THE UTTERMOST SAVIOUR

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:25)

THANK GOD for this tremendous word of Scripture. It is as the shadow of a rock in a weary land, as the life-giving waters of the desert oasis, as the lights of home to the weary traveller. It is simple, sublime, satisfactory; so simple that a child may understand it; so sublime that it embraces the very majesty, the very glory, the very dominion and power of GOD; so satisfactory that it is the Great Physician's balm to the wounded soul, to the feverish spirit.

We need this uttermost SAVIOUR. We need this uttermost salvation. The awfulness of sin, the terrors of death, the dread of the judgment day, the yawning jaws of hell, require a champion of champions, a conqueror whose arms have never seen or suffered defeat. JESUS is that Victor. The immortality of His nature - "But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood"; the perfection of His character - "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens"; the efficacy of His sacrifice - "Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself" - these insure and assure for us a positive, permanent salvation. For almost two thousand years JESUS has amply demonstrated His wonderful ability. His superlative power. In never a case has He failed. Never a client has He lost. Never a one has come to Him to find in Him aught that was exaggerated, aught that was unsatisfying, aught that was undesirable. Grace for sin, fullness for poverty, peace for turmoil, power for weakness, health for disease, good measure, pressed down, running over, has He constantly bestowed upon His votaries, upon those who by faith claimed Him as their REDEEMER.

Now, without any hesitation, without any peradventure, without any doubt, as dogmatically as GOD gives me utterance, I offer to everyone of you JESUS CHRIST, the Son of GOD, the blood-stained Man of Calvary, the eternally glorified GOD of Joseph's open tomb, to save you from the uttermost depths of depravity, to keep you in pressure of the uttermost degree of temptation, to sustain you through the uttermost duration of time.

I stand to make this offer on the four pillars of our blessed faith. I know that JESUS is the uttermost SAVIOUR, that He offers you an uttermost Salvation, because He was appointed by GOD for that task, GOD having sent Him into the world to seek and to save the lost; because He died on the cruel cross for the sins of everyone of us and His precious blood, by the guarantee of the Word, cleanses us from all sin; because GOD raised Him from the dead for our justification; because He is even now at the right hand of GOD interceding for us.

Let us, therefore, delve into this matchless text, and, as the HOLY SPIRIT gives us guidance and understanding, analyze it so that we shall understand the mighty message of GOD contained in it. Let us, then, remember that JESUS has saved and can save the worst of sinners, that He can reclaim and revive the worst of backsliders, that He can save from the power of sin, that He can save from the consequences of sin!

I. HE IS ABLE TO SAVE THE WORST OF SINNERS
That has been His mission for 1900 years. He has never turned down a petitioner, never failed a client, never lost a patient. From the king's throne room to the cheapest hovel, from the banker's counting house to the murderer's death cell, from the queen's boudoir to the harlot's den, from the ends of the earth, from every country, continent, clime, and condition men, women, children, have found Him able to save to the uttermost all those who came unto GOD by Him. The great Mayo brothers in Rochester did not get their reputation for medical and surgical skill by setting the sprained finger of some child, or even by removing a pair of tonsils. When the doctors of any given city have given up a patient; when the loved ones of the sick one, in desperation, have sent or brought the sufferer to Rochester, these mighty men, by their almost magical skill of diagnosis and treatment, in numberless cases have restored health and vigor to the diseased bodies. Clarence Darrow did not get his fame as a national and international lawyer by defending a man for speeding in some local police court, or even by obtaining a non-contested divorce decree.

When the bar, the papers, the country, have adjudged by a common opinion a criminal to be guilty unto death, this brilliant man's forensic ability has stepped in to cheat the gallows, and sometimes even the prison bars.

It is so with JESUS. When society has ostracized, outlawed an individual for transgressions that have stained his soul, stigmatized his character, brought upon him the obloquy of his fellow men, the Lord CHRIST by His mighty passion and power has lifted that person out of the pit and from the miry clay, has put his feet on the rock, the song of Moses and the Lamb on his lips, and sent him home by the way of the cross rejoicing.

There are men preaching the Gospel today in all the lands of this world, whose lives were entrapped by Satan, enmeshed in sin, defiled, degraded by every kind of evil. CHRIST has redeemed them, released them; relieved them, regenerated their souls. They are shining illustrations, unswerving exclamation points, eternal amens to my contention that JESUS is able to save the worst of sinners.

