

The Lost Sought and Saved

by J.C. Philpot

J.C. Philpot's sermon emphasizes the profound need for grace in recognizing our lost state and the redemptive work of Christ as the Son of Man who seeks and saves the lost.

Scripture: Job 9:33, Isaiah 28:8, Daniel 4:23, Luke 19:10, Romans 6:14

Topics: "Human Sinfulness", "Divine Redemption"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the profound nature of man as a sinner and a pharisee, highlighting the deep-rooted self-righteousness and pride that plagues the human heart. He emphasizes the need for continual self-examination and the revealing work of the Spirit to expose the sinful nature within us. Philpot delves into the story of Zaccheus to illustrate how the grace and mercy of Jesus stir up enmity in the hearts of the self-righteous, yet bring salvation to the lost. He then explores the significance of Jesus as the Son of Man who came to seek and save the lost, addressing the meaning of being lost, the purpose of His coming, and the execution of His office in seeking and saving the lost.

Transcript

Preached at Eden Street Chapel on July 27, 1851, by J. C. Philpot

"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10

Man is a strange compound. A sinner, and the worst of sinners, and yet a pharisee! A wretch, and the vilest of wretches, and yet pluming himself on his good works! Did not experience convince us to the contrary, we would scarcely credit that a monster like man, a creature, as some one has justly said, 'half-beast and half-devil,' should dream of pleasing God by his obedience, or of climbing up to heaven by a ladder of his own righteousness.

Pharisaism is firmly fixed in the human heart. Deep is the root, broad the stem, wide the branches, but poisonous the fruit of this gigantic tree, planted by pride and unbelief in the Adamic soil. And what can "hew this tree down, yet leave the stump of the roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass in the tender grass of the field?" Da 4:23 The axe of the Spirit only. Self-righteousness is not peculiar to this or that individual. It is interwoven with our very being. It is the only religion that nature understands, relishes, or admires. In spite of all my Calvinistic profession, a pharisee I believe I would have been to this day, and the chief of the pharisees, if I had not had some deep and painful discoveries of what I am in the Adam fall.

And these discoveries we need perpetually. Again and again must we be put into Satan's sieve. Again and again must the heart be ploughed up, and its corruptions laid bare, to keep down the growth of this pharisaic spirit. It is a creature of many lives; it is not one blow, nor ten, nor a hundred that can kill it. Stunned it may be for a while, but it revives again and again. Pharisaism can live and thrive under any profession. Calvinism or Arminianism is the same to it. It is not the garb he wears, nor the mask he carries, that constitutes the man. An Antinomian may be as great a pharisee as an Arminian; a Particular Baptist as a Roman Catholic.

Pharisaism we see carried out to its fullest extent in the New Testament; and by some of the vilest wretches that ever lived, fiends in enmity against the beloved Son of God. This hatred often broke out during the Lord's life before it quenched itself in his blood. And what specially drew out this enmity? It was to see grace and mercy manifested in the salvation of a sinner. When the gracious and blessed Lord called down Zaccheus, the chief among the publicans, from the tree in which he fancied himself securely perched, and invited himself to become his guest, how this stirred up and drew forth the enmity of the pharisaic heart! 'O,' they cried, in all the pride of their painted holiness, 'he is gone to be guest--did ever any see the like? To what a strange pass are things come now! Here is one who declares himself a teacher sent from God; and yet what a horrible thing is this Teacher, who calls himself the Son of God, now doing; he is gone to be guest, to sit down to table, and to partake of food, "with a man that is a sinner!" Why did he not rather come to us holy men! Our hands are clean; we are the special favorites of heaven and the only fit companions for one sent from God! But that he should go to be guest with a tax-collector and a sinner--Oh, this is indeed an affront to us, and most unbecoming in him.'

And yet, with all their murmurings, Zaccheus manifested what the power of God could do, and that grace after all can in one moment do in a sinner's heart, a thousand times more than all their pharisaism had done in theirs for years. Take all these pharisees together; was there one who had ever done or ever meant to do half of what Zaccheus was enabled to do by the grace of God? "Behold," he says, "Lord, the half of my goods pharisaism never gave the tenth or hundredth part I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation," and no doubt he had amassed much of his property thereby, "I restore him fourfold." Penetrated and overwhelmed by the super-abounding grace of God, he would have stripped himself to the bone. The gracious answer of the blessed Redeemer was, "This day is salvation come to this house, for so much as he also"--this despised tax-collector, this abhorred sinner--"is a son of Abraham," a child of God, savingly interested in the everlasting covenant. Then He that has the key of David brought forth the key that opens the wards of this intricate yet heavenly lock--"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

