

News of Salvation by Christ Brought to the Convinced and Condemned Sinner

by Philip Doddridge

Philip Doddridge's sermon delivers the powerful message of salvation through Jesus Christ, emphasizing God's grace and the necessity of faith for forgiveness and eternal life.

Scripture: Isaiah 53:5, Hosea 13:9, Matthew 8:29, Mark 9:24, Luke 2:10, John 3:36, Romans 5:21, 2 Corinthians 5:19, Revelation 5:9

Topics: "Salvation Through Faith", "Gods Compassion"

Description

Philip Doddridge preaches about the incredible message of salvation through Jesus Christ, emphasizing God's compassion in sending His Son to die for sinners, offering reconciliation and forgiveness to believers. He urges readers to reflect on the profound impact of this good news, highlighting the sacrificial love of Jesus and the necessity of faith in receiving eternal life and righteousness. Doddridge encourages a heartfelt response to the Gospel, seeking genuine belief and gratitude for the grace extended through Christ's sacrifice.

Transcript

1. The awful things which have hitherto been said, intended not to grieve, but to help.--2. After some reflection on the pleasure with which a minister of the Gospel may deliver at message with which he is charged.--3. And some reasons for the repetition of what is in speculation so generally known.--4. 6. The author proceeds briefly to declare the substance of these glad tidings: viz. that God having in his infinite compassion sent his Son to die for sinners, is now reconcilable through him.--7.8. So that the most heinous transgressions shall be entirely pardoned to believers, and they made completely and eternally happy. The sinner's reflection on this good news.

1. My dear reader, it is the great design of the Gospel, and wherever it is cordially received, it is the glorious effect of it, to fill the heart with sentiments of love; to teach us to abhor all unnecessary rigor and severity, and to delight not in the grief but in the happiness of our fellow-creatures. I can hardly apprehend how he can be a Christian who takes pleasure in the distress which appears even in a brute, much less in that of a human mind; and especially in such distress as the thoughts I have been proposing must give, if there be any due attention to their weight and energy.

I have often felt a tender regret while I have been representing these things; and I could have wished from my heart that it had not been necessary to have placed them in so severe and so painful a light. But now I am addressing myself to a part of my work which I undertake with unutterable pleasure, and to that which indeed I had in view in all those awful things which I have already been laying before you. I have been showing you, that, if you hitherto have lived in a state of impenitence and sin, you are condemned by God's righteous judgment, and have in yourself no spring or hope and no possibility of deliverance.

But I mean not to leave you under this sad apprehension, to lie down and die in despair, complaining of that cruel zeal which has "tormented you before your time." (Matt. 8:29) 2. Arise, O thou dejected soul, that art prostrate in the dust before God, and trembling under the terror of his righteous sentence; for I am commissioned to tell thee, that, though "thou hast destroyed thyself, in God is thine help." (Hos. 13:9) I bring thee "good tidings of great joy," (Luke 2:10) which delight mine own heart while I proclaim them, and will, I hope, reach and revive thine--even the tidings of salvation by the blood and righteousness of the Redeemer.

And I give it thee for thy greater security, in the words of a gracious and forgiving God, that "he is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and not imputing to them their trespasses." (2 Cor. 5:19) 3. This in the best news that ever was heard, the most important message which God ever sent to his creatures; and though I doubt not that, living as you have done in a Christian country, you have heard it often, perhaps a thousand and a thousand times; I will, with all simplicity and plainness, repeat it to you again, and repeat it as if you had never heard it before.

If thou, O sinner, shouldst now for the first time feel it, then will it be as a new Gospel unto thee, though so familiar to thine ear; nor shall it be "grievous to me" to speak what is so common, "since to you it is safe" and necessary. (Phil. 3:1) They who are most deeply and intimately acquainted with it, instead of being cloyed and satiated, wilt hear it with distinguished pleasure; and as for those who have hitherto slighted it, I am sure they had need to hear it again.

Nor is it absolutely impossible that some one soul at least may read these lines who hath never been clearly and fully instructed in this important doctrine, though his everlasting all depends on knowing and receiving it. I will therefore take care that such a one shall not have it to plead at the bar of God, that, though he lived in a Christian country, he was never plainly and faithfully taught the doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ, "the way, the truth, and the life, by whom alone we come unto the Father." (John 14:6) 4.