I had an experience in a Denver mission about two months after my own conversion. Scheduled to preach there one Tuesday night, I was standing in the pulpit by the side of the man in charge. A testimony meeting was in progress. One after another, men and women stood up joyous-faced, clear-accented to testify what CHRIST JESUS had done for them and meant to them. A woman rose to her feet. How shall I describe her? Her dress was grayish-brown with age. Her hat was torn, and wisps of hair stuck out through the rents. Her face was lined, aged, tired. Looking up to the superintendent by my side, she said:

"Jimmy, it is eighteen years ago tonight since you led me to CHRIST right here in this room. Do you remember?" The man nodded his head.

"Do you remember what I was before I became a Christian?" The man bowed his head, but failed to answer. Again she spoke:

"You need not be ashamed, Jimmy. They all know about me. It is all past and gone. I was a streetwalker, just as common as the cheapest trash. You found me. You were patient with me. You told me about CHRIST. You broke my heart with your tears. You made me surrender and JESUS saved me.

"It has been a hard grind, Jimmy, but I have stayed with the Lord, and surely He has stayed with me. You Know when I was young, after I became a Christian, it was not so hard. I was strong and could do almost any kind of work. I nursed babies. I scrubbed floors. I laundered clothes. I made my way pretty well. Now, I am getting old and tired. People don't want me about much. There are days when the sun is shining, and it is dry and clear. I get me something to do and earn a dollar or two, enough for supper and a bed. Before I go to sleep, Jimmy, I kneel in prayer, bow my head in my hands, and say, 'Lord JESUS, You have been good to me. All that I am and all that I have I give to You.'

"Then there are days when it is cold and wintry, raining or snowing. Nobody wants any laundry done. Nobody wants any children minded. Nobody wants any floors scrubbed. I come to the end of the day without a penny in my pocket. Sometimes somebody gives me a hand-out. Sometimes I have to go hungry. Sometimes I sleep in the park under a bench, or in an empty store, or in the cheapest flop-house. But, Jimmy, I want you to know that even then, before I go to sleep, I lift up my heart to the Lord and say, JESUS, I am old. I am tired. I am hungry, but I love you. I can't give You much but all that I have is Yours for keeps.'

Brethren and sisters, that is just what I am trying to tell you. This JESUS has the power to take the weakest, vilest soul, to cleanse it in His own blood, to fill it with His own SPIRIT, to tie it to Himself with the strongest bonds of love, of loyalty, of gratitude. Scan the pages of Christian history. They are stained with the penitential, grateful tears of those whom the REDEEMER has lifted out of the very pit of hell. There are few of us in this crowd tonight who do not know of some vile sinner, some weak and sordid soul finding pardon, peace, power in Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

II. HE IS ABLE TO RECLAIM THE WORST OF BACKSLIDERS

That, too, has been His mission throughout the ages. The Bible contains records of it. How far did David backslide in his terrible sin with Uriah and Bathsheba? It seems to me that that was about the limit of a man's drifting from GOD. Yet JESUS found him, broke his heart, brought him to his knees, restored him to His own gracious favor.

How far did Peter backslide when pressed by that servant girl? He denied JESUS, whom he claimed to love, with such bitter words of rejection and cursing. Was he lost? Of course not. CHRIST loved him too well for that, as He loves every other backslider. The look in JESUS' eyes brought Peter to his shamed senses. He went out to weep, and in the gusty penitential passion of his tears found his way back to the Master.

There are countless other cases in the Bible and outside of it recording the misadventures of those who for a time took their eyes off GOD, thus opening the way for the inroads and encroachments of Satan. But CHRIST has never lost any of His own. He always and ever leaves the ninety-nine behind, to go into the desert to find the wandering one. He is doing it now, seeking out everywhere those who once knew the fervor of constant affection, the fire of loyal zeal, who have now grown cold by prayerlessness, by Biblelessness, by churchlessness, by disobedience, by sin. Now He is beckoning to you to come once more into the graciousness of His love, to taste once more of the fullness of His mercies, to sit once more at the banquet table of His compassion.

Who does not know the story of Jerry McAuley? He was converted in Sing Sing penitentiary. Upon being, discharged, he tried for a while to go straight, but circumstances pressed against him. He went back to his old tricks, becoming, if anything, even worse than, before his reported salvation. He got himself a woman by the name of Marie and lived with her in open disregard of the claims of conventional society. One early morning he started towards the downtown section of New York. Stopping on a street corner to light a cigarette, he was accosted by a well-dressed gentleman, whom he did not seem to know.