In opening these words, I shall attempt, with God's blessing,

I. First, to trace out the meaning of the expression, "that which was lost."

II. Secondly, the "coming of the Son of Man."

III. Thirdly, the execution of his blessed office in "seeking and saving that which was lost."

I. "That which was lost." God created Adam in his own image, after his own likeness; and for a short time he stood upright in his native created purity. But, according to the secret purposes of God, our first parent and federal head fell from that high estate; and we being in his loins, fell in him and with him. And Oh what a fall was there! The fall of man was complete. A responsible, intelligent being, capable of serving and obeying his Creator, if he falls, must fall to the very bottom of his created nature. There is no medium

between thorough standing and thorough falling. Satan, created an angel of light, when he sinned through pride, fell to the bottom of his angelic nature. He was not suspended, like the fabled coffin of Mahomet, between heaven and hell; but he fell as low as he could fall--down, down, down to the very depth of angelic nature. The highest angel became the lowest devil. But man could not fall so low as Satan, because he was not in his nature by original creation so high as Satan. The greater the height, the deeper the fall. But man fell to the bottom of human nature, as Satan fell to the bottom of angelic nature. In a word, he fell as far as he could fall. He fell out of the image of God; he fell from the high estate in which he was created into entire alienation from his Creator, and sank, utterly sank into the lowest depths of wickedness, so that nothing good, pure, or innocent was left remaining in him.

But how hard, how difficult it is to believe this! When we see so much amiability in human nature, so much that wears the appearance of goodness; when there really is such kindness and benevolence, and so much tender unselfish affection shown by thousands in whom the grace and fear of God are not--how hard to believe, how cruel to declare, that man is essentially and innately a being steeped in wickedness! But this arises from two things:

1. from not seeing, or bearing in mind, that natural and spiritual things are eternally distinct. Nature at its best is nature still--flesh at its highest attainment is flesh still.
2. And that society could not subsist unless there were tender affections in the human heart. I see the goodness of God in the fact that human nature is thus kind and amiable. In the wise providence of God, also, our passions are in civilized communities under necessary restraint. Our mutual interest makes us outwardly, if not inwardly, kind and affectionate, and restrains the breaking forth of our innate selfishness. We could not live in the world were it otherwise. If there were no check upon human nature, we would be like wild beasts, and tear each other to pieces. For the sustenance of life and society, it is necessary that there should be real or pretended affection, and amiability. But because this individual is kind, another amiable, and a third interesting, to deny and soften the reality and depth of the fall, is to err indeed.

All true sight and knowledge of the fall flow from the teachings of the Spirit. As, therefore, we obtain light from on high, and feel spiritual life in our breast, there is a deeper discovery of the Adam fall, and of our own miserable state as involved in it, until we are brought to see and feel, that in us, that is, in our flesh, dwells no good thing. Now this will ever be in a proportionate degree to the manifestation of the purity and holiness of the character of God, and the application of God's holy law in its breadth and spirituality to the soul. This will effectually dispel all dreams of human purity and creature perfection. Let one ray of divine light shine into the soul out of the holiness of God, how it discovers and lays bare the hypocrisy and wickedness of the human heart! How it seems to take the lid off the boiling pot, and shows us human nature heaving, bubbling, boiling up with pride, unbelief, infidelity, enmity against God, peevishness, discontent, and every hateful, foul, unclean lust, every base propensity and filthy desire. You may hear now and then in others the bubbling and boiling through the vessel. But to know yourself, you must look below the lid to see how it steams, and hisses, and throws up its thick and filthy scum from the bottom of the cauldron. A calm may be on the face, but a boiling sea within.

It is this laying bare of our deep-seated malady that makes a soul under the first teachings of the Spirit feel itself lost. And Oh, what a word! Lost utterly lost! The purity of the divine image lost; and with it, utter loss of power to return to God, no more, loss also of inclination. What a condition to be in! Without power, without will; an enemy and a rebel; by nature hating God and godliness; when we would do good to find evil, horrid evil, present with us; to feel sin thrusting its hateful head into every thought, word, and action,

so that when we would settle down and find rest in SELF "all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean" Isaiah 28:8. Where this is opened up in a man's soul, and a corresponding sense of the purity and holiness of God is manifested, he will see and feel himself too the vilest of the vile--and he will be glad to put his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope.

