

693k
La D 324

20,693k La D 324

Good Tidings of Great Joy

SERMON preached in Union Chapel, Bethersden, on Christmas Day,
1959, by the Pastor, Mr. H. Dawson.

1 Timothy, 1.15.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that
Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

This is a word which is very familiar to you, a word often quoted, and yet - what a wonderful word it is to encourage any sinner who knows of a truth that he possesses a never-dying soul, and is born for an eternal destiny, either to be lost or saved. Such a sinner will ponder a word like this because it spells hope, and something in that sinner's breast will say: "If Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, who can tell but what God will be gracious unto me"? It is a great word, a wonderful word, and I hope grace will be given to say something on it that may be helpful to some of you gathered together, desiring to worship God aright.

"This is a faithful saying". We might ask, first of all, who is the Author of this saying? The Author is He, who is the Author of the Word of God in its entirety, the Holy Spirit is His Name. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God"; "God spake all these words"; and this word which is our text; then if the Holy Spirit is the Speaker in the text, you and I should seek, as grace is given, to "take off our shoes from off our feet", - in a spiritual interpretation of it, - "for the place whereon we stand is holy ground". What are you doing concerning this saying? Is it acceptable to you? The Speaker in the text declares it "is worthy of all acceptation". Have you accepted it? Do you believe it? Do you live your life in the light of the truth it sets forth, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners", such as you feel to be? "This IS a faithful saying"; it has never failed any poor sinner yet, who desired to put God to the test concerning the truth of it. "Prove me now, herewith, if I will not open unto you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it". There shall be a blessing let down for such a sinner, the blessing of a welcome according to the word of Jesus Christ: "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise" - I'll never, no never, no never - "cast out". "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation", and yet now very few people do accept the truth of the text, and rejoice in Him as Christ Jesus, Who "came into the world to save sinners"; a truth that, for sinners born again, is delightful to contemplate. As I thought on the word, hoping that it might be the word to be brought before you, I felt there was help in it, and hope, and comfort, inasmuch as it is worded "for sinners". That is a word which I know describes me. When I read in the Word of God, as I often do, about the "godly", and the "righteous", and the "holy brethren", and "Saints", and the "pure in heart", and suchlike characters I have to pause and weigh matters up; I cannot always feel as I should like to feel that I am such a character as those words define, but when it comes to a word like this: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" I know where I am, and I can stand on that footing, and I

humbly desire to hope in God as I stand thereon.

1. I want, as the Lord shall help me, to look at this word from three viewpoints. First of all there is in the text a Wonderful Mystery: "Christ Jesus came into the world". God into this world came down; a wonderful mystery of a truth, and yet a blessed reality. The second viewpoint is: the text tells us of a Wonderful Mission: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". The third viewpoint is a Wonderful Message: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief".

Let us contemplate, as grace is given, the Wonderful Mystery: "Christ Jesus came into the world", and says the Apostle Paul in this same epistle to Timothy: "And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh". Mark the wording: "And without controversy"; now there is one place beneath the sun where this blessed truth that "Christ Jesus came into the world", "God was manifest in the flesh", is without controversy, and that place is the Church of Christ. Within the Church of Christ this beautiful, blessed truth delights the hearts of them that belong to it, and they believe it; and it is without controversy; - they do not question it, or cavil at it, or seek to undermine it - but there are thousands, alas, outside the Church of Christ that do. There are thousands of so-called preachers that stand in pulpits and do it, and they make controversy as to whether Jesus Christ is indeed the eternal Son of God in His divine nature; and others suggest that He was just a good man, and His life can be regarded as a pattern, and maybe the world would be all the better if people lived more like He did, but they do not accept Him for Who He is, verily God, verily Man: God manifest in the flesh. Do you? "What think ye of Christ"? Let your consciences tell you what you do think. The Lord bless you if you do think concerning Christ as to Who He is, verily God, verily Man, and if you feel:

"Compared with Christ, in all besides,
No comeliness I see,
The one thing needful, dearest Lord,
Is to be one with Thee".

