

BACCALAUREATE SERMON,

What Must I Do to be Saved?

DELIVERED

*Before the Class of '80,*

BY

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PRESIDENT OF WABASH COLLEGE.



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THIS DISCOURSE

IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CLASS  
OF '80, FOR WHOSE BENEFIT IT WAS COM-  
POSED, WITH A MOST SINCERE PRAYER  
FOR THEIR SUCCESS IN ALL THAT  
PERTAINS TO THEIR LIFE HERE  
AND HEREAFTER.

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# DISCOURSE.

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“What must I do to be saved?” — ACTS, XVI; 30.

The last word in this sentence in importance is the first. And in the English language there are few more pleasant words.

Its Latin origin, *salvus*, gives us a large brood of sweet words. The thought which runs through all these words is that of *safety, soundness, well being, health.*

In the English Bible, the words “*save,*” in its general application, “*Salvation,*” “*Safety,*” “*Safely,*” “*Saviour,*” “*Salute,*” “*Salutation,*” and words closely related to them, appear hundreds of times.

The word, *saved,* in our text, is one that comes to us through a great many avenues.

It was spoken by a man with serious earnestness. He asked the question, “What must I do to be saved?”

There was nothing in the circumstances to provoke mirth. Man is described as “the animal that laughs.”

There are cases in which laughter is beautiful. It is so, in a merry child. In some cases it is glorious. The Psalmist, in view of certain great things, said, “then was our mouth filled with laughter.”

In some cases, laughter is mad, “as the crackling of burning thorns is the laughter of a fool.” And sometimes laughter is terrible, as when God, in tremendous hyperbole, is said to “laugh” at His ene-

mies, even when their calamities come upon them.

There was no laughter in the Jails at Philippi that night of the earthquake, so far as we know. If there was any, it was in the mouths of Paul and Silas. "They prayed and sang praises." Perhaps their "mouth was filled with laughter." The other prisoners did not laugh. Nor did the jailor, roused from sleep by an earthquake, laugh. With profound earnestness, he said: "What must I do to be saved?"

I will not deal with this great question narrowly. It is very broad, and it touches us at many points.

The word, *saved*, has its companion-word, "lost," and the word, salvation, its companion-word—now yet in the dictionary—"lostness," or *lost condition*. Like the inseparable things which Plato names "Pleasure and Pain," these things represented in the words, *Saved* and *Lost*, are inseparable.

I beseech you not to scowl or sneer, as if I am now talking as "a sour evangelical." I now merely state a fact. In human conditions, the notion of *lostness* is ever present as a possibility, and alas, in innumerable cases, as an actuality.

Will you look at this from a physical standpoint? A vigorous, healthy child is a pleasant sight. Look at that boy's face as

"the mantling blood  
Flows in his lovely cheeks."

That is a pleasant sight. Look again. The fires have scorched that face, and though that boy is now a man of power in his profession, and the casualty occurred fifty years ago, the stranger looks at that face with a feeling of sickness. It was a beautiful

face, but it might, and it did, become what it now is. It had the possibility of being lost.

A true woman in the midst of her home and her children, displays her charms to great advantage. What think you of her lifeless and confined form in the midst of home and children? The element of *lostness* shadowed her and her home.

These illustrations are well worn, but they represent a vast class of unquestioned facts, which belong to the physical and social sphere.

And so tremendously does this element of *lostness* appeal to us at this point, that it would be true to say that under that deep shadow, reluctant coffers are unlocked and stout hearts are broken, as man in the deepest seriousness asks, "What must I do to be saved?"

Some things are certain relatively, and yet this element of *lostness*, "to-day, yesterday, and forever," shadows the business world. An awakened sinner may be laughed at, as if scared by some "old wife's fable," but this very day, in the midst of wrecked fortunes, many men—not denounced as superstitious—are asking the question: "What must I do to be saved?"

In cases where health, life, and property are in peril, men are serious. Their fellows do not sneer at them, and they may, without the risk of being laughed at, ask, "What must I do to be saved?"

Here, there is the fact of *lostness*—the condition of being lost; who, here, may not both need, and want salvation?