"Aren't you Jerry McAuley?" asked the man. "What's that to you?" answered Jerry.
"I have been looking for you, Jerry," spoke the man.
"I was one of those who came to Sing Sing to help you in trying to lead some of the other prisoners to CHRIST. Where have you been?"
"Oh, I've been around."
"You don't mean to tell me that you have gone back into your old life after your marvelous profession of CHRIST?"

"Well, a fellow's got to live, and if these bulls don't leave me alone, why I'll just do anything. I am not going to starve to death." He accompanied his words with some very bitter curses.
"Jerry, I am the cashier of one of the banks in New York. I have plenty of money. You can have any of it, or all of it, if it will help you go straight. The Lord needs you. You have served the devil long enough."
Jerry looked up at the man. "Mister, you don't mean - you don't mean you would give me money to go straight?"
"Yes, Jerry." The man reached into his pocket, pulled out his purse. "How much do you want?"
Jerry studied for a minute. He dropped his cigarette. Raising his right hand, he drove his clenched fist into the palm of his left hand, and cried out:
"Man, I am not going to take a penny of your money. But, so help me GOD, I am going straight from now on if it kills me." He wheeled around, hastily walked back to the apartment he shared with Marie, and asked her to put on her hat and coat, to come with him.
"Where are we going?" she said.
"To the City Hall to get married. I am going straight. I mean every word of it."
The woman threw back her head and laughed.
"Boy, oh, boy, that is funny! You are good enough for me just as you are, and if I am not good enough for you just the way I am, why you know what you can do. But I am not going to any City Hall with you or anybody else."

Jerry pleaded and begged, but the woman was adamant. He left her. He went through torment and suffering and sacrifice. He kept straight. The Lord blessed him, raised up friends for him. They helped him open a mission, helped him win Marie to CHRIST and marry her. Today the Bowery Mission is a monument to the fact that JESUS is able to reclaim the worst backslider.

III. BE IS ABLE TO SAVE FROM THE POWER OF SIN

That is what we need. Everyone of us, next to our salvation, more than anything or everything else in all the world,

needs some one stronger than circumstances,
mightier than sin,
wiser than Satan.
We need some one who can encamp around about as an army with conquering banners.
We need some one who can give us, the grace, the wisdom, the power, to resist the devil that he may flee from us.
We need some one who never tires or sleeps, some one whose watchful eye is keeping vigil over us by day and by night.

Where shall we find such a one? In JESUS, blessed JESUS. The truth of GOD's statement, "For this purpose the Son of GOD was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," has been proved beyond the shadow of a doubt: in the hundreds of years that have passed since CHRIST ascended to the Father. The contention, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen," has been the mighty weapon, the source of encouragement, the fount of inspiration to the generations of Christians who have claimed CHRIST as SAVIOUR. By the indwelling presence of the HOLY SPIRIT, the Lord JESUS makes us more than conquerors over the evil that besets us.

It was Dr. Venting of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary who told a class of us this story. Years ago he was pastor of the great, tremendously rich Euclid Avenue Baptist Church, Cleveland, Ohio. The organist of that church was a young, marvelously skilled musician named Roland. He was married, had a beautiful wife and two precious children. He was not a Christian. His besetting, killing sin was drink. One Sunday night there was a baptizing in the church. The crowd had gone when Dr. Venting stepped out of his dressing room through his study, through the auditorium to the rotunda of the church. Roland was just starting down the stairs. Dr. Venting stopped him. They talked for a while about small things. Then the pastor began to plead with him for CHRIST. The night was beautiful. The SPIRIT of GOD seemed to be reaching down from the balmy skies. Roland was touched, moved, melted. The two men knelt in the shadow of a great column. Dr. Venting raised his voice in passionate prayer to GOD. When he was through, Roland gloriously accepted and confessed CHRIST as his personal SAVIOUR.

The next morning Dr. Venting was walking to town to the ministerial conference, when he noticed a familiar figure ahead of him. It was Roland. The preacher watched him. It was before prohibition days. There were saloons, one to almost every block. The young organist walked up to the first saloon, stopped, started to go in, clenched his hands, shook them, turned around and walked on. He did that at least a half dozen times before he came to the building where his studio was located.