"What think ye of Christ"? The Word of God says: "He is despised, and rejected of men", and He is by the great majority; and man, as he is born, coming in to the world, says: "We will NOT have this Man to reign over us"; so much for man's so-called free-will, which was vitiated and lost in the Adam fall, so that he cannot think aright; such is man's attitude concerning Christ Jesus the Lord: "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Thee, or Thy ways". Man, as he is born, is content to live like that, an enemy to God and godliness; what a mercy when a sinner is born again, and he finds within a new heart and a new spirit, and the stony heart is taken away and a heart of flesh is given, and in that heart of flesh there is a solemn, blessed realisation of Who Christ Jesus is, - verily God, verily Man. To understand a little of this great truth - God manifest in the flesh - let us go to Bethlehem, (the Lord help

us to do it) and see that thing (what a wonderful thing it was) which came to pass there. Did you notice in the reading (Luke 2) one word which needs to be weighed up? The dear shepherds as their minds were made up to go to Bethlehem and see this thing, - see Christ Jesus beginning His great mission coming "into the world to save sinners", - what did they say? "Which the Lord has made known unto us". Here you see it is by revelation alone the things of God can be understood aright; and in going to Bethlehem when Christ Jesus came into the world and was seen as verily Man, what a mystery it is that He was seen as a Babe, a little Babe; weak, helpless as babes are, as verily Man, and yet:

"His shoulders held up heaven and earth,
When Mary held up Him".

verily Man.

Christ Jesus, verily God,

"The strength of God is known by all,
But who His weakness knows"

It is a wonderful consideration to see Jesus Christ in the manger cradle at Bethlehem, when for a while He was sheltered in a stable:

"Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Pleased a Man with men to be".

Ask God to help you to think on it, and keep it like Mary: But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart".

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". There was a solemn necessity that He should come into the world to do it. God, in the beginning, created the heavens and the earth, and when He has prepared Eden's garden, He formed Adam in His own image and placed him therein, and then Eve as his helpmeet, and they dwelt there awhile in the midst of all conceivable earthly happiness. But, alas, the Word of God tells us: "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men for that all had sinned", and the "Adam fall" took place. "And the Lord God drove out the man and the woman", and the world from that time on was under a curse. The Adam fall was of such a nature that it was absolutely impossible for man to make up the breach which had been made betwixt God and man. I like Joseph Hart's words about it:

"For this there must be One Who can,
From sin and death release us;
Make up the breach 'twixt God and man
Which none can do but Jesus".

There was that lovely

promise: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head", and then time rolled on, thousands of years rolled into eternity, and then you come to a beautiful Scripture which is good to ponder and think upon: "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Own Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons". It was in the fulness of time that Christ Jesus came into the world, according to God's Calendar, and it will do you good if you get grace to go to Bethlehem and see the thing that came to pass there: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". You need grace to rise above all that is sentimental about this, and to enter into that which is spiritual: "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth". It says that Christ Jesus was made of a woman, flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, and "yet without sin". Ever keep that thought uppermost, the Holy, harmless, undefiled Son of God; the sinless One came into the world to save sinners, and to stand in the sinners' stead as their substitute, and so you read a tremendous word in 2nd Corinthians' Epistle: "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him". The opening up of that Scripture is in the Book of Isaiah, where Isaiah declares "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all"; the margin reads "The Lord hath made the iniquity of us all to meet on Him". He bore sin's tremendous load, and that is on behalf of all whom God ordained to life eternal; remember that! "Christ Jesus came into the world, to save sinners". He was made of a woman, and then it says: "made under the law", and as verily Man He kept that law; He was made under it on our behalf, and He kept all it's demands. In every jot and tittle of what it demands of a sinner born under it, Jesus Christ in the sinner's stead kept it:

"In Him the Father never saw,
The least transgression of His law;
In Him we then perfection view,
The Saints in Him are perfect too".

So He lived His life on earth, and He went about doing good in thought, word and deed; He kept the law, and at the end of His life, what did He say? "I have finished the work that Thou gavest Me to do". God the Father declared: "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased". "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth". "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". It was a multitude which no man can number - arithmetic fails altogether - people of every kindred, tribe and tongue; sinners, down through the ages, hundreds of millions; yes, sinners, and He saved each one, every one on whose behalf He came, "and to you is the word of this salvation sent". "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". Has He saved you? Are you concerned about being saved? It is a great mercy if you ponder in your heart salvation, if you find welling up that petition of David's: "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation", but preparatory to that line of things being known and

felt by you there is one other aspect of truth that you must know, poor sinner - "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost". Have you ever felt to be a lost sinner? There is no preacher born that God ever sent to preach that can tell you in adequate words what a sinner feels like when he knows in his own conscience before God that he is a sinner lost, and glad that sinner is to read such a word as this: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". Christ Jesus, having lived under the law and wrought out a righteousness for poor sinners, who have none of their own wherein to appear before the majesty of heaven, went up Calvary's hill, and died in the stead of poor sinners like you and me. It is beautiful reading to some of us: "Christ died for our sins". Did He? You say, "I should be glad to know that He did, if I could only be sure about that I should know happiness beyond words to describe". Poor sinner, the Lord bless you; I tell you it is to be known. "Through this Man there is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins"; and if you are concerned about being a sinner saved, and that is what you are waiting upon God to have made plain, I encourage you to hope in God, and I tell you:

"The time of love will come
When each shall clearly see,
Not only that Christ shed His blood
But each shall say 'For ME'".

