainly a child, as any other man that ever lived upon the face of the earth. He is thus in His humanity a child born.

But as Jesus Christ is God's Son, He is not born, but given, begotten of His Father from before all worlds, begotten, not made, being of the same substance with the Father. The doctrine of the eternal affiliation of Christ is to be received as an undoubted truth of our holy religion. But as to any explanation of it, no man should venture thereon, for it remaineth among the deep things of God, one of those solemn mysteries indeed into which the angels dare not look, nor do they desire to pry into it, a mystery which we must not attempt to fathom, for it is utterly beyond the grasp of any finite being.

As well might a gnat seek to drink in the ocean as a finite creature to comprehend the eternal God. A God whom we could understand would be no God if we could grasp Him. He could not be infinite.

If we could understand Him, then were He not divine. Jesus Christ, then, I say, as a Son is not born to us, but given. He is a boon bestowed on us, for God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son into the world.

He was not born in this world as God's Son, but He was sent, or was given, so that you clearly perceive that the distinction is a suggestive one and conveys much good truth to us. Unto us a child is born. Unto us a Son is given.

This morning, however, the principal object of my discourse, and indeed the sole one, is to bring out the force of those two little words, unto us, for you will perceive that here the full force of the passage lies. For unto us a child is born. Unto us a Son is given.

The divisions of my discourse are very simple ones. First, is it so? Secondly, if it is so, what then? Thirdly, if it is not so, what then? In the first place, is it so? Is it true that unto us a child is born? Unto us a Son is given? It is a fact that a child is born. Upon that I use no argument.

We receive it as a fact, more fully established than any other fact in history, that the Son of God became man, was born at Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. It is a fact, too, that a Son is given. About that we have no question.

The infidel may dispute. But we, professing to be believers in Scripture, receive it as an undeniable truth that God has given His only begotten Son to be the Savior of men. But the matter of question is this.

Is this child born to us? Is He given to us? This is the matter of anxious inquiry. Have we a personal interest in the child that was born at Bethlehem? Do we know that He is our Savior, that He has brought glad tidings to us, that to us He belongs, and that we belong to Him? I say this is a matter of very grave and solemn investigation. It is a very observable fact that the very best of men are sometimes troubled with questions with regard to their own interest in Christ, while men who are never troubled at all about the matter are very frequently presumptuous deceivers who have no part in this matter.

I have often observed that some of the people about whom I felt most sure were the very persons who were the least sure of themselves. It reminds me of the history of a godly man named Simon Brown, a minister in the olden times in the city of London. He became so extremely sad in heart, so depressed in spirit, that at last he conceived the idea that his soul was annihilated.

It was all in vain to talk to the good man. You could not persuade him that he had a soul. But all the time he was preaching, praying, and working more like a man that had two souls than none.

When he preached, his eyes poured forth plenteous floods of tears. And when he prayed, there was a divine fervor and a heavenly prevalence in every petition. Now so it is with many Christians.

They seem to be the very picture of godliness. Their life is admirable, and their conversation heavenly. But yet they are always crying.

"'Tis a point I long to know." Oft it causes anxious thought. "'Do I love the Lord, or no? Am I His, or am I not?' So does it happen that the best of men will question, while the worst of men will presume. Ay, I have seen the men about whose eternal destiny I had serious questioning, whose inconsistencies in life were palpable and glaring, who have prated concerning their sure portion in Israel and their infallible hope, as though they believed others to be as easily duped as themselves.

Now what reason shall we give for this foolhardiness? Learn it from this illustration. You see a number of men riding along a narrow road upon the edge of the sea. It is a very perilous path, for the way is rugged, and a tremendous precipice bounds the pathway on the left.

Let but the horse's foot slip once, and they dash downwards to destruction. See how cautiously the riders journey, how carefully the horses place their feet. But do you observe, yon rider, at what a rate he dashes along as if he were riding a steeplechase with Satan.

You hold up your hands in an agony of fear, trembling lest every moment his horse's foot should slip and he should be dashed down. And you say, why so careless a rider? The man is a blind rider on a blind horse. They cannot see where they are.

He thinks he is on a sure road, and therefore is it that he rides so fast. Or to vary the picture, sometimes when persons are asleep, they take to walking, and they will climb where others will not think of venturing. Giddy height that would turn our brain seems safe enough to them.

