

Christ Crucified

by C.H. Spurgeon

The gospel of Christ crucified is rejected by some and triumphant over others, and it is the only way to salvation.

Duration: 55:02

Scripture: Matthew 10:32, Luke 19:5, Acts 9:4-5, Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 2:2, Ephesians 1:13

Topics: "Persecution And Faith", "Eternal Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher describes two contrasting scenes. The first scene depicts a martyr being bound to a stake and burned alive. Despite the intense pain and suffering, the martyr remains steadfast in his faith, proclaiming his belief in the resurrection and the glory that awaits him in heaven. The preacher emphasizes the power of the gospel and the strength it gives to believers in times of persecution. In the second scene, a young girl lies on her deathbed, her body ravaged by illness. However, she radiates a peaceful smile, indicating her assurance of eternal life and the presence of an angel. The preacher calls upon the audience to reflect on their motives for attending the sermon and urges them to seek the wisdom and power found in the gospel.

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 Kelch inviting you to listen to a message from the Prince of Preachers. C. H. Spurgeon preached this message on February 11th, 1855, at the Exeter Hall Strand. It is entitled, Christ Crucified.

The text is 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verses 23 and 24. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness. But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

What contempt hath God poured upon the wisdom of this world? How hath He brought it to naught, and made it appear as nothing? He has allowed it to work out its own conclusions, and prove its own folly. Men boasted that they were wise. They said that they could find out God to perfection, and in order that their

folly might be refuted once and forever, God gave them the opportunity of so doing.

He said, Worldly wisdom, I will try thee. Now sayest that thou art mighty, that thine intellect is vast and comprehensive, that thine eye is keen, that thou canst unravel all secrets. Now, behold, I try thee.

I give thee one great problem to solve. Here is the universe. Stars make its canopy, fields and flowers adorn it, and the floods roll o'er its surface.

My name is written therein. The invisible things of God may be clearly seen in the things which are made. Philosophy, I give thee this problem.

Find me out. Here are my works. Find me out.

Discover in the wondrous world which I have made the way to worship me acceptably. I give thee space enough to do it. There are data enough.

Behold the clouds, the earth and the stars. I give thee time enough. I will give thee four thousand years, and I will not interfere.

But thou shalt do as thou wilt with thine own world. I will give thee men in abundance, for I will make great minds and vast, whom thou shalt call lords of earth. Thou shalt have orators.

Thou shalt have philosophers. Find me out, O Reason. Find me out, O Wisdom.

Discover my nature, if thou canst. Find me out unto perfection, if thou art able. And if thou canst not, then shut thy mouth for ever.

And then I will teach thee that the wisdom of God is wiser than men. Yea, I will teach thee that the foolishness of God is wiser than men. And how did the Reason of man work out the problem? How did Wisdom perform her feats? Look upon the heathen nations.

There you see the result of Wisdom's researches. In the time of Jesus Christ you might have beheld the earth covered with the slime of pollution, a Sodom on a large scale, corrupt, filthy, depraved, indulging in vices which we dare not mention, reveling in lusts too abominable even for our imagination to dwell upon for a moment. We find the men prostrating themselves before blocks of wood and stone, adoring ten thousand gods more vicious than themselves.

We find, in fact, that Reason wrote out her own depravity with a finger covered with blood and filth, and that she forever cut herself out from all her glory by the vile deeds she did. She would not worship God. She would not bow down to Him who is clearly seen.

But she worshiped any creature, the reptile that crawled, the crocodile, the viper. Everything might be a god, but not, forsooth, the God of heaven. Vice might be made into a ceremony.

The greatest crime might be exalted into a religion. But true worship she knew nothing of. Poor Reason! Poor Wisdom! How thou art fallen from heaven! Like Lucifer, thou son of the morning, thou art lost.

Thou hast written out thy conclusion, but it is a conclusion of consummate folly. After that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God. It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

Wisdom had had its time, and time enough. It had done its all, and that was little enough. It had made the world worse than it was before it stepped upon it.

And now, says God, foolishness shall overcome wisdom. Now ignorance, as ye call it, shall sweep away your science. Now humble, childlike faith shall crumble to the dust all the colossal systems your hands have piled.

He calls his army. Christ puts his trumpet to his mouth, and up come the warriors, clad in fisherman's garb, with the brogue of the Lake of Galilee. Poor humble mariners! Here are the warriors, O Wisdom, that are to confound thee.

