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How Sinners are Saved!

A SERMON

DELIVERED BY THE PASTOR,

JOSEPH JARVIS,

In the Spring of 1912.

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"For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not."—ISAIAH xxx. 15.

We have in our text and its associations both natural history and spiritual mystery as is often the case in Holy Writ, especially with the Old Testament. The history relates to the *national* Israel of God, the Seed of Abraham according to the flesh, and the mystery to all *believers* in our Lord Jesus Christ whether of the Jewish nation, or of the nations of the world.

I. I call your attention first of all, then, to the POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF THOSE TIMES TO WHICH OUR SUBJECT ALLUDES. I have felt constrained to do this because of a striking correspondence between those days and our own. You will find by carefully studying this prophecy of Isaiah that our text relates to the reign of that godly king, Hezekiah, and more especially to the time of a threatened invasion of Judah by Assyria. Now it appears that there was an irreligious political faction which determined, in spite of the message of the Lord by the prophet Isaiah, to lean upon an arm of flesh rather than upon the love and omnipotence of the Lord their God. These unbelieving men it appears sent ambassadors with large presents to the king of Egypt thereby to purchase his help against the Assyrian foe, as Hoshea the king of Israel had done, but to his own confusion and ruin, not long before. Therefore we read in the commencement of this chapter, "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of Me; and that cover with a covering, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; that walk to go down into Egypt and have not asked at My mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt. Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion."

Brethren, Have we not here a sad picture of our own national apostacy? have we not, at least to an alarming extent, forsaken the God of our fathers? Does not the spirit of this age reiterate to-day the audacious cry of the heathen monarch of Egypt, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" What do we hear of the Lord to-day as our national Defender and Helper? Are we not rather boasting of our "Treaties and Alliances" with other great Powers? Is not our confidence in our superior Army, in our glorious Navy, and in our mighty battleships? Are we not trusting, like Judah of old, in the shadow of this Egypt rather than in the "shadow of the Almighty"? Besides these lamentable and startling facts, true

religion and morality are everywhere decayed. Many of our noble and great set the example of irreligion by a wanton desecration of the Lord's Day, by even a prodigality of wild and sinful pleasure seeking, and by an irrepressible greed for gold, and thirst for power and influence that one might well suppose them to have quite forgotten that they must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to answer for the deeds done in the body.

On the other hand we find among the common people the same principles of unholiness with far less refinement. We live in an age when men are unthankful, and unholy, when thousands and thousands among the young no longer rise with respect before hoary age, nor do they honour the face of the old man. Children are disobedient to parents, and in many cases without natural affection. The "faces of the elders are not honoured" by the crowd, and in our midst are millions of "Yokeless, lawless, masterless monsters," who neither "Fear God, nor honour the king," indeed they despise all lawful authority and are struggling to become a law to themselves.

Now glance for a moment at the religious world in good Hezekiah's day, and then compare the religious condition of our times with that and see if we do not find an almost exact parallel. Come with me now to the 8th verse and read onward to the 12th, "Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: that this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord; which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits: get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us." Now is not this a most graphic and exact description of the false religion of our times? It appears so to me in every detail. In the broad sense we must plead guilty to the charge of rebellion here preferred against Judah, whether taken in its application to national or religious apostasy. Nor can we escape the terrible charge, "Lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord." There are many teachers in our midst who are teachers of lies, men of corrupt minds who have turned from the truth as it is in Jesus to fables, men who are the "enemies of the cross of Christ" and the friends of those deadly heresies which "drown men in perdition and destruction;" and what is very sad, even to relate,—these men have their followers who are as pleased to receive their deep and dangerous falsehoods as they are to vend them. These are the people who say to the true seers, "See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things." You will observe that the consciences of these men bear witness to the truth of a genuine Gospel ministry, but they say, "We will not listen to right things, they are too old fashioned and severe. We would rather be comforted by smooth things and confirmed in our carnal ease by deceits, than we would be saved by the naked truth, since such a message gives, for the present any way, so many alarms, and will not allow us to settle on our lees. We choose the wrong way, because easy, though the end be woe!" Can you, my friends, conceive of a more terrible condition than this in which a man deliberately chooses to be the dupe of falsehood? Nor does this moral degradation end such a terrible case, for the doom of such willingly ignorant persons is fearful, because they "received not the love of the truth that they might be saved." "And for this cause also (saith the