It is often said there are some things more valuable than either property or life. If the Scriptures be

“cast into our teeth,” “all that a man hath will be given for his life,” it may be said in reply, that this assertion was made by *Satan*, who is a “liar from the beginning.” It may be true of some—yea, of many—but it is not true of all. It has been said that “mankind justify and applaud him who dies for his kindred, his country, his race, or to sustain his integrity,” and that when the martyrs of liberty and truth die, “death does not come to them as to common men, whispering of terror, or of hope for them alone, but

“In its hollow tones are heard  
The thanks of millions yet to be.”

By a true man “a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.” And the world’s Divine Martyr said: “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.”

We have been speaking of this element of *lostness*; does *it* also shadow the “good name?” Is it possible for a good name to be lost? May this become a name so bad that it “shall rot?” Surely I need not prove the affirmative. What do you think of these words of Mirabeau to his friend: “I would pass through a furnace, heated seven times, to purify the name of Mirabeau! But for this name, so polluted, all France would be at my feet.” What was that but a fierce articulation of the question, “What must I do to be saved?”

A numberless throng of men, who through crime, have lost that which divine authority declares worth more than “great riches,” have in some way or other, shrieked the same question into the ear of man and of God,—and it has seemed that every ear has been deaf to the cry.

And innocent men have also felt “—— the poisonous gall that drips on virtue’s robe, from scandal’s viper lips.”

Innocent, they incur a stupendous calamity, and as the black cloud bursts on them, is it unmanly to plead, as did the most illustrious of their number: “if it be possible, let it pass from me?” or, that in the presence of a loss, more bitter than death, they should wail out the old question, “What must I do to be saved?”

There can be no division of opinion as to the presence of this element of *lostness* here. Nor is there any reluctance in asking the jailor’s question. And when one asks the question, rarely is the man found so abandoned to humane feeling, as to utter a coarse laugh, or settle his face into the hard, cold lines of an inhuman sneer. There is another sphere of human activities and possibilities, attended by the element for which a freshly coined word has already been used so often. I refer to the sphere of *mind*. I do not now refer to the *moralities* of the human soul, but to mind only.

Take a case in which the mind reached a conclusion in reasoning. Two well grown lads—neighbors, friends, equals—are balancing plans for the future. They met again when they were grey headed. And the one said, referring to that scene so many years ago, “I made a mistake. I wish I were back at the cross-roads, where you took one road and I the other.” He uttered the piercing regret of many a life that has either ended in failure, or not attained the success of which it was capable.

There are men to whom nature has given extraordinary mental powers. They lack one thing—*the*

*will to work.* Their career at school might be formulated into this sentence: "*They did the least they could*" Even in the most famous schools, sometimes such gifted sluggards are graduated "with the endorsement of a college diploma."

Perhaps after awhile they wake up. There are cases of "genuine awakening." Conscious of "the good stuff" in them, and meeting an actual and hard world, they are scared. They blame themselves, and not unfrequently their teachers. I have known some of these rollicking fellows—troublesome, yet lovable—with bitter tears to curse their own folly. •

These rash and wicked sacrifices of mental gifts and opportunities, are not confined to academic spheres and callings. There are men of this sort in all callings. You may say that conviction of sin is a fiction, but I assure you "the convictions of folly, of regret, of self condemnation," are no fiction, when a man, who might have been ready for active life, is rudely waked up by the hard requirements of a profession for which he is not prepared. We may laugh at the prodigal's confession: "I have sinned;" for that pertains to religion, but he is in dead earnest as he says in his heart, and perhaps audibly, "I have played the fool! I have hated instruction, and my heart has despised reproof."

This is sincere conviction, and if a real man feels it in some form or other, he will formulate the want then burdening him, in the famous question: "What must I do to be saved?"

There are men of high gifts, and also men of ordinary gifts, who abuse themselves by failing to do in the realm of mind, what they might and ought. If such men encounter a *crisis* in their destiny—a



turning point in their lives—let them deal with it wisely. Let them say there in that presence, “a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep!” That means ruin, perhaps, without redemption.