When you say 'for ME',
there is one other thing you will add on to it: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief":

"No sinner needed mercy more,
That ever sought God's face".

"God be merciful to me, THE sinner". "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". Did you ever say 'Thank-You' to God for doing it?; did you ever dwell with a soft heart on that amazing Scripture, also one that is oft quoted: "For God so loved the world, that He have His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"? "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world"; do not forget it! The willing Son obeyed, do not forget that! "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"; I ask you again, "What think ye of Christ"? Did you ever feel: "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons; I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste"? Have you been saying:

"Lord Jesus, make Thyself to me
A living, bright reality"?

2. Let us look at the second viewpoint of the subject: a Wonderful Mission. "Christ Jesus came into the world" for a specific purpose, and the purpose is outlined in the text, "to save sinners"; what a mission it

was! I do like that Scripture where the dear Saviour declared: "Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O God". The will of God the Father was, there should be that mighty host of sinners saved by grace; and it was the Father's will that His dear Son should come down into the world and do all that must be done that those sinners should be saved with an everlasting salvation. These are beautiful, blessed truths, deep things of God are these;

"These are truths, and happy he,
Who can well receive them;
Brethren, though we cannot see,
Yet we should believe them".

What had to be done that sinners might be saved? I said earlier on that the breach had to be made up which the Adam fall had made between God and man, and Jesus Christ came down into this world to do it, and he did it. I have told you He lived under the law, and wrought out righteousness for these poor sinners in the text - saved sinners - to be made "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light", and to save them from the law's tremendous curse and shame. It is a wonderful experience when the poor sinner can realise this great mercy:

"The terrors of law and of God
With me can have nothing to do;
My Saviour's obedience and blood,
Hide all my transgressions from view".

Christ Jesus is known then as Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". The Saviour came to save them from sins utter defilement: "In that day there shall be a fountain open for sin and for uncleanness", and arising from this, what a great word there is to contemplate: "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin". Yes, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, if you are a sinner born again you, in a right mind, will be aware every day, all day, how much you do need saving. You need saving from things within, things without; what you are by nature; the plague of the heart, known and felt, how it lives and moves within us; what havoc it makes in our soul's experience at times, and you need saving from it. You need saving from the world which lieth in wickedness, as never before in it's long, sinful history:

"Save me from this bewitching world,
Which has to death ten-thousand hurled";

and when you look round the world, as it is, with all it's chaos and confusion, it is indeed "a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation" - "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world". Therefore all the sinners referred to in the text, on whose behalf Christ Jesus came into the world, will be delivered from its ill and evil, and saved from it. Not only so, what a wonderful

Scripture is that word in John's Epistle: "In this was the Son of God made manifest, that He might destroy all the works of the devil". You and I need to be saved from Satan's testing of us when, if it is our mercy to be taught of God, you and I are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

"The Lord will make the tempter flee,
And as thy days, thy strength shall be";

and here is the guarantee: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"; "He is able to succour them that are tempted":

"He knows what sore temptations mean,
For He has felt the same".

This word also is a very helpful word to consider: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners", and that will refer to whatever our circumstances may be:

"Every state, howe'ver distressing,
Shall be profit in the end;
Every ordinance a blessing;
Every providence a friend".

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose"; and this is a guarantee: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". He said: "Marvel not if the world hate you, but know this, it hated Me before it hated you. Ye are not of the world, if ye were of the world the world would love his own". The dear Saviour came into the world, and He went through it in the life He lived separated from it in all it's ill and evil, and it's wickedness. "The holy, harmless, undefiled Son of God". Then there comes a time, it may be coming to some us ere long, when heart and flesh shall fail; what then? "And deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage". I do like that word of Williams the hymnwriter, when he refers to Christ Jesus as the

"Death of death, and hell's destruction".

It is a wonderful word setting forth Who Christ Jesus is, and what He has done. Jesus, when He died, vanquished death on behalf of all the sinners in the text, on whose behalf He came into the world to save; remember that! There is a guarantee: grace to live, grace to die, and these sinners, saved by grace as they are, when they come down to die will feel, if they do not proclaim it, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Sometimes it is our lot to stand by the grave, and see all that is mortal laid therein of these sinners saved by grace. What is said? "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust", but "in sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection to the life everlasting". "Christ Jesus came into the

world to save sinners".

