

# The Sinner's Friend

## A sermon by Charles Spurgeon

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## PREFACE

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834 -1892) endures as one of the most beloved Christian pastors and writers of all time. He pastored a Baptist church in London, and many of his sermons were copied by stenographers and then distributed for a penny. But like all the great writing of the past, his sermons become harder for us to follow with each successive generation. Language is constantly evolving, and what was a common expression in 19th-century England may now seem unusual or even incomprehensible in 21st-century America.

As a result, great works are being lost to most people. This sermon has been carefully and thoughtfully updated so that you can read it without the distractions of obsolete words, strange spelling, and figures of speech that don't make sense to us today. Additionally, Spurgeon's speech was always peppered with Bible jargon. In this updated version of *The Sinner's Friend* I have footnoted most of these, but Spurgeon often paraphrases and combines several verses and I did not attempt to change this. None of the sermon's substance has been changed; I have strived to maintain the heart and depth of his messages while updating them for the modern reader. I hope this adaptation speaks to your heart as it did mine.

Rebecca Perkins  
February 2023



# The Sinner's Friend

Charles Spurgeon



A FRIEND OF TAX COLLECTORS AND SINNERS.  
MATTHEW 11:19

Many a truth has been spoken in jest, and many a tribute to virtue has been unintentionally paid by sinister lips of malice. The enemies of our Lord Jesus Christ thought they would brand him with infamy, hold him up to mockery, and hand his name down to everlasting scorn by calling him “a friend of tax collectors and sinners.” Short-sighted mortals! Their scandalous words only spread his reputation! To this day the Savior is adored by the title that began as a slur. It was designed to be a stigma that every good man would shudder at and back away from. It has proved to be a fascination that wins the heart and enchants the soul of all the godly. Saints in heaven and saints on earth delight to sing of him:

“Savior of sinners they proclaim,  
Sinners of whom the chief I am.”<sup>1</sup>

What the hateful Jewish leaders said in bitter spite has been turned by the Holy Spirit into the most gracious title. Where they poured out vials of hate, the perfume of sacred incense arises. Troubled consciences have found a sweet balm in

that very title. Jesus, “the friend of tax collectors and sinners,” has proved himself friendly to *them*, and they have become friends with him—so completely has he justified the very name that his enemies gave him as an irreverent insult.

We’ll take this title of Jesus tonight as a mark of distinction that declares his excellency, and as God helps us, we’ll try to exalt his name and proclaim his fame while we attempt to explain how he was the friend of sinners, and how he shows that he is still the same.

#### I. OUR LORD PROVED HIMSELF IN HIS OWN TIME TO BE THE FRIEND OF SINNERS.

What better proof could he give of it than coming from the majesty of his Father’s house to the lowliness of Bethlehem’s manger? What better proof could he give than leaving the company of cherubim and seraphim, to lie in the manger where the horned oxen fed, and to become the associate of fallen men? The coming of the Savior to earth in the very form of sinners, taking upon himself the flesh of sinners, being born of a sinner, having a sinner for his supposed father—his very being a man, which is equivalent to being in the same form with sinners—surely



this was enough to prove that he is the sinner's friend.

When you look at his earthly family lineage and begin to read through it, you will be struck by the fact that there are only a few women mentioned in it, and yet three out of those mentioned were prostitutes. Even in his lineage, there was the taint of sin, and a sinner's blood would have run in his veins if he had been the true son of Joseph. But since he was begotten by the Holy Spirit who overshadowed the virgin, there was no sin in him<sup>2</sup>; yet his reputed genealogy ran through the veins of sinners. Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba are three names that remind us of deeds of shame, and yet these stand in the records as the ancestors of the Son of Mary, the sinner's friend!<sup>3</sup>

As soon as Jesus Christ, being born in the same sinful flesh, has matured and has begun his real life's work, he immediately reveals his friendship with sinners by associating with them. You don't find him standing at a distance, issuing his mandates and orders to sinners to make themselves better, but you find him coming among them like a good workman who stands over his work. He takes his place where the sin and iniquity are, and he personally comes to deal

with it. He does not write out a prescription and send his medicines with someone else to heal the sickness of sin. No, he comes right into the leper colony, touches the wounded, looks at the sick! And there is healing in the touch. There is life in the look. The Great Physician took upon himself our sicknesses and bore our diseases,<sup>4</sup> and so proved himself to really be the sinner's friend.