Now in this melancholy state, what can such a poor lost wretch do? Condemned by the law; hunted by Satan; pursued by conscience--alarmed by fear of death--and troubled with a dread of eternal perdition--what can he do to save himself? When he feels himself "lost," what help, strength, or wisdom is there then to be found in him? But if he has not some of this experience traced out in his heart by the finger of God, the gospel is to him an empty sound. He has never, no never, felt the power of the gospel in his soul; he is in heart a pharisee. Free grace may be his creed, but freewill in some shape or other is the idol within. But when, in the depth of his soul, he knows himself "lost, lost, lost," and feels the inability of the creature to save--this is the man, this is the spot, unto whom and into which the Savior and salvation comes; and he, and he alone, will welcome and drink in with greedy ears the joyful sound of salvation by grace.

II. "The Son of Man has come." What a blessed coming! The Lord Jesus seems to have taken to himself, with the tenderest condescension to our needs, that gracious title, "the Son of Man." He was the Son of God, and that from all eternity; but he delights to call himself the Son of Man. We need one like ourselves, wearing the same nature; carrying in his bosom the same human heart; one who has been "in all points, tempted like as we are, yet without sin;" and therefore able to sympathize with and to support those who are tempted. A sinner like man, when made sensible of his pollution and guilt, cannot draw near unto God in his intrinsic, essential majesty and holiness. Viewed as the great and glorious Being that fills eternity, Jehovah is too great, too transcendently holy, too tremendously perfect for him to approach. He must therefore have a Mediator; and that Mediator one who is a Mediator indeed, a God-man, "Immanuel, God with us." The depth of this mystery eternity itself will not fathom.

But the tender mercy of God in appointing such a Mediator, and the wondrous condescension of the Son of God in becoming "the Son of Man" are matters of faith, not of reason; are to be believed, not understood. When thus received, the humanity of the Son of God becomes a way of access unto the Father. We can talk to, we can approach, we can pour out our hearts before "the Son of Man." His tender bosom, his sympathizing heart, seems to draw forth the feelings and desire of our own.

God, in his wrathful majesty, we dare not approach; he is a "consuming fire;" and the soul trembles before him. But when Jesus appears in the gospel as "the Mediator between God and man," and "an Arbitrator," as Job speaks, "to lay his hand upon us both" Job 9:33, how this seems to penetrate into the depths of the human heart! How this opens a way for the poor guilty, filthy, condemned, and ruined sinner to draw near to that great God with whom he has to do! How this, when experimentally realized, draws forth faith to look unto him, hope to anchor in him, and love tenderly and affectionately to embrace him.

"The Son of Man has come!" We never asked it. Dare we have asked it? Who dare propound this in the counsels of heaven? Here is man sunk in the ruins of the fall, an enemy, and an alien. Who dare propose his reconciliation and recovery? The elect angels saw their fellow angels cast out of heaven without pity and without mercy; why should not man suffer the same fate? Man shared with them in sin; why should not man share with them in sorrow? But Oh, the tender mercy, heavenly grace, sympathizing compassion of the Triune Jehovah! When man was sunk in the lowest depths of the fall--ruined and alienated from the life of God, the secret counsels of eternity were brought to light, that the Son of God should become the

Son of Man, to suffer, bleed, and die for such wretches; and thus be a Mediator able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him! "The Son of Man has come," has come! The Mediator has appeared in flesh, that "whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

III. But we pass on to consider WHAT THE SON OF MAN CAME TO DO. Here we were lost, utterly lost--without power, without will to help or save ourselves. Now in this extremity, utter extremity, when, as the apostle says, we were "without strength," "the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost."

There is something expressive in the word, "that which was lost." It does not say, 'those who were lost,' but "that which was lost." The election of grace, the chosen remnant, was viewed as a lost thing; and the Son of Man came to seek and save this lost remnant. The church of God is thus spoken of as a whole; and yet, to show its insignificance and nothingness in itself, it is but a thing, an empty nothing, compared with the majesty of God.

But a sense of being thus "lost," must be wrought into the heart as an experimental feeling. A Savior, like Jesus, is not inwardly needed until the soul feels itself really lost. We cannot until then understand his character, enter into his heavenly mission, nor see the beauty and blessedness of super-abounding grace. The gospel to us is no gospel to all; but a dry, dead, unmeaning sound. We may daily read and continually hear it preached. But the gospel as a revelation of the grace of God, in its blessedness, suitability, sublimity, and glory, with all the fruits connected with it--why, we are deaf to its divine melody, blind to its heavenly charms, until a conviction, and that a piercing one, lays hold of the soul, that we are lost, lost, lost, eternally lost, without this remedy.

