

# *The Mission Of The Son Of Man*

A Sermon by Charles Spurgeon

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

How fond our Master was of the sweet title, the "Son of Man!" If he had chosen, he might always have spoken of himself as the Son of God, the Everlasting Father, the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Prince of Peace. He has a thousand gorgeous titles, resplendent as the throne of heaven. But he speaks of himself evermore as the Son of Man who came down from heaven. Let us learn a lesson of humility from our Savior. Let us never court great titles or proud degrees. What are they, after all, but beggarly distinctions whereby one worm is known from another? He that has the most of them is a worm still and is in nature no greater than his fellows. If Jesus called himself the Son of Man, when he had far greater names, let us learn to humble ourselves unto men of low estate, knowing that he that humbles himself shall in due time be exalted. I think, however, that there is a sweeter thought than this in that name, Son of Man. It seems to me that Christ loved manhood so much that he always desired to honor it. And since it is a high honor, and indeed the greatest dignity of manhood that Jesus Christ was the Son of Man, it is his established custom to display this name that he may, as it were, put rich stars upon the breast of manhood and put a crown upon its head.

Our text announces as a declaration of our Savior that he, the Son of Man, is come to seek and to save that which was lost. In addressing you this morning, I shall simply divide my discourse thus: First, I shall lay it down as a self-evident truth that *whatever was the intention of Christ in his coming into the world, that intention most certainly shall never be frustrated.* We shall then, in the second place, look into *the intention of Christ*, as announced in the text, viz., "to seek and to save that which was lost." Then, in concluding, we shall derive *a word of comfort*, and perhaps one of *warning*, from the intention of our Savior in coming into the world "to seek and to save that which was lost."

You are aware that there has been a very great discussion among all Christians about the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is one class of men who believe in what is called *general redemption*, affirming it to be an undoubted truth that Jesus Christ has shed his blood for every man, and that the intention of Christ in his death was the salvation of men considered as a whole. However, they have to overlook the fact that in this case Christ's intention would be in some measure frustrated. There are others of us who hold what is called the doctrine of *particular redemption*. We conceive that the blood of Christ was of an infinite value, but that the intention of the death of Christ never was the salvation of all men. For if Christ had designed the salvation of all men, we hold that all men would have been saved. We believe that the intention of Christ's death is just equal to its effects. Therefore, I start this morning by announcing what I regard to be a self-evident truth, that whatever was the intention of Jesus Christ in coming into the world, that intention most certainly shall be fulfilled.

I shall make use of a few arguments to strengthen this doctrine, although I believe that on the very first announcement it commends itself to every thinking mind.

In the first place, it seems to be *inconsistent with the very idea of God that he should ever intend anything which should not be accomplished*. When I look at man, I see him to be a creature so distracted with folly and so devoid of power that I do not wonder that he often begins to build and is not able to finish. I do not marvel that so often he stops short because he has not counted the cost. I wonder not, when I think how much there is that is above man's control, that he should sometimes propose but that God should dispose far differently from his proposition. But when I think of God whose name is, "I am that I am," the self-existent one, in whom we live and move and have our being, who is from everlasting to everlasting the Almighty God having all power and strength, knowing all things, having a fullness of wisdom, I cannot associate with such an idea of God the supposition of his ever failing in any of his intentions. It would seem to me that a God who could intend a thing and fail in his intention would be no God, but would be a thing like ourselves, perhaps superior in strength, but certainly not entitled to worship. I cannot in any way think of God, of a true and real God like Jehovah, except as a being who wills and it is accomplished, who speaks and it is done, who commands and it stands fast, forever, settled in heaven. Since Jesus Christ was the Son of God, I cannot therefore imagine that in his atonement and redemption his real intention and desire can in any way be frustrated. Believing that Jesus Christ was very God of very God, equal and co-eternal with the Father, I dare not, lest I should be guilty of presumption and blasphemy, associate with that Name of Jehovah Jesus any suspicion that the design of his death shall remain unaccomplished.

Again, we have before us the fact that *hitherto, all the words of God have accomplished their purpose*. Whenever God has uttered by the lips of his servants a prophecy, it has surely come to pass. The instruments of accomplishing that purpose have often been the most factious and rebellious of men. They had no intention whatever of serving God; they have run contrary to his laws. But you will observe that when they have dashed wildly along, his bit has been still in their mouth and his bridle in their jaws. Every word of God has certainly been accomplished. The kings of the earth stood up and took counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, "Let us break his bands asunder and cast his cords from us." But he that sits in the heavens did laugh at them. Still he worked his own sovereign will. Let them do as they pleased, God was over them all reigning and ruling evermore. If then, God's purpose in providence certainly has never been frustrated, am I to imagine that God's purpose in the glorious sacrifice of Jesus Christ shall be null and void? If there be any of you who have arrived at such a contortion of intellect as to conceive that a less work being accomplished, a greater one shall fail, I must leave you to yourselves. With you I could not argue; I should think you incapable of an argument. Surely, if God the Master, the Judge, the King, has in all things done according to his own pleasure in this lower world, in the mere creation and preservation of men, it is not to be dreamed of for a moment that when he stoops himself from the highest heaven to give his own heart's blood for our redemption, he shall in that be foiled. No. Though earth and hell be against him, every purpose of Jesus on the cross shall be consummated, and as the price was "finished," so shall the purchase be; as the means were fully provided, so shall the end be accomplished to its utmost jot and tittle.