Some people appear to have a humanitarian love toward the fallen, but they would not touch them with a pair of fireplace tongs. They would lift them up if they could, but it must be by some machinery, some sort of device so that they do not degrade themselves or contaminate their own hands. Not so the Savior! Up to the very elbow, he seems to thrust that gracious arm of his into the mire, to pull up the lost one out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay.<sup>5</sup> He himself takes the pickaxe and shovel and goes to work in the great quarry so that he may dig out the rough stones. Afterward, he himself will polish them with his own bitter tears and bloody sweat, that he may make them fit to shine forever in the glorious temple of the Lord his God.<sup>6</sup>

He comes himself into direct, personal contact with sin without being contaminated by it. He comes as close to it as a man can come. He eats

and drinks with sinners. He sits at the Pharisee's table one day and does not rise to leave because there is an immoral crowd coming to see him.<sup>7</sup> Another day he goes to the tax collector's house. The tax collector had no doubt been a great extortioner in his time; but Jesus sits there, and that day salvation comes to that tax collector's house.<sup>8</sup> Beloved, this is a sweet trait about Christ, and proves how real and true his love was, that he associated with sinners, and did not shun even the worst of them. No, he not only went among them, but he was always seeking their good through his ministry. If there was a sinner anywhere, a lost sheep of the house of Israel,<sup>9</sup> Christ was after that sinner. There was never such a tireless shepherd. He looked for those who were lost until he found them.<sup>10</sup>

I will tell you briefly about one of his earliest works of mercy. He was once on a journey, and Samaria was a little out of his way. But there lived in a city of that country a woman—ah, the less said of her the better! She had had five husbands, and the man who she was then with was not her husband. She was a disgrace to that city. But Jesus, who has a keen eye for sinners and a heart that beats for them, intends to save that woman, and he must and he *will* have her as one of his

own. Being weary, he sits down on a well to rest. A special providence brings the woman to the well.

The conventionalities of society forbid him to talk with her, but he breaks through the narrow bigotry of caste. She is a Samaritan by birth, but he doesn't care about that. But will this most holy being condescend to have a familiar conversation with her—a dishonor to her as a woman? He will. His disciples may marvel when they come back and find him talking with her, but he will do it. He begins to open up the Word of Life to her understanding, and that woman becomes the first Christian missionary we ever hear of, for she ran back to the city, leaving her water pot, and crying, "Come, see a man who told me all the things I ever did! Could this be the Christ?" And they came and believed, and there was great joy in that Samaritan city.<sup>11</sup>

You know, too, that there was another sinner. He was a bad fellow—I would fear him. He had been constantly tyrannizing the poor, and getting more out of them by taxation than he should have, but the little man had the nudge of curiosity and he *needed* to see the preacher, and the preacher *needed* to love him. Truly, there was a wonderful attraction to Jesus for a sinner. That sinner's heart

was like a piece of iron. Christ's heart was like a magnet. Wherever there was a sinner, the magnet began to feel it, and soon the sinner began to feel the magnet too. "Zaccheus," said Christ, "hurry and come down. Today I must stay at your house." Down comes the sinner, and salvation has come to his house at this hour!<sup>12</sup>

Oh, Christ never seemed to preach so sweetly as when he was preaching a sinner's sermon! I would have loved to have seen that dear face of his when he cried, "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest";<sup>13</sup> or better still, to have seen his eyes running with whole showers of tears when he said, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not!"<sup>14</sup> Or to have heard him preach those three great sermons<sup>15</sup> to sinners when he described the woman sweeping the house and taking away the dust, so that she might find her lost piece of money; and the shepherd going from hill to hill after the wandering sheep; and the father running to welcome that raggedy-clothed prodigal, kissing him with the kisses of love, clothing him with the best robe, and inviting him into the feast, while they laughed and danced

and rejoiced because the lost was found, and he who was dead was alive again!