These are the heroes who shall overcome thy proud philosophers. These men are to plant their standard upon the ruined walls of thy strongholds, and bid them fall forever. These men and their successors are to exalt a gospel in the world which ye may laugh at as absurd, which ye may sneer at as folly, but which shall be exalted above the hills, and shall be glorious even to the highest heavens.

Since that day, God has always raised up successors of the apostles. I claim to be a successor of the apostles, not by any lineal descent, but because I have the same role and charter as any apostle, and have as much call to preach the gospel as Paul himself, if not as much owned in the conversion of sinners, yet in a measure blessed of God. And therefore, here I stand, foolish as Paul might be, foolish as Peter or any of those fishermen, but still with the might of God I grasp the sword of truth, coming here to preach Christ and Him crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Before I enter upon our text, let me very briefly tell you what I believe preaching Christ and Him crucified is. My friends, I do not believe it is preaching Christ and Him crucified to give our people a batch of philosophy every Sunday morning and evening, and neglect the truth of this holy book. I do not believe it is preaching Christ and Him crucified to leave out the main cardinal doctrines of the word of God, and preach a religion which is all a mist and a haze, without any definite truths whatever.

I take it that man does not preach Christ and Him crucified, who can get through a sermon without mentioning Christ's name once. Nor does that man preach Christ and Him crucified, who leaves out the Holy Spirit's work, who never says a word about the Holy Ghost. So then indeed the hearers might say, we do not know so much as whether there be a Holy Ghost.

And I have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless you preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. I have my own ideas, those I always state boldly. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism.

Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the gospel if we do not preach justification by faith without works, nor unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace, nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah. Nor do I think we can preach the gospel unless we base it upon the peculiar redemption which Christ has made for His elect and chosen people.

Nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called, and suffers the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation after having believed. Such a gospel I abhor. The gospel of a Bible is not such a gospel as that.

We preach Christ and Him crucified in a different fashion. And to all gainsayers we reply, we have not so learned Christ. There are three things in the text.

First, a gospel rejected, Christ crucified to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness. Secondly, a gospel triumphant unto those which are called, both Jews and Greeks. And thirdly, a gospel admired.

It is to them who are called the power of God and the wisdom of God. First, we have here a gospel rejected. One would have imagined that when God sent His gospel to men, all men would meekly listen and humbly receive its truths.

We should have thought that God's ministers had but to proclaim that life is brought to light by the gospel, and that Christ has come to save sinners, and every ear would be attended, every eye would be fixed, and every heart would be wide open to receive the truth. We should have said, judging favorably of our fellow creatures, that there would not exist in the world a monster so vile, so depraved, so polluted, as to put so much as a stone in the way of the progress of truth. We could not have conceived such a thing.

Yet that conception is the truth. When the gospel was preached, instead of being accepted and admired, one universal hiss went up to heaven. Men could not bear it.

Its first preacher they dragged to the brow of the hill, and would have sent him down headlong. Yea, they did more. They nailed him to the cross, and there they let him languish out his dying life in agony such as no man hath borne since.

All his chosen ministers have been hated and abhorred by worldlings. Instead of being listened to, they have been scoffed at, treated as if they were the offscouring of all things, and the very scum of mankind. Look at the holy men of the old times, how they were driven from city to city, persecuted, afflicted, tormented, stoned to death wherever the enemy had power to do so.

Those friends of men, those real philanthropists, who came with hearts big with love, and hands full of mercy, and lips pregnant with celestial fire, and souls that burned with holy influence. Those men were treated as if they were spies in the camp, as if they were deserters from the common cause of mankind, as if they were enemies, and not, as they truly were, the best of friends. Do not suppose, my friends, that men like the gospel any better now than they did then.

There is an idea that you are growing better. I do not believe it. You are growing worse.

In many respects men may be better, outwardly better, but the heart within is still the same. The human heart of today, dissected, would be just like the human heart a thousand years ago. The gall of bitterness within that breast of yours is just as bitter as the gall of bitterness in that of Simon of old.

We have in our hearts the same latent opposition to the truth of God, and hence we find men even as of old who scorn the gospel. I shall, in speaking of the gospel rejected, endeavor to point out the two classes of persons who equally despise the truth. The Jews make it a stumbling block, and the Greeks account it foolishness.