Now the Lord works this sense of our lost condition in various ways. In some perhaps suddenly; in others, in a more gradual manner; but all he brings eventually to the same point--to feel themselves utterly lost. A man must lose his life to find it; must lose his religion to gain it; must lose his power and strength, no, his all, before he receives new power and new will through the gospel of the grace of God.

1. "The Son of Man is come to seek that which was lost." Here is a poor sinner writing bitter things against himself. Alas! he has lost all his religion. O how religious he once used to be! How comfortably he could walk to church or chapel with his Bible and hymn-book under his arm, and look as devout and holy as possible! How regularly also, he could read the Scriptures, and pray in his manner, and think himself pretty well with one foot in heaven. But a ray of heavenly light has beamed into his soul, and shown him who and what God is, what sin and a sinful heart is, and who and what he himself as a sinner is. The keen dissecting knife of God has come into his heart, laid it all bare, and let the gory matter flow out. When his conscience is bleeding under the scalpel, and is streaming all over with the gore and filth thus let out, where is the clean heart once boasted of? Where is his religion now? All buried beneath a load of filth. Where is all his holiness gone?--his holy looks, holy expressions, holy manners, holy gestures, and holy garb--where are they all gone? All are flooded and buried. The sewer has broken out, and the filthy stream has discharged itself over his holy looks, holy manners, holy words and holy gestures; and he is, as Job says, "in the ditch." "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands ever so clean."

Here is a pharisee of the first water aspiring to the height of creature perfection. Common water will not do; it must be snow water, the purest possible. And in this he will wash, and wash, and wash again; there shall not be one spot or speck upon his hands or heart. "Yet shall you," Job adds, "plunge me in the ditch." What then? How will he come out? There shall not be a single thread not saturated with the filth of the

ditch; so that he shall be as glad to tear off his filthy rags as one who had dropped into the Thames' sewer. "My own clothes shall abhor me," as much as I abhor them. Job 9:31.

If such be your experience, may I not ask you, Where is your former religion now? You have lost it; and a very good thing too. We never find the right religion, until we have lost

the wrong one. We never find Christ, until we have lost SELF. We never find grace, until we have lost our own pitiful self-holiness. We never experience the beauty and blessedness of salvation by grace until we despair of salvation by the works of the flesh.

"The Son of Man is come to seek that which is lost." But how does he seek? By the gospel. Some by the preached gospel. There may be one here who cries with Jonah, "I am cast out of your sight." Jonah was obliged to go into the whale's belly, aye, into the belly of hell, to feel himself lost, and have his pharisaism drowned out of him. When he cried, "I cast out!" that was the best speech Jonah ever made in his life; and when he said, "Yet will I look again toward your holy temple!" that was the best look that Jonah ever looked in all his days; for it was that cry and that look which brought Jonah out of the belly of hell. And though I will not say, we must be cast into the whale's belly, or even into the belly of hell, we must go down somewhere into Jonah's experience before we can have Jonah's deliverance. Now the Lord seeks out such lost souls. Perhaps there is some one here this evening who may have crept into the chapel, hid himself in some corner, buried his face in his hands, and secretly lifting up his heart to God, has said, 'Lord, can you, will you be merciful? Have I sinned so as never, never to be forgiven? Are my backslidings such as never, never to be healed? Have I offended you, so that you will never, no, never give me a smile again?' Here is the man. Here is the individual that the Son of Man is come to seek; here is the poor creature; the Lord knows where he is--where he is physically, and where he is spiritually; and he has come to seek him. He cannot find the Lord; but the Lord has come to look after his stray sheep. In his providence and grace he brings him under the sound of the gospel, and applies it with power to his soul. Thus, he often seeks; and not only seeks, but finds him.

If the Lord did not seek him, he would never seek the Lord. That is most certain. If you are one that seeks the Lord in prayer, in supplication, in secret desire, with many a heart-rending groan, and often by night and by day, be well assured, that you would have never sought the Lord, had not the Lord first sought you. He is now seeking you. It may be as you fear some time before he finds you; but he will find you at last. How sweetly the Lord has set forth this in the parable of the lost sheep!

