

Objections Against Receiving Christ Answered

by Ralph Erskine

The sermon addresses various objections to receiving Christ, emphasizing that the greatness of one's sins should be a great argument to come to Christ, and that Christ's mercies are greater than our sins.

Scripture: Psalm 103:12, Isaiah 1:18, Matthew 11:28, John 6:37, Romans 5:8, Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 7:25, 1 John 1:9, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "Salvation By Faith", "Overcoming Doubt"

Description

Ralph Erskine addresses various objections that may hinder individuals from coming to Christ, emphasizing that the greatness of sins should lead one to Christ, as His mercy and merits surpass all transgressions. He highlights that God's justice is satisfied through belief in Christ, and unworthiness should not deter one from receiving God's grace, as it is freely given. Erskine encourages individuals to trust in Christ's willingness to save, regardless of past rejections or doubts, and assures that even the weakest and oldest sinners can find redemption in Christ. He concludes by urging listeners to persist in seeking Christ, despite doubts, fears, and perceived weaknesses, as Christ is ready to answer and overcome all objections.

Transcript

1. Objections are drawn from the greatness and multitude of sins. It is true, there are some who have no such objections as this at all; they are as secure, senseless, and dense as a stone of the wall; there is no hope of saying any thing, to move and affect such unless the Lord himself awaken them. But if any here were objecting to this purpose, though it was but one in all this company; "Oh! my guilt is so serious, my sins are so great, and my transgressions are so multiplied, that you would tremble to think of the sins I have been guilty of, and what light I have sinned against, and this makes my heart sink: none know but God and my own conscience, what a sinner I have been; and will Christ ever accept of me." Answer: The greatness of your sins should be a great argument to engage you to come to Christ, and receive him Your sins are not greater than God's mercies; your guilt is not greater than Christ's merits. It is hardly to be supposed, that you are worse than some who yet have obtained mercy; such as Paul a persecutor and blasphemer; Manasseh a murderer and wizard in compact with the devil; Mary Magdalene in whom were seven devils; and many of the Jews that crucified the Lord of glory, yet were washed in that blood of the Lamb which they shed. The merit of Christ's blood is infinite; though your sins were greater than all sins, yet there is virtue in his blood to expiate them; for, it cleanses from all sin. Though the sands be many and large, yet the sea can overflow them all: so, though your sins be numerous and great, the blood of Christ

can cover them all. In a word, the question is not about the greatness of your sins, but your present duty: be your sin what it will, the Lord calls you to come to Christ and receive him: and your unbelief in your rejecting Christ is greater than all your other sins; for it is a refusal of the remedy, whereby you may be relieved of all your sin and guilt. Your other sins are but against the law; but this sin, in rejecting Christ, is against the law and the gospel both. Other sins are against God; but this sin, in rejecting Christ, is against God and Christ both. It is a great sin to think any sin little; but it is a greater sin, to think the righteousness of Christ is not above all sin. Our disobedience is the disobedience of man; but Christ's obedience is the obedience of God: therefore, our believing in Christ pleases God better than if we had continued in innocence, and never sinned. The least sin is unpardonable without this obedience and righteousness of Christ; and the greatest is pardonable by it. Therefore, O seek Christ, to be clothed with this righteousness.

2. Objections are drawn from the justice of God. "Oh, God is just, and will not hold the sinner guiltless: therefore, though I should fly to the horns of the altar, there I fear justice would be avenged upon me." Answer: This is also an argument why you should receive Christ. God's justice indeed must be satisfied; and there is no way in the world to give satisfaction to God, but by believing in Christ; for, "God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself." He has endured the wrath of God, and so there is no way to answer justice, but by flying to that satisfaction he has made; and if you do, justice will not demand a double satisfaction; one from you, and another from your Surety. No, he will deliver you from going down to the pit, because he has found a ransom. It is contrary to the nature of justice, to demand a double satisfaction when the satisfaction given by Christ is infinite.

3. Objection is drawn from the sinner's unworthiness. "Oh! I am utterly unworthy, and have nothing to move God to pity me; will he accept the likes of me?" Answer: What do you think is the strength of that reasoning? It comes just to this: I have no merit; therefore, God will have no mercy: there is no salvation for me by the law; therefore there is no salvation for me by the gospel. If you look at God with the eye of the lawyer, the least sin makes you ineligible for mercy; but if you look at him in Christ, or with an evangelical eye, the greatest sinner may receive mercy; yes, the sense of unworthiness makes a man the more receptive.

It is an unworthy objection, and argues lamentable ignorance of the gospel. Come to him as deserving nothing but wrath, and flying to God's free grace, and Christ's full merit, and the covenant's rich promise. It is with faith, as it is with a bird cast into the water; it cannot fly, the element is so gross; it cannot clap its wings there; but cast it into the air, then it will clap its wings and mount: so faith is the wing of the soul; when it looks to the man's self and his own worthiness, this is such a gross element, faith cannot mount: but let it out to the air of God's free grace and promise in Christ, then it will act and fly: yes, grace cannot act but upon an unworthy object, and without any cause from the object.

Justice has an eye upon the disposition of the person, in its rewards; but grace and mercy has an eye upon itself. Thus, if a king executes a malefactor, this is an act of justice, and the cause of it is in the offender; but if a king pardons a malefactor, this is an act of grace, and the cause of it is in the king's heart, not in the worthiness of the delinquent: so here, if you were worthy, you were not capable of this free gift. If ever there was a gift freely given, it is Christ; and will you reject him because you are unworthy?

Why, if you were worthy, it would not be a free gift. No, your refusing of Christ and standing aback from him for your unworthiness is great pride: you would have a bladder of your own, that you might swim to heaven without being obliged to Christ. If you meet a poor beggar, and see nothing but misery and poverty

in his face, and draw your purse and offer him money, would it not be strange to hear him say, "No, I will not have it; I am not worthy; over there is a gentleman in fashionable clothing, give it him for he is worthy."

Just as ridiculous is the case here, while you stand back from Christ because of your unworthiness. In a word- Christ is worthy enough of your taking. What if the greatest prince in the world should make suit to the poorest beggar, who has neither beauty nor dowry, though she be unworthy to hear of the proposal, yet the person is worthy who has made it; so it is here, if Christ, the Prince of life, and King of glory, be worth the receiving, then reject not his offer that he makes of himself: and indeed never will you be worthy till you receive him.

4. Objection is drawn from a doubt and suspicion arising in the mind if Christ be willing: "Oh! I fear he is not willing to accept me." Answer: He declares in his word, that he is not willing that any should perish; and he swears that he has no delight in the death of sinners. And O sinner! will you look up to God's face, and say, though he has both said and sworn to that purpose, that he is not willing? His purpose of grace in saving some does not say that he is willing to destroy any; it only says that, as he is not willing that any should perish, so he is resolved that all shall not get leave to destroy themselves; as all would do, if he did not catch hold of some, and pluck them as brands out of the burning fire, and his doing so says that none are destroyed by him, unless they destroy themselves.

None are willing to be saved by him, until his willingness precedes their willingness. His not saving all is no more an argument of his desire that any should perish than a king's not pardoning all rebels is an argument of that prince's willingness that any should live in rebellion against him, and fall under his furious judgement. Although it was possible for an earthly prince, to make them all willing subjects to him, yet it were not inconsistent with a merciful disposition, for him to allow some to take their will that he may show how stubborn their nature is, and how equal and just he is in the administration of his government: for acts of justice towards some are not inconsistent with a will to show mercy upon all.

Natural reason and unbelief still suspect the willingness of Christ; especially because of a decree past in heaven, which the word mentions concerning the salvation of some, from which they know not but they may be excluded. This is a powerful temptation of Satan, leading men boldly and arrogantly to speculate about the records of heaven, that are locked up from men and angels, till the decree is fully unveiled. It is an evidence of our cursed hatred against God, that we will not believe his good will in Christ, revealed in the gospel toward sinners by so many commands and promises, calls and invitations.

If you would notice instances of Christ's willingness, behold how he wept over Jerusalem, self-destroying Jerusalem, rejecting his offer, Luke 29: 41,42. "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes." What a moving sight was this, to see the Son of God in a flood of tears for lost sinners! Had he been asked, as he did Mary, in another case, "Blessed Lord, what seekest thou?"

Why weepest thou?" His answer readily would have been, "I seek not myself; I weep not for myself; for I shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, though sinners be not gathered; but I weep to see sinners so mad, as to reject their Saviour and salvation, rather than part with their lusts, that have damnation attending them; I weep to see them content, rather to cast themselves headlong into the devil's arms, than throw themselves into my arms of mercy, or receive and embrace me."

Oh! how did Christ's heart melt with pity for you, and will not your hearts melt with desire toward him! Surely, all the rivers of tears that flowed from his eyes, and the rivers of blood that flowed from his pierced heart and feet and hands and side, will be standing monuments of his good-will to save sinners. How would you have him to discover his willingness? Why man, woman, he just turns humble supplicant to you; and, as it were, upon his bare knees beseeches you to be reconciled to him; 12 Cor. v. 20.

"We are ambassadors for Christ, though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Tremendous and amazing condescension! Behold, divine mercy, stooping down to a sinner, in the humble posture, entreating him to receive a Saviour, and to receive a free remission through him! Surely the humble entreaties of the great God, should both convince us of his willingness to receive us, and shame us out of our unwillingness to receive Christ, and salvation through him.

5. Objection is drawn from a doubt or suspicion of our being prepared for receiving Christ. Oh says the sinner, that is any way sensible, "I am not humbled enough; Christ comes to bind up the broken hearted; but my heart is not broken; to give the oil of joy for mourning; but I do not have a mourning or humble spirit: therefore I may not believe, or receive Christ." Answer- You will never reckon yourself humbled enough, if you would have humiliation proportioned to your sin, which is an infinite evil. Feelings of guilt, though ever so deep, though your heart should be broken in as many pieces, as the glass does shiver against the wall; and though you were roaring day and night under the disquiet of a guilty conscience, and fearful apprehensions of God's wrath; yet all this will not say that you are now fit for Christ. These humiliations may be merely judicial, and punishments of sin, as were those of Cain and Judas; therefore, you cannot judge yourself by your legal humiliations, but only by the issue and event of them. Think not, then, to bring humiliation in your hand as a price; this will but more unfit you: the best humiliation is to see your lack of humiliation; the best preparation, to see your lack of preparation, and your lack of all good things about you: and to receive Christ is the only way to true gospel humiliation. The law is like a thunder clap, that terrifies; but the gospel is like a warm sun that dissolves the ice. Nothing melts the soul more than Christ apprehended by faith. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn," Zech. 12:10. Faith sees the greatest love, the sweetest kindness; and this melts the heart. No doubt, the prodigal was more melted, and broken, by his father's embracing of him so kindly, than by all his former miseries. What! art thou embracing me, a stubborn child, and unworthy spendthrift? So Christ comes in the gospel, saying, "Come, poor sinner, you have done evil as you could; though you have wronged me, and my Spirit, and my Father, and yourself, yet come and I will get you a pardon for all that; fear not, I will be yours to save you; my blood yours, to wash you; my righteousness yours, to justify you; my Spirit yours, to sanctify you." This melts the heart! What! is this for me, guilty me, rebellious me? Yes, it is for you graciously and freely! How the soul now dissolves into tears!

6. Objection is drawn from fear that the day of grace is past. "Alas! I have refused many call invitations, and offers, so much that Christ will not regard me! I have often trifled with the gospel, often trampled on his precious blood; and with what confidence can I now claim it?" Answer- It is to be hoped that while you have this call yet to receive Christ, that now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation, if your former refusals of Christ have not yet been malicious and deceitful, but rather temerarious and inadvertent, which though a grievous sin, yet not unpardonable: and now, since Christ does not yet exclude you from the gospel offer, why will you exclude yourselves? The more you have refused his offer in times past, the more need you have of forgiveness. You should go to God as David, saying, "Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." This would indeed be a strange argument with man, "Pardon my crime, for it is great;" but it is a strong argument with God: Lord, it is great and so I have more need of a pardon; it is great, and so you will

have great honour in pardoning: even as a physician has in curing a desperate disease. The sinning against Christ's blood, or slighting it, is indeed a heinous sin but the more heinous it is, the more need you have to hasten to this blood as the only fountain that can wash away the guilt of trampling upon it. Nay though you had shed this blood, as the Jews did, yet you are welcome to come to it for mercy: see the commission that Christ gives to his apostles, Luke 24:46, 47. "Preaching repentance, and remission, in his name, to all nations, and begin at Jerusalem " O! why at Jerusalem, where he was mocked, pierced, and crucified; Nay, begin there; for they have most need of my blood to wash them. If any thing could alienate Christ's heart from sinners, surely the consideration of their crucifying him, and using him so deceitfully, might have done it. "Yes," says he, "go make offer of my blood and mercy to these my murderers;" and accordingly, it was done by Peter, Acts 2, and many of them got this blood applied to them. Again,

7. Objection is drawn from the long continuation in sin. "I am an old sinner; my sins are of very long continuance; I have remained in the grave of sin and I am just an old rotten sinner." Answer- I fear there are some old sinners here very near to hell and damnation; the devil has got the prime of their age, and he is likely to get the dregs. Oh! if gospel grace would draw you, I would let down the rope ladder of love, by telling you that, though your sins be old, yet they are not so old as Christ's mercies, which are everlasting mercies. It is not the first old distemper that Christ hath cured; he raised Lazarus with a word though he had been four days in the grave: he stopped a bloody issue with the hem of his garment, that had run twelve years: he loosed a poor woman, whom Satan had bound eighteen years: he cured an impotent man that had an infirmity thirty-eight years: and, can he not easily cure all the sicknesses in your soul? He received those that came at the eleventh hour: he received some that came at the last hour. Consider the thief on the cross, whom the devil thought he was sure of, having drawn him the length of the mouth of hell just ready to cast him in. Yet, even then, upon his looking to Christ, did the arms of mercy take hold of him. This is encouragement to you to look to him.

8. Objection is drawn from a doubt or jealousy about our right to receive Christ. "Oh!" says one, "though Christ can save me, yet I have no right to receive him: though his blood is sufficient to wash me, yet I have no right to it." Answer- You have a full right and authorisation, from the very call of the gospel, to run to it. See what Christ enjoins ministers to do, Mark 16:15. "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: make offer of me and my blood to all, without distinction; whatever be their age, sex, or circumstances, man, woman, and child. Let no children hearing me, think they are too young to be included in this call to come to Christ; nay, the gospel is preached to you as well as to old folk: you may die in your youth; and if you die without Christ, you will perish as well as old Christless persons. ".Preach the gospel to every creature; even to the worst of sinners: every creature, be they ever so wicked; even though they have sinned themselves into the likeness of beasts or devils; yet if they be creatures, offer my blood, my mercy, my merit, my righteousness to them: invite and press them to come to me and receive me; and "Him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out." O sinner, let the gospel offer be accepted: and you shall find, whatever you have been, that there is mercy enough in God's being to pity you; merit enough in Christ's blood to pardon you; and power enough in his intercession to provide and apply it to you. Look to him for a share of this grace offered to you; and receive not the grace of God in vain.

9. Objection is drawn from the power of sin. "Alas! I find sin to be strong in me; how should I believe or receive Christ? none have such a wicked heart; surely the Lord will loath me." Ans. That as a sense of the power of sin, is better than to be senseless and dull under it; so, consider the nature of unbelief, more than the strength of sin; for, it is an evil heart of unbelief, that gives strength to sin. There are two things you must be obliged to Christ for. his merit, to get the guilt of sin pardoned; and his Spirit, to get the power of

sin subdued. There is no healing but under the wings of Christ; and therefore you must go to him for it. What do you think of faith? Is it an enemy to holiness? No, by no means; it is the only way to it. And do you find sin opposing you? Why then, know, that this time of opposition, is a time for faith to work. When a man sees death, then it is time for faith to believe life. When he sees the grave, it is time for faith to believe the resurrection; when he sees guilt, it is time for faith to believe pardoning mercy; and when he sees sin, it is time for faith to receive a Saviour; when he sees strong corruption, then it is time for faith to lay hold on Christ's strength, and cast yourself upon his faithful promise, for healing and pardoning of it. You may try other ways, but they will not do; you may wash in other waters, but they will not cleanse you; you may perplex your own thoughts, with a thousand shifts beside this, but they will not avail you: in Christ and the promises of the covenant, are the cures of your sinful nature; and faith applies the healing medicine. But now, to name no more,

10. Objection is drawn from the weakness of the creature, and of means. "What" say you, "I have no strength to believe; no strength to pray; no heart to duty: or, if I try it at any time, I have no success in it, or benefit by it." Here are two objections, and I shall divide them, in order to give a more distinct reply.

Well, then, the first part of the objection is, "I have no strength to believe, no power to receive Christ. I don't even have the heart to pray for faith." Answer- It is proper for you to know our own utter inability to believe; they who think they can believe well enough of themselves mistake the faith of God's operation for dreams, and strong imagination of their own brain. But, even though you say you have no strength, see that the disease lies rather in this, that you have no will. If you were made willing, you undoubtedly would find yourselves made able in due time: therefore, cry for one pull more of omnipotent grace, to make you willing in the day of his power. And even though you say you cannot cry and you have no heart to pray; it is perhaps your mercy, to be kept empty-handed, that you may not make a Christ of your duty, or a Saviour of your feelings; for, perhaps, you would rest there. However, know, that unbelief is the great cause of feeling unable to perform duty; for it fills the man with hard thoughts of God. "Oh!" says unbelief, "God is so holy, he will never regard you; God is so just, he will never endure you." Unbelief makes God all full of frowns and anger; and so the man's spirit sinks within him: but faith would bring up the soul; Psalm 22:13. "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord, in the land of the living."