Now these two very respectable gentlemen, the Jew and the Greek, I am not going to make these ancient individuals the object of my condemnation, but I look upon them as members of a great parliament, representatives of a great constituency, and I shall attempt to show that if all the race of Jews were cut off,

there would be still a great number in the world who would answer to the name of Jews, to whom Christ is a stumbling block, and that if Greece were swallowed up by some earthquake and ceased to be a nation, there would still be the Greek unto whom the gospel would be foolishness. I shall simply introduce the Jew and the Greek, and let them speak a moment to you, in order that you may see the gentlemen who represent you, the representative men, the persons who stand for many of you, who as yet are not called by divine grace. The first is the Jew.

To him the gospel is a stumbling block. A respectable man the Jew was in his day. All formal religion was concentrated in his person.

He went up to the temple very devoutly. He tithed all he had, even to the mint and the common. You would see him fasting twice in the week, with a face all marked by sadness and sorrow.

If you looked at him, he had the law between his eyes. There was the phylactery, in the borders of his garments, of amazing width, that he might never be supposed to be a Gentile dog, that no one might ever conceive that he was not a Hebrew of pure descent. He had a holy ancestry.

He came of a pious family. A right good man was he. He could not endure those Sadducees at all who had no religion.

He was thoroughly a religious man. He stood up for his synagogue. He would not have that temple on Mount Gerizim.

He could not bear the Samaritans. He had no dealings with them. He was a religionist of the first order, a man of the very finest kind, a specimen of a man who is a moralist and who loves the ceremonies of the law.

Accordingly, when he had heard about Christ, he asked who Christ was. The son of a carpenter. Ah, the son of a carpenter! And his mother's name was Mary, and his father's name Joseph.

That of itself is presumptuous enough, said he, positive proof, in fact, that he cannot be the Messiah. And what does he say? Why, he says, woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! That won't do. Moreover, he says, it is not by the works of the flesh that any man can enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The Jew tied a double knot in his phylactery at once. He thought he would have the borders of his garments made twice as broad. He bowed to the Nazarene? No, no.

And if so much as a disciple crossed the street, he thought the place polluted and would not tread in his steps. Do you think he would give up his old father's religion, the religion which came from Mount Sinai, that old religion that lay in the ark in the overshadowing cherubim? He give that up? Not he. A vile imposter, that is all Christ was in his eyes.

He thought so. A stumbling block to me. I cannot hear about it.

I will not listen to it. Accordingly, he turned a deaf ear to all the preacher's eloquence and listened not at all. Farewell, old Jew.

Thou sleepest with thy fathers, and thy generation is a wandering race still walking the earth. Farewell, I have done with thee. Alas, poor wretch, that Christ who was thy stumbling block shall be thy judge, and on thy head shall that loud curse be.

His blood be on us and on our children. But I am going to find out, Mr. Jew, here in Exeter Hall, persons who answer to his description, to whom Jesus Christ is a stumbling block. Let me introduce you to yourselves, some of you.

You were of a pious family, too, were you not? Oh, yes. And you have a religion which you love. You love it so far as the chrysalis of it goes, the outside, the covering, the husk.

You would not have one rubric altered, nor one of those dear old arches taken down, nor the stained glass removed for all the world. And any man who should say a word against such things, you would set down as a heretic at once. Or perhaps you do not go to such a place of worship, but you love some plain old meeting-house where your forefathers worshipped, called a dissenting chapel.

Ah, it is a beautiful plain place. You love it. You love its ordinances.

You love its exterior. And if anyone spoke against the place, how vexed you would feel. You think that what they do there, they ought to do everywhere.

In fact, your church is a model one. The place where you go is exactly the sort of place for everybody. If I were to ask you why you hope to go to heaven, you would perhaps say, because I am a Baptist, or because I am Episcopalian, or whatever other sect you belong to.

There is yourself. I know Jesus Christ will be to you a stumbling block. And if I come and tell you that all your going to the house of God is good for nothing, if I tell you that all those many times you have been singing and praying all pass for nothing in the sight of God, because you are a hypocrite and a formalist, if I tell you that your heart is not right with God, and that unless it is so, all the external is good for nothing, I know what you will say.

I shan't hear that young man again. It is a stumbling block. If you had stepped in anywhere where you heard formalism exalted, if you had been told, this must you do, and this other must you do, and then you will be saved, you would highly approve of it.

But how many are there externally religious, with whose characters you could find no fault, but who have never had the regenerating influence of the Holy Ghost, who were never made to lie prostrate on their face before Calvary's cross, who never turned a wishful eye to the yonder Savior crucified, who never put their trust in Him that was slain for the sons of men. They love a superficial religion. But when a man talks deeper than that, they set it down for cant.