I do therefore testify unto you this day, that the holy and gracious Majesty of heaven and earth, foreseeing the fatal apostacy into which the whole human race would fall, did not determine to deal in a way of strict and rigorous severity with us, so as to consign us over to universal ruin and inevitable damnation; but, on the contrary, he determined to enter into a treaty of peace and reconciliation, and to publish to all whom the Gospel should reach, the express offers of life and glory, in a certain method which his infinite wisdom judged suitable to the purity of his nature and the honor of his government.

This method was indeed a most astonishing one, which, familiar as it is to our thoughts and our tongues, I cannot recollect and mention without great amazement. He determined to send his own Son into the world, "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person," (Heb. 1:3) partaker of his own divine perfections and honors, to be, not merely a teacher of righteousness and a messenger of grace, but also a sacrifice for the sins of men; and would consent to his saving them on no other condition but this, that he should not only labor, but die in the cause. 5.

Accordingly, at such a period of time as infinite wisdom saw most convenient, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared in human flesh; and after he had gone through incessant and long-continued fatigue, and borne all the preceding injuries which the ingratitude and malice of men could inflict, he voluntarily "submitted himself to death, even the death of the cross;" (Phil. 2:8) and having been "delivered for our offences, was raised again for our justification." (Rom. 4:25) After his resurrection he continued long enough on earth to give his followers most convincing evidences of it, and then "ascended into heaven in their sight;" (Acts 1:9-11) and sent down his Spirit from thence unto his apostles, to enable them, in the most persuasive and authoritative manner, "to preach the Gospel;" and he has given it in charge to them, and to those who in every age succeed them in this part of their office, that it should be published "to every creature," (Mark 16:15) that all who believe in it may be saved by virtue of its abiding energy, and the immutable power and grace of its divine Author, who is "the same yesterday, today, and for ever." (Heb. 13:8) 6.

This Gospel do I therefore now preach and proclaim unto thee, O reader, with the sincerest desire that, through divine grace, it may "this very day be salvation to thy soul." (Luke 19:9) Know therefore and consider it, whosoever thou art, that as surely as these words are now before thine eyes, so sure it is that the incarnate Son of God was "made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men;" (1 Cor. 4:9) his back torn with scourges, his head with thorns, his limbs stretched out as on a rack, and nailed to the accursed tree; and in this miserable condition he was hung by his hands and feet, as an object of public infamy and contempt.

Thus did he die in the midst of all the taunts and insults of his cruel enemies, who thirsted for his blood; and, which was the saddest circumstance of all, in the midst of those agonies with which he closed the most innocent, perfect, and useful life that ever was spent on earth, he had not those supports of the divine presence which sinful men have often experienced when they have been suffering for the testimony of their conscience. They have often burst out into transports of joy and songs of praise, while their executioners have been glutting their hellish malice, and more than savage barbarity, by making their torments artificially grievous; but the crucified Jesus cried out, in the distress of his spotless and holy soul, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46) 7.

Look upon your dear Redeemer! look up to this mournful, dreadful, yet, in one view, delightful spectacle! and then ask thine own heart, Do I believe that Jesus suffered and died thus? And why did he suffer and die? Let me answer in God's own words, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him, that by his stripes we might be healed: it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief, when he made his soul an offering for sin; for the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. 53:5,6,10) So that I may address you in the words of the apostle, "Be it known unto you therefore, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins;" (Acts 13:38) as it was his command, just after he arose from the dead, "that repentance and remission of sins should be, preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem," (Luke 24:47) the very place, where his blood had so lately been shed in such a cruel manner.

I do thereby testify to you, in the words of another inspired writer, that Christ was made sin, that is, a sin offering, "for; though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him:" (2 Cor. 5:21) that is, that through the righteousness he has fulfilled, and the atonement he has made, we might be accepted by God as righteous, and be not only pardoned, but received into his favor. "To you is the word of this salvation sent," (Acts 13:26) and to you, O reader, are the blessings of it even now offered by God, sincerely rely offered; so that, after all that I have said under the former heads, it is not your having broken the law of God that shall prove your ruin, if you do not also reject his Gospel.