I invite you to stand at *the foot of the cross* and take a view of Jesus Christ, and then I will put it to you whether you can imagine that Jesus Christ could in any measure have died in vain. Come, believer, place yourself in the garden of Gethsemane. Hide yourself among those

dark olives and listen to yonder man who is in agony. Hear those strong cries, see those tears. See the bloody sweat of the man Christ Jesus. Can you believe that one of those clots of blood shall fall to the ground and not effect its purpose?

Come now with me to *the hall of judgment*. See there your Master placed in mock state in the midst of a ribald band of soldiers. Do you see how they spit on those blessed cheeks, how they pluck his hair, how they buffet him? Can you hear the cry of the multitude as they say, "Crucify him, crucify him?" And now, stand there and look at this man whom Pilate has just brought forth, still bleeding from the last of the scourge, covered with spit and shame. Will you believe that the incarnate Son of God shall be made such a spectacle to men, angels, and devils and yet fail of his design? Shall Jesus Christ suffer this shame and spitting, and yet endure what were far worse--a disappointment in the fulfillment of his intentions? No, God forbid! We are pledged to the strong belief that what Christ designed by his death must certainly be accomplished.

I might use a hundred other arguments. I might show that every attribute of Christ declares that his purpose must be accomplished. He certainly has love enough to accomplish his design of saving the lost, for he has a love that is bottomless and fathomless, even as the abyss itself. He certainly has no objection to the accomplishment of his own design, for "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." And certainly the Lord cannot fail for lack of power, for where we have omnipotence there can be no deficiency of strength. Nor can the design be unaccomplished because it was unwise, for God's designs are of infinite wisdom. I cannot see anything in the character of Christ nor anything the wide world over that can for one moment make me imagine that Christ should die and yet it should be said afterwards, "This man died for a purpose which he never lived to see accomplished. The object of his death was only partially fulfilled. He saw of the travail of his soul, but he was not satisfied for he did not redeem all whom he intended to redeem."

Now some people love the doctrine of universal atonement because they say it is so beautiful. It is a lovely idea that Christ should have died for all men. It commends itself to the instincts of humanity. Let me tell you what this supposition necessarily involves. If Christ on his cross intended to save every man, then he intended to save those who were damned before he died, because if the doctrine be true, that he died for all men, he died for some that were in hell before he came into this world, for doubtless there were myriads there that had been cast away. If it were Christ's intention to save all men, how deplorably has he been disappointed! We have his own evidence that there is a lake that burns with fire and brimstone, and into that pit must be cast some of the very persons, who, according to that theory, were bought with his blood. To think that my Savior died for men in hell seems a supposition too horrible for me to imagine; that he was the substitute for the sons of men, and that God having first punished the substitute punished men again. It seems to me to conflict with any idea of justice. That Christ should offer an atonement and satisfaction for the sins of men, and that afterwards those very men should be punished for the sins which Christ had already atoned for, seems to me the most incredible monstrosity.

I have stated the first thought, that the intention of Christ's death cannot be frustrated.

And now I think every one will anxiously listen, every ear will be attentive, and the question will arise from every heart, "WHAT THEN WAS THE INTENTION OF THE SAVIOUR'S DEATH? AND IS IT POSSIBLE THAT I CAN HAVE A PORTION IN IT? For whom, then, did the Savior die? And is there the slightest possibility that I have some lot or portion in that great atonement which he has offered? Beloved, my text is the answer to the question: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Now, our text tells us two things. First, the subjects of the Savior's atonement: the lost. Second, his objectives: he came to seek and to save.

He came "to seek and to save that which was *lost*." Some of you turn your heads away at once and conclude that up till now you have given no evidence that you have any portion in the death of Christ. You are a very good sort of people. You never did much that was wrong, perhaps a little now and then, but nothing that ever troubles your conscience. You have a notion that you shall certainly enter into the kingdom of heaven, for you are no worse than your neighbors, and if you do not go to heaven, who will? Christ himself tells us that he came, "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Inasmuch as you belong to the righteous and trust in yourselves that you are good and excellent, you may turn upon your heel and go, for in the blood of Christ there is no portion for men who live and die trusting in their own self-righteousness.