You may love all that is external about religion, just as you may love a man for his clothes, caring nothing for the man himself. If so, I know you are one of those who reject the gospel. You will hear me preach, and while I speak about the externals, you will hear me with attention, whilst I plead for morality and argue against drunkenness, or show the heinousness of Sabbath-breaking, all well and good.

But if once I say, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye can in no wise enter into the kingdom of God, if once I tell you that you must be elected of God, that you must be purchased with the Savior's blood, that you must be converted by the Holy Ghost, you say, He is a fanatic, away with Him, away with Him. We do not want to hear that any more. Christ crucified is to the Jew, the ceremonialist, a stumbling block.

But there is another specimen of this Jew to be found. He is thoroughly orthodox in his sentiments. As for forms and ceremonies, he thinks nothing about them.

He goes to a place of worship where he learns sound doctrine. He will hear nothing but what is true. He likes that we should have good works and morality.

He is a good man, and no man can find fault with him. Here he is, regular in his Sunday pew. In the market he walks before men in all honesty, so you would imagine.

Ask him about any doctrine, and he can give you a disquisition upon it. In fact, he could write a treatise upon anything in the Bible, and a great many things besides. He knows almost everything.

And here, up in this dark attic of the head, his religion has taken up its abode. He has the best parlor down in his heart, but his religion never goes there. That is shut against it.

He has money in there, mammon, worldliness, or yet something else, self-love, pride. Perhaps he loves to hear experimental preaching. He admires it all.

In fact, he loves anything that is sound. But then he has not any sound in himself. Or rather, it is all sound, and there is no substance.

He likes to hear true doctrine, but it never penetrates his inner man. You never see him weep. Preach to him about Christ crucified, a glorious subject, and you never see a tear roll down his cheek.

Tell him of the mighty influence of the Holy Ghost. He admires you for it, but he never had the hand of the Holy Spirit on his soul. Tell him about communion with God, plunging into Godhead's deepest sea and being lost in its immensity.

The man loves to hear, but he never experiences. He has never communed with Christ. And accordingly, when once you begin to strike home, when you lay him on the table, take out the dissecting knife, begin to cut him up and show him his own heart.

Let him see what it is by nature and what it must become by grace. The man starts. He cannot stand that.

He wants none of it. Christ received in the heart and accepted. Albeit that he loves it enough in the head, it is to him a stumbling block, and he casts it away.

Do you see yourselves here, my friends? See yourselves as others see you? See yourselves as God sees you? For so it is. Here be many to whom Christ is as much a stumbling block now as he ever was. O ye formalists, I speak to you! O ye who have the nutshell, but abhor the kernel! O ye who like the trappings in the dress, but care not for that fair virgin who is clothed therewith! O ye who admire the paint in the tinsel, but abhor the solid gold! I speak to you! I ask you, does your religion give you solid comfort? Can you stare death in the face with it and say, I know that my Redeemer liveth? Can you close your eyes at night, singing as your Vesper song, I to the end must endure, as sure as the earnest is given? Can you bless God for affliction? Can you plunge in, accuted as you are, and swim through all the floods of trial? Can you march triumphant through the lion's den, laugh at affliction, and bid defiance to hell? Can you? No.

Your gospel is an effeminate thing, a thing of words and sounds, and not of power. Cast it from you, I beseech you. It is not worth your keeping.

And when you come before the throne of God, you will find it will fail you, and fail you so that you shall never find another. For lost, ruined, destroyed, ye shall find that Christ, who is now a stumbling block, will be your judge. I have found out the Jew, and I have now to discover the Greek.

He is a person of quite a different exterior to the Jew. As to the phylactery, to him it is all rubbish, and as to the broad-hemmed garment, he despises it. He does not care for the forms of religion.

He has an intense aversion, in fact, to broad-brimmed hats, or to everything which looks like outward show. He appreciates eloquence. He admires a smart saying.

He loves a quaint expression. He likes to read the last new book. He is a Greek, and to him the gospel is foolishness.

The Greek is a gentleman found in most places nowadays, manufactured sometimes in colleges, constantly made in schools, produced everywhere. He is on the exchange, in the market. He keeps a shop, rides in a carriage.

He is a noble, a gentleman. He is everywhere, even in court. He is thoroughly wise.

Ask him anything, and he knows it. Ask for a quotation from any of the old poets, or anyone else, and he can give it to you. If you are Mohammedan, and plead the claims of your religion, he will hear you very patiently.

But if you are a Christian, and talk to him of Jesus Christ, stop your cant, he says. I don't want to hear anything about that. This Grecian gentleman believes all philosophy, except the true one.