He was the mightiest of preachers for sinners, beyond a doubt! Oh, how he loved them! Never mind the Pharisees—he has thunderbolts for them. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees!”<sup>16</sup> But when tax collectors and prostitutes come, he always has the gate of mercy open for them. For them he always has some tender word, some loving saying like this—“the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out.”<sup>17</sup> “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven;”<sup>18</sup> or similar words of tender wooing. This is how the very “chief of sinners”<sup>19</sup> was drawn into the circle of his disciples.

And you know, dear friends, he didn’t prove his love merely by preaching to them, and living with them, and by his patience in enduring their contradiction against him and all their evil words and deeds, but he proved it by his prayers too. He used his mighty influence with the Father on their behalf. He took their polluted names on his holy lips. He was not ashamed to call them brothers.<sup>20</sup> Their cause became his own, and in their interest, his pulse throbbed. How many times on the cold mountains he kept his heart warm with love for them! How often the sweat rolled down his face

when his spirit was in agony for them, I cannot tell you. This much I do know; on that very same night when his sweat was “like great drops of blood falling down to the ground,”<sup>21</sup> he prayed this prayer—after having prayed for his saints, he went on to say—“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word.”<sup>22</sup> Here, truly, the heart of the Savior was bubbling up and welling over toward sinners. And you never can forget that some of his last words were, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”<sup>23</sup> Though willfully and wickedly they pierced his hands and feet, there were no angry words, but only that short, loving, hearty prayer: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” Ah, friends! If there ever was a man who was a friend to others, Jesus was a friend to sinners his whole life through.

This is just a small sampling. As for the river of the Savior’s love for sinners, I have only brought you to its banks. You have only stood on the bank and dipped your feet in the flood—but now prepare to swim! He was so fond of sinners that he made his grave with the wicked. He was numbered with the transgressors.<sup>24</sup> God’s fiery sword was drawn to strike a world of sinners

down to hell. It *must* fall on those sinners. But Christ loves them. His prayers hold back the arm of God for a little while, but still, the sword must fall in due time. What is to be done? By what means can they be rescued? Swifter than the lightning's flash I see that sword descending. But what is that I see? It falls—but where? Not on the neck of sinners! It is not their neck that is broken by its cruel edge. It is not their heart which bleeds beneath its awful force. No, the friend of sinners has put himself in the sinner's place!

And then, as if he had been the sinner, though in him was no sin, he suffers, bleeds, and dies—no common suffering—no ordinary bleeding—no death such as mortals know.<sup>25</sup> It was a death in which the second death was comprehended, a bleeding in which the very veins of God were emptied. The God-man divinely suffered. I do not know how else to express the suffering. It was more than mortal agony, for the divine strengthened the human, and the man was made vast and mighty to endure through his being God. Being God and man, he endured more than ten thousand million men all put together could have suffered. Indeed, he endured the hells of every person for whom he died, the torments, or



the equivalent of the torments, which they all ought to have suffered.<sup>26</sup> The eternal wrath of God was condensed and put into a cup, too bitter for mortal tongue to know, and then drained to its utmost dregs by the loving lips of Jesus. Beloved, this was love!

In this is love, that while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.<sup>27</sup> Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.<sup>28</sup> This is what Christ has done, demonstrating therefore that he *is* the friend of sinners.

But the trial is over; the struggle has passed. The Savior is dead and buried; he rises again, and after he has spent forty days on earth—in those forty days still proving his love for sinners—he rises again for their justification;<sup>29</sup> I see him ascending up on high. Angels attend him as the clouds receive him.