So there be many spiritual sleepwalkers in our midst who think that they are awake, but they are not. Their very presumption in venturing to the high places of self-confidence proves that they are somnambulists, not awake, but men who walk and talk in their sleep. It is then, I say, really a matter of serious questioning with all men who would be right at last as to whether this child is born to us and this son given to us.

I shall now help you to answer the question. If this child who now lies before the eyes of your faith, wrapped in swaddling clothes in Bethlehem's manger, is born to you, my hearer, then you are born again. For this child is not born to you unless you are born to this child.

All who have an interest in Christ are in the fullness of time by grace converted, quickened and renewed. All the redeemed are not yet converted, but they will be. Before the hour of death arrives, their nature shall be changed, their sins shall be washed away, and they shall pass from death unto life.

If any man tells me that Christ is his Redeemer, although he has never experienced regeneration, that man utters what he does not know. His religion is vain, and his hope is a delusion. Only men who are born again can claim the babe in Bethlehem as being theirs.

But, says one, how am I to know whether I am born again or not? Answer this question also by another. Has there been a change effected by divine grace within you? Are your loves the very opposite of what they were? Do you now hate the vain things you once admired, and do you seek after that precious pearl which you at one time despised? Is your heart thoroughly renewed in its object? Can you say that the bent of your desire is changed, that your face is Zionward, and your feet set upon the path of grace, that whereas your heart once longed for deep draughts of sin, it now longs to be holy? And whereas you once loved the pleasures of the world, they have now become a chaff and dross to you, for you only love the pleasures of heavenly things, and are longing to enjoy more of them on earth, that you may be more prepared to enjoy a fullness of them hereafter. Are you renewed within? For mark, my hearer, the new birth does not consist in washing the outside of the cup and platter, but in cleansing the inner man.

It is all in vain to put up the stone upon the sepulchre, wash it extremely white, and garnish it with the flowers of the season. The sepulchre itself must be cleansed. The dead man's bones that lie in that charnel house of the human heart must be cleansed away.

Nay, they must be made to live. The heart must no longer be a tomb of death, but a temple of life. Is it so with you, my hearer? For recollect, you may be very different in the outward, but if you are not changed in the inward, this child is not born to you.

But I put another question. Although the main matter of regeneration lies within, yet it manifests itself without. Say then, has there been a change in you in the exterior? Do you think that others who look at you would be compelled to say, this man is not what he used to be? Do not your companions observe a change? Have they not laughed at you for what they think to be your hypocrisy, your puritanism, your sternness? Do you think now that if an angel should follow you into your secret life, should track you to your closet and see you on your knees, that he would detect something in you which he could never have seen before? For mock, my dear hearer, there must be a change in the outward life, or else there is no change within.

In vain you bring to me the tree and say that the tree's nature is changed. If I still see it bringing forth wild grapes, it is a wild vine still. And if I mark upon you the apples of Sodom and the grapes of Gomorrah, you are still a tree accursed and doomed, notwithstanding all your fancied experience.

The proof of the Christian is in the living. To other men the proof of our conversion is not what you feel, but what you do. To yourself your feelings may be good enough evidence, but to the minister and others who judge of you, the outward walk is the main guide.

At the same time, let me observe that a man's outward life may be very much like that of a Christian, and yet there may be no religion in him at all. Have you ever seen two jugglers in the street with swords, pretending to fight with one another? See how they cut and slash and hack at one another, till you're half afraid that there'll be murder done soon. They seem to be so very much in earnest that you're half in mind to call in the police to part them.

See with what violence that one is aimed a terrific blow at the other one's head, which his comrade dexterously warded off by keeping a well-timed guard. Just watch them a minute, and you will see that all

these cuts and thrusts come in a prearranged order. There is no heart in the fighting, after all.

They do not fight so roughly as they would if they were real enemies. So sometimes I have seen a man pretending to be very angry against sin, but watch him a little while, and you will see it is only a fencer's trick. He does not give his cuts out of order.

There is no earnestness in his blows. It is all pretense. It is only mimic stage play.

The fencers, after they have ended their performance, shake hands with one another and divide the coppers which the gaping throng had given them. And so does this man do. He shakes hands with the devil in private, and the two deceivers share the spoil.

The hypocrite and the devil are very good friends, after all. They mutually rejoice over their profits, the devil leering because he has won the soul of the professor, and the hypocrite laughing because he has played his part. Take care, then, that your outward life is not a mere stage play, but that your antagonism to sin is real and intense, and that you strike right and left as though you meant to slay the monster and cast its limbs to the winds of heaven.