He studies all wisdom, except the wisdom of God. He seeks all learning, except spiritual learning. He loves everything, except that which God approves.

He likes everything which man makes, and nothing which comes from God. It is foolishness to him, confounded foolishness. You have only the discourse about one doctrine in the Bible, and he shuts his ears.

He wishes no longer for your company. It is foolishness. I have met this gentleman a great many times.

Once, when I saw him, he told me he did not believe in any religion at all. And when I said I did, and had hoped that when I died I should go to heaven, he said he dared say it was very comfortable, but he did not believe in religion, and that he was sure it was best to live as nature dictated. Another time he spoke well of all religions, and believed they were very good in their place, and all true, and he had no doubt that if a man were sincere in any kind of religion, he would be all right at last.

I told him I did not think so, and that I believed there was but one religion revealed of God, the religion of God's elect, the religion which is the gift of Jesus. He then said I was a bigot, and wished me good morning. It was to him foolishness.

He had nothing to do with me at all. He either liked no religion, or every religion. Another time I held him by the coat-button, and I discussed with him a little about faith.

He said, It is all very well. I believe that is true Protestant doctrine. But presently I said something about election, and he said, I don't like that.

Many people have preached that and turned it to bad accounts. I then hinted at something about free grace. But that he could not endure.

It was to him foolishness. He was a polished Greek, and thought that if he were not chosen, he ought to be. He never liked that passage, God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, and the things which are not to bring to naught things that are.

He thought it was very discreditable to the Bible, and when the book was revised, he had no doubt it would be cut out. But to such a man, for he is here this morning, very likely come to hear this reed shaken of the wind, I have this to say. Ah, thou wise man, full of worldly wisdom, thy wisdom will stand thee here.

But what wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan? Philosophy may do well for thee to lean upon while thou walkest through this world. But the river is deep, and thou wilt want something more than that. If thou hast not the arm the most high to hold thee up in the flood, and cheer thee with promises, thou wilt sink, man.

With all thy philosophy thou wilt sink. With all thy learning thou shalt sink, and be washed into that awful ocean of eternal torment, where thou shalt be for ever. Ah, Greeks, it may be foolishness to you, but ye shall see the man your judge, and then ye shall rue the day that e'er ye said that God's gospel was foolishness.

Having spoken thus far about the gospel rejected, I shall now briefly speak upon the gospel triumphant. Unto us who are called, both Jews and Greeks, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Yonder man rejects the gospel, despises grace, and laughs at it as a delusion.

Here is another man who laughed at it too. But God will fetch him down upon his knees. Christ shall not die for nothing.

The Holy Ghost shall not strive in vain. God hath said, My word shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be abundantly satisfied.

If one sinner is not saved, another shall be. The Jew and the Greek shall never depopulate heaven. The choirs of glory shall not lose a single songster by all the opposition of Jews and Greeks.

For God hath said it. Some shall be called. Some shall be saved.

Some shall be rescued. Perish the virtue, as it ought, abhorred, and the fool with it who insults the Lord. The atonement the Redeemer's love has wrought is not for you.

The righteous need it not. Seest thou yon harlot wooing all she meets, the worn-out nuisance of the public streets, herself from morn to night, from night to morn, her own abhorrence, and as much your scorn, the gracious shower, unlimited and free, shall fall on her when heaven denies it thee. Of all that wisdom dictates, this is the drift.

That man is dead in sin, and life a gift. If the righteous and good are not saved, if they reject the gospel, there are others who are to be called, others who shall be rescued. For Christ will not lose the merits of His agonies, or the purchase of His blood.

Unto us who are called. I received a note this week asking me to explain that word, called, because in one passage it says, Many are called, but few are chosen, while in another it appears that all who are called

must be chosen. Now let me observe that there are two calls.

As my old friend John Bunyan says, the hen has two calls, the common pluck which she gives daily and hourly, and the special one which she means for her little chickens. So there is a general call, a call made to every man. Every man hears it.

Many are called by it. You are all called this morning in that sense, but very few are chosen. The other is a special call, the children's call.

You know how the bell sounds over the workshop to call the men to work. That is the general call. A father goes to the door and calls out, John, it is dinner time.

That is the special call. Many are called with the general call, but they are not chosen. The special call is for the children only, and that is what is meant in the text.

Unto us who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God, that call is always a special one. While I stand here and call men, nobody comes. While I preach to sinners universally, no good is done.