They bring his chariot from on high,  
To bear him to his throne;  
Clap their triumphant wings and cry,  
“The glorious work is done.”<sup>30</sup>

What a ceremony! What a procession! What splendor! He will forget his poor friends the

sinner now, won't he? Not him! I think I hear the song,

“Lift up your heads, O you gates!  
And be lifted up, you everlasting doors!  
And the King of glory shall come in.”<sup>31</sup>

The streams of light shine out; the pearly gates are all flung open wide!<sup>32</sup> And as he passes through, take note, the highest joy that swells his soul is that he has opened those gates, not for himself—for they were never shut to him—but that he has opened them for sinners! It was for this that he died, and it is for this that he ascends on high, that he may “open the kingdom of heaven for all believers!”<sup>33</sup> See him as he rides through heaven's streets! “You have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive: you have received gifts for men.”<sup>34</sup> Ah, but hear the refrain, for this is the sweetest note of all the hymn: “Yea, for the rebellious also—yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.”<sup>35</sup> The scattered gifts of his coronation, the lavish bounties of his ascension, are still for sinners. He is exalted on high—for what? To give repentance and remission of sins.<sup>36</sup> He still wears on his breastplate the names of sinners;<sup>37</sup> on his hands and on his heart he still bears the

remembrance of those sinners;<sup>38</sup> and every day for the sinner's sake he doesn't hold his peace, and for the sinner's sake, he doesn't rest, but cries to God until every sinner is brought safely home! Every sinner who believes, every sinner who was given to him, every sinner whom he bought with blood—I'm telling you, he will not rest until all are gathered to be the jewels of his crown, forever and ever!<sup>39</sup>

It seems to me that we cannot say more, and I think you will say we could not have said less concerning the way in which the Savior proved himself to be the sinner's friend. If there are any of you who dare to doubt him after this, I don't know what else to say. If there is one who has proved himself to be your friend, surely Jesus did it, and he is willing to receive you now. What he has done, he still continues to do. Oh, that you might have the grace to perceive that Jesus is the lover of your soul, that you might find the blessedness which all these tokens of friendship have brought for believing sinners.

II. While we change the subject a little, we will still keep to the text, and notice

#### WHAT CHRIST IS DOING NOW FOR SINNERS.

There is a deep principle involved here—a principle that the Pharisee of old could not understand, and the cold heart of humanity is slow to embrace today. I have two explanations to offer of the way Jesus personally reveals himself as the friend of sinners, and I will just mention these before I come to the application of the subject I intend.

Once upon a time, a woman was brought to Jesus by the scribes and Pharisees.<sup>40</sup> She was an adulteress; she had been taken in the very act. They tell the sinner's friend what sentence Moses would pronounce in such a case, and they ask him, what do you say? They said this to tempt him. They were not much concerned about the unhappy woman. The accusation they intended to lay was against the Man of Nazareth. You know how he settled the case and made her accusers feel ashamed. He did not bring the sinner up before the judge. No, he would not act as judge and pronounce the sentence. Rather, he acted as the neighbor; he behaved as a friend.

There is a proverb among a certain class of hard-dealing tradesmen, "We know no friendship in business." And they fully carry it out while they grind the faces of the poor without pity, and strive to outdo one another without fairness. In the same manner, there was no friendship, no mercy whatsoever, among those gentlemen of the long robe. Righteousness, in their minds, consisted of exacting justice with rigid severity; and as for wickedness, it was only shameful when it was found out. She who was taken in the act must be stoned. They who had done it secretly must prosecute. The real friendship of Jesus appears in his singling out the woman as an object of pity.

Where they accused him of winking at crime and harboring the criminal, he was truly laying the axe at the root of the tree, and sheltering the victims while he scolded the arrogant rulers.