apostle) God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." But now listen further to the wicked words of these rejecters of the truth, for they say, "Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us." You will observe that an acknowledgment is made by these rebellious ones that the prophets were *in the way*, and in the *right way*, too, for they said, "Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path." Thus they totally rejected the Lord's gracious command, "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest to your souls." Their next wicked request shows how hateful the thought of Divine holiness always is to false professors, for they cried, "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us."

There is very much religion in the world to which fallen nature is by no means opposed—quite the contrary. Man in his fallen state is generally *very* religious. The heathen themselves are not without religion, but of course they are ignorant of the true way of salvation. A devotional spirit can never by itself give proof that one is in the way of life, for the greater portion of the human race are devoted to some branch or other of natural religion, and what is more striking, very many persons will receive a large portion of that which is *revealed*. Seldom, indeed, can you find men who will refuse to believe the more *pleasing* doctrines of Divine revelation. Did you ever hear the natural man find fault with the well-known glorious text, "God is love"? I never did. But how terribly some men will rail against God's justice and holiness. Tell the naturally religious man of "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild," speak to him of the Saviour's pity and compassion, and if you yourselves are sufficiently blind to believe it, tell such people how good and merciful God would be to them if they would only let Him; represent, or rather misrepresent, to them that grace is not sovereign, but that all depends upon their own free will, innate power and choice, and they will quite fall in love with this divinity which after all is only the creation of the human fancy. But preach Divine omnipotence, justice, holiness, and sovereignty, and they will be ready, like the enemies of Stephen, to gnash on you with their teeth. It is a most lamentable fact that the great cry of the general profession to-day is, "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us." The people to-day do not reverently tremble before this "Holy Lord God," they wish to forget this glorious attribute of Deity altogether; and as for the awful doctrine of sin, and its just wages, "Death," why, they would take it both as an insult to the dignity of human nature, and to the benevolence of the Creator, whom they imagine to be so much the God of love as never to exercise the essential attribute of Justice.

It is a still more woeful fact that many so-called ministers of the gospel either lead the people into these sinful delusions, or, knowing their corrupt taste, are afraid to be faithful. I heard of a sad case of this kind not long since, where the preacher was taken to task for speaking of "righteousness and judgment to come" by some of the influential persons in his congregation, and such was the effect that he has since then sinfully withheld the truth. There are, I grieve to say it, many men to-day who, pandering to the wretched tastes of their people, dare not preach the totality of human depravity in

the Adam Fall, and roundly declare that our condition by nature is so terrible that, if saved at all, our salvation must be wholly of grace. Men strive to-day to forget the terrors of Divine holiness altogether.

Some time since a lady of this class came to hear me preach, prompted, I suppose, either by curiosity, or by the invitation of a relative. After the service some inquiry was made as to her impressions of the sermon when, after speaking appreciatingly of some things, she exclaimed, "But Mr. Jarvis said such dreadful things about people; why, he declared that we are all 'Great and hell-deserving sinners,' and I am sure we are not." Poor woman, what a mercy for her it would be if the good Lord would but reveal her sins in the light of His countenance, and then bring her as a guilty and broken-hearted sinner to the feet of the sinner's Friend! Well, I plead guilty to the charge of speaking "dreadful things" of our fallen nature, but I have never yet been able to paint it in half of its native blackness, and if this is to be vile, I purpose, like David, to be yet more vile, and to prove that there is not even one perfectly clean thread in either the warp or the woof of our degenerate being, but that all is leprous and filthy.