The poor sheep has gone astray; and having once left the fold, it is pretty sure to have got into some strange place or other. It has fallen down a rock, or has rolled into a ditch, or is hidden beneath a bush, or has crept into a cave, or is lying in some deep, distant ravine, where none but an experienced eye and hand can find it out. And so with the Lord's lost sheep; they get into strange places. They fall off rocks, slip into holes, hide among the bushes, and sometimes creep off to die in caverns. When the literal sheep has gone astray, the shepherd goes after it to find it. Here he sees a foot-mark; there a little lock of wool torn off by the thorns. Every nook he searches; into every corner he looks, until at last he finds the poor sheep--wearied, torn, and half expiring, with scarcely strength enough to groan forth its misery. Nor does he beat it home, nor thrust the goad into its back; but he gently takes it up, lays it upon his shoulder, and brings it home rejoicing. Similar in grace are the Lord's ways with his lost sheep. Men act otherwise. Let a pharisee see a sheep cast, as we call it in the country, that is, lying helpless upon its back, he would soon kick it up and kick it home, beat its head with his crook, or drive the sharp nail into its flank.

David's was a wise prayer, "Let me fall into the hands of God, and not into the hands of man." Oh! to fall into the hands of God; into the hands of a merciful and compassionate High Priest, who was tempted in all points, like as we are, and can therefore sympathize with his poor tempted people! These, these are the only hands for us safely to fall into; and he that falls into these hands will neither fall out of them, nor through them, for "underneath are the everlasting arms," and these can neither be sundered nor broken.

2. But the Son of Man has come not only to seek, but to save. Seeking was not enough; he would save as well as seek. And do you think he would save only IN PART? Was the fall in part? Did man fall only half way from God? A salvation, then, which does not go as deep as the fall, can be no salvation to me. It is not a half salvation, nor a three-quarter salvation; no, nor a ninety-nine hundredth salvation that can suit or save a thoroughly ruined soul. To be salvation at all, it must be complete. Were it anything but complete, it were none; it would not reach down to the extremity of the case.

"The Son of Man has come to save." Blessed word! "To save." He requires nothing upon our part to contribute to our salvation; he has come to save, and that to the uttermost. And to save from what? From the depth of the fall; from sin in all its miserable consequences.

The Lord came to save FROM SIN. There are five things connected with sin from which the Lord came to save.

1. There is the GUILT of sin. Now this lies with great weight and power upon every CONSCIENCE into which the law enters, and where there is any discovery of the purity, holiness, and majesty of God. Guilt of conscience, what a burden! Distress of soul through the imputation of God's wrath, and the fearful apprehension of falling into the hands of Him who indeed is a "consuming fire"--is a heavy load indeed. Did guilt ever lie upon your conscience, wake you up in the dead of the night, and make you feel as if you could wring the hair off your head? If you have felt something of what guilt is, and what a wound it can make in a sinner's conscience, you don't need me to tell you- it must be the Son of Man, and the Son of Man alone, who can save you from the guilt of sin. And how does he save from guilt? By the application of his precious blood to the conscience; thus revealing a sense of his dying love, and giving the soul to feel, that where sin abounded, there grace does and will much more abound. Nothing short of this can effectually take away guilt from the conscience of the sinner.

2. But there is the FILTH of sin. Sin not merely makes as it were a stab in the conscience, or rather, the law as manifesting the wrath of God due to sin brings thereby a burden of guilt; but the filth of sin pollutes and defiles the heart and imagination. Did you ever feel what a filthy wretch you are! how defiled and polluted from head to foot; so that you have hated, abhorred, and detested yourself before God as a monster of all uncleanness? O how little a man can know of the hideous nature of sin, and of the holiness and purity of God, who does not feel how sin pollutes and defiles him from head to foot! He must be saved from this. And how? In two ways-

A. By a solemn plunge into the fountain of Christ's blood once opened for sin and uncleanness, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with me."

B. By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit; being bathed in the laver of regeneration, and washed by the washing of water by the word; in other words, by the application of God's word of truth by a divine power to the heart.

3. But there is the dreadful LOVE of sin. 'O!' you say, 'surely a child of God can never love sin! Why, I have always been taught ever since I heard of religion, that when a man is born again he loves what he hated, and hates what he loved; and therefore, you can never persuade me that there is such a thing in my heart as love to sin!' I do not want to persuade you; I want you to persuade yourself. And if you knew as much of the human heart as some here, you would painfully know there was in the carnal mind enmity against God, and love to evil. Do not mistake me- there is in the carnal mind a detestable and abominable love of sin. If there be not, I am much deceived. Do you never commit sin? Why do you? Is it not because you love it? If you did not love it; if there were no desire toward it, no inclination, would you ever long after anything sinful? We do not want what we do not like; it is inclination that draws and leads us here and there. Look a little deeper into your heart than the mere surface. Do not take my word for it; I know it too painfully to be mistaken; it has cost me many a groan; and yet here it is to this day.