Their secret vices were the true cause of the wretchedness that had fallen upon the dregs of the nation. Consider this: when it is said of him that he is a "friend of tax collectors and sinners," it is implied that he was not a friend of scribes and Pharisees. Yet again, I want you to notice that the position which Christ came to fulfill toward

sinners was that of pure, unadulterated friendship.

Let me give you an illustration. There is an awful story going around: A murder has been committed and the poor wretch who committed it has cut his own throat. The policeman and the surgeon are quickly on the scene. One comes in the interest of law, the other in the interest of humanity. The officer says, "Sir, you are my prisoner." The doctor says, "My dear man, you are my patient." And now he lays a delicate hand on the wound. He stops the bleeding, applies soft ointment, binds it up with bandages, and bending down his ear, listens to the man's breathing. He takes hold of his hand and feels his pulse. Gently raising his head, he administers some medicine to him, takes him to the hospital, gives the nurse instructions to watch him, and orders that he be given a nutritious diet as he is able to bear it.

Day after day he still visits him and uses all his skill and diligence to heal the man's wounds. Is that the way to deal with criminals? It is certainly not the way the police deal with them. Their business is to find all traces and evidence of their guilt. But the medical attendant is not concerned with the man as an evildoer, but as a sufferer.

So it is with the sinner. Moses is the officer of justice who comes to arrest him. Christ is the Good Physician who comes to heal him. He says, "Oh Israel, you have destroyed yourself but I am your help." He deals with the disease, with the wounds, with the sufferings of sinners. He is therefore their friend. Of course, the metaphor will only go a little way. In the instance of the murderer, the surgeon would hand his patient over to the officers as soon as his wound was healed. But in the case of our Savior, he redeems the soul from being under the law and delivers it from the penalty of sin, as well as restores it from the self-inflicted injuries.

But oh, if I could just show you that Christ treats the sinner with compassion, rather than indignation; that the Son of Man has not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them;<sup>41</sup> that his visit to our world was as a mediator, not to condemn the world, but to give his life as a ransom for many!<sup>42</sup> Surely then, you would see reason enough why the sinner should look to him as a friend indeed.

But let us go further. I would beg you to make the case your own. You are a sinner; can I not convince you that he is your friend? Imagine you were recently sick. The physician looked very

grave and whispered something to your wife. She didn't tell you what it was, but your own life hung in the balance, and it's a wonder you are here tonight. Shall I tell you why you are here?

Do you see that tree over there? It has been standing in its place for many years, but it has never yielded any fruit, and several times the owner of the garden has said, "Cut it down." The other day the wood cutter came with his axe. He felt its edge; it was sharp enough and he began to cut, and the chips were flying, and he made a deep gash. But the gardener came by, one who had watched over the tree, and still had hope for it, and he said, "spare it—spare it just a little longer. The wound that you made may heal. I will dig around it, fertilize it, and if it bears fruit, spare it another year, and if not then cut it down."

That tree is yourself. The wood cutter is Death. That chipping at the trunk of the tree was your sickness. Jesus is he who spared you. You would not be here tonight—you would be there in hell among the damned, howling in unutterable woe, if the friend of sinners had not spared your life.

And where *are* you tonight? Perhaps, my hearers, you are in an unusual place. Your Sunday



evenings are not often spent in the house of God. There are other places that know you, but your seat there is empty tonight. There has been much persuasion to bring you here, and it may be that you have come against your will, but some friend has asked you to drive him and here you are. Do you know why you are here? It is a friendly providence, managed by the sinner's friend which has brought you here, that you may hear the sound of mercy and have a loving invitation presented to you. Be grateful to the Savior that he has brought you to the gospel pool. May you—oh, may you this night be made to step in and be washed from sin! But it is kind of him and proves how true a friend of sinners he is, that he has brought you here. I will leave you now where you are, and I will tell you how he has dealt with other sinners, for perhaps this may lead you to ask him to deal the same with you.