I will just put another question. If thou hast been born again, there is another matter by which to try thee. Not only is thy inward self altered and thy outward self too, but the very root and principle of thy life must become totally new.

When we are in sin, we live to self. But when we are renewed, we live to God. While we are unregenerate, our principle is to seek our own pleasure, our own advancement.

But that man is not truly born again who does not live with a far different aim from this. Change a man's principles, and you change his feelings. You change his actions.

Now grace changes the principles of a man. It lays the axe at the root of the tree. It does not saw away at some big limb.

It does not try to alter the sap. But it gives a new root and plants us in fresh soil. The man's inmost self, the deep rocks of his principles upon which the topsoil of his actions rest, the soul of his manhood is thoroughly changed, and he is a new creature in Christ.

But, says one, I see no reason why I should be born again. Ah, poor creature! It is because thou hast never seen thyself. Didst thou ever see a man in the looking-glass of the word of God? What a strange monster he is! Do you know a man by nature has his heart where his feet ought to be? That is to say, his heart is set upon the earth, whereas he ought to be treading it beneath his feet.

And stranger mystery still, his heels are where his heart should be. That is to say, he is kicking against the God of heaven when he ought to be setting his affections on things above. Man by nature, when he sees clearest, only looks down, can only see that which is beneath him.

He cannot see the things which are above. Strange to say, the sunlight of heaven blinds him. Light from heaven he looks not for.

He asks for his life in darkness. The earth is to him his heaven, and he sees suns in its muddy pools, and stars in its filth. He is, in fact, a man turned upside down.

The fall has so ruined our nature that the most monstrous thing on the face of the earth is a fallen man. The ancients used to paint griffins, dragons, chimeras, and all kinds of hideous things. But if a skillful hand could paint man accurately, none of us would look at the picture, for it is a sight that none ever saw except the lost in hell.

And that is one part of their intolerable pain, that they are always compelled to look upon themselves. Now then, see you not that ye must be born again? And unless ye are so, this child is not born to you. But I go forward.

If this child is born to you, you are a child. And the question arises, are you so? Man grows from childhood up to manhood naturally. In grace, men grow from manhood down to childhood.

And the nearer we come to true childhood, the nearer we come to the image of Christ. For was not Christ called a child even after He had ascended up to heaven? Thy holy child, Jesus! Brethren and sisters, can you say that you have been made into children? Do you take God's word just as it stands, simply because your heavenly Father says so? Are you content to believe mysteries without demanding to have them explained? Are you ready to sit in the infant class and be a little one? Are you willing to hang upon the breast of the church and suck in the unadulterated milk of the word, never questioning for a moment what your divine Lord reveals, but believing it on His own authority, whether it seem to be above reason or beneath reason, or even contrary to reason? Now, except ye be converted and become as little children, this child is not born to you. Except like a child you are humble, teachable, obedient, pleased with your Father's will and willing to assign all to Him, there is a grave matter of question whether this child is born to you.

But what a pleasing sight it is to see a man converted and made into a little child! Many times has my heart leaped for joy when I have seen a giant infidel who used to reason against Christ, who had not a word in his dictionary bad enough for Christ's people, come by divine grace to believe the gospel. That man sits down and weeps, feels the full power of salvation, and from that time drops all his questionings, becomes the very reverse of what he was. He thinks himself meaner than the meanest believer.

He is content to do the meanest work for the church of Christ and takes his station, not with Locke or Newton as a mighty Christian philosopher, but with Mary as a simple learner, sitting at Jesus' feet to hear and learn of Him. If ye are not children, then this child is not born to you. And now let us take the second sentence and put a question or two upon that.

Is this Son given to us? I pause a moment to beg your personal attention. I am trying, if I may, so to preach that I may make you all question yourselves. I pray you, let not one of you exempt himself from the ordeal, but let each one ask himself, Is it true that unto me a Son is given? Now if this Son is given to you, you are a son yourself.

For as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God. Christ became a Son that in all things He might be made like unto His brethren. The Son of God is not mine to enjoy, to love, to delight in, unless I am a son of God too.