But on the other hand, what joy is mine, since I can point the very worst of sinners to the redeeming and cleansing blood of the Lord Jesus, and declare in His name that there verily is pardon, and peace, and purity for all who come unto God by Him, for "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." Yes, blessed be His holy name, "*Jesus came to reclaim sinners, not the righteous!*" The Lord grant that each of us may learn, by His own blessed teaching, both to fear, and love, and trust "That great and terrible NAME, THE LORD THY GOD," for it bespeaks a fearful condition of soul when any one cries with those apostates of old, "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us." I will now close this part of our subject by reminding you of the Lord's answer to this wicked request of false professors, "Wherefore, thus saith the Holy One of Israel, because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon: therefore this *iniquity* shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant."

II. We must now come to our second division, in which we have to deal with the SPIRITUAL MYSTERY. Let us read the text again, and in doing so notice the unswerving faithfulness of the prophet to his conscience and to his God. The people had cried, "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us," but he is insistent with the title, and here makes use of it again. Listen. "For thus saith the Lord God, the HOLY ONE of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not." We have then, in connection with this part of our subject, to consider THE WAY OF SALVATION, OR IN OTHER WORDS, HOW WE MAY AND MUST BE SAVED. You will observe that the Divine directions concerning salvation are twofold. "In *returning* and *rest* shall ye be saved." The first direction is, Return; the second, Rest. In considering the first part of the direction I must remind you that the call to return implies that the called ones are *found on the wrong road*. Thus it was with Hezekiah's rebellious ambassadors who had gone down to Egypt for help. Divine compassion cried after them, "Come back, come

home! return to the God of your fathers with penitence and faith, and I will save you from your powerful and much-dreaded Assyrian foes. Not in going down into Egypt for help from an arm of flesh, but in returning to Me from all your sins and false confidences shall ye be saved." You see, brethren, that Hezekiah's princes were in the wrong road, and thus it is with the whole race of mankind by nature. God's own solemn witness against us is, "They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." There is a broad way to destruction, and a narrow way which leadeth unto life, and we all from birth choose the wide way to woe, unless indeed we, as in that wonderful and singular case of John the Baptist, receive through the Holy Ghost the heavenly birth before we are born into the world. Listen to our Lord's words on this all-important subject, "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

My friends, are you aware that all those of you who have not been born from above are in this broad way to hell? Are you aware that the grace of God alone "can teach our feet the way from endless night to endless day"? Dear child of eight, or ten, or twelve, I must tell you that, if you have never felt the burden of sin, and never sought pardon from the Lord, that you have been just as many years as you are old on this fearful broad way to destruction; the Lord cause you at once to return, and seek Him in your early years. Young man, young woman, how old are you? Twenty? twenty-five? thirty? And are you still without a gospel hope, and without God in the world? Are you still strangers to your own need, and to the love and grace of the Saviour of sinners? Then you have been twenty, twenty-five, or thirty years on the road to perdition, and if you keep on this fearful, downward course, you will soon arrive in those awful regions where neither hope, nor happiness, nor ease ever come. In RETURNING and rest only can ye be saved. But saddest of all, there may be here before God a greyheaded sinner whose hoary hairs are not found in the way of righteousness. My venerable friend, how stands the case with thee? how many weary years hast thou wandered in this sinful wilderness? Perchance it is sixty, seventy, eighty, or eighty-five? and yet, my poor friend, hast thou never experienced a change of heart? hath thy life been wasted in the use of earth's "muck-rake," while thou hast despised the crown of glory which a compassionate Lord freely gives to all those who love His appearing? Then I dare not deceive thee; oh how near thou art to destruction, for, says the great Judge of all the earth, "The sinner being (or dying) a hundred years old shall be accursed." You see, the Lord will have no respect to age nor honour; grace only can pass with Him as the current coin of heaven. My aged friend, pause for a few moments, and consider how very, very far, thou art from heaven and happiness, and how near, how very near, thou art to the end of thy sinful course, and to the world of endless ruin! Yet even now the Lord Jesus is able and willing to save thee if thou findest in thy heart through His grace a willingness and a longing for His great mercy. Sinners as old and as hardened as thyself have been saved by Him, therefore, "Flee, flee from the wrath to come!" Thou hast indeed wandered far away from God, and art almost as near to hell as it is possible to be, yet