Rather when the cry comes, “awake, O sleeper!” let him shake himself from his slumber and like an earnest man say, “What must I do to be saved?” And he shall hear a voice repeating his own great question, and answering it, “What must I do? *Work with thy might.*”

These are only hints. There are actual and serious losses; there may be actual and grand deliverances. and so practical does the whole business seem that no one thinks of the one asking, in such a case, to be saved as worthy of scorn. Nay, not the least interesting part of human biography is made up of the story of men in some calling or other *lost*, but through some friendly influence *saved* to virtue, to work, to themselves, to humanity, to God.

Such are the numerous cross roads of life, the dangers of choosing the wrong road, and such the glaring and tremendous results of wrong choices, or of following a right road with no heart “that in most of the spheres of human activity we find a general agreement, that many people ought to say, in view of the possibility of being lost, ‘what must I do to be saved?’”

Let us push our enquiries a step further. Does this principle of *lostness* and *salvation* apply to the *philanthropies*?

Here, also, I mean to deal with the question in no narrow spirit. I hope, also, to merit your assent. There is a class of poor wretches in London who are

forced to find shelter in lodging houses established for them. It was said these poor creatures were subjected to horrible indignities, being forced to bathe in unutterably filthy water, herd with the diseased and the bad, and sleep in rooms the foul airs of which were unendurable.

A man of wealth and a philanthropist, dressing himself in rags, spent a night in one of these lodging houses, undergoing what ordinary pauper lodgers did. He spent one night there, and his story of that night's experience thrilled London, as Howard's account of the prisons had done Europe.

This immense human squalor is the source whence such writers as Dickens and Hugo have drawn their most thrilling characters. Even in the cities of the New World this squalor is huge and bad; in those of the old world it is immeasurable. The most extravagant believer in the goodness of human nature confesses *lostness* here, a ruin as evident as when fire has burnt up a city. In some small section of such a domain in Edinburgh, Thomas Chalmers planted a church and school, and lifted a whole community into industry, work, morality, comfort, piety. There *was* lostness and there *is* salvation.

In 1778 Capt. Cook discovered the Sandwich Islands. The people were then "characterized by licentiousness and brutality," "in the lowest state of barbarism in which men are ever found." "Society was a dead sea of pollution."

In 1820 a company of Christian men and women landed on one of these Islands, and as "they looked upon the degradation and barbarism of the half naked, lewd and chattering savages, some turned away from the sight with shrinkings and tears, and

others were ready to ask, "Can these be human beings? Is it possible to civilize them and Christianize them? Can we take up our abode for life with such a people?" Surely here was *lostness* without rose-color, or rose-scent. It really seemed *all* lostness, and nothing else. In a few years their language was reduced to writing, spelling-books, Bibles and newspapers were printed, a constitution made, a civilization created, a people saved. Among the displays at the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia in 1876, all things considered, the Hawaiian was not excelled.

And this was salvation.

As compared with this sort of *lostness* in the world at large, the Hawaiian Islands are a mere speck, and all of this "groans and travails in pain together," waiting for the salvation. Shall it ever come? God says *yes*; a carping infidelity says *no*. Time shall show which is right. At any rate, the cry is going up from a lost world, "What must we do to be saved?"

To individualise the philanthropies.—Many years ago there was in a New England town a dissipated young man. He had tried to reform but had failed. One man stuck to the poor boy and told him not to give up. One day he met his philanthropic friend with an eager petition for money to get to Boston. To save himself he must get away. At once the money was given him. For years his friend did not hear from him, but at last the brave fellow reported himself in a lucrative business in New Orleans, a Christian merchant. His name is a familiar one, and it shall live a long time in the *Theological Seminary* bearing it.

There was a man lost and there was a man saved.

There are millions of young men who, to-day, **are** lost. *Lostness* in their case has become *ruin*. When the Good Samaritan took *Lane* by the hand and saved him, did that sort of philanthropy die *with* him? The lost Lanes—the ruined young men—everywhere dwell in the deep shadows of death, **in** a dumb desperate way saying, “What must we do to be saved?” Are there no Good Samaritans to help them? Is there no superhuman philanthropy to save them?

I protest to you that, so far, I am discussing a principle in no narrow spirit. You may say Christianity is not a divine religion, and that Christ is not the world’s Saviour, and that conviction of sin is a delusion, and conversion a lie, but you will not deny that all about us extend the dark domains of ruin, where dwell the bad of all sorts and the destroyed of every grade; you will not deny that in nearly every house there is a closeted skeleton, and in every home an aching heart, and in every community a plague-spot, and in all human dwelling-places lost souls.