I may dismiss another part of you. Some of you are saying, "Well, sir, I know I am guilty, but still I am persuaded that by attention to the law of God in the future, I shall certainly be able to take away the demerit of my guilt. By a consistent course of attention to religious ordinances, and by carefully regarding that which is right and wrong between God and man, and man and man, I shall, without doubt, make an atonement for the sins of the past." Christ came not to die for men who can save themselves without him. If you think you can save yourself, remember, the door of mercy is shut in your face. Christ came to bring robes from heaven, but not for you who can spin one for yourself. It is said he came to save "that which was lost."

Now you must bear with me while I run over the different ways in which a man may be lost. We know that all men are lost in Adam. As soon as we are born into this world, we are lost. When the tiny sailing vessel of the infant is launched upon the river of life, it is lost. Unless Sovereign grace shall stretch forth its hand and save it in infancy and carry it to heaven, or save it afterwards when it shall have grown up, that infant is lost. "Behold," says David, "I was born in sin and shaped in iniquity; in sin did my mother conceive me." "In Adam all die." The fall of Adam was the fall of the human race. You, I, and all of us fell down.

We are lost by practice. No sooner does the child become capable of knowing right and wrong than you discover that he chooses the evil and abhors the good. Early passions soon break out like weeds immediately after the shower of rain. Speedily the hidden depravity of the heart makes itself manifest, and we grow up to sin and so become lost by practice. But note, a man may be lost in Adam and lost by practice and yet not be saved by Christ. But Christ is able to save you; his salvation is able to redeem you from death.

Some become lost to the church. After having been trained up religiously, they turn aside. Others are lost to society. I have seen many who are dead while they live. We have in

the midst the harlot and drunkard, who, like the leper in the camp of Israel, have to be put away less the evil spread. And those who seek after right are obliged to turn away from them, less the evil should spread in the midst of the flock. Now there are many who are lost to society whom Jesus Christ came to save, and whom he will save. But a man may be lost to society and lost everlastingly. It is no proof that Christ will save him because he is thus lost, while at the same time it is no proof that he will not save him, for Christ came to save even men who are lost like this.

Now I will tell you the people whom Christ will save. They are those who are *lost to themselves*. Imagine a ship at sea passing through a storm. The ship leaks, and the captain tells the passengers that he fears they are lost. If they are far away from shore, they pump with all their might as long as they have any strength remaining. They seek to keep down the devouring element. They still think that they are not quite lost as long as they have the power to use the pumps. At last, they see that the ship cannot be saved. They give it up for lost and leap into the lifeboats. The boats are floating for many a day, full of men who have but little food to eat. "They are lost," we say, "lost out at sea." But they do not think so. They still cherish a hope that perhaps some stray ship may pass that way and pick them up. There is a ship on the horizon. They strain their eyes to look at her. They lift each other up, wave a flag, rend their garments to make something that shall attract attention. But she passes away. Black night comes and they are forgotten. At length the very last mouthful of food has been consumed. Strength fails them, and they lay down their oars in the boat, lay themselves down to die. You can imagine then how well they understand the awful meaning of the term "lost." As long as they had any strength left, they felt they were not lost. As long as they could see a sail, they felt there was yet hope. While there was yet a moldy biscuit left or a drop of water, they did not give up all for lost. Now the biscuit is gone and the water is gone. Now strength is departed and the oar lies still. They lie down to die by each other's side, mere skeletons. Now they know what it is to be lost, and across the shoreless waters they seem to hear their death knell pealing forth that awful word, Lost!

Now in a spiritual sense, these are the people Christ came to save. Sinner, you too are condemned. Our father Adam steered the ship awry and she split upon a rock, and she is filling even to her bulwarks now. And pump as philosophy may, it can never keep the waters of her depravity so low as to prevent the ship from sinking. Seeing that human nature is of itself lost, it has taken to the lifeboat. She is a fair boat, called the boat of Good Endeavor, and in her you are striving to row with all your might to reach the shore. But your strength fails you. You say, "Oh, I cannot keep God's law. The more I strive to keep it, the more I find it to be impossible for me to do so. I climb, but the higher I climb, the higher is the top above me. When I was in the plains, I thought the mountain was but a moderate hill. But now I seem to have ascended halfway up its steps, and there it is, higher than the clouds. I cannot discern the summit." However, you gather up your strength. You try again, you row once more, and at last, unable to do anything, you lay down your oars, feeling that if you are saved it cannot be by your own works. Still, you have a little hope left. There are a few small pieces of moldy biscuit remaining. You have heard that by attention to certain ceremonies you may be saved, and you munch your dry biscuit. But at last that fails you, and you find that neither baptism nor the Lord's supper nor any other outward rites can make you clean, for the leprosy lies deep within. That done, you still look out. You are in hopes that there may be a sail coming, and while floating upon that deep of despair, you think you detect in the distance some new dogma, some

fresh doctrine that may comfort you. It passes, however, like the wild phantom ship. It is gone, and there you are left at last with the burning sky of God's vengeance above you, with the deep waters of a bottomless hell beneath you, fire in your heart and emptiness in that ship which once was so full of hope. You lie down despairing, and you cry, "Lord, save me or I perish!"