Now, my hearer, have you a fear of God before your eyes, a filial fear, a fear which a child has lest it should grieve its parent? Say, have you a child's love to God? Do you trust to Him as your Father, your Provider and your Friend? Have you in your breast the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father? Are there times with you when on your knees you can say, My Father and my God? Does the Spirit bear

witness with your spirit that you are born of God? And while this witness is born, does your heart fly up to your Father and to your God in ecstasy of delight to clasp Him who long ago hath clasped you in the covenant of His love, in the arms of His effectual grace? Now, mark, my hearer, if thou dost not sometimes enjoy the spirit of adoption, if thou art not a son or daughter of Zion, then deceive not thyself. This Son is not given to thee. And then, to put it in another shape, if unto us a son is given, then we are given to the Son.

Now, what say you to this question also? Are you given up to Christ? Do you feel that you have nothing on earth to live for but to glorify Him? Can you say in your heart, Great God, if I be not deceived, I am wholly Thine. Are you ready today to write over again your consecration vow? Canst thou say, Take me, all that I am and all I have shall be forever Thine. I would give up all my goods, all my powers, all my time, and all my hours, and Thine I would be, wholly Thine.

Ye are not your own. Ye are bought with a price. And if this Son of God be given to you, you will have consecrated yourself wholly to Him, and you will feel that His honor is your life's object, that His glory is the one great desire of your panting spirit.

Now, is it so, my hearer? Ask thyself the question, I pray thee, and do not deceive thyself in the answer. I will just repeat the four different proofs again. If unto me a child is born, then I have been born again.

And, moreover, I am now, in consequence of that you birth, a child. If again a son has been given to me, then I am a son. And again, I am given to that son who is given to me.

I have tried to put these tests in the way that the text would suggest them. I pray you, carry them home with you. If you do not recollect the words, yet do recollect to search yourselves, and see, my hearers, whether you can say, Unto me this Son is given.

For, indeed, if Christ is not my Christ, He is of little worth to me. If I cannot say, He loved me and gave Himself for me, of what avail is all the merit of His righteousness, or all the plenitude of His atonement? Bread in the shop is well enough, but if I am hungry and cannot get it, I starve, although granaries be full. Water in the river is well enough, but if I am in a desert and cannot reach the stream, if I can hear it in the distance, and am yet lying down to die of thirst, the murmuring rill or the flowing of the river helps to tantalize me, while I die in dark despair.

Better for you, my hearers, to have perished as Hottentots, to have gone down to your graves as dwellers in some benighted land, than to live where the name of Christ is continually hymned and where His glory is extolled, and yet to go down to your tombs without an interest in Him, unblessed by His gospel, unwashed in His blood, unclothed of His robe of righteousness. God help you, that you may be blessed in Him, and may sing sweetly, Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. This brings me to my second head, upon which I shall be brief.

Is it so? If it is so, what then? If it is so, why am I doubtful today? Why is my spirit questioning? Why do I not realize the fact? My hearer, if the Son is given to thee, how is it that thou art this day asking whether thou art Christ or not? Why dost thou not labor to make thy calling and election sure? Why tarriest thou in the plains of doubt? Get thee up, get thee up to the high mountains of confidence, and never rest, till thou canst say, without a fear that thou art mistaken, I know that my Redeemer liveth. I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him. I may have a large number of persons here to whom it is a matter of uncertainty as to whether Christ is theirs or not.

O my dear hearers, rest not content unless you know assuredly that Christ is yours, and that you are Christ's. Suppose you should see in tomorrow's newspaper, although, by the way, if you believed anything you saw there, you would probably be mistaken. But suppose you should see a notification that some rich man had left you an immense estate.

Suppose, as you read it, you were well aware that the person mentioned was a relative of yours, and that it was likely to be true. May be that you have prepared tomorrow for a family meeting, and you are expecting brother John and sister Mary and their little ones to dine with you. But I very much question whether you would not be away from the head of the table to go and ascertain whether the facts were really so.

Oh, you would say, I am sure I should enjoy my Christmas dinner all the better if I were quite sure about this matter. And all day, if you did not go, you would be on the tiptoe of expectation. You would be, as it were, sitting upon pins and needles until you knew whether it were the fact or not.

Now there is a proclamation gone forth today, and it is a true one too, that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners. The question with you is whether He has saved you, and whether you have an interest in Him. I beseech you, give no sleep to your eyes and no slumber to your eyelids till you have read your title clear to mansions in the skies.