3. Let us look at it a little from the third viewpoint, a Wonderful Message. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief". I wonder how many in this assembly are sinners whom Christ Jesus came into the world to save. Is it a subject that burdens you, and causes you many searchings of heart, and brings you in secret places before God with Whom you have to do: "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that Thou bearest to Thy people, O visit me with Thy salvation". "Worthy of all acceptation"; it is not that which you just admire, or speculate about, but it is that which a sinner born again appreciates and believes. As I pondered the subject, I thought of some sinners who have no concern whatever to be saved, and in their lips and lives they give the evidence of it. There is a very solemn word that dropped from the Saviour's lips, and He said: "Wherefore, I say unto you all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men". "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him"; and this latter declaration is a wonderful mercy to think on, for the Apostle Paul went down bedrock into that mercy. Here is a solemn consideration -- "But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven Him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come". Where do those preachers really stand, dear friends, who stand in pulpits and seek to undermine the truth that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" and that He is verily God, verily Man. They seek to overthrow the truth when it says that He was born of the virgin Mary, through the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost; I judge that to be the sin unpardonable, and such sinners have no concern whatever to be amongst the sinners Christ Jesus came into the world to save. Not only so, if men deny the inspiration of the Word of God and seek to level it down to books that men may write, and treat it as of the like importance, then they are in the same category. The word of God tells us plainly the Author of it in every jot and tittle: "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"; and to deny the Word of God to be the Word of God I judge to be the sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. All manner of sin, otherwise, shall be forgiven. I have thought sometimes how wonderful it is to contemplate that, when you read about how the Israelites lived under the law, it was made plain that he who was a murderer must die, there was no escape from it; the law pronounced that judgement, and the murderer must die; likewise so must the adulterer; and also the blasphemer; each one must die under the law; - no revocation, no extenuating circumstances could bring any rebatement of what the law pronounced; the sinner must die. Now under the Gospel it is wonderful to contemplate: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". Think of the Psalmist David, as before God, he was the equivalent of a murderer in the matter of Uriah the Hittite, a judicial murderer, for he was left to what he was by nature and schemed his death; but the Psalmist is in heaven, and he was a sinner saved by grace. Manasseh made Jerusalem's streets run with blood, a murderer beyond all question, but the blood of Jesus Christ cleansed Manasseh, as one of the sinners on whose behalf He came into the world; and think of the dying thief, I judge he was a blasphemer, and maybe he was a murderer too; but in life's latest hour he

realised what it was to be saved by grace. What did the Saviour say when He preached His own Gospel? "Publicans and harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you"; so that under the Gospel not only the murderer, but the adulterer and the blasphemer, when they are wrought upon by the Spirit of God can know the wondrous mercy "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners", even such sinners as they feel to be. Remember:

"The vilest sinner out of hell,
Who lives to feel his need,
He's welcome to the throne of grace,
The Saviour's blood to plead".

I wonder how many of us this Christmas morn have it deep down in our hearts that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Let us seek an answer to that question I put to you - "What think ye of Christ"? How many of us are saying as before God "We believe and are sure Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God", "Lord, to whom can we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life". It is a wonderful mercy to have something in our souls that we are sure about. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure", and some of us are sure that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". Remember this:

"Sinner, if thou art taught to see,
How great thy guilt, thy misery,
In every thought and act impure,
The blood of Christ thy soul can cure".

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need". This word I have tried to bring before you: "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief", is the keynote of those good tidings of which the angels sung in the silent night long ago: "And the angel said unto them, Fear Not, behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord"; yes, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners", and what good tidings of great joy such a word proves to be to every sinner born again; every sinner concerned to "win Christ, and be found in Him";

"Did ever sinner sink to woe,
Thirsting for pardoning grace?
Ten thousand voices answer 'No'
'None die that seek His face'".

Dear Friends, the Lord bless you, and do ponder in your hearts, as grace is given, these good tidings - good tidings that God is approachable by poor sinners like you and me, and a welcome is guaranteed:

"No sinner was ever yet empty sent back,
Who came seeking mercy for Jesus' sake".

Good tidings
that there is help and hope in God for sinners concerned about an interest in the salvation of God. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". It means good tidings of righteousness for poor sinners who are made to say:

"Naked I come to Thee for dress,
And helpless look to Thee for grace";

and it means good tidings as revealed in the exceeding great and precious promises in the Gospel, for they are all "Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus". Do take this word home, and the Lord help you to think upon it to some purpose, and may you live to prove, dear friends, you dear young people especially think on; oh, may you live to prove that you are among those sinners "Christ Jesus came into the world to save".

"Approach, my soul, the mercy-seat,
Where Jesus answers prayer,
And humbly lie at His dear feet,
For none can perish there".

Amen.

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS