

" A FAITHFUL SAYING"

"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 Timothy 1:15.

There is an art in brevity. Shakespeare said, "Brevity is the soul of wit." Sophocles, the great Greek writer, said, "A short saying oft contains much wisdom." Paul was a master of brevity, and increasingly so as he approached the end of life.

Five times in the pastoral epistles (I Timothy 1:15, 3:1, 4:9; II Timothy 2:11 and Titus 3:8) Paul wrote what he called "faithful sayings." They were short and simple in statement, but mighty in meaning. Our text is one of those brief, pithy sayings which express great thoughts in few words --one of those literary gems in which truth, diffused elsewhere, finds crystallization. Great meaning and value are attached to such condensed expressions of truth.

The character of this saying is sketched and commended to the reader or hearer. Before it is ever stated it is described as being faithful and worthy of acceptance. It is worthy of the acceptance of all; the humble and the noble, the despised and the exalted, the poor and the rich, the foolish and the wise -- everybody. It is a genuine and precious saying. It is trustworthy. It has never deceived anybody who really believed and trusted it. This saying is worthy of attention. Because it offers help where men are most helpless, it should receive the attention of every person. The very fact that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" should inspire gratitude and increase love.

I. The Person Who Came.

"Christ Jesus came." That "Christ Jesus came into the world" implied that He existed somewhere before He came here. Christ Jesus, God's Anointed Son, the supreme Person of all the ages, came. He is supreme in character, authority, attitudes and accomplishments. There was never a person like Him, neither before He came nor since He arrived. He was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. Christ Jesus is the Son of God, the Saviour of men and the only hope of the world.

II. The Place Into Which He Came.

"Christ Jesus came into the world." Christ did not come into the world as other men did. He laid aside His infinite glory and entered this world through the lowly door of Bethlehem's manger. He came into the world in fulfillment of God's eternal plan and purpose. Before He laid the foundations of the world, the Father planned that Christ should come. He had planned it as carefully as He planned creation. Christ's coming was the outworking of God's eternal purpose and the fulfillment of the Father's will.

"Christ Jesus came into the world" because God sent Him. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17). "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:4-5). Concerning His coming He said, "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:7).

Christ Jesus came into the world as the Babe of Bethlehem. He "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:7-8).

He came to the earth where men are proud, conceited, selfish, envious and sinful. He came to the place where men cheat, lie, fight, commit adultery, murder and dishonor God.

III. The Purpose For Which He Came.

It is regrettable that there is confusion in the minds of men regarding the purpose of Christ's coming to earth. Some think that He came to set a beautiful example for mankind. Others think that He came to teach the "Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man." Still others think that He came to reform people and to reorganize society along new and different lines. There are some who think that He came to proclaim wise and sound philosophies and high moral ideals by which people are to mold their lives. But, there is no need to speculate or guess or argue about "Why Christ came to Earth!" There need not be any uncertainty about the purpose of Christ's coming into the world, for it is stated as plainly and clearly as language can express it in our text: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." These plain and explicit words declare that it was His interest in sinners that induced Him to come to earth. Christ did not come to upbraid, condemn or punish sinners. He did not come to reform them or merely to help them. Instead, He came to save them freely and fully. What a blessing! There is no other comparable to it.

"He did not come to judge the world,
He did not come to blame;
He did not merely come to teach:
It was to save He came.
And when we call Him Saviour
We call Him by His name."

IV. The People For Whom He Came.

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." That implies that sin is a reality. Sin is the most foul, hateful, hideous and loathesome thing in this world. What is sin? "Sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). It is crossing over the boundary between good and evil. Sin is missing the mark, or failure to meet the divine standard. Sin is trespassing, or the intrusion of self-will into the sphere of divine authority. All of us have broken God's law many times. "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" (Isaiah 53:6). "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Sin is universal. No heart, home or society is free from it. Its effects are terrible. Sin darkens the understanding, defiles the conscience, ossifies the will, hardens the heart and warps all the affections. Sin brings suffering and misery. Sin also causes God to withhold His blessings. In speaking to His sinful people God said, "Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you" (Jeremiah 5:25). Sin in the life of individuals, or of nations, causes God to withhold His wonderful blessings. "The wages of sin is death," meaning eternal separation from God. There is nothing as terrible as that.

In order to profit by the fact that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," we must understand how He accomplished this salvation for us. In brief, it was by His death. He came to this earth primarily to die. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). Everything He did and said was preparatory to His death. He knew that His teachings would not keep anyone out of hell. Men had enjoyed excellent teaching before, but they had persisted in sin. Christ knew that His example would not keep anyone out of hell, for men had enjoyed wonderful

examples before, but they had persisted in sin. He knew that His miracles would not keep anyone out of hell, for there had been miracles before, and men had persisted in their folly. Therefore, the Son of God came into the world to die in order to save all whom God had given Him.

Christ's death on the cross was sacrificial, vicarious and substitutionary. He took the sinner's place under the law, assumed his responsibilities, discharged his debt to the law, and graciously satisfied the demands of justice.

"There was no other good enough
to pay the price of sin.
He only could unlock the door of Heaven
and let us in."

Christ came into the world to save sinners from the penalty of sin, the power of sin and the presence of sin. If you are not saved, it is not the fault of God the Father, Christ the Son or the Holy Spirit, but it is strictly your own fault.

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Sinners cannot save themselves. All men are truly sinners, but they are not equally sinners. They are all in the mire of sin, but they have not all sunk to an equal depth in it. Christ will not save any who refuse to receive Him as their Saviour but He will save freely, fully and forever all who will come to Him, acknowledge their sins and put their trust in Him. If you have any desire to obtain salvation, there is only one way to do so, and that is through a personal faith or trust in Christ Who died on the cross for you. If you would escape the consequences of your sin, you must receive Christ by faith. There is no salvation in any other. Unless you receive the salvation which Christ purchased and provided, you will remain lost and never enter heaven. Put your trust in the Saviour Who stood before God with all your sins upon Himself in order that you might stand before God with none of your sins upon yourself.

When the crew of the Squalus realized they had taken their last dive and that they were lying helpless at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, 240 feet below the surface, they sent up smoke flares and a buoy. Would one of the sister ships find them, and if so, could they be rescued? Their help must come from above. In agonizing silence they waited.

Soon after that fatal dive the submarine Sculpin set out in search. The red smudge was found, then the buoy. But twenty-four hours passed before actual rescue work could be started. A giant ten-ton diving bell dipped and rose again and again, each time taking several men alive from those awful depths, until all thirty-three men who were alive in the submarine had been rescued.

When that huge diving bell came down for the Squalus crew, not one sailor refused to be rescued, but all gladly accepted the way to safety.

When the Sculpin sent down the ten-ton diving bell, not one of the thirty-three men said, "I will think it over," or "There are hypocrites on the Sculpin, and I do not want anything to do with them," or "I will wait for a more convenient season." Not one of them said, "I am in good condition as I am," or "There is too much to give up." Not one of them said, "I am waiting for a friend," or "I do not understand the workings of the diving bell," or "Sometime I will," or "I don't feel like being rescued," or "Tomorrow I will ask to be rescued." Not one of them found fault with the Sculpin crew, as some find fault with the preacher. Not one

of them said, "I can't hold out," or "Next year will be soon enough." All gladly and promptly accepted the way to safety.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Therefore, He came to save you. He is able to do that which He came to do. Furthermore, He is willing to do the thing which He came to do. Moreover, He is willing to do it right now. Christ is here in saving power now, and is saying to you who are not Christians, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Receive Him as your personal Saviour now and be saved. Then, while we sing, come forward to confess Him publicly as your Saviour and to unite with the church.

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).