What, man, shall your eternal destiny be a matter of uncertainty to you? What, is heaven or hell involved in this matter? And will you rest until you know which of these shall be your everlasting portion? Are you content? While it is a question whether God loves you or whether He is angry with you, can you be easy while you remain in doubt as to whether you are condemned in sin or justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus? Get thee up, man! I beseech thee by the living God and by thine own soul's safety. Get thee up and read the records. Search and look and try and test thyself to see whether it be so or not.

For if it be so, why should we not know it? If the Son is given to me, why should not I be sure of it? If the child is born to me, why should I not know it for a certainty that I may even now live in the enjoyment of my privilege, a privilege the value of which I shall never know to the full till I arrive in glory? Again, if it be so, another question. Why are we sad? I am looking upon faces just now that appear the very reverse of gloomy, but mayhap the smile covers an aching heart. Brethren, sister, why are we sad this morning? If unto us a child is born, if unto us a son is given, hark, hark to the cry.

It is harvest home, harvest home. See the maidens as they dance and the young men as they make merry. And why is this mirth? Because they are storing the precious fruits of the earth.

They are gathering together under their barns wheat which will soon be consumed. And what, brothers and sisters, have we the bread which endureth to eternal life? And are we unhappy? Does the worldling rejoice when his corn is increased, and do we not rejoice when unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given? Hark yonder! What means the firing of the tower guns? Why all this ringing of bells in the church steeples, as if all London were mad with joy? There is a prince born, therefore there is this salute, and therefore are the bells ringing. Ah, Christians, ring the bells of your hearts, fire the salute of your most joyous songs, for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.

Dance, O my heart, and ring out peals of gladness. Ye drops of blood within my veins, dance, every one of you. Oh, all my nerves become harp strings, and let gratitude touch you with angelic fingers.

Now my tongue shout, shout to his praise who hath said to thee, Unto thee a child is born, unto thee a son is given. Wipe that tear away. Come, stop that sighing.

Hush, you murmuring. What matters your poverty? Unto you a child is born. What matters your sickness? Unto you a son is given.

What matters your sin? For this child shall take the sin away, and this son shall wash and make you fit for heaven. I say, if it be so, lift up the heart, lift up the voice, rejoice aloud. Ye saints, rejoice.

But once more, if it be so, what then? Why are our hearts so cold? And why is it that we do so little for him who has done so much for us? Jesus, art thou mine? Am I saved? How is it that I love thee so little? Why is it that when I preach I am not more in earnest, and when I pray I am not more intensely fervent? How is it that we give so little to Christ who gave himself for us? How is it that we serve him so sadly who served us so perfectly? He consecrated himself holy. How is it that our consecration is marred and partial? We are continually sacrificing to self and not to him. O beloved, yield yourselves up this morning.

What have you got in the world? Oh, says one, I have nothing. I am poor and penniless and all but houseless. Give thyself to Christ.

You have heard the story of the pupils to a Greek philosopher. On a certain day it was the custom to give to the philosopher a present. One came and gave him gold.

Another could not bring him gold but brought him silver. One brought him a robe and another some delicacy for food. But one of them came up and said, O Solon, I am poor.

I have nothing to give to thee. But yet I will give thee something better than all these have given. I give thee myself.

Now if you have gold and silver, if you have aught of this world's goods, give in your measure to Christ. But take care above all that you give yourself to him and let your cry be from this day forth. Do not I love thee, dearest Lord? O search my heart and see and turn each cursed idol out that dares to rival thee.

Do not I love thee from my soul? Then let me nothing love. Dead be my heart to every joy when Jesus cannot move. Well, now I have all but done.

But give your solemn, very solemn attention while I come to my last head. If it is not so, what then? Dear hearer, I cannot tell where thou art. But wherever thou mayest be in this hall, the eyes of my heart are looking for thee that when they have seen thee, they may weep over thee.

Ah, miserable wretch, without a hope, without Christ, without God! Unto thee there is no Christmas mirth. For thee no child is born. To thee no son is given.

Sad is the story of the poor men and women who during the week before last fell down dead in our streets through cruel hunger and bitter cold. But far more pitiable is thy lot. Far more terrible shall be thy condition in the day when thou shalt cry for a drop of water to cool thy burning tongue, and it shall be denied thee, when thou shalt seek for death, for grim, cold death.

Seek for him as for a friend, and yet thou shalt not find him. For the fire of hell shall not consume thee, nor its terrors devour thee. Thou shalt long to die, yet shalt thou linger in eternal death, dying every hour, yet never receiving the much-coveted boon of death.