Is that your condition this morning, my friend? Has that ever been your condition? If so, Christ came into the world to seek and to save you. And you he will save and no one else. He will save only those who can claim this for their title: "Lost." Only those who have understood in their own souls what it is to be lost as to all self-trust, self-reliance, and self-hope.

Can you say that you are lost? Are you left in the midst of a hopeless, arid wasteland? Are the vultures wheeling in the sky, screaming with delight because they hope soon to feed upon your flesh and bones? Is the water bottle dry and does the bread fail? Are you now without hope, without trust in yourself, ready to lie down in despair? Listen! The Lord thy God loves you. Jesus Christ has bought you with his blood. You are and shall be his. He has been seeking you all this time, and he has found you at last in the vast howling wilderness. Now he will take you upon his shoulders and carry you to his house rejoicing, and the angels shall be glad over your salvation. Now, such people must and shall be saved. This is the description of those whom Jesus Christ came to save. Whom he came to save he will save. You, you lost ones, lost to all hope and self confidence, shall be saved. Though death and hell should stand in the way, Christ will perform his vow and accomplish his design.

We have now to notice THE OBJECTIVES OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST. He came "to *seek* and to *save* that which was lost." I am so glad that these two words are both there, for if they were not, what hope would there be for any of us? The Arminian says Christ came to save those that seek him. Beloved, there is a sense in which that is true, but it is a lie. Christ did come to save those that seek him, but no one ever sought the Lord Jesus Christ unless the Lord Jesus Christ first sought him. Christ does not leave it to ourselves to seek him, or else it would be left indeed, for so vile is human nature that although heaven be offered, and though hell thunder in our ears, yet there never was and there never will be any man who, unconstrained by sovereign grace, will run in the way of salvation and so escape from hell. It is all in vain for me to preach to you and all in vain for the most earnest exhortations to be addressed to any of you, unless the Holy Spirit shall be pleased to back them up. For man is so infatuated with himself, his disease one that causes such a madness of the brain, that he refuses the remedy and puts away from him the healing drink which alone can give him life from the dead. You will not come unto me that you might have life." Leave man alone, and with the cross of Christ before him and all hell behind him, he will shut his eyes and prefer to be damned rather than enter into eternal life by the blood of Christ the Lord. Hence, Christ came first to seek men and then to save them.

Ah, what a task that is of seeking men! There are some of you today on the tops of the mountains of pride, and others of you in the deep glens of despair. I think I see the Savior coming forth to seek you. He finds you today in the green pastures of the sanctuary, he comes near to you, and by these hands of mine he seeks to lay hold of you. But no sooner do you discern his approach than you run far away into the wild desert of sin. Christ often finds those whom he will save in the worst of tempers, in the most hardened conditions. And he softens their hearts, awakens their consciences, subdues their pride, and takes them to himself. But

never would they come to him unless he came to them. It must be sovereign grace that seeks the sinner and brings him home.

When Christ seeks him, he saves him. Having caught him at last, like the ram of old, in the thorns of conviction, he does not take a knife and slay him, as the sinner expects, but he takes him by the hand of mercy and begins to comfort and to save. Oh, you lost sinners. The Christ who seeks you today will save you. He will first find you when you are emptied of self, and then he will save you. When you are stripped, he will bring forth the best robe and put it on you. When you are dying, he will breathe life into your nostrils. When you feel yourselves condemned, he will come and blot out your iniquities like a cloud, and your transgressions like a thick cloud. Fear not, you hopeless and helpless souls. Christ seeks you today, and seeking, he will save you. He will save you now.

But I must remind you that the time is coming when that word "lost" will have a more frightful meaning to you than it has today. In a few more months, some of you will hear the great bell of eternity tolling forth that awful word, "Lost." The great sepulchres of hell will toll out your doom, "Lost, lost, lost," lost forever. But if that bell is ringing in your ear now, when you are lost, then be of good cheer. It is a good thing to be so lost. It is a happy thing to be lost to self and lost to pride and lost to carnal hope. Christ will save you. Believe that. Look to him as he hangs upon his cross. One look shall give you comfort. Turn your weeping eyes to him as he bleeds there in misery. He can, he will, save you. Believe on him, for he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not must be damned. But whosoever among the lost ones will now cast himself on Christ Jesus shall find everlasting life through his death and righteousness. May the Lord now gather in his lost sheep, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.