It is not all those legions of sins which rise up in battle array against you that shall be able to destroy you, if unbelief do not lead them on, and final impenitency do not bring up the rear I know that guilt is a timorous thing; I wilt therefore speak in the words of God himself nor can any be more comfortable: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," (John 3:36) "and he shall never come into condemnation." (John 5:24) "There is therefore now no condemnation," no kind or degree of it, "to them," to any one of them, "who are in Jesus Christ, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." (Rom. 8:1) You have indeed been a very great sinner, and your offences have truly been attended with most heinous aggravations; nevertheless you may rejoice in the assurance, that "where sin hath abounded, there shall grace much more abound; "that where sin bath reigned unto death," where it has had its most unlimited sway and most unresisted triumph, there "shall righteousness reign to eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 5:21) That righteousness, to which on believing on him thou wilt be entitled, shall not only break those chains by which sin is, as it were, dragging thee at its chariot-wheels with a furious pace to eternal ruin, but it shall clothe thee with the robes of salvation, shall fix thee on a throne of glory, where thou shalt live and reign for ever among the princes of heaven, shalt reign in immortal beauty and joy. without one remaining scar of divine displeasure upon thee, without any single mark by which it could be known that thou hadst even been obnoxious to wrath and a curse, except it be an anthem of praise to "the Lamb that was slain, and has washed thee from thy sins in his own blood." (Rev. 1:5) 8.

Nor is it necessary, in order to thy being released from guilt, and entitled to this high and complete felicity, that thou shouldst, before thou wilt venture to apply to Jesus, bring any good works of thine own to recommend thee to his acceptance. It is indeed true, that, if thy faith be sincere, it will certainly produce them; but I have the authority of the word of God to tell thee that if thou this day sincerely believest in the name of the Son of God, thou shalt this day be taken under his care, and be numbered among those of his sheep to whom he hath graciously declared that "he will give eternal life, and that they shall never perish." (John 10:28) Thou hast no need therefore to say, "Who shall go up into heaven, or who shall descend into the deep for me?"

For the word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart." (Rom. 10:6,7,8) With this joyful message I leave thee; with this faithful saying, indeed "worthy of all acceptation;" (1 Tim. 1:15) with this Gospel, O sinner, which is my life; and which, if thou dost not reject, will be thine too.

The Sinner's Reflection on this Good News.

"O my soul, how astonishing is the message which thou hast this day received! I have indeed often heard it before and it is grown so common to me, that the surprise is not sensible. But reflect, O my soul, what it is thou hast heard, and say whether the name of a Savior whose message it is, may not well be called 'Wonderful, counsellor,' (Isa. 9:6) when he displays before thee such wonders of love, and proposes to thee such counsels of peace! "Blessed Jesus, is it indeed thus?"

Is it not the fiction of the human mind? Surely it is not! What human mind could have invented or conceived it? It is a plain, a certain fact, that thou didst leave the magnificence and joy of the heavenly world in compassion to such a wretch as I! Oh! hadst thou from that height of dignity and felicity only looked down upon me for one moment, and sent some gracious word to me for my direction and comfort, even by the least of thy servants, justly might I have prostrated myself in grateful admiration, and have kissed 'the very footsteps' of him 'that published the salvation.' (Isa. 52:7) But didst thou condescend to be thyself the messenger?"

What grace had that been, though thou hadst but once in person made the declaration, and immediately returned back to the throne from whence divine compassion brought thee down? But this is not all the triumph of thine illustrious grace. It not only brought thee down to earth, but kept thee here in a frail and wretched tabernacle, for long successive years; and at length it cost thee thy life, and stretched thee out as a malefactor upon the cross, after thou hadst borne insult and cruelty which it may justly wound my heart so much as to think of.

And thus thou hast atoned injured justice, and `redeemed me to God with thine own blood.' (Rev. 5:9) "What shall I say! `Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief!' (Mark 9:24) It seems to put faith to the stretch, to admit what it indeed exceeds the utmost stretch of imagination to conceive. Blessed, for ever blessed be thy name, O thou Father of mercies, that thou hast contrived the way! Eternal thanks to the Lamb that was slain, and to that kind Providence that sent the word of this salvation to me!

O let me not, for ten thousand worlds, `receive the grace of God in vain!' (2 Cor. 6:1) O impress this Gospel upon my soul, till its saving virtue be diffused over every faculty! Let it not only be heard, and acknowledged, and professed, but felt! Make it `thy power to my eternal salvation;' (Rom. 1:16) and raise me to that humble, tender gratitude, to that active, unwearied zeal in thy service, which becomes one `to whom so much is forgiven.' (Luke 7:47) and forgiven upon such terms as these.

"I feel a sudden glow in mine heart while these tidings are sounding in mine ears; but, oh! let it not be a slight superficial transport! O let not this, which I would fain call my Christian joy, be as that foolish laughter, with which I have been so madly enchanted, `like the crackling blaze of thorns under a pot!' (Eccles. 7:6) O teach me to secure this mighty blessing, this glorious hope, in the method which thou hast appointed; and preserve me from mistaking the joy of nature, while it catches a glimpse of its rescue from destruction, for that consent of grace which embraces and ensures the deliverance!"

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