It is not needful to have divine flames flash terrors before our eyes, as in Paul’s and Bunyan’s case, in order to see these things. A man has only to open his eyes and look in any direction to see *lostness*, and a great deal of it. And shall the dwellers in this tremendous domain be frowned or laughed into silence as their breaking hearts seek relief in the cry, so often repeated in this address, “What must I do to be saved? Mr. Froude laughs at Bunyan’s convictions and horror about sin, but surely even he cannot laugh to confront half a million human beings in London itself, so bad, so corrupt, so desperate,

so dangerous that they seem devils, and their dwelling-place hell.

Within common shot of his writing-desk is lostness on a large scale. Of course he knows it; and in the sphere of the philanthropies approves when one, or many poor wretches, shrieks the cry into open heaven, "What must we do to be saved?" Surely, thus far, we are all agreed both as to the *lostness* as a dreadful fact, and the *salvation* as a possible fact.

We now enter disputed territory—that of the *morality*s. I include in this term all that belongs to man as a moral being. I will assume, with no other proof than the soul's own consciousness, that man has a moral nature, and that any theory contrary to this is false. We will assume as true that when a man lies, steals, or commits murder, *he, himself*, does the act. It is not "God, who is everything," doing that bad act in and through a part of himself! God does not tempt man to sin, much less — may the dear God pardon the irreverence of ever naming it — does God himself do the act. "Man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed."

Assuming this, the inference is inevitable that a sinless, moral being may become sinful, and that one who has become sinful may go down deeper into sin — may "wax worse and worse."

Whilst opinions on this point agree, they are not so well agreed as to the opposite proposition as stated in three questions: (1) Is the fact that a man may fall from goodness into badness, and then "wax worse and worse," one that should give us any concern? (2) Is it possible for one who has become bad to become good? And, (3) if possible, is such a change desirable? You will notice that in these

questions I use not the technical phrases of "holiness and sin," lest you call this the cant of Evangelicalism, but the words "bad and good," "badness and goodness," belonging to the vocabulary of common life. To some it might seem meaningless or flat to call the murderer Rand "a sinner," but most people know your meaning in calling him a *bad man*.

And what do you mean by calling one a *bad man*? Of course you do not mean merely one that kills or steals? A man now in a New England Insane Hospital killed his own child, but wise men say he was *crazy*. You may pity him, but if he is crazy you do not call him bad. What is it to be bad? It is to be bad at *heart*. We call this man dishonest and the other vicious, and the third one corrupt, and we always mean in each case that there is a bad moral state—a bad heart—out of which grew the bad act. Ordinary men talking about good men and bad men are not deceived by such statements.

We understand, then, that an honest man may fall into dishonesty, a pure man into impurity, a good man into badness, and in each case the man becomes worse and worse. How do most men regard this fact? In its outward and material relations with unanimous condemnation. Set a man before twelve men or twelve hundred men, and say, "this man is a thief," or, "this man murderously cut his victim to death with a knife," who of them all would not condemn these men as bad? I will go further to assert that not one of them but would say it is a matter of great moment, if possible, to make the thief and the murderer good at heart. Ask those whose property is exposed to the thief, and whose lives are at the mercy of the murderer, if they would not breathe

more freely if all the thieves and murderers could be made good?

When we come into the more *refined* relations of badness—badness without arms full of stolen property—badness unstained with the blood of murder—badness nicely gloved, wearing purple and fine linen—mere badness of a moral nature not carried into some act of badness, that is foul, or brutal, or devilish—we find men differing in opinions. Some may formally admit the badness to be bad without sincerity, and others may deny the whole proposition outright as absurd. Very well. Yet in any case the *fact* of the moral badness is admitted, and the admission covers all the ground I need to occupy. If it is good to love and serve God, and bad not to love and serve Him; if it is good to love neighbor, and bad not to love him; if it is good, to be good at heart, and bad to be bad at heart; if it is good, to carry the goodness of a good heart into the piety we owe God, and the humanity we owe man, and bad to be impious, either in heart or in life, or in both, towards man,—in a word, if it is good for a man to be good, both at heart and in life, and bad for man to be bad, both in heart and in life,—then surely, you will admit the question of restoring those who have become bad in heart and life to goodness, is one that ought to concern us all.