sovereign mercy cries, "Return," and therefore, "in returning and rest shall ye be saved." Come, come all ye weary and heavy laden, come to Jesus, and He will save you and give you rest. Come, ye children, come, ye youths, come, ye young men and maidens, come, ye aged and decrepit ones, come to Jesus, even if ye can only crawl, nay, come to Jesus though able only to cast a longing look toward Him, or to sigh after Him, or to send forth a labouring groan heavenward, and ye shall not fall short of His compassion and grace.

"Ho! ye needy, come and welcome,  
God's free bounty glorify;  
True belief and true repentance,  
Every grace that brings us nigh,  
Without money, without money,  
Come to Jesus Christ and buy."—*Hart.*

This, brethren, is the way in which we may and must be saved, if saved at all. We have all wandered from God. "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Poor, miserable, guilty, despairing sinner, listen to the loving call of Him who came to seek and to save that which was lost. He says, "I have formed thee; thou art My servant; O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of Me. I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins. RETURN UNTO ME, FOR I HAVE REDEEMED THEE." And again, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him RETURN UNTO THE LORD, AND HE WILL HAVE MERCY UPON HIM; AND TO OUR GOD, FOR HE WILL ABUNDANTLY PARDON!" Glorious grace! glorious promise! glorious salvation which is all of the Lord! "In RETURNING and rest shall ye be saved." Every call to repentance, as found in the Word of God, or met with in the dispensation of Divine providence, is virtually a call to return to God, for repentance carries in its bosom the idea of a change of thought, a change of feeling, a turning round, and a change of practice. Hence when John the Baptist cries, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," the meaning is, "Return ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." When our Lord says, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish," we do no violence to the sentence to read it, "Except ye return, ye shall all likewise perish." We read in the seventh Psalm that "God is angry with the wicked every day," and that, "if he TURN not, He will whet His sword" and destroy him. Careless sinner, heaven's solemn message is, "Turn or burn."

But passing on, I would remark that one of the saddest spectacles with which I have ever met is that of the man who, through an awakened conscience, realises that the wages of his sin is death, and yet, despairing of ever conquering his evil passions, rushes madly on to ruin in a settled unbelief of deliverance. The prophet Ezekiel was sent by the Lord with a message to this class of persons, and a wonderful message it is, too. Listen. "Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel: thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I HAVE NO PLEASURE IN THE DEATH OF THE WICKED; but that the wicked TURN from his way and live: TURN YE, TURN YE FROM YOUR EVIL WAYS; FOR WHY WILL YE DIE, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL?" But methinks I hear some poor consciously helpless sinner say, "I would gladly repent and turn to the Lord, I would believe, I would love, I would be holy, yea, I would

most joyfully be all that a Christian ought to be, but I find that I have no more power to do all this than to keep God's holy law.

"I would, but can't repent,  
Though I endeavour oft;  
This stony heart will not relent,  
Until by grace made soft.  
Oh could I but believe,  
Then all would easy be;  
I would, but cannot; Lord, relieve;  
My help must come from Thee!"

My friend, it is no small mercy to feel thy *sinful helplessness*, for this experience will cause thee to prize that precious declaration of the Lord, which says, "I have laid help upon ONE that is mighty." And this blessed ONE, remember, is exalted with God's right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to GIVE repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. Come, then, before Him, and moan out the prayer of repenting Ephraim, "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: TURN Thou me, and I shall be TURNED; for Thou art the LORD my God." We cannot turn ourselves in our own strength, but the Lord can turn us, for He works all our works in us of His own good pleasure. Seek, then, to be turned by Him, and your testimony shall be that which followed the prayer to which we have made allusion, "Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth;" and the Lord will acknowledge you for His dear son as He acknowledged Ephraim. The Lord often commands us to do impossible things, that by attempting them we may learn our helplessness and seek His strength; therefore, "Seek the Lord and His strength: seek His face evermore;" for even thus in "returning shall ye be saved." And now, brethren, in dismissing this part of our subject, I can but observe that we have found this gracious call of our God to *poor, miserable sinners* passing sweet; but I must remind you that, if possible, the Lord's call to refractory and *wandering saints* is even sweeter; witness that incomparable word in the Song of Solomon, "RETURN, RETURN, O Shulamite; RETURN, RETURN, that We may look upon thee." What inexpressible love for His Church does the Lord convey in this fourfold charge of grace for her return, especially when we remember that the reason assigned for her desired return is found in the astonishing words, "That We may look upon thee." What a marvel of grace that each Divine Person in the adorable Trinity should find delight in gazing upon the blushing countenance of an erring, but penitent, mortal! yet so it is, for the heavenly Bridegroom cries, "Let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." Shame that we should wander from such amazing love.