I know a sinner—while I live I must know him. I fully remember him when he was hard-hearted and an enemy of God by a multitude of wicked works. But this friend of sinners loved him; and passing by one day, he looked right into his soul with such a look that his hard heart began to break. There were deep throes as though a birth of a divine sort was coming on. There was an

agony, and there was a grief unutterable. That poor soul did not think it was kind of Jesus, but indeed, it was kindness too intense to ever fully estimate, for there is no saving a soul except by making it feel its need of being saved. In the work of grace, there must be an emptying and a pulling down before there can be a filling and a building up. That soul knew no peace for many years, and the sole of its foot had no rest<sup>43</sup>; but one day

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
Come unto me and rest;  
Lay down, you weary one, lay down,  
Your head upon my breast.  
I came to Jesus as I was,  
Weary and worn and sad,  
I found in him a resting place,  
And he has made me glad!

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
Behold, I freely give  
The living water, thirsty one,  
Stoop down, and drink, and live.  
I came to Jesus and I drank  
Of that life-giving stream;

My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
And now I live in him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
I am this dark world's light,  
Look unto me, your morn shall rise,  
And all your days be bright.  
I looked to Jesus and I found  
In him my star, my sun  
And in that light of light I'll walk,  
Till traveling days are done."<sup>44</sup>

Yes, I said, Christ is the friend of sinners! I said it then and I will keep saying it while this poor lispng, stammering tongue can still speak. And it seems to me that God had a design of abundant mercy when he saved my soul. I had not believed it then, though a mother's loving voice might have whispered it in my ears. But he seems to remind me of it over and over again, until love and terror mingle in my chest, saying, "Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel." Oh, my blessed Lord, you trust my lips when you bear witness to my heart. You charged my tongue when you captured my soul. Am I a chosen vessel?<sup>45</sup> It is to bring his name to sinners. As a full bottle seeks to

vent, so my testimony craves to be spoken. Oh, sinner, if you trust him, he will be such a friend to you; and if you now have a broken heart and a contrite spirit,<sup>46</sup> these are his work. It is proof of his great love for you if he has made you hunger and thirst after him.<sup>47</sup>

Let me impress upon you that Jesus is the friend of the friendless. She who had spent all her money on physicians without getting relief, obtained a cure for free when she came to him.<sup>48</sup> He who has nothing to pay gets all his debts canceled<sup>49</sup> by this friend. And he who was near starvation finds not only a passing meal, but a constant supply at his hands.<sup>50</sup>

We know of a place in England that still exists, where a loaf of bread is served to every passerby who chooses to ask for it. Whoever he is, he just has to knock at the door of St. Cross Hospital, and there is the free loaf of bread for him. Jesus Christ so loved sinners that he built a “St. Cross Hospital” so that whenever a sinner is hungry, he only has to knock and have his needs supplied. No, he has done better. He has attached a bath to this hospital of the cross; and whenever a soul is black and filthy, it only has to go there and be washed. The fountain is always full, always effective. No sinner who ever found it and went

in could not wash away his stains. Sins that were scarlet and crimson have all disappeared, and the sinner has been made whiter than snow.<sup>51</sup> As if this were not enough, attached to this hospital of the cross is a wardrobe, and a sinner, asking simply as a sinner with nothing in his hands, just being empty and naked, may come and be clothed from head to foot.<sup>52</sup> And if he wishes to be a soldier, he may not merely have clothes, but he may have armor that will cover him from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. Even if he wants a sword it will be given to him, and a shield too.<sup>53</sup> There is nothing that his heart can desire that is good for him that he will not receive. He will have enough money as long as he lives, and he will have an eternal heritage of glorious treasure when he enters into the joy of his Lord.<sup>54</sup>

Beloved, I can't tell you all that Christ has done for sinners, but this I know, that if he meets with you tonight and becomes your friend, he will stand by you to the end.<sup>55</sup> He will go home with you tonight. No matter how many flights of stairs you have to go up, Jesus will go with you. No matter if there is no chair for him to sit down on, he will not look down on you. You will be hard at work tomorrow, but as you wipe the sweat from

your brow he will stand by you. You will, perhaps, be despised for his sake, but he will not forsake you. You will, perhaps, have days of sickness, but he will come and stand beside your bed in your sickness. You will, perhaps, be poor, but your bread will be given to you, and your water will be sure, for he will provide for you.<sup>56</sup> You will anger him much and grieve his Spirit.<sup>57</sup> You will often doubt him. You will go after other “lovers”. You will provoke him to jealousy, but he will never stop loving you. You will, perhaps, grow cold to him, and even forget his dear name for a time, but he will never forget you. You may, perhaps, dishonor his cross and damage his good reputation, but he will never stop loving you. No, he will never love you less—he cannot love you more. Tonight he receives you to himself. Faith will be the wedding ring that he will put on your finger. He solemnly pledges his loyalty to you:

“Though you should him oftentimes forget  
His lovingkindness fast is set.”

His heart will be so true to you that he will never leave you nor forsake you.<sup>58</sup> You will come to die soon, but the friend of sinners, who loved you as a sinner and would not cast you off when your sinfulness kept you away from him, will still be

with you when you come to the sinner's doom, which is to die. I see you going down the sloping banks of the Jordan,<sup>59</sup> but the sinner's friend goes with you. Ah, dear heart, he will put his arm beneath you, and tell you not to be afraid. And when in the dark shadows of that grim night you expect to see a fearful image—the grim face of Death—you will see instead his sweet and smiling face, bright as an evening star, by your soul, and you will hear him say, "Do not be afraid, I am with you; be not alarmed; I am your God."<sup>60</sup> You will soon land in the world of spirits, but will the sinner's friend forsake you then? No! He will be pleased to own you! He will meet you on the other side of the Jordan and say, "Come, my beloved, I have loved you with an everlasting love, and have bought you, though you were a vile sinner, and now I am not ashamed to talk about you before my holy angels. What's more, he will say, "Come with me, and I will take you to my Father's face, and will acknowledge you there."<sup>61</sup>

And when the day comes when the world will be judged, he will be your friend then. You will sit on the bench with him.<sup>62</sup> At the right hand of the judge you will stand, accepted in him who was your advocate, and who is now your judge, to acquit you. And when the splendors of the

millennium come, you will share in them; and when the end comes and the world is rolled up<sup>63</sup> like a worn-out garment, and these arching skies have passed away like a forgotten dream; when eternity, with its deep-sounding waves, breaks upon the counterfeit of time and sweeps it away forever—then, on that sea of glass mingled with fire,<sup>64</sup> you will stand with Christ your friend. He will still own you, despite all your misbehavior in the world which has past; and will still love you, loving you as long as eternity lasts. Oh, what a friend Christ is to sinners, *to sinners!*

Now remember that we have been talking about sinners. There is a notion going around that Jesus Christ came into the world to save respectable people, and that he will save decent folks. Those of you who go regularly to a place of worship and are the good sort of people will be saved. Now Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and who does that mean?<sup>65</sup> Well, it does include some of us whom God has not allowed to enter into outward sin. But it also includes within its deep, broad scope, those who have gone to the utmost extent of criminality.

Talk of sinners! Walk the streets by moonlight, if you dare, and you will see sinners. Watch when the night is dark, and the wind is howling, and the



thief is breaking in, and you will see sinners. Go to your prison and walk through the wards, and see the men with heavy, scowling, brows, men you would not like to meet out at night, and there are sinners there. Go to the juvenile detention centers, and see those who reveal juvenile depravity, and you will see sinners there. Go across the seas to the place where a man will gnaw a bone covered in human flesh and there is a sinner there. Go where you please and ransack the earth to find sinners, for they are common enough. You can find them in every lane and street of every city and town and village. *It is for all of them that Jesus died!* If you select the worst specimen of humanity, if he is born of a woman, I will have hope for him yet, because the gospel of Christ has come to sinners, and Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save sinners.<sup>66</sup>

Electing love has selected some of the worst to be made the best. Redeeming love has bought, specially bought, many of the worst to be the reward of the Savior's sacrificial death. Effective grace calls out and compels many of the vilest of the vile to come in! This is why I have tried tonight to preach my Lord's love for sinners.