It is like the sheet lightning you sometimes see on the summer's evening, beautiful, grand, but who ever heard of anything being struck by it? But the special call is the forked flash from heaven. It strikes somewhere. It is the arrow sent in between the joints of the harness.

The call which saves is like that of Jesus when He said, Mary. And she said unto Him, Rabboni. Do you know anything about that special call, my beloved? Did Jesus ever call you by name? Canst thou recollect the hour when He whispered thy name in thine ear, when He said, Come to me? If so, you will grant the truth of what I am about to say next, that it is an effectual call.

There is no resisting it. When God calls with His special call, there is no standing out. Ah, I know, I laughed at religion.

I despise. I abhorred it. But that call! Oh, I would not come.

But God said, Thou shalt come. All that the Father giveth me shall come. Lord, I will not, but Thou shalt, said God.

And I have gone up to God's house sometimes almost with a resolution that I would not listen, but listen I must. Oh, how the word came into my soul! Was there a power of resistance? No. I was thrown down.

Each bone seemed to be broken. I was saved by effectual grace. I appeal to your experience, my friends.

When God took you in hand, could you withstand Him? You stood against your minister times enough. Sickness did not break you down. Disease did not break you to God's feet.

Eloquence did not convince you. But when God put His hand to the work, ah, then what a change! Like Saul with his horses going to Damascus, that voice from heaven said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? There was no going further then.

That was an effectual call. Like that again which Jesus gave to Zacchaeus when he was up in the tree. Stepping under the tree, he said, Zacchaeus, come down.

Today I must abide at thy house. Zacchaeus was taken up in the net. He heard his own name.

The call sank into his soul. He could not stop up in the tree, for an almighty impulse drew him down. And I could tell you some singular instances of persons going to the house of God and having their character described, painted out to perfection, so that they have said, he is painting me, he is painting me.

Just as I might say to the young man here who stole his master's gloves yesterday, that Jesus calls him to repentance. Maybe that there is such a person here. And when the call comes to a peculiar character, it generally comes with special power.

God gives His ministers a brush and shows them how to use it in painting lifelike portraits, and thus the sinner hears the special call. I cannot give the special call. God alone can give it, and I leave it with Him.

Some must be called. Jew and Greek may laugh, but still there are some who are called, both Jews and Greeks. Then to close up this second point.

It is a great mercy that many a Jew has been made to drop his self-righteousness. Many a legalist has been made to drop his legalism and come to Christ. Many a Greek has bowed his genius at the throne of God's gospel.

We have few such. As Cowper says, we boast some rich ones whom the gospel sways, and one who wears a coronet and prays. Like gleamings of an olive tree, they show here and there one upon the topmost bough.

Now we come to our third point. A gospel admired. Unto us who are called of God, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Now, beloved, this must be a matter of pure experience between your souls and God. If you are called of God this morning, you will know it. Oh, I know there are times when a Christian has to say, "'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?" But if a man never in his life knew himself to be a Christian, he never was a Christian. If he never had a moment of confidence when he could say, "'Now I know in whom I have believed,' I do not think I utter a harsh thing when I say that that man could not have been born again.

For I do not understand how a man can be born again and not know it. I do not understand how a man can be killed and then made alive again and not know it. How a man can pass from death into life and not know it.

How a man can be brought out of darkness into marvelous light without knowing it. I am sure I know it. When I shout out my old verse, now free from sin I walk at large.

My Savior's blood's my full discharge. At His dear feet content I lay, a sinner saved and homage pay." There are moments when the eyes glisten with joy, and we can say, we are persuaded, confident, certain. I do not wish to distress anyone who is under doubt.

Often gloomy doubts will prevail. There are seasons when you fear you have not been called, when you doubt your interest in Christ. Ah, what a mercy it is that it is not your hold of Christ that saves you, but His hold of you.

What a sweet fact it is, not how you grasp His hand, but His grasp of yours that saves you. Yet I think you ought to know, sometime or other, whether you are called a god. If so, you will follow me into the next part of my discourse, which is a matter of pure experience.

Unto us who are saved, it is Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. The gospel is, to the true believer, a thing of power. It is Christ, the power of God.

Ay, there is a power in God's gospel beyond all description. Once I, like Mazepa, bound on the wild horse of my lust, bound hand and foot, incapable of resistance, was galloping on with hell's wolves behind me, howling for my body and my soul as their just and lawful prey. There came a mighty hand, which stopped that wild horse, cut my bands, set me down, and brought me into liberty.