Faith shows God to be on a throne of grace; and this raises the heart. and faith gives the soul reasons to prevail in prayer; such as, the name of God, the blood of Christ, the promise of the covenant, the intercession of Christ, the faithfulness of God. In the meantime think not either to believe or pray aright, without opposition from Satan, an evil heart of unbelief, the prevalence of sin, and an ensnaring world. You must wrestle, through grace, all the way to glory "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

The second part of the objection is, "That, though you attempt, you find no success in duty, no benefit by it; "I am still where I was." Answer-. True seeking comes always to something: it is pride and impatience that says, "It is vain to serve the Lord:" see Mal. 3:14, 18 and Isa. 40:22-24. "God is faithful who hath promised." It is true, many ask and receive not, because they ask amiss, and do not ask in faith, nothing wavering. What success can we expect, if we tell the true God to his face, that he is a liar, and that he will not make good a word that he says? Therefore, seek the removal of this unbelief.

Besides, remember that there is a twofold answer that God makes; real and tangible. A king may sign a pardon, and yet the criminal not know it, for a time. An answer may be given sometimes when we know

not of it; For example: you seek, perhaps, a heart to pray, and a heart to hate sin: well, upon this perhaps you find your heart harder, to your feeling, than it was; and your corruption bursting forth upon you; which makes you lie grovelling, with the greatest urgency, at heaven's gate, and causes the most extreme loathing of your depraved nature. Why, here you get the very thing you was seeking, yet you are not aware that these things are answers; because the answer comes in a way different from your expectation. The heart may have such thirstiness after grace, such an abomination of sin, that these present answers from heaven may seem to be nothing, yet there is something more the man would have. Present grants are not a satisfying of his desire; however something is got by every faithful seeking. The man gets either more addition to some grace, or more aversion to some sin; or more grace to seek, or more strength to wait. But though you get not so much as you desire, surely you get more than you deserve. Although it is not so much as to satisfy, yet it is as much as to help for the present. Suppose you be not answered at all, it is your sin to murmur, and your duty to wait: and remember, that God never gives his people so large an alms here, but that they need to become beggars, the next hour at the throne of grace again: and know that God loves to be urged, but he does not love to be hastened. If God promises, it is your duty to believe: if he delays, it is your duty to wait. God postpones that he may be gracious; and, "Blessed are all they that wait for him." In a word, the Lord may keep his door bolted, that you may be provoked to knock the harder. The woman of Canaan struggled with the intent of Christ's refusing to answer her; therefore she becomes unrelenting; and so gets all her will. Therefore, whatever discouragement you meet with, resolve never to quit the throne of grace, but always to lay yourselves in Christ's way, and never to go to another for help. Indeed, purpose that you will die waiting on him. Remember the Psalmist's experience, Psalm 40:1. "I waited patiently on the Lord, and at length he inclined his ear, and heard my cry." You may meet with discouragement and temptation, and be put to very hard thoughts; but you must be resolute in looking to Christ for help; reasoning with yourselves like the four lepers at the siege of Samaria, 2 Kings 7:4. If I live at a distance from Christ I will certainly perish, there is no hope for me: if Christ pity me not, when I am waiting on him, I will certainly die; but yet there is hope, he will have pity at length. Therefore, if I perish, I will perish at Christ's feet; still looking up to him, where never one yet perished and I hope he will not let me be the first.

Thus I have attempted to answer some objections: but after all there may be thousands of objections that remain; and it is the Lord only that can effectively and powerfully answer them, or any of those already mentioned. but whatever be your objections against receiving Christ, pray to Christ himself to answer them: he is content that you receive him for this purpose, to answer all your objections, as well as to pardon all your sins and conquer all your corruptions.

Notwithstanding all that has been said, perhaps some are ready to think, my objection has not been mentioned, my case has not been touched; for, it is a singular case. I am no more moved with all that has been said than a stone in the wall. Well it might give some foundation for faith, if you consider that Christ can, out of these stones, raise up children to Abraham; and that he has promised to take away the heart of stone. O beloved, will you put him to his word? Nay, say you, my heart is raging in hatred against him, like a devil. Well, say not, for all that, there is no hope; for Christ can cast out devils; and it is his work and business to put evil spirits out, and to put his own Spirit within you: only allow him to work; for it is one of the ways of receiving him, even to exercise him to receive you and to destroy the works of the devil within you. If Christ should not find any work here among all this company, woe is us, that you should all give such a vile slight to a precious Christ, as that you prefer your lowly lusts to him, and will not so much as desire him to put the sacrificing knife to the throat of your lusts; and though he stand knocking at your door, yet you will not so much as desire him to come in; nor invite him to close the door. If anyone knocks

at your door, you will readily desire them to open, and come forward. Shall not glorious Christ get as much reception as that from you? Oh invite him, at least, to put in his hand by the knob of the door, and then your inner being will move for him, Song 5:4. May the Lord persuade you to receive Christ, and answer all your objections against him.

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