Dr. Venting kept on following him, entered into the building just a few steps behind him, took the next elevator up and stepped into Roland's office.
"Good morning, Dr. Venting."
"Good morning, Roland. How do you feel this morning?"
"Oh, Dr. Venting, I am the happiest man in all the world. I did not know there could be such joy!"
"Roland, I wasn't spying on you, but tell me what were you doing in front of those saloons when you stopped, started in, then turned away and walked on?"
The young musician coloured like a schoolgirl. Great tears came to his eyes.
"Dr. Venting, JESUS and I were having a good time."
"What do you mean, Roland, 'JESUS and I were having a good time'?"
"Well, brother pastor, you know my sin, don't you? That is what kept me from coming to CHRIST a long time ago. I did not want to be a hypocrite. I was worried about myself. This morning I knew I had to fight it out or it would whip me. I stopped in front of those saloons. The smell of gin, of wine, of beer, warm, tempting, tantalizing, assailed me. I could not keep from

walking in. My strength was too small. It was then that I asked JESUS to give a guy a hand. Dr. Venting, He did. He kept the devil from me. He gave me grace to turn away, to go on." Together in that modern office building, the two men once more fell on their knees to lift up their grateful hearts and voices to GOD, to thank Him that JESUS is able to save from the power of sin.

It will be that way with you, friend, as it has been with everyone who has ever relied on JESUS. No matter what your sin may be, no matter what temptation may press, no matter what burden may oppress you, no matter how weak you may believe yourself to be, He, even JESUS, is mighty unto the pulling down of the strongholds of sin. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptations also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

IV. HE IS ABLE TO SAVE FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." "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." That is the truth of GOD's Word, the truth that you may utterly and absolutely depend upon, now and forevermore. If there is anything in Scripture that is plain, it is the assurance that JESUS bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He is able to save us from the consequences of sin here and from the consequences of sin hereafter. When we accept Him as our personal REDEEMER, our transgressions are forgiven, our iniquities are blotted out, our names are written in the book of life. We are made children of GOD, with GOD Himself responsible for all that we face, for all that we need, for all that we must overcome. GOD is a good father, a rich father, a loving father. No good thing shall He deny to them that love Him and serve Him.

The fears of life are banished by CHRIST. He is the soul of courage, the source of strength, the supply of wisdom. Nothing can happen to those who put their trust in Him except by His permissive will. As a mother broods and watches over her suckling child, so GOD safely keeps and cares for those who have come to Him through CHRIST.

The distresses, the depressions, the disturbances of life may appall but they cannot prevail over those who have anchored their souls in the haven of rest.

He restores the years which the locusts have eaten. He gives back love, grace, virtue, honor, character, reputation, influence, many times even health, and wealth. He restores joy, happiness, peace, family life. He doubles and redoubles the assets that Satan offers. Friend, you will have drifted far from GOD. You may have crushed your life on the very rocks of destruction. Your loved ones, your friends may look askance at you, or even turn their backs upon you. Come to CHRIST. He is able to save from the consequences of sin. He is able to restore you to the bosom of the Father, to give back to you the things of which sin has robbed you. He will give you good measure, pressed down, shaked together, running over, of the bounties of Heaven.
He is able to obviate the consequences of sin by removing the fear of death. Death is merely an experience to those who are in CHRIST, as it were a corridor from the narrowness of this life into the wideness of GOD's mansions in glory. To the believer death is but an open door to the joys of Heaven, a welcome release from the burdens and turmoils of this life. Death becomes the messenger of GOD summoning us to the banquet on high.

He is able to save you from the consequences of sin by stripping the judgment of its terrors. In Him we have an advocate with the Father Who will represent us at the Bar of GOD, to speak for us, to defend us, to introduce us. His merit, His righteousness, His atonement, His intercession will make even the judgment lose its awfulness. For His sake we shall be welcomed, loved, crowned.

He is able to save from the consequences of sin by keeping us out of hell and taking us into Heaven. How many, many times have I wept and rejoiced over the seventh chapter of Revelation and that marvelous statement:

"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and

made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and GOD shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

This also is yours for the having in this able CHRIST. This is the final consummation of His plan, of all of His work, of all of His sacrifice. In this, as in nothing else, is shown His eternal, universal, effective, available ability.

There is but one word left to be said. We need this uttermost CHRIST. We need this uttermost salvation. How may we obtain it? How may we close with it? How may we receive it? The text is clear: "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Come unto GOD by Him is your answer. Just as you are, without waiting, without hesitating, without looking to anything or anyone else, but because GOD invites you, because CHRIST offers Himself to you, because you need His grace, because the hour is auspicious, come to GOD by CHRIST now. The way is clear. The way is open. The way is waiting. Step out! Come! Come now!