What shall I say to thee this morning? O Master, help me to speak a word in season now. I beseech thee, my hearer, if Christ is not thine this morning, may God the Spirit help thee to do what I now command thee to do. First of all, confess thy sins, not into my ear, nor into the ear of any living man.

Go to thy chamber, and confess that thou art vile. Tell him thou art a wretch undone without his sovereign grace. But do not think there is any merit in confession.

There is none. All your confession cannot merit forgiveness, though God has promised to pardon the man who confesses his sin and forsakes it. Imagine that some creditor had a debtor who owed him a thousand pounds.

He calls upon him and says, I demand my money. But, says the other, I owe you nothing. That man will be arrested and thrown into prison.

However, his creditor says, I wish to deal mercifully with you. Make a frank confession, and I will forgive you all the debt. Well, says the man, I do acknowledge that I owe you two hundred pounds.

No, says he, that will not do. Well, sir, I confess I owe you five hundred pounds. And by degrees he comes to confess that he owes the thousand.

Is there any merit in that confession? No. But yet you could see that no creditor would think of forgiving a debt which was not acknowledged. It is the least that you can do to acknowledge your sin.

And though there be no merit in the confession, yet, true to his promise, God will give you pardon through Christ. That is one piece of advice. I pray you take it.

Do not throw it to the winds. Do not leave it as soon as you get out of Exeter Hall. Take it with you, and may this day become a confession day with many of you.

But next, when you have made a confession, I beseech you, renounce yourself. You have been resting perhaps in some hope that you would make yourself better and so save yourself. Give up that delusive fancy.

You have seen the silkworm. It will spin and spin and spin, and then it will die where it has spun itself a shroud. And your good works are but a spinning for yourself, a robe for your dead soul.

You can do nothing by your best prayers, your best tears, or your best works to merit eternal life. Why, the Christian who is converted to God will tell you that he cannot live a holy life by himself? If the ship in the sea cannot steer itself aright, do you think the wood that lies in the carpenter's yard can put itself together and make itself into a ship and then go out to sea and sail to America? Yet this is just what you imagine. The Christian who is God's workmanship can do nothing, and yet you think you can do something.

Now give up self. God help you to strike a black mark through every idea of what you can do. Then lastly, and I pray God help you hear, my dear hearers, when thou hast confessed thy sin and given up all hope of self-salvation, go to the place where Jesus died in agony.

Go then in meditation to Calvary. There he hangs. It is the middle cross of these three.

Methinks I see him now. I see his poor face emaciated and his visage more marred than that of any man. I see the beady drops of blood still standing round his pierced temples, marks of that rugged thorn crown.

Ah! I see his body naked, naked to his shame. We may tell all his bones. See there his hands rent with the rough iron and his feet torn with the nails.

The nails have rent through his flesh. There is now not only the hole through which the nail was driven, but the weight of his body has sunken upon his feet, and see the iron is tearing through his flesh. Now the weight of his body hangs upon his arms, and the nails there are rending through the tender nerves.

Hark! Earth is startled. He cries, Ali! Ali! Lama Sabachthani! O sinner, was ever shriek like that? God hath forsaken him. His God has ceased to be gracious to him.

His soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. But hark again he cries, I thirst. Give him water.

Give him water. Ye holy women, let him drink. But no, his murderers torture him.

They thrust into his mouth the vinegar mingled with gall, the bitter with the sharp, the vinegar and the gall. At last, hear him, sinner, for here is your hope. I see him bow his awful head.

The King of heaven dies. The God who made the earth has become a man, and the man is about to expire. Hear him.

He cries, It is finished. And he gives up the ghost. The atonement is finished.

The price is paid. The bloody ransom counted down. The sacrifice is accepted.

It is finished. Sinner, believe in Christ. Cast thyself on him.

Sink or swim, take him to be thy all in all. Throw now thy trembling arms around that bleeding body. Sit now at the feet of that cross and feel the dropping of the precious blood.

And as you go out, each one of you say in your hearts, a guilty, weak and helpless worm, on Christ's kind arms I fall. He is my strength and righteousness, my Jesus and my all. God grant you grace to do so, for Jesus Christ's sake.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you all forever and ever. Amen and amen. This message, A Christmas Question, was preached by Charles Haddon Spurgeon on December 25, 1859.

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