Granted then, that such a restoration does concern us, a second question clamors for an answer: *is it possible?* Can a bad man become a good man? Can he be saved from his badness?

Notice, this is not merely or chiefly a question of *legal* status, but of moral condition. Three men were convicted of infamous crime in Pennsylvania,

and the very day they were sentenced, the Court of Pardons, infamously, remitted their penalty. They were pardoned criminals. At heart they were bad as ever, and the press denounced them infamous, even after they were pardoned. It is possible to pardon a bad man, while he is as bad as ever. He may be relieved of penalty by executive clemence, and not be good.

That is not the question. Can a bad man become good? that is the question. The answer must be brief. God answers the question in the affirmative. "The wicked must forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts." He must have help, but the thing can be done. So God says.

The chief element in our beautiful modern philanthropy, is the belief in the *possibility* of restoring the bad to goodness, the lost to salvation. A score of philanthropic reforms are based on this belief.

We need not talk or think Calvinism or Arminianism, or any other Theology or system of Ethics. There is a wide spread conviction that the recovery of the bad from their badness, is a possibility. If this were not so, it were a mercy to the tax-payers and to the bad themselves, to abandon our present systems, looking to the recovery of the wicked and outcast, for some unlighted and horrible prisons like those of Siberia, in which the hopeless may descend quickly into the grave! We protest in horror against the inhuman thought, which denies the worst a chance to become good.

And in fact, a great many are restored; not all, but many, and the history of human philanthropy, by many a sweet fact, answers the question before us in the affirmative. Within the domain of the mortalities is many a monument erected in which the



history of some "chief of sinners" is emblazoned in the words : a "woman that was a sinner saved," "a passionate John saved." "a thief on the cross saved," "a Saul of Tarsus, the murderer of Christ's Saints, saved;" or, in the biggest meaning of the great words, "*a sinner saved.*"

It is possible for a bad man, within certain limits to become good, a lost man to be saved. What shall we answer to the third question is such a restoration, such a salvation *desirable*? Again, I beg you, to note it is not a question of legal status, but of moral cleansing; not of pardon, but of purity. We want the bad to become good, the corrupt in heart to become clean in heart, and the wicked in life to become good in life.

Is such a change, such a salvation, desirable? I saw the other day a man more brutal than the bulldog, on account of which he had killed a man, cutting by one tremendous blow, two ribs of his antagonist from the back bone. Daily, human fiends are doing fiendish deeds of all sorts. Crime and criminals are in all grades dangerous. Is it desirable for *our* sakes to make such men good? What a sigh of relief would the world heave if that might be? We all say, "Yes," to this question. What say you to this: Is it desirable to save men from their sins? Is it desirable to save men from their hypocrisies, from their moral infirmities, their impure hearts, their undevout, as well as openly wicked lives?

Oh! it seems to me that "the whole creation that groans and travails in pain together until now," answers these questions in the affirmative, in tones as earnest and grand as the noise of many waters. God himself, answers these in the tragedy of Calvary. Is

it desirable to save men, to restore bad men to goodness, and lost men to heaven?

Do you think all this while, I have lost sight of the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Oh! its grandest application is to the *moralities* of man, its divinest meaning not found until we consider man as a moral being, as at heart bad, as—if I may use the tremendous words of God—"having a heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Here is a work to be done, very difficult, very desirable, and very glorious. It is to make the bad good. And in the light of that work itself, I venture to affirm that human life never articulated a more tremendous question than this, "What must I do to be saved?" and that so far as we now know, neither man nor God ever attempted a more worthy work than to furnish a practical answer to the question.

Indeed, so far as man is concerned, in all the relations he occupies from the lowest to the highest, this is the one grand consummate question of man—a question unequalled in its grandeur, importance and and glory.