Is there power, sir? Ay, there is power, and he who has felt it must acknowledge it. There was a time when I lived in the strong old castle of my sins and rested in my works. There came a trumpeter to the door and bade me open it.

I with anger chid him from the porch and said he ne'er should enter. There came a goodly personage with loving countenance. His hands were marked with scars, where nails were driven, and his feet had nail prints too.

He lifted up his cross, using it as a hammer. At the first blow, the gate of my fregdes shook. At the second, it trembled more.

At the third, down it fell, and in he came. And he said, Arise, and stand upon thy feet, for I have loved thee with an everlasting love. A thing of power! Ah, it is a thing of power! I have felt it here, in this heart.

I have the witness of the Spirit within, and know it is a thing of might, because it has conquered me, it has bowed me down. His free grace alone, with the first to the last, hath won my affection and held my soul fast. The gospel to the Christian is a thing of power.

What is it that makes the young man devote himself as a missionary to the cause of God, to leave father and mother and go into distant lands? It is a thing of power that does it. It is the gospel. What is it that constrains yonder minister, in the midst of the cholera, to climb up that creaking staircase and stand by the bed of some dying creature who has that dire disease? It must be a thing of power which leads him to venture his life.

It is love of the cross of Christ which bids him do it. What is it that enables one man to stand up before a multitude of his fellows, all unprepared it may be, but determined that he will speak nothing but Christ and Him crucified? What is it that enables him to cry like the warhorse of Job in battle, Aha! and move glorious in might? It is a thing of power that does it. It is Christ crucified.

And what emboldens that timid female to walk down that dark lane in a wet evening, that she may go and sit beside the victim of a contagious fever? What strengthens her to go through that den of thieves and pass by the profligate and profane? What influences her to enter into that charnel house of death and there sit down and whisper words of comfort? Does gold make her do it? They are too poor to give her gold. Does fame make her do it? She shall never be known nor written among the mighty women of this earth. What makes her do it? Is it love of merit? No.

She knows she has no dessert before high heaven. What impels her to it? It is the power of the gospel on her heart. It is the cross of Christ.

She loves it. Therefore she says, Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small. Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

But I behold another scene. A martyr is hurried to the stake. The halberd men are around him.

The crowds are mocking, but he is marching steadily on. See, they bind him with a chain around his middle to the stake. They heap faggots all about him.

The flame is lighted up. Listen to his words. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name.

The flames are kindling round his legs. The fire is burning him even to the bone. See him lift up his hands and say, I know that my Redeemer liveth, and though the fire devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see the Lord.

Behold him clutch the stake and kiss it as if he loved it, and hear him say, For every chain of iron that man girdeth me with, God shall give me a chain of gold. For all these faggots and this ignominy and shame, he shall increase the weight of my eternal glory. See, all the underparts of his body are consumed.

Still he lives in the torture. At last he bows himself, and the upper part of his body falls over. And as he falls, you hear him say, Into thy hands I commend my spirit.

What wondrous magic was on him, sirs! What made that man strong? What helped him to bear that cruelty? What made him stand unmoved in the flames? It was the thing of power. It was the cross of Jesus crucified. For unto us who are saved, it is the power of God.

But behold another scene, far different. There is no crowd there. It is a silent room.

There is a poor pallet, a lonely bed, a physician standing by. There is a young girl. Her face is blanched by consumption.

Long hath the worm eaten her cheek, and though sometimes the flush came, it was the death flush of the deceitful destroyer. There she lieth, weak, pale, wan, worn, dying. Yet behold a smile upon her face, as if she had seen an angel.

She speaks, and there is music in her voice. Joan of Arc of old was not half so mighty as that girl. She is wrestling with dragons on her deathbed.

But see her composure, and hear her dying sonnet. Jesus, lover of my soul, Let me to thy bosom fly, While the billows near me roll, While the tempest still is high. Hide me, O my Saviour, hide, Till the storm of life is past.

Safe into the haven guide, O receive my soul at last. And with a smile she shuts her eye on earth, and opens it in heaven. What enables her to die like that? It is the power of God unto salvation.

It is the cross. It is Jesus crucified. I have little time to discourse upon the other point, and be it far from me to wear you by a lengthened and prosy sermon.

But we must glance at the other statement. Christ is to the called ones the wisdom of God, as well as the power of God. To a believer, the gospel is the perfection of wisdom.

And if it appear not so to the ungodly, it is because of the perversion of judgment consequent on their depravity. An idea has long possessed the public mind that a religious man can scarcely be a wise man. It has been the custom to talk of infidels, atheists and deists as men of deep thought and comprehensive intellect, and to tremble for the Christian controversialist, as if he must surely fall by the hand of his enemy.