"RETURN, my wandering heart,  
To thy dear resting-place;  
Nothing in nature, nor in art,  
So fair as Jesu's face."

2. We must now come to the second part of this *Divinely-given direction to salvation*. "In returning and REST shall ye be saved." I wish to impress upon you with all my might—nay, may the Holy Ghost Himself impress upon you, that the REST here commanded stands, by the Divine counsel, in *direct opposition to labour*. It is not by labouring, but by looking, men are saved. ("LOOK unto Me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth.") It is not by working, but by believing, that men escape the wrath to come. The way to heaven is NOT by the law of works, but by the law of faith. Hear the word of the Lord, ye legal toilers, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on

Him that justifieth the ungodly, his *faith* is counted *for righteousness*. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." Poor Pharisaic workmonger, you may perform your weary go-round of duties like a horse at the mill; you may fast till your poor bones pierce through your skin, you may lick the floor like a monk till your tongue bleeds, and you might perform endless so-called good works and charities in a legal spirit, and yet be farther from God and heaven than before, for "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, as it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Brethren, to work for salvation is worse than vain, for "Without *faith* it is impossible to please God." Works can only work our woe.

"Weary, working, burdened one, Wherefore toil you so? Cease thy doing: all was done Long, long ago. Cast thy DEADLY "doing" down— Down at Jesu's feet;	Stand in Him, in Him alone, Gloriously complete. Till to Jesus' work you cling By a simple faith. "Doing" is a deadly thing— "Doing" ends in death."
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Beware, beware, my friends, of this DEADLY doing; work *from* life, but never attempt to work *for* life. Seek for remission of sins only through the blood of the Lamb; trust in good works, but be sure they are the good works of the Lord Jesus only, for, "In returning and *rest* shall ye be saved." Rest, therefore, from all your legal toiling; rest from your own righteousness which is but "filthy rags," rest from any confidence whatever in your prayers and tears and promises, yea, rest from self and the creature altogether, and trust only and always in the Lord Jesus who has finished the work the Father gave Him to do, a work of perfect doing and awful suffering, and remember that it is the worst of treason against heaven's Eternal King to attempt to take from, or add to that holy and incomparable work concerning which He cried on the cross, "IT IS FINISHED!" Listen to this:—"There remaineth therefore a rest (or the keeping of a Sabbath) to the people of God." Brethren, Christ is this Rest, Christ is this Sabbath. But how do we enter into this rest? how do we keep this holy Sabbath of the Lord?—and one more question, Who keeps it? Listen, for I will give you a word from this same book that answers each question, "WE WHICH HAVE BELIEVED do enter into rest." Blessed truth! and what is the gracious result? You shall have again the apostle's inspired answer: "He that is entered into His rest (that is, the rest which Christ gives) he also hath CEASED FROM HIS OWN WORKS as God did from His. "Thus it is that in *returning and rest* shall ye be saved." Beautifully has Hart epitomized this comforting teaching of the Lord in one of his remarkable hymns; I will give you a verse:—

"His word is this—Poor sinners, hear; CEASE FROM YOUR OWN WORKS,  
'Believe on Me, and banish fear. bad or good,  
Amen. And wash your garments in My blood.'"

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