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GENTLEMEN OF THE SENIOR CLASS:

My words to you shall be few. You are just completing your course. The day of your graduation shall ever be "reckoned as one of the *white days* of your lives." You have been children, now, you become men. For a long while you have been getting ready, now you are ready, to do something. At least, I hope so. The time of drill now closes, and the signal gun of battle sounds. The words of reproof in the *imperative* mood now tone themselves down into the *subjunctive* mood of entreaty and

hope. If you have been laggards; you cease to be such here, and seek new fields in which to lag. Here you may have "kicked against the pricks." In a little while you shall find whether the world is run without goads. Even the old college bell—faithful monitor—shall ring out its farewell to you, and its honest tones fade into reminiscences.

I have had some acquaintance with college boys and college men. There are few of them who do not need the steel-pointed goad, and the brazen throated bell to urge them to duty. The college goad and the college bell are no longer for you. The world will find a goad for you and a bell to ring in your ears. May they be as faithful as those you leave behind you.

I am glad you are through. I am glad you are going. You have been here long enough. It is time you are away. The fondest father may say this to the most dutiful son. It is no discredit to you, that I say to you, "Begone!" You have got yourselves ready to do something. Then away to do it, and "a blessing go with you."

But though we tell you to go as if glad you are going, be sure we shall be glad to see you back. You shall not be like guests who depart without a regret and return without a welcome.

I have been speaking to you on what may seem an inapt theme. You may say this is a *college*, and not a monastic school. Why ring so many charges on a question that smacks so strongly of religion? The question is pertinent, and my answer shall not intentionally be impertinent. If, as Prof. Stuart used to say, "original sin consists in aversion to work." You need to be saved from that original sin. I am not sure what the original sin was, that the angel

washed out of Mohammed's heart to get him fit to be Allah's prophet. I am sure you will have to be *saved from laziness*, if you effect much in this world !

A man who had studied human nature carefully, once said, "after all that has been said in eulogy of human nature, I have seen a good deal in it that is not very good." In energetic terms God has spoken of human nature as bad. I may speak my thoughts in mild terms. If human nature be what such high authority declares it to be, you *need to be saved from yourselves*. Indeed, this is one the most needed of all the salvations—*from yourselves*. You need to be saved from *meanness*, from *selfishness*, from *untruthfulness*, from *appetite*, from *passion*, from *envy*, and a dozen other "*works of the flesh*." You may wear as elegant apparel as Dives and as rich a chain as Daniel, but you will not have the best manliness until you experience a salvation from yourselves. To be true men, you need to be *new* men, and to be manly men, you need to be *Godly* men. This paradox is worthy your thought.

In fact, when I look at a man in the rough, I am sure that he needs to be cut out of his roughness as the statue is cut out of the marble block. "The imprisoned statue" is saved out of the rough block by the mallet and chisel of the sculptor. The Moses of Michael Angelo was once in the huge block. The sculptor was the saviour.

All true education is salvation ! The education is the Saviour. The true disciple is the saved. From the time that the babe learns to smile in his mother's love, until the man learns to love in the smile of God, each step is an answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" The child saved from

childish things, becomes a man, and the man saved from himself, becomes an angel of God.

This is not a mere conceit of words. It is a fact. Man's entire progress in the true life is a salvation. The average man needs a good deal of salvation. He needs it at a good many points. He needs a full assortment of salvation. To make him the good son, the industrious worker, the faithful brother, the true citizen, the humane man, worthy to occupy the numerous relations which belong to manhood, requires much more saving than is ordinarily admitted.

It is possible that a careful scrutiny of yourselves, may show you that none of you is yet half saved. Nor will you be fully saved until delivered from the infirmities of human nature adorned by virtue, enriched by intelligence—animated by benevolence and crowned with piety. You have become men, fit for the new life, the other side “the dreaded flood.”

“Death is another life. We bow our heads  
At going out, we think, and enter straight  
Another golden chamber of the king's,  
Larger than this we leave and lovelier.”

This life is brief enough, tremendously brief. Its relations to the future life, are of unspeakable importance. For this life, if there were no other, we need salvation. For the future life with its immense solemnities, and grandeurs, we need salvation a thousand fold. No wonder the Son of God came to the earth to save men. No wonder God yearns to save them.

And hence, my young friends, do not dismiss my words as cant, when I close this address by urging you every day of your lives, and in every exigency of life bearing on your temporal and eternal destinies, humbly and devoutly to ask this question, “What must I do to be saved?” Find the answer to your question, and you *are saved?*