Look a little deeper; take the lid off; it needs no microscope; and I warrant, if you look a little deeper than usual you will see a something, a something we can scarcely bear to look at--but you will see a something, a something in your heart that has a strange alliance with every sin; a hideous something that seeks gratification from what God hates, and what you and I hate too; for there is a hating of sin in our spiritual nature--as there is an abominable and detestable love to it in our carnal nature.

Now we must be delivered from, and saved out of this. And how? By the letting down of the love of God into our soul. You may try not to love this, and not to love that forbidden thing; not to desire this, or not to desire that sinful object. You may try to watch your looks, your thoughts, and your words, and say, 'I won't, I won't, I won't!' but there is something within which secretly says, 'Yes, I want, I want, I want,' every time that you say 'I won't, I won't, I won't.'

Now you must be saved from this; for all your groans and sighs and struggles cannot keep that something in our heart from opening its mouth, like a little bird in its nest after a worm. But when the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the blessed Spirit, and heavenly things come with a sweet power into the soul, it takes away for the time the love of sin, and draws up the affections to where Jesus sits at God's right hand. And that is the way whereby we are purged from the dreadful love of sin, and learn to detest everything which made the Savior groan, bleed, and die.

4. But there is the POWER of sin. "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Why? "For you are not under the law, but under grace." 'Aye,' say you, 'but sin has power.' I grant it. But what gives sin its power? Love. O what a mysterious power sin has in our carnal mind! People say they do not love sin. 'O, that is horrible!' they cry. But sin loves them, if they do not love sin. What else makes them so proud, so overbearing, so worldly? What leads them to do this or that unbecoming thing? Why surely there must be some power to produce this. Here are some steel filings lying upon the table--O how quiet they are! they do not move. No; they lie quite still. But bring the magnet; and see where they are then. See how they leap toward it and cling to it closely.

So it is with sin and our carnal mind. Here sin lies. O how quiet these lusts are! how subdued this pride! Why it is almost changed into humility! Surely the heart is getting better! It is not so bad as preachers say it is! Why, all is as calm as the sea on a summer's day. Here are the steel filings; very quiet, though very dirty. Bring the magnet. Let something that attracts the carnal mind pass over these filings. O how they all leap forth to embrace it!

Now here is the power of sin working in our fallen nature through temptation. This we must be saved from. And how? Not by the law; not by resolutions; not by tears; not by remorse; not by shame; but by the blessed beaming in of the grace of God, giving power against power, giving strength, the strength of grace against the dominion of evil.

5. But there is the PRACTICE of sin. Are you quite pure here? Could you bear to be followed up every day of the week, and every hour of the day? Would you like a minister of the gospel to be always dogging your steps, and watching what you said and what you did, and how you lived all the day long? 'No,' say you. 'Sometimes I would rather shrink back I think.' Then, though God may keep you from unbecoming things outwardly--God grant it may be so!--yet who is not guilty in some measure of some slip, some fall? Who can say he keeps his eyes, or his hands, or his feet, or his tongue as pure as they should be kept? Now from this we need deliverance. And this, by "the fear of the Lord, is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death."

From these five things does Jesus save; the guilt of sin; the filth of sin; the love of sin; the power of sin; and the practice of sin. And all by the gospel--not a grain of the law, but all by the gospel, the pure gospel, the precious and everlasting gospel. "For the Son of Man;" not Moses; no, not Moses; but "the Son of Man"--the kind, condescending, compassionate great High Priest--"has come to seek and to save that which was lost." And if He cannot do it; who can? If He has not done it; who has? If we turn away from this Savior, and this salvation, what hope have we? There is hope now; but turn away from the gospel to the law, from Christ to Moses, and from salvation by grace to salvation by the works and deeds of the flesh--it cuts off all hope. "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

And let Pharisees rave as long as they please; let them gnash their teeth against the purity and blessedness of the free grace of the gospel; those who have felt its power and tasted its sweetness, know that nothing but the gospel can suit their souls, and nothing but the gospel can save them from all that they fear. No more! this despised gospel as regards practice and a consistent life and conversation will produce more in five minutes than the law could produce in five centuries; it will raise up more holiness, true holiness, more obedience, true obedience, than Moses could do with all his thunders. And therefore the Lord give us faith to drink deeply into this precious gospel, enjoy its sweetness, and die beneath its blessedness.

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