But this is purely a mistake. For the gospel is the sum of wisdom, an epitome of knowledge, a treasure-house of truth, and a revelation of mysterious secrets. In it we see how justice and mercy may be married.

Here we behold inexorable law entirely satisfied, and sovereign love bearing away the sinner in triumph. Our meditation upon it enlarges the mind, and as it opens to our soul in successive flashes of glory, we stand astonished at the profound wisdom manifest in it. Ah, dear friends, if ye seek wisdom, ye shall see it displayed in all its greatness, not in the balancing of the clouds, nor the firmness of earth's foundations, not in the measured march of the armies of the sky, nor in the perpetual motion of the waves of the sea, not in vegetation with all its fairy forms of beauty, nor in the animal with its marvelous tissue of nerve and vein and sinew, nor even in man, that last and loftiest work of the Creator.

But turn aside and see this great sight, an incarnate God upon the cross, a substitute atoning for mortal guilt, a sacrifice satisfying the vengeance of heaven and delivering the rebellious sinner. Here is essential wisdom, enthroned, crowned, glorified. Admire ye men of earth, if ye be not blind, and ye who glory in your learning, bend your heads in reverence, and own that all your skill could not have devised a gospel at once so just to God, so safe to man.

Remember, my friends, that while the gospel is in itself wisdom, it also confers wisdom on its students. She teaches young men wisdom and discretion, and gives understanding to the simple. A man who is a believing admirer and a hearty lover of the truth as it is in Jesus is in a right place to follow with advantage any other branch of science.

I confess I have a shelf in my head for everything now. Whatever I read, I know where to put it. Whatever I learn, I know where to stow it away.

Once, when I read books, I put all my knowledge together in glorious confusion. But ever since I have known Christ, I have put Christ in the center as my Son, and each science revolves around it like a planet while minor sciences are satellites to these planets. Christ is to me the wisdom of God.

I can learn everything now. The science of Christ crucified is the most excellent of sciences. She is to me the wisdom of God.

O young man, build thy studio on Calvary. There raise thine observatory, and scan by faith the lofty things of nature. Take thee a hermit's cell in the garden of Gethsemane, and lay thy brows with the waters of Siloam.

Let the Bible be thy standard classic, thy last appeal in matters of contention. Let its light be thine illumination, and thou shalt become more wise than Plato, more truly learned than seven sages of antiquity. And now, my dear friends, solemnly and earnestly, as in the sight of God, I appeal to you.

You are gathered here this morning, I know, from different motives. Some of you have come from curiosity. Others of you are my regular hearers.

Some have come from one place, and some from another. What have you heard me say this morning? I have told you of two classes of persons who reject Christ, the religionist who has a religion of form and nothing else, and the man of the world who calls our gospel foolishness. Now put your hand upon your heart and ask yourself this morning, Am I one of these? If you are, then walk the earth in all your pride, then go as you came in.

But know for all this, the Lord shall bring thee into judgment. Know thou that thy joys and delights shall vanish like a dream, and like the baseless fabric of a vision be swept away forever. Know thou this, moreover, O man, that one day in the halls of Satan, down in hell, I perhaps may see thee amongst those myriad spirits who revolve forever in a perpetual circle with their hands upon their hearts.

If thine hand be transparent and thy flesh transparent, I shall look through thy hand and flesh and see thy heart within. And how shall I see it? Set in a case of fire. In a case of fire! And there thou shalt revolve forever with the worm gnawing within my heart, which shall never die.

A case of fire around thy never-dying, ever-tortured heart. Good God! Let not these men still reject and despise Christ, but let this be the time when they shall be called. To the rest of you who are called I need say nothing.

The longer you live, the more powerful will you find the gospel to be. The more deeply Christ taught you are, the more you live under the constant influence of the Holy Spirit, the more you will know the gospel to be a thing of power. The more also you will understand it to be a thing of wisdom.

May every blessing rest upon you, and may God come up with us in the evening. Let men or angels dig the mines where nature's golden treasure shines. Brought near the doctrine of the cross, all nature's gold appears but dross.

Should vile blasphemers with disdain pronounce the truths of Jesus vain, we'll meet the scandal and the shame, and sing and triumph in His name. This message, Christ Crucified, was preached by C. H. Spurgeon on February 11th, 1855. This is Charles Kelsch inviting you to join me again for another message from the Prince of Preachers.

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