Oh, by that love, looking out of those eyes in tears; Oh, by that love, streaming from those

wounds flowing with blood; by that faithful love, that strong love, that pure, unselfish, and enduring love! Oh, by the heart and the depths of the Savior's compassion, I call on you, do not turn away as though it were nothing to you! Believe in him and you will be saved.<sup>67</sup> Trust your souls with him and he will bring you to his Father's right hand in glory everlasting.

May God give us a blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Christ Our Righteousness*, Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf  
Translated by Charles Wesley (1740)

<sup>2</sup> Luke 1:35, 1 John 3:5

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 1:3, 5, 6

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 53:5, Matthew 8:17

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 40:2

<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 2:21

<sup>7</sup> Luke 7:36-39

<sup>8</sup> Luke 19:2-9

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 15:24

<sup>10</sup> Luke 19:10

<sup>11</sup> John 4:4-26

<sup>12</sup> Luke 19:2-9

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 11:28

<sup>14</sup> Luke 13:34

<sup>15</sup> Luke 15

<sup>16</sup> Matthew 23:13

<sup>17</sup> John 6:37

<sup>18</sup> Matthew 12:31

<sup>19</sup> Paul (1 Timothy 1:15)

- <sup>20</sup> Hebrews 2:11
- <sup>21</sup> Luke 22:44
- <sup>22</sup> John 17:20
- <sup>23</sup> Luke 23:34
- <sup>24</sup> Isaiah 53: 9, 12
- <sup>25</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21
- <sup>26</sup> Mark 15:33-37, Luke 23:44-47, 1 Peter 2:24
- <sup>27</sup> 1 John 4:10, Romans 5:6,8
- <sup>28</sup> John 15:13
- <sup>29</sup> Acts 1:3, 9
- <sup>30</sup> *Jesus Seen of Angels*, James Fanch and Daniel Turner (1791)
- <sup>31</sup> Psalm 24:7
- <sup>32</sup> Revelation. 21:21
- <sup>33</sup> From *Te Deum*, a Latin Christian hymn dating to the 5th century
- <sup>34</sup> Psalm 68:18
- <sup>35</sup> Psalm 68:18
- <sup>36</sup> Acts 2:38
- <sup>37</sup> Exodus 28:15-21, see Hebrews 8:1-6
- <sup>38</sup> Isaiah 49:16
- <sup>39</sup> Zechariah 9:16
- <sup>40</sup> John 8:4-11
- <sup>41</sup> John 3:17

42 Timothy 2:5, John 3:15, Matthew 20:28

43 Genesis 8:9

44 *I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say*, Horatius Bonar (1846)

45 Acts 9:15

46 Psalm 51:17

47 Matthew 5:6

48 Luke 8:43-48

49 Matthew 18:27

50 Matthew 6:26

51 Isaiah 1:18

52 Revelation 19:8

53 Ephesians 6:10-17

54 Matthew 25:21, 23

55 Hebrews 13:5

56 Matthew 6:26

57 Ephesians 4:30

58 Hebrews 13:5

59 The Jordan River is a metaphor for crossing over into Heaven, as God led the Jews across the Jordan into the Promised Land. Deuteronomy 11:31 and many others.

60 Joshua 1:9

61 Jeremiah 31:3, 1 Corinthians 6:20, Matthew 10:32

62 1 Corinthians 6:2

<sup>63</sup> Revelation 6:14

<sup>64</sup> Revelation 15:2

<sup>65</sup> 1 Timothy 1:15

<sup>66</sup> Luke 19:10

<sup>67</